

Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
Perceptions of Practice and Potential:
Investigating Education and Health Care Plan
Implementation in Early Years and Primary
Education

H. Richards

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ABSTRACT

The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) aimed to reform provision for children and young people with additional and complex learning needs. Its intention was to place such children and their families at the centre of practice and introduce Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) to bring together support from different disciplines. Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs) are the key implementers of the Code of Practice within their settings. This requires them to recognise complex needs, to interface with setting staff, families and expert professionals, and to apply for and implement EHCPs. However, differences in leadership, training and educational phase have created a confusing situation in which knowledge, status and priorities vary. This mixed-methods, close-to-practice research sought to identify, describe and explain key features of the role, implementation and SENCO identity, as perceived and experienced by SENCO practitioners working in either the early years or primary phase of education. A conceptual framework that encompassed micro-level influences (identity theory) and external ecological influences (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1982) was utilised to do this.

Following a pilot study, eight SENCOs working in the early years phase and seven SENCOs working in the primary phase from a variety of settings in one local authority area in the Midlands region of England participated in two stages of data collection. Each completed a work-line, a critical event narrative interview, and a repertory grid interview, then ranked a group repertory grid. Descriptive and numerical analysis of the data sets was conducted, with findings and results being integrated to discover the salient external and internal influences on EHCP implementation.

This process revealed seven themes, with accompanying sub-themes. Detail about SENCO identity (including their perceptions of collective and professional identity and of positive and negative impacts on their personal identity) emerged, including that the experience and outcomes for individual children were central to SENCO purpose. Key relationships became apparent, as did institutional issues (availability of consistent information and communication and liaison), and organisational issues (setting ethos, impact on SENCO status, teamwork and evidence collation). Knowledge and skills (of processes, developmental norms, SEND and of individual children) were also important, and all of these themes influenced the quality of evidence provided for EHCPs and so outcomes. A model was developed to illustrate these, then recommendations relating to purpose, support resources, communities of learning, and relationships were made. Finally, potential impact and dissemination platforms were detailed.

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“I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion.”

Thomas Jefferson, Letter to William Charles Jarvis. September 28, 1820.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BERA	British Education Research Association
CDC	Council for Disabled Children
CQC	Care Quality Commission
CYP	Children and Young People
DfE	Department for Education
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DoH	Department of Health
EHCP	Education, Health and Care Plan
ITT	Initial Teacher Training
LEA	Local Education Authority
LA	Local Authority
NASEN	National Association of Special Educational Needs
NASENCo	The National Award for Special Educational Needs Coordination
NCTL	National College for Teaching and Leadership
Ofsted	The Office for Standards in Education
PVI	Private, voluntary and independent sector early years provider
QTS	Qualified Teacher Status
SENCo	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disability
SEND Code of Practice	Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015)
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
SMART	Specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timely
UK	United Kingdom

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CHAPTER 1 – OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The role of Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCo) is to co-ordinate the identification, assessment, and provision of support for children and young people (CYP) with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). This includes having a key role implementing the Education, Health and Care plans (EHCP), required to secure the resources necessary to meet the needs of CYP with significant and complex additional needs (DfE, 2015b; DfE, 2017e). EHCPs were introduced in the most recent *Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice* (DfE and DoH, 2015) in England, alongside other changes, including to the role and responsibilities of SENCos. This resulted in considerable additional workloads for SENCos (Ekins, 2015; Qureshi, 2015b; Hellawell, 2016; Curran et al., 2017; DfE, 2017f). Whilst the SEND Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) aimed to significantly strengthen and develop the position and responsibilities of SENCos, for example in determining the strategic development of SEN policy and provision in schools, it stopped short of ensuring their status in statute. This meant that settings had a degree of flexibility as to how they enacted the SENCo role (Johnson et al., 2017). Additionally, SENCos and their settings operate in a context of financial cutbacks and increasingly fragmented provision (Brundrett, 2016), where conflicting ideals such as increased parental choice and voice (Lamb, 2009), better outcomes for children and families (*Children and Families Act 2014*), and budgetary efficiency (Veck, 2014) coexist. This has created complex working environments.

Whilst the SEND Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) highlights the importance of early identification, assessment and implementation of support, SENCos working in private, voluntary and independent early years settings are only required to be trained to level 3¹ (DCSF, 2008b; DfE, 2014c) and the training and support available for them in practice is both optional and variable (Griggs and Bussard, 2017). This contrasts with the qualified teacher status (level 6 or 7) and mandatory SENCo training (level 7) required of SENCos working in primary age-phase settings. This means that the practitioners tasked with the prioritised early identification and intervention may have neither the necessary status, power or tools available to them to effectively realise this (Lamb and Blandford, 2017).

1.2 The Study

This study investigated the perceptions of SENCos operating in this new policy context by examining their experiences of EHCP implementation. As a microcosm of the wider arena of policy and practice

¹ In England, level -3 is a pre-degree level equivalent to A-level, levels 4 and 5 are equivalent to the first and second years of bachelor degree study, level-6 is bachelor degree level, and level-7 is master's degree level.

(Hellowell, 2017b), this offered the opportunity to identify the challenges, influences and changes to the collaborative working practices and identity of SENCOs, resulting from the SEND reforms (*Children and Families Act 2014*; DfE and DoH, 2015). The study sought to discover the influences that SENCOs themselves recognise as significant for their practice and potential. It did this by focussing on their individual experiences of implementing EHCPs within their settings.

1.3 Research Aims

The SEND Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) frames SENCOs as overseers of SEND provision in their settings, by increasing their responsibilities and suggesting that the role be strengthened. However, conflicts between social justice and the economic and political context of austerity and neoliberalism exist and enactment of the role varies, depending on the leadership, knowledge, training, age-phase, and status of settings and their staff. This means that SENCOs and other setting staff can experience and perceive the role differently, with implications for how EHCPs are implemented. Consequently, whilst the SEND Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) tasked SENCOs with developing practice and provision, this may require them to identify, work with, and sometimes change, setting and staff understandings, priorities, and cultures. The research aims were therefore created to explore perceived:

- changes to the position of SENCOs, created by the SEND Code of Practice and EHCP implementation (DfE and DoH, 2015), including their roles, responsibilities and relationships;
- differences in educational phase, setting, status, and training route that have relevance to EHCP implementation;
- organisational and individual influences on the practical implementation of the policy; and
- changes to the identity development of SENCOs because of the above.

The objectives linked to these can be found in section 4.2.

1.4 Research Questions

The study sought to explore these differences, changes, and influences from the perspective of SENCOs by focussing on the following three research questions:

- How do SENCOs perceive the impact of the new policy on their roles, responsibilities, and relationships?
- What do SENCOs perceive to be the key positive and/or negative influences on the implementation of this policy?

- How, if at all, do these influences contribute to their developing professional identity as SENCoS?

These questions influenced and shaped the design and choices made within the enquiry, as presented in the following sections.

1.5 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework was developed from identity theory and Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory (1979, 1982) to enable SENCo perceptions of the internal and external influences which affect EHCP implementation to be revealed. At the internal level, identity theory was used to explore SENCo perceptions of their actual and ideal practice. Conceptualised as a triad made up of collective, professional and personal elements, identity, in line with Bronfenbrenner's bi-directionality, is conceptualised as dynamically interacting with SENCo agency in the ecological systems of the individual settings in which SENCoS practice. Indeed, experiences influence individual perceptions of the world, and these perceptions, or values and beliefs, inform each person's identity and actions. At the external level, institutional and organisational concepts were considered because SENCoS practice in different settings, each of which has statutory and recommended duties as well as unique characteristics. Concepts considered include policy and how this is realised in specific contexts, with the contribution of leadership and power, and setting ethos, including purpose and values, being central to this. These influences, along with the concept of change and the contribution of continuing professional development are considered in this study.

1.6 Methodology

The experiences and perceptions of SENCoS were central to the study and the conceptual framework informed the approach to the research and the methods used. Social reality is considered to be the product of individual understandings that develop in transaction with our contexts. A relativist ontology (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Patton, 2002) was therefore adopted. SENCo perceptions of both internal and external influences were explored to discover the interactions and impact on practice and on SENCo identity and agency. Pragmatism recognises that actions cannot be separated from the situations and contexts in which they occur. It also recognises that our actions are dependent on individually and socially held worldviews, are open to change, and that our actions affect outcomes (Morgan, 2014). A pragmatic constructivist paradigm was therefore adopted, and mixed-methods were used to explore SENCo experiences and perceptions of EHCP implementation.

The methods used to collect descriptive data were worklines, critical event narrative interviews and individual repertory grid interviews. Numerical data were produced by the individual repertory grid

rating process and by the group repertory grid rankings. The administration and analysis of each of these methods was piloted with two SENCoS working in early years settings and two working in statutory school-age settings. Fifteen SENCoS (eight from early years and seven from the primary phase) participated in the main study. This involved a pre-interview task (work-line), two interviews (one critical event narrative interview and one individual group repertory grid interview), followed by a group repertory grid ranking task.

1.7 Results

Findings and results from the analysis of the data sets collected by each of these methods are presented separately in Chapters 5 and 6. These were then integrated and discussed in Chapter 7, a process which revealed seven key themes and their associated subthemes. These were structured around the levels contained in the conceptual framework.

At the micro-level, SENCo perceptions of their collective and professional identity, and positive and negative impacts on their personal identity are presented. These include attributes that would be beneficial for any professional working in a collective capacity, and the value of positive relationships, networks, and communication and liaison skills. Professionally, SENCoS juxtapose the demands and constraints inherent to this role with a clear sense of purpose - that is, a child-centred approach. This involves holistic, personalised, caring support and favourable outcomes for CYP with SENCoS valuing contact with CYP, their families, and professionals for the contributions they make to this. Process knowledge, knowledge of SEND and development, and everyday knowledge of the child and their circumstances also inform this. Positive impacts on personal identity included increased assertiveness and a sense of achievement. These compared to negative impacts, including stress, value differences and being personally affected by the work.

At the macro-level, resource issues were revealed at the institutional level, including difficulties accessing professional involvement and consistent advice, and the challenge of achieving good communication and liaison between the personnel involved with the EHCP process. Interestingly, this was more of an issue for SENCoS working in the primary phase since early years SENCoS generally benefit from the oversight of Area SENCoS. At the organisational level, enactment of the SENCo role and EHCPs were affected by setting ethos, since this influenced and informed the position and status bestowed on SENCoS and the support provided for the role. Although setting staff share the responsibility for SEND provision, SENCoS still held the primary responsibility for managing EHCP applications in their organisations. Furthermore, while SENCoS appreciated the contribution of a range of information and knowledge to provision, the availability of expert advice could be difficult and was dictated by the agreements their settings held with these services. Each of these issues contributed

to the quality of evidence produced, and so to the outcomes achieved, with SENCoS perceiving that effective EHCP implementation involved detailed, individualised targets and support.

1.8 Conclusion

The thesis concludes by précising the response to each research question and by identifying three areas of knowledge that this study contributes to the field of SEND provision and SENCo practice, that is, issues specific to each age-phase, information about SENCo identity, and contributors to effective EHCP implementation at both macro and micro levels of practice. A model illustrating the main practice influences is presented. This illustrates how knowledge, skills, and relationships can ameliorate the effect of resource issues and setting ethos on the quality of evidence and so outcomes of EHCP applications and enactment. Finally, four recommendations for practice are made. These are the need:

- to recognise the role of purpose and values;
- for consistent, accessible information and support for SENCoS;
- for professional development opportunities that involve communities of learning and meaning schema changes; and
- for recognition of the contribution relationships make to practice and policy implementation.

Dissemination platforms are identified and prospective projects, including future research arising from this study, are considered. Finally, the study is evaluated by reflecting on the research process undertaken and by identifying the strengths and limitations of this research.

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Overview

This chapter identifies what is already known about the research problem, through a thorough review and critical analysis of the literature (Hart, 2005). The review is structured into three sections, each of which concludes with a summary of the main evidence and arguments present in the literature that:

1. situates the research in the context of current SEND provision;
2. explores the SENCo role; and
3. considers SENCo practice, including key responsibilities relating to EHCPs and future directions.

The literature was engaged with in stages - first to identify the position and purpose of the study, then to capture emerging literature. My understanding therefore developed alongside contemporary research (Trafford and Leshem, 2008; Aveyard et al., 2016). The literature was also used to identify and inform the conceptual stance of the work (Thomas, 2013). This can be found in Chapter 3. A critical interpretative synthesis (thematic) approach was adopted to allow the prominent and recurrent themes and gaps to emerge (Dixon-Woods et al., 2006, 2005; Flemming, 2010). Both reciprocal and refutational literature were included to develop a network of themes, and to identify the relationships between them. Initially, a combination of academic literature, papers emerging from ongoing theses and government reports and policies were searched. Purposive searching was conducted using initial terms, such as 'SENCo', 'SEND reforms', and 'identity', in various combinations. This enabled as much of the applicable literature as possible to be retrieved, and identified further sources. Additional search terms were added later to explore emerging themes, for example, 'status' and 'values'. Emerging literature was also found using databases and search engines, through notifications set up in, for example, Zetoc and Google Scholar, and through journal alerts. Bibliographies and later a bibliographic software feed (Scopus) were also checked. Finally, e-communities, especially the SENCo Forum, were followed to capture emerging reports and government documentation.

2.1 The Context of Current SEND Provision

This section explores the cultural and political context, and particular institutions and organisations, within which SENCos operate.

2.1.1 Disability and Citizenship

Conceptualisations of disability in the West have historically been based on the deficit model, which focusses on treating an individual's deficiencies (Barton, 1996; Wearmouth, 2016). This began to transform in the latter part of the twentieth century when the social model emerged from the work

of disabled people themselves. The social model considers the adaptations and support needed so an individual can thrive. It distinguishes between the impairment or medical condition an individual has been diagnosed with, and the disability caused by the physical and social barriers which prevent their day-to-day inclusion (Rieser, 2002; Oliver, 2013). Indeed it has been proposed the term disabled be rephrased as 'dis-ableism' (Smith, 2018, p.87) to indicate the social and attitudinal barriers the individual faces (Thomas, 2002). The affirmation model builds on this (Swain and French, 2000) by suggesting differences need to be recognised as an ordinary part of human life (Cameron, 2007, 2014). In reality, however, individuals with SEND may have to live everyday life within 'oppressive contexts' (Cameron, 2014, p.6), which is contrary to developing concepts of citizenship.

The affirmation model therefore aligns with evolving concepts of citizenship. Osler and Starkey (2005) describe citizenship as comprising of a *status* (of being a citizen), a *feeling* (of belonging to a community of citizens) and a *practice* (of participating freely in society). In response to this, recent legislation places increased emphasis on equity and diversity ('Disability Discrimination Act', 1995; 'Human Rights Act', 1998; 'Equality Act', 2010; Hakala, 2010) and social justice and citizenship should be integral to SEND provision. Liasidou (2011) and Liasidou and Svensson (2014) suggest SENCos should embrace these as a discourse for tackling the power and systemic education inequalities that undermine inclusive education reform. This is no small task, however, since approaching the education of pupils with SEND from a social justice and citizenship perspective requires a focus on the prevailing attitudes and conditions (ibid, p.793).

2.1.2 Special Educational Needs and Disability

Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) is an educational term that relates directly to teaching and learning (Norwich, 2008; Williams et al, 2009). It refers to difficulties with learning that require special educational provision (Warnock, 1978), which is used when a child experiences significantly greater difficulty with learning than their peers, or has a disability that prevents them from making use of 'generally provided' educational facilities (*Child and Families Act 2014*, Part 3, Sections 20.1 and 20.2).

A complex interrelationship exists alongside this term. Considering pupils as children with SEND is a medical model approach. Although terms such as SEND can empower individuals by providing them with a way of understanding their difficulties (Glazzard, 2010), they can also disempower. They do this by assisting learned helplessness (Peterson et al , 1995) and by contributing to frames of reference that limit a positive approach to aspiration and achievement, and to diversity and difference. Indeed, a label itself tells us nothing specific about a pupil and their learning, or about what they need in order to access learning and thrive. To address this limitation, the identification of SEND must involve

assessing individual functioning, as well as analysing both within-person features (strengths and challenges) and contextual causes (supports and obstacles). This is concurrent with a bio-psycho-social model (World Health Organisation (WHO), 2007), which is adopted by the disability rights movement (Thomas, 2002; Shakespeare, 2006; Oliver, 2013) because it is preferable to the social model of disability often emphasised in education, which relies on an 'overly narrow and flawed conception of disability' (Shakespeare, 2006, p.9). Scoping the needs of individual children in this way could be said to mirror developments in educational provision for pupils with SEND (Warnock, 1996; Rieser, 2002; Hakala, 2010). That is, more recent legislation appears to reflect the emancipatory results of the disability rights movement and increasingly values parent and child voices (Jørgensen et al., 2011; Vandenbussche and De Schauwer, 2018).

In practice, the term SEND may be construed using a combination of models (Rieser, 2012), with some considering the term SEND has outlived its usefulness (Williams et al., 2009; Rieser, 2012). Instead 'SEND' should be viewed as a descriptor or meme, needed at one stage on the way to providing appropriate and adequate support for any child or young person (CYP) whose needs go beyond what would normally be provided. Memes are units of cultural information, representing ideologies, and language and belief systems. They link and cohere social groups, inform behaviour, and evolve (Beck and Cowan, 1996). This is evidenced by changing language. For example, Scotland now uses the term 'additional support needs' (Riddell and Weedon, 2014) to signify required support that is not limited to traditional understandings of 'special needs'. Although this corresponds with Walton's (2016) view of interim or developing terms and provision, the term SEND is still used to indicate additional educational needs, in part to justify how scarce resources are allocated to address competing demands (Lamb in Williams et al., 2009 p.204).

2.1.3 The Political Context

Understanding the education of pupils with SEND requires knowledge of wider educational practice, which itself resides within a particular social and political context, so revealing the interpretations, values, aims and tensions inherent in practice (Pring, 2000). Neoliberalism and meritocracy (Liasidou, 2011; Liasidou and Svensson, 2014) currently underpin western ideology, so provision is driven by economics rather than by values (Hakala, 2010; Stevenson, 2010; Roberts, 2015). First, the standards culture of targets and tests in England emerged (*Education Reform Act 1988*; Kirk and Wall, 2010). Next, inclusion in schools was prioritised in the United Kingdom (UK) under New Labour (1997 – 2010) in response to the Salamanca Declaration (UNESCO, 1994) (see Section 2.1.4). Later, the Coalition government (2010 – 2015) focussed on raising aspirations for CYP with SEND (DfE, 2012b) whilst at the same time implementing funding cuts (DfE, 2012a). The education for pupils for SEND was therefore set in a context of both attainment and austerity. Moreover, whilst inclusion was at the

heart of government ethos, an apparent incompatibility with the standards agenda, a lack of clarity about the role of special schools, and limits of inclusion, remained (Graham and Slee, 2008; Slee, 2011).

The Conservative government subsequently increased the number of academies, presented as increasing choice, diversity and markets in education (*Academies Act 2010*). This linked education and economic competitiveness more clearly (Hardy and Woodcock, 2015; Connell, 2013; Lehane, 2016). A new National Curriculum (DfE 2013) and a government-led drive to increase grammar school education (Stewart and Walker, 2016) increased the tensions still further. This is important since these dominant functionalist thrusts, with an emphasis on education for economic prosperity, may be at odds with the philosophy of inclusion, with its core values of democracy, equality, care and justice (Glazzard, 2014). Indeed, neoliberalism values competition rather than valuing ethical approaches (Hellawell, 2015, 2016), and prioritises efficiency over purposes and values (Barton, 1998; Davies, 2005; Fielding and Moss, 2010; Connell, 2013). Thus the rise of a neoliberal political, economic and cultural agenda supporting market-driven provision is reflected in the trajectory within SEND towards a system in which responsibility for choices about care allegedly sits with individuals and families (Connell, 2013; Lehane, 2016). This has both widened existing markets and created new markets for SEND provision (Connell, 2013; Tomlinson, 2014), revealed by the move in the distribution of high-needs funding from national-to-local level (Parish and Bryant, 2015) and by the agenda of choice reflected in personal budgets (DfE and DoH, 2015). Such markets, however, bring issues of governance and professional competence/expertise, and raise questions about what constitutes informed choice (Gough et al., 2014). Indeed, whilst this has resulted in substantial improvements in some services and settings, others struggle to provide high-quality input and additional support (Bernardes, et al., 2015). Furthermore, this situation, and the choices made within it, is increasingly dependent on the priorities and ethos of leadership in individual settings (Ainscow et al., 2013; Pearson et al., 2015).

2.1.4 The Legislative and Policy Framework

The Warnock Report recommended that, where possible, children with SEND should be educated in mainstream schools (Warnock, 1978), despite there being little or no onus on the school or setting themselves to make adaptations or adjustments to meet the specific needs of SEND learners (Fuchs and Fuchs, 1994 ; Armstrong, 1998). Subsequently, the Salamanca Agreement placed a responsibility on settings to be more proactive in meeting the needs of learners with diverse needs (UNESCO, 1994). This sociological response drew attention to the social construction and adaptations needed for the individual to thrive (Clough , 2000, Cole, 2005b). In England, three Codes of Practice over 20 years (DfE, 1994; DFES, 2001; DfE and DoH, 2015) were produced to provide statutory guidance to schools

on meeting the needs of their pupils with SEND and developing their provision and practice, thus, in theory, moving towards school ownership of delivery for all pupils.

The Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs (1994) introduced Statements of Special Education (legal contracts, which set out the pupil's need, and the provision needed to meet these). However, in practice the implementation of these was often problematic because different services, such as those operated by the NHS, were not under the jurisdiction of Local Education Authorities (LEAs). This had implications for funding, provision and accountability (Rix et al, 2005, Anderson and Boyle, 2015). The focus on raising educational standards, achievement and accountability added further complications to this. Indeed, the 1997 Green Paper *Excellence for All* (DfE, 1997) was concerned with raising standards, resourcing and inclusion for pupils with SEND; a combination which many considered incompatible (Warnock, 1996, Armstrong, 1998; Barton, 1998).

The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) 2001 highlighted the need for schools to make 'reasonable adjustments' for pupils with SEND. The accompanying *Special Educational Needs Code of Practice* (DfES, 2001) contained an expectation that pupils would be offered differentiated learning opportunities, and that the 'culture, practice management and deployment of resources in a school or setting [would be] designed to ensure all children's needs are met' (p.2., para. 1.6). As a result, most children with SEND moved to mainstream settings rather than attending specialist placements. This was despite limited knowledge of which setting types worked for which children. Additionally, SENCos were routinely considered to be the staff member responsible for all pupils with SEND in their setting, though this was not a recommendation of this Code (Hallett and Hallett 2010).

In response to this, the school improvement agenda and curriculum approach (Clough, 2000, Glazzard, 2014) was extended to address issues of accountability and achievement (DfES, 2003; DfES, 2004), though the success of these was questioned by the House of Commons Education and Skills Committee (2006), who found the SEN framework was 'struggling to remain fit for purpose' (p.104). The contribution of continuing professional development (CPD) that strongly focusses outcomes for CYP to this situation has been recognised (Cordingley, 2015). This includes identifying the aspirations of the pupils and families themselves, though this can require shifts in how SEND is construed by settings. Indeed, Lamb (2009) found parents should be listened to more often and that the educational system was not ambitious enough for SEND children. Ofsted subsequently evaluated how well CYP with SEND were being served by the legislation and by educational arrangements (Ofsted, 2010b). They found no one model of provision worked better compared to others. Instead, the significant factors in success were found to be the quality of assessment, teaching and support received (Ofsted,

2010a, Wearmouth, 2012). Consequently, the *Support and Aspiration Green Paper* (DfE, 2011) proposed reforms that would address these findings, and so support better life outcomes. This recommended a single identification and assessment process (to be called an EHCP) which would increase parental confidence by giving them more control, and which would transfer power to front line professionals. Consequently, the *Children and Families Act 2014* addressed statutory duties and provision for CYP with SEND, including 14 statements related to EHCPs (Part 3, numbers 37–50).

2.1.5 Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice: 0 – 25

As the first significant change to SEN legislation since 2001, *The Children and Families Act 2014* informed the Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015). Following the interim findings of a Pathfinder Project (DfE 2015a), the *Act* (2014) actualised the Green Paper (DfE, 2011) recommendation to replace Statements of SEN with EHCPs and for person-centred-planning. The Code of Practice also:

- extended the age range covered;
- provided guidance for joint planning and commissioning of services between education, health and social care;
- offered new guidance for the identification, assessment and support for all pupils with SEN; and
- set out the responsibility of every teacher to assess, plan, implement and review the provision and progress of children with SEND (DfE and DoH, 2015, p.13-14).

However, despite being hailed as a ‘radically different system’ that transferred power to ‘front-line professionals, parents and local communities’ (DfE, 2011 p.4), much of the Code of Practice merely extends and tightens up existing principles and practice (Norwich, 2014). That is, the reforms are incremental rather than disruptive, so attitudes, aspirations, and achievements are evolving rather than being revolutionised (Christensen, 1997; Christensen et al., 2008). What actually changed were factors linked to the wider institution of education in terms of governance, accountability, and funding, as well as moves towards a ‘user-led model’ (ibid. p.416). These ‘less familiar’ movements of policy, governance and responsibility (Allan and Youdell, 2015, p.2) are proposed by Lehane (2016) to be the semi-hidden tools of a neoliberalist agenda. Indeed, whilst the Code of Practice sets out the legal framework governing SEND, and provides practical advice to organisations and bodies at an institutional and organisational level, the advice, support and guidance for practitioners at micro-level is limited (Bernardes et al., 2015; Curran et al., 2017). Allan and Youdell (2015) describe this as the code’s ‘empty architecture’ (p.1). This can be viewed as a positive situation that education, health and care professionals, as well as children, young people and parents/carers can ‘furnish and navigate’

(ibid, 2015, p.11). Alternatively, it can be viewed as a negative situation where inadequate guidance for local professionals is provided (Bernardes et al., 2015; Hellowell, 2016). Whilst practitioners are given 'considerable freedom' in how they establish and deliver support for SEND within their settings (DfE and DoH, 2015, p.44), this generality in guidance about assessment and identification (Norwich, 2015) means provision in the new code is 'over there', and requires 'going after and getting' (Allan and Youdell, 2015, p.7). Additionally, the decentralised, deregulated marketplace has resulted in many non-state providers, has increased choice and has introduced potential quality issues. These require discrimination and power to negotiate (ibid), with the economic and management concepts of commissioning, strategic needs assessment and personal-budgets are present which means that SENCos must also be able to successfully navigate economic and management operations. This is an area requiring serious reflection, given that organisations, settings, and individuals show variation in their understanding of SEND and adoption of the reforms (Lawson et al., 2013; Lawson and Jones, 2017; Donovan, 2018). Indeed, there is a lack of clarity about the professional base delivering EHCPs (Robinson et al., 2018), and the resourcing in Local Authorities has been shown to be too limited to successfully operationalise many aspects of the policy (House of Commons Select Committee, 2018b; National Audit Office, 2019).

Furthermore, the initial preoccupation with implementation demands obscures deeper, moral issues by presenting a 'straightforward' response to SEND (Hellowell, 2018, p. 1) when in reality, contradictory demands such as justice, fair opportunity, choice and preference, academic standards and social inclusion exist. Indeed, implementation of the Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) should not be limited to directing professional practice, effective partnership working, and CYP and parental involvement, but should be viewed as a discourse (Ball, 1993) complete with 'ethical baggage of its own' (Cribb and Ball, 2005, p. 126). Whilst this need to address ethos and values has more recently been recognised (Boesley and Crane, 2018; Ofsted and CQC, 2018; House of Commons Education Committee, 2019), in reality considerable challenges remain to fully realising the objectives of the *Children and Families Act 2014*, through enactment of the Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015). This is because whilst the Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) represents a shift to more holistic, person-centred approaches (Robinson et al., 2018), in actuality many of the dilemmas and limitations of the previous Statements of Special Educational Need (House of Commons Education Committee, 2018a, 2018c; Esposito and Carroll, 2019; Smith and Broomhead, 2019) persist.

2.1.6 Perspectives on Inclusion

Educational provision for pupils with SEND has moved from a predominantly segregated, separate provision, through integration (physical placement in an existing provision without the necessity of changing the environment to ensure membership) (Hodkinson, 2010; Ainscow, 2012) to inclusion. The

proactive inclusive approach has appeared in legislation and policy for just over 20 years (DfE, 1997; Taylor et al, 1997; *DfES*, 2004). However, definitions of inclusion reflect specific political and economic viewpoints since it inevitably means different things to different people (Sikes et al., 2007; Norwich, 2008; Rose, 2010). Some argue the term inclusion has been hijacked by SEND and that it is, in fact, relevant to wider social inclusion (Bossaert et al, 2013; Cole, 2005a; 2005b; Norwich and Eaton, 2015), since inclusion is actually 'about a philosophy of acceptance where all pupils are valued and treated with respect' (Carrington and Elkins, 2005, p.86). Literature linking SEND specifically to this view are limited (Messiou, 2016), despite Thomas and Loxley (2007) arguing that inclusion has its basis in social justice and human rights. However, a contemporary view considers the environments in which inclusion occurs, and the words 'belonging' and 'acceptance' often co-occur with 'inclusion' in the literature (Warnock, 2005; Norwich, 2015; Glazzard et al., 2015; Anderson, 2016; Healy, 2018). Furthermore, a sense of community membership has been shown to be pertinent to social cohesion, where groups are embraced rather than marginalised and where experiences and perceptions of citizenship create membership (Kunc, 1992, Kliewer and Drake, 1998, Bossaert et al 2013). Respecting and accepting pupils with SEND in this way affects the way the SENCo role is viewed in terms of purpose and value. Certainly, conceptualising inclusion in terms of equity of educational opportunity and guaranteeing this through equality legislation, places a statutory duty on schools to break down any barriers to participation and achievement for all learners.

However, the existence of a 'bias to inclusion' within SEND, initiated by Labour (1997-2010) and adopted by the Coalition government (2010) (Robertson, 2012; Norwich, 2014) must also be considered. The Green Paper (DfE, 2012b) sought to reduce this, in line with Warnock's assertion that inclusive education policy had 'gone too far' (Warnock, 2005, p.39). Instead, it could be more useful to understand inclusion as the education engagement of all in educational activities (Norwich, 2014). This coheres with the evolution of the cultural meme (Beck and Cowan, 1996) towards a wider, more varied usage (Allan, 2013; Walton, 2016). Indeed, Walton (2016) suggests inclusive education is an interim measure, proposing that in the future all education, by definition, will be inclusive. Consequently, inclusive practice is both a value and an ongoing process which aims to be 'a facilitative and constructive focus for improving the education of children with SEND' (Hornby, 2015 p.235).

2.1.7 SEND and Educational Provision

Inclusive education is the dominant discourse in SEND provision, despite being contested by some, with strong advocates as well as opponents (Fuchs and Fuchs, 1994; Brantlinger, 1997; Lauchlan and Greig, 2015). However, whilst the principle of SEND education within mainstream schools remains central to current policy and practice, inclusion itself is developing towards a more egalitarian application (Allan, 2013, Walton, 2016). Additionally, whilst proposals for radically different models of

SEND education exist (Messiou, 2016), current provision reflects the tenets of providing for vulnerable groups and promoting education for all, usually within a school for all (Ainscow et al., 2006).

Educational provision is divided into five stages in England, the first two being early years and primary (DfE, 2017d). Early years education (from birth to the year in which a child turns five) takes place in a variety of state, voluntary and private settings including child-minders, pre-schools, nurseries and classes attached to mainstream schools. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) (DCSF, 2008a; DfE, 2014b) and detailed Early Learning Goals and guidance (Rochford, 2016; DfE, 2017b) provides a regulatory and quality framework for the provision of care, development and learning for children in this stage, all of whom are entitled to 15 hours of free nursery education during term-time, with some eligible for 30 hours free nursery education (DfE, 2017a). Consequently, early years settings have early and regular contact with children. This is important because early identification and intervention has been shown to create more positive future outcomes for CYP with SEND (Guralnick, 2005; Jones and Jordan, 2008; Young et al., 2008; Barnardo's, 2016), is well represented in the Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015, p.15), and is set against cutbacks to Health Visitor visits and development checks (Machin et al., 2011; DfE, 2014b; Griggs and Bussard, 2017).

Primary education refers to the age range of rising five to 11 years. National Curriculum levels for this age-group were removed in September 2015 to allow teachers greater flexibility in the way they plan and assess learning (DfE, 2014a). Whilst the rationale for this was to release schools from an over-reliance on data and to create a practice of real feedback (Magee, 2014), their elimination also removed a language that enabled teachers to share a common understanding of progress and outcomes (Quinlan and Tidd 2014). Subsequently the Rochford Review (2016) and resulting Primary Assessment in England report (DfE, 2017) recognised that what is important is not just pupils' attainment but also the progress the school helps them to make from their starting points and a standard baseline assessment for all reception pupils is currently being created to address this. This is interesting because despite the increasingly diverse pupil population, limitations remain for some groups (Norwich and Eaton, 2015), with some pupils continuing to be a challenge to include (Graham and Slee, 2008; Slee, 2013; Glazzard, 2014).

In reality SEND provision focusses on a few, and there are limited standards and guidelines to measure the success (or not) of inclusive education practices (Messiou, 2016). Responding to this, Ofsted are consulting on changes to the education inspection framework, to include a focus on what children learn rather than over-reliance on performance data and calling time on the culture of 'teaching to the test' and off-rolling (Ofsted, 2019). In addition, Allan and Youdell (2015) propose that education, health and care professionals, as well as CYP and their families, should be made ultimately responsible

for materialising the Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) in that they should be regarded as overseers (not controllers) of an imposed system that is a complex collection of elements (economy, legislation, policy, institutions and social and cultural forms). That these individuals are operating in a 'SEN industry' (Tomlinson, 2014, p.11) which views effective practice as being that which reduces a future of risks and costs by achieving desirable educational and social outcomes is also interesting, since this system requires key professionals to effectively 'self-produce' (ibid, p.11) in order to perpetuate and retain their roles.

2.1.8 Connected and Holistic Provision

Educational provision for children with SEND was considered in Section 2.1.7. Norwich (1996) argues SEND provision is interconnected with education as a whole, and describes it as a 'connected specialism' (p.100). Effective outcomes for SEND students are related to specialist knowledge and input from key professionals (Tomlinson, 2014), but what is specialised about the field is also interdependent on the general system, so cannot be clearly detached or treated as separate from it (Norwich, 2014). Indeed, successful provision for pupils with SEND helps learners overcome educational barriers, and successful SEND provision has driven new forms of pedagogy and creative thinking which have been influential to the whole education sector (Armstrong 2017). The tracking of the progress of all pupils to identify the need for support (Carter 2015; Smith et al., 2015) is an example of this.

Equality of opportunity for pupils with SEND does not just mean equality of provision (Glazzard, 2013). Rather, a holistic approach, that recognises the importance of the whole and the interdependence of its parts, in terms of the individual and the organisation or systems involved, is required. Taking a holistic view of CYP and their circumstances, along with what they need to develop and achieve their potential (Chaney, 2012) must encompass more than a narrow set of educational achievements and will often span the boundaries of health, education and social care. Such an approach can allow success to be experienced, which in turn motivates and builds self-esteem (MacKenzie, 2013; Biesta et al., 2017). Moreover, intellectual demand, connectedness, supportiveness and working with and valuing difference mark productive, holistic pedagogies (Hayes et al., 2006) and provision that is adjusted and additional (Søreide, 2006; 2007; Henry, 2016), that extends to principles of respect, care and compassion (Boylan and Woolsey, 2015) and has a holistic conceptualisation of well-being (Bottery et al., 2012) is a necessary part of SEND provision.

It is therefore recognised that 'additional competencies beside special educational knowledge' (Isaksson and Lindqvist 2015, p.128) can be needed, for example, additional health-related and psychosocial knowledge and skills. The SEN framework, prior to 2014, was based on educational issues

and did not help CYP to access sufficient support from other agencies. Apart from the successful Early Support Programme, there was little evidence of more holistic approaches or improved cross-agency working (Peterson, in Williams et al, 2009, p.212). The Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) seeks to address this, but there seems to be an additional layer, linked to ‘hearts and minds’ (Jones, 1998, p.343; Swenson and Sims, 2014; Done et al., 2015; Torrance and Humes, 2015) that enables practitioners to go beyond a merely systematic delivery of assessment and provision. Woods and Jeffrey (2002) identify a link between commitment to a holistic approach and values and beliefs. They suggest this is similar to the ‘holism, humanism and vocationalism of the old Plowden self-identity’ (ibid, p.89) Indeed, the values of equality of opportunity, respect for individuals and commitment to the highest education standards are explicit within this report (Plowden, 1967; Richards, 1997). Woods and Jeffrey (2002) also suggest the child-centred philosophy of many teachers is challenged by a systematic delivery; a challenge that is manifest in their professional identity. Although this concurs with the presentation of schools as led by either value/ideas or data/abstract processes ‘contextualisation and judgments are invariably required’ (Done et al., 2016b, p.293).

Such contextualisation and judgements are informed by rounded knowledge of the child, family and setting. Indeed, the extent to which a holistic view of children is held, and the extent to which diversity and difference is acknowledged, influence setting cultures and provision and underlie effective joint working (Messenger, 2013). This is a central tenet of the cross-service provision envisioned in EHCPs.

2.1.9 Summary

Section 2.1 set out the context in which this study is situated. Special educational needs and disability (SEND) is understood in terms of citizenship (Osler and Starkey, 2005). Civil rights and social justice for CYP with SEND is therefore considered, with inclusion understood to be both a value and an ongoing process (Hornby, 2015). However, the socio-political position may be prioritising efficiency over such values. This is evident in the legislation and policies that frame and inform provision for those with SEND, so whilst the most recent SEND reforms were presented as being ‘radically different’, many uncertainties remain. This includes implementation which is open to local interpretation, and conflicts, such as those between standards and complex needs and between efficiency and personalised provision, persist. Furthermore, the policy frames SENCOs as overseers of this scenario, which has implications for their role and practice. Section 2.2 explores aspects of this.

2.2 The Role of the SENCO

This section explores literature pertaining to the role of Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) as those ‘responsibilised’ (Lehane, 2016; Hellawell, 2017b, p.5; 2018) for materialising Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) in England. This exploration is also needed in a context where

successful practice is linked with the skills, development and 'effective self-production' of the personnel themselves (Tomlinson, 2014. p.11).

2.2.1 International Perspectives

The development and monitoring of support for pupils with SEND in mainstream schools is closely associated with school outcomes and educational equity (Poon-McBrayer, 2012). This is operationalised differently internationally. Some countries, such as the USA, use external mechanisms involving personnel outside the setting to guide, lead and monitor the support. The external model is operative in early years in England, in that Area SENCOs support early years SENCOs in their settings (DfES, 2003a). The internal model, where personnel from within the setting are designated to co-ordinate support is more common (Poon-McBrayer, 2012) and is present in the primary phase of education in England. Emanuelsson (2001) compared studies of support teachers' roles from the UK, the Netherlands, Spain and Australia. The decisions each country made regarding SEND support and co-ordination depended on whether countries had a categorical perspective (similar to the medical model of SEND) or a relational perspective (similar to the social model of SEND). These perspectives determined the 'school code' in operation, which governed whether the support co-ordinator operated reactively (managerially) or pro-actively (reform guiding), and were also found to determine 'the inclusiveness of the setting' (ibid p.134).

Scandinavian countries, which are frequently held up in England as having good practice in SEND, operate internal models of support so the SENCO role is similar to the English model (MacKenzie, 2007, 2013; Takala and Ahl, 2014; Struyve et al., 2017). Swedish SENCO training focusses on schools' organisation and learning environments (Göransson et al., 2015; Barow et al, 2017). However, SENCOs are not mentioned in the *Swedish Education Act 2010*: their responsibilities, specific work areas and roles are not controlled centrally (Skollagen, 2010:800) and the medical model persists (Skritic, 1991; Sundqvist et al., 2014). Subsequently, educational leaders have an ambiguous view of what role SENCOs should have in schools (Lindqvist, 2013). Instead, head teachers have the legal right to determine needs, organise and develop their school in relation to SEND work and SENCOs in Sweden operate on three levels: organisational, classroom-based and with individuals. Thus, although Swedish SENCOs have been hailed as 'vanguards of change' (Lindqvist, 2013, p.205), in reality traditional ways of dealing with challenges are in action. Also, the SENCO's role is often unclear and questioned when it comes to school development (Barow et al., 2017; Lindqvist, 2013), which is similar to the position in England.

In Finland, special support is more often conducted in segregated settings, and there is no differentiation between the role of special education teacher and SENCO, both of whom hold masters

degrees as a basic qualification for the role (Takala and Ahl, 2014). The *Finland Basic Education Act 1998* (Finlex, 1998) outlines both SEND and support teaching so these are present in main policy documents. The SEND support system is divided into three steps: general, intensified and special support, with a higher level of special support provided in Finland than Sweden (Sundqvist et al., 2014; Takala and Ahl 2014). SENCos spend most of their time with pupils and have a minor consultative role; a stance that appears to be less inclusive than England, though outcomes are often more positive (Hakala 2010; Sundqvist et al., 2014). Therefore, despite the Swedish and Finnish school systems resting on the ideas of democracy, equality, equity and inclusion, the literature reveals that in practice they may be beset by similar dilemmas to England (Skollagen, 2010; Sundqvist et al., 2014).

In contrast with the established Scandinavian position, the SENCo role in Ireland is a new phenomenon. SENCos here have, until recently, operated in 'a policy vacuum' (Fitzgerald and Radford, 2017, p.452). Co-ordination of SEND provision has been embedded in the deficit (medical) model, with resources being secured by medical diagnosis (NCSE, 2014). A new model, piloting resource allocation as a social, collective operation is underway. This is interesting when linked to the reactive or proactive codes identified by Emanuelsson (2001) because SEND provision in Ireland has previously assumed children with SEND are inherently different to their peers (Griffin and Shevlin, 2011). Fitzgerald and Radford (2017) investigated how the SENCo role could be developed in Ireland and discovered the role is primarily operational, that more than a specialist knowledge of SEND is required to lead a whole school approach to inclusive practice, and that no clear SENCo identity exists. They also found that school leadership was critical in a whole school approach. This small review of international perspectives reveals concepts with application to this study and that different manifestations of, and challenges to the role, also exist in other countries.

2.2.2 Constituent Nations of the United Kingdom

Each of the nations that comprise the UK also have unique characteristics and devolution has allowed a gradual de-centring from UK policy, although Scotland has had its own education system for decades (Arnott and Ozga, 2012). Whilst all four nations use an internal model, there are discernible variations in how children with SEND are supported within each country. In Northern Ireland, the Learning Support Co-ordinator role mirrors the English SENCo role and the SEND framework aligns quite closely to educational policy developments in England (Abbott, 2007). A new SEN framework is currently being developed. The *Special Educational Needs and Disability Act* (Northern Ireland, 2016) is the first element of this, with secondary legislation, in the form of a Code of Practice, anticipated by 2019 (DENI, 2016). A child-deficit (medical) model persists here, within an education system in which academic selection at age 11 is long established (Smith et al., 2015). Despite value-based proposals arising from The Fundamental Review (DENI, 2009), which appeared to identify a call for 're-visioning'

(Smith, 2014, p. 387) of SEND in Northern Ireland, little change of a radical nature has occurred (Smith et al., 2015, p.387). This is a lost opportunity to promote and develop a more inclusive society, which is considered to be particularly important because of the religious and political divisions present in Northern Ireland. Indeed, the Learning Support Co-ordinator role is seen as having the potential to champion a collective response, and thus become a role model of inclusion (Smith et al., 2015).

In Wales, the Welsh Language Strategy (Welsh Government, 2012) and demographics, particularly the high rates of poverty, are significant (Ware, 2014). All CYP with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) in Wales are entitled to a statutory individual development plan (Welsh Government, 2014). This contrasts with the situation in England where only those with complex needs receive an EHCP. Furthermore, *The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018* (Welsh Government, 2018a) is to be supported by a new statutory ALN Code (Welsh Government, 2018b) from September 2020 which will set out 'clear, legally enforceable parameters', and will be a 'type of subordinate legislation' (SNAP Cymru 2015, n. p.). Regulations will also be introduced to ensure ALN Co-ordinators are appropriately trained. This has parity to the stronger, statutory Code currently being developed in Northern Ireland.

Policy developments and outcomes for pupils with additional support needs in Scotland were analysed by Riddell and Weedon (2014). Areas of divergence (such as the broader concept of additional support needs) and convergence (such as replacing Records of Need with co-ordinated support plans and eligibility for co-ordinated support plans) exist. Whilst there are many parallels with England, they claim Scotland is setting the 'direction of travel' (p.378), for example, in their embrace of wider conceptualisations of additional support. In contrast to Northern Ireland and Wales, a new Code of Practice with statutory powers (which emerged out of *The Education (Scotland) Act 2016*) is already in place (Scottish Government, 2017). Interestingly though, the co-ordinator role does not feature in this document.

These devolved nations are therefore developing their own Codes of Practice and manifestations of the co-ordinator role. As well as being aware of, and seeking to accommodate local conditions, the policies will have statutory powers, providing the means to ensure enactment. Furthermore, the co-ordinator role in these nations must embrace wider contextual factors and appear to be embracing wider conceptualisations of inclusion, manifested by the different descriptors used: learning support (Northern Ireland), additional learning needs (Wales) and additional support needs (Scotland).

This has relevance to the English position, where the SENCo role was at first unofficial, with some predicting it would decline and disappear (Crowther et al., 2001; Dyson, 1990; Garner, 1996). Despite being described as an 'endangered species' that must 'adapt or die' (Butt, 1991, p.14), the SENCo role

has endured. However, the reality of its survival, enactment and development is complicated, and may require SENCoS to adapt to more local conditions and for wider views of inclusion and learning need to be embraced, as demonstrated in this section.

2.2.3 The SENCo in England

Although introduced over 25 years ago in England (DfE, 1994), the SENCo role has been repeatedly considered unclear (MacKenzie, 2007; Pearson, 2010; Rosen-Webb, 2011; Robertson, 2012). This lack of clarity is present in both policy and research (Rosen-Webb, 2011; Curran et al., 2017). Whilst it is recognised that defining and developing the role is important and necessary (Clough, 1998; Layton, 2005; Liasidou and Svensson, 2014; Pearson, 2010), this is still ongoing (NASEN, no date, DfE and NASEN, 2018b). Pearson and Ralph (2007) found a high degree of local interpretation at school level and Hallett and Hallett (2010) commented that the role is 'as varied as the schools and settings in which the post-holders are employed and the role is delivered' (p.1). Variations in local circumstances contribute to this scenario, including educational phase, membership of senior leadership team, extent of direct class teaching and other responsibilities, and support and funding available (MacKenzie, 2007). These variations present a situation that can be viewed as both a challenge and as an opportunity (Evers and Kneyber, 2016).

Whilst the role is statutory and regarded as 'pivotal' (DfES, 2004), Tissot (2013) and Hellowell (2015) suggest the discrepancy between the legal requirement and the lack of clear guidance in England has contributed to enactment at a mainly operational level, where there is an extensive and demanding range of tasks (Davies et al., 1998). Strategic development and input can therefore be limited (Cole, 2005a; 2005b). Although some SENCoS reported enhanced status (Garner, 1996), this was not the experience of most (Dyson and Gains, 1995) due to differences in power, funding, resources and time constraints (Garner, 1996). In an effort to address this, the Teacher Training Agency's SENCo National Standards (TTA, 1998) identified four core responsibilities:

- strategic direction and development of SEN provision;
- teaching and learning;
- leading and managing staff; and
- efficient and effective deployment of staff and resources (p.11).

These twenty-year-old standards reveal responsibility for the guidance and leadership of other staff. However, in reality SENCoS were often restricted to the co-ordination of provision and deployment of Teaching Assistants rather than being involved in strategic and leadership capacities (Pearson, 2008b). Indeed, many did not have the formal authority to lead (Tissot, 2013), a situation that was identified as a contributor to the underperformance of the SEN system (DfE, 2011).

The most recent Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) was intended to simplify and improve the guidance in order to address this underperformance. Although described as a ‘radically different’ system (DfE, 2011, p.16), in actuality it extends, integrates and tightens up existing principles and practices (Norwich and Eaton, 2015; Lehane, 2016). Nevertheless, the status and role of SENCOs is central to the execution of the reforms outlined within the Code of Practice (ibid) and several dimensions of the role are strategic in nature (Curran et al., 2017; Hellowell, 2017b; Pearson et al., 2015). These include overseeing the operation of the school’s SEN policy and advising on how delegated budgets and other resources are deployed, and working with the head teachers and governors to make sure the school meets its responsibilities under the *Equality Act 2010* (DfE and DoH, 2015, para. 6.80). This reflects the developing balance between the SENCO role as a specialist and manager, as identified by Norwich (2010).

Consequently, the Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) aimed to strengthen and develop the SENCO role (Robertson, 2012; Qureshi, 2015b) and also to address some of the individual interpretations and enactments that have been manifest to date (Szwed, 2007b; Liasidou and Svensson, 2014). However, even though the House of Commons Education and Skills Select Committee (2006) recommended membership of the senior leadership team to be a requirement of the role, it is still not a legal requirement and the wording of the Code still leaves room for local interpretation (DfE and DoH, 2015, Section 6.87). This means school-level decisions that affect how the SENCO role is enacted and different approaches to the role are likely to persist (Kearns, 2005; Blandford, 2013). This is particularly pertinent in the early years, where SENCOs have different qualification requirements and pay levels and where their status and influence is often not as strong (Clough and Nutbrown, 2004; DCSF, 2008b; DfE, 2008; Oberhuemer, 2011; Clough and Nutbrown, 2014). All settings have ‘freedom in how they support children with SEN, guided by the Code of Practice’ (Johnson et al., 2017, p.7). Therefore, such variations mean the strategic developments needed to address the identified underperformance of the SEND system (Layton, 2005; MacKenzie, 2007, 2013; Burton and Goodman, 2011; Tissot, 2013; Qureshi, 2015a) is an opportunity for some (Johnson et al., 2017) and a potential issue for others. This is particularly so when questions remain regarding how settings and governors decide who is best suited to lead such strategic development.

2.2.4 Membership of the Senior Leadership Team

It is recognised that the SENCO role should have a dual focus (operational/management and strategic) (Norwich, 2010). However, SENCOs are not always placed at the centre of school development in the way envisioned when the post was introduced (Griffiths and Dubsky, 2012). This is in spite of research supporting the leadership aspect of the role (Szwed, 2007a; 2007b). Instead, the work of SENCOs is often limited to administrative and bureaucratic procedures, or to delivering interventions, and many

SENCOs are still not part of senior leadership teams (SLTs) (Gedge, 2018), with Tissot (2013) finding SENCOs with between five and 14 years' experience in the role are twice as likely to be on leadership teams compared with those with less experience.

There are problems when no clear expectation of SENCOs as leaders exists (Layton, 2005; Maher and Vickerman, 2018; Tysoe, 2018). When SENCOs themselves do not 'believe that key people and agencies see them in a leadership role', their voice and impact is affected (Layton, 2005, p.55) and they may not feel empowered to develop the role, or express their vision of how teaching and learning could be developed to raise achievement in the broader pupil population (Kearns, 2005). Indeed, the authority and time SENCOs have to support and develop teaching and learning for all is restricted if they are not part of the SLT (Wedell, 2004; Pearson, 2008b; Hallett and Hallett, 2010; Qureshi, 2015b; Curran et al., 2018). This is due to a variety of reasons including differences in workload (Pearson, 2008a; 2008b), resistance to the development of inclusive practice (Cole, 2005a; Robinson and Goodey, 2018), and colleagues and management perceptions and support of the role (Layton, 2005; Pearson and Ralph, 2007). Additionally, whilst English legislation and policy now insists the key focus for SENCOs is the whole setting, it assumes they possess the skills and power to systematically evaluate, develop and monitor provision and practice in their settings (Oldham and Radford, 2011; Hellowell, 2017b).

Instead of functioning as an 'in-house expert to whom responsibility for inclusion could be delegated' (Done et al., 2016a, p.14), SENCOs should be engaged in whole-setting initiatives, including the identification of training needs, the development of setting practice and oversight of the intersecting aspects of behaviour management and safeguarding (Tissot, 2013). It has also been suggested SENCOs could become 'Effective Learning Consultants', whose primary responsibility was to help teachers and schools improve the effectiveness of the learning situation, as far back as 1990 (Dyson, 1990, p.53). More recently, Norwich (2010) suggested the core function of SENCOs should be to manage SEND, with the wider development of inclusive practice being shared by all staff, and Hallett and Hallett (2010) suggested that a distributed leadership model would ensure all senior leadership staff are involved and committed to developing inclusive practice. However, although it was suggested that a clear choice between formalising the leadership role of the SENCO through legislation, or reducing the role to the management of specialist support, should be made (Oldham and Radford, 2011), this would be difficult to enforce in, for example, the private and voluntary sector (PVI) where most early years SENCOs practice (Roberts-Holmes, 2013) or within academies, where SENCOs are not required to be qualified teachers (*Academies Act 2010*).

Leadership refers to that which steers and promotes change (Spillane et al., 2004). It is ‘a process of influence leading to the achievement of desired purposes’ (Bush and Glover, 2003, p.8). Whilst studies have considered the link between pupil attainment and leadership (DCSF, 2009a), the function of SENCOs in this dynamic has not been considered; however, leadership is set within a context of increased aspirations for pupils with SEND (Lamb, 2009; *Nutbrown Review, 2012, Children and Families Act 2014*; DfE, 2012a; DfE, 2016e). Indeed, the view that SENCOs have a central role to play in promoting whole school achievement has recently gained ground (Tissot, 2013; Ekins, 2015). This connects with the view that educational leadership is ‘politically positioned to provide the mitigated language of policy and practice to invoke public sector reform’ (Gunter 2005, p.166). Thus, it is central to how policy is both shaped and implemented. Different concepts of educational leadership contribute since different theories are applied or are understood in varying ways (Leithwood and Day, 2008; Bush, 2011). Torrance and Humes (2015) criticise this lack of clear conceptual underpinning and caution that despite the move to put leadership centrally in the role of every teacher, the lack of clarity presents significant challenges to the attempts to increase teacher professionalism. Different leadership models also have implications for different elements of practice, including commitment (Hulpia and Devos, 2010) and fostering inclusivity, engagement and professional growth (Fusarelli and Lindle, 2011). An additional challenge created for SENCOs by the Code of Practice is their need to be involved with both *micro* and *macro* leadership (Crowther et al., 2009). Micro-leadership focusses on pedagogy as part of the overall process of school improvement, whilst those in formal leadership roles have a macro role in driving strategic development (Crowther et al., 2009). Consequently, leadership training is included in the National Award for SENCOs (NASENCO) (DCSF, 2009b; TDA, 2009; Done et al., 2015) with models, which have cross-over in practice, considered, including distributed, transformational, transactional and values-led/sustainable leadership.

The literature refutes the notion that leaders are born and/or possess certain unique qualities. Instead, given the right circumstances, anyone is capable of exercising leadership (Anderson and Johnson, 2006). Formal authority assigned to a particular role and effective leadership are different propositions, with supportive institutional contexts being a major contributor to the development of leadership and practice (Gunn and Lefoe, 2013). Bottery et al. (2012) suggest successful leadership practice requires centrally defined standards. Such prescriptions then need to be interpreted in a manner that allows dovetailing with the context within which the individual practices, and with the individual’s approach and moral drive. Additionally, not all SENCOs wish to be on the SLT (Maher and Vickerman, 2018). This is interesting because Lamb and Blandford (2017) found SENCOs who had leadership training and experience, or who had completed the NASENCO training, were equipped to meet the enhanced role envisioned in the Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) to a greater degree.

2.2.5 Knowledge and Training

SENCOs need specialist knowledge of SEND in order to manage and develop the teaching and learning within their setting. This includes developing the understanding and practice of staff (Göransson et al., 2015; Tissot, 2013; Szwed, 2007b). Whilst SENCOs in school settings must be qualified teachers (TDA, 2008, 2009; DCSF, 2009b), SENCOs in early years settings must only be trained to level 3² (DCSF, 2008; DfE and DoH, 2015; DfE and NASEN, 2018a; 2018b). Furthermore, because the National Award for Special Education Co-ordination (NASENCo) at Master's level (7)³ is mandatory only in state schools (TDA, 2009), there are significant knowledge and training level differences between early years, state and independent school SENCOs. Recently, the need for a more formal early years SEND training and knowledge pathway in England has been recognised (Lamb and Blandford, 2017).

All early years practitioners and all teachers are considered to be teachers of children with special educational need (DfE, 1994; DfES, 2001; DfE and DoH, 2015), hence this is the responsibility of all practitioners rather than solely that of the SENCO. However, training in SEND is limited in some initial courses (Carter, 2015; Sellgren, 2018) and the diversification of early years settings and schools, and varied number of SEND pupils, means a trainee's experience may be mixed and possibly limited (Smith et al., 2015). Also, there is debate around the general and/or specialist nature of teaching pupils with SEND (Norwich, 1996; Tomlinson, 2014; Messiou, 2016). The tenet of making higher quality teaching available to the whole class or group contained within the Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) reflects the view that general pedagogical knowledge and strategies are appropriate and relevant to many CYP with SEND (Tissot, 2013; Pearson et al., 2015; Messiou, 2016). There is also acknowledgment, in concepts such as provision mapping and the graduated response (NASEN, 2014), that specialist SEN knowledge and pedagogical strategies are present in settings (Griffiths and Dubsky, 2012; Qureshi, 2014).

The need to improve the quality of teaching for children with SEND is identified in *Aiming High for Disabled Children* (DfES, 2007) and in *The Children's Plan* (DCSF, 2007), including better initial teacher training and continuous professional development (CPD) (3.6, p.54). Optimal SEND practice is dependent on appropriately trained and skilled professionals (Qureshi, 2015b). Another key indicator for the successful teaching of children with SEND involves SENCOs in their roles as change agents. That

² Currently, someone with at least a relevant level 3 qualification (a pre-degree level equivalent to A-level) must manage early years group settings. Half of early years staff in a setting need to be qualified at least to level 2 (*Nutbrown Review*, 2012, p.6). Early years SENCOs are required to have a level 3 National Vocational Qualification (DfE and DoH, 2015). Lamb and Blandford (2017) make recommendations for a proposed SENCO qualification pathway from level 3 to level 7, to include early years and further education.

³ SENCOs working in statutory school-age, maintained settings are required to have qualified teacher status and to complete the National Award for Special Educational Needs Co-ordination Award (NASENCO), a level 7 qualification, within 3 years of taking up the post (National College for Teaching and Leadership, 2014).

is, in relation to the vision and values of settings and as primary advocates for the rights and needs of children with SEND in mainstream (Morewood, 2011, 2012; Qureshi, 2015b). The SENCo role can thus be seen as one of empowerment; of themselves, of the skills of the staff in their settings, and of the agency of CYP with SEND and their families (Morewood, 2012; Van de Putte et al., 2017). Indeed, by developing the knowledge and skills of teachers and staff within their setting, SENCos can improve the teaching and learning of all pupils (Cowne, 2008; Qureshi, 2014).

Improved student progress and outcomes are identified by Coe et al. (2014) as a definition of good teaching. Content knowledge, quality of instruction, classroom climate, classroom management, teacher beliefs and professional behaviour all contribute to this. However, whilst *The Carter Review* (2015) identifies that good teaching for SEND is good teaching for all children (p.10), and that all teachers are potentially teachers of children with SEND, initial teacher training (ITT) does not routinely prepare teachers to support SEND, despite this being part of the standards that have to be signed off in order to qualify (TDA, 2008; DfE, 2012c). Such a lack of preparation can affect confidence, willingness and skill (Isaksson and Lindqvist, 2015; Robinson and Goodey, 2018) and prior to mandatory training for maintained school SENCos, the knowledge SENCos had themselves of manifestations, resources and interventions for SEND was often restricted, with knowledge often confined to selective school functions rather than to wider improvement and development (Davies and Lee, 2001; Cole, 2005b; Kearns, 2005).

In Early Years

The Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) highlights the importance of early assessment, identification and intervention (Section 5). Indeed, it is well recognised that addressing primary difficulties early results in better success and can also prevent secondary difficulties arising (Guralnick, 2005; Goswami, 2008; Allen, 2011; *Nutbrown Review*, 2012; Barnardo's, 2016). However, training curriculums are often 'school-biased' and pay little attention to the non-compulsory early years, despite these practitioners being at the forefront of making initial observations and recognising need (Oberhuemer, 2011). Clough and Nutbrown (2004) found few preschool educators felt appropriately equipped to work with children with SEND. Much of their understanding and knowledge is derived 'on the job' or through occasional training, with knowledge of developmental milestones often not robustly in place (Barnett, 2011; DfE, 2014b). Indeed, an 'erosion' of the knowledge base of practitioners working in this phase is documented by MacFarlane et al. (2016, p254). Many settings and educators are therefore highly reliant on the advice and guidance provided by Area SENCos (qualified teachers who support early years providers so they make appropriate provision for children with SEND). Furthermore, there is concern that as more Local Authorities subsume the Area SENCo role into other work areas, or discontinue some of their previous activities, there will be less capacity to support early

years SENCOs. This will potentially impact on early identification, assessment and intervention (Lamb and Blandford, 2017).

The standards set for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) require only the manager to 'hold a full and relevant Level 3 qualification and at least half of all other staff must hold at least a full and relevant Level 2 qualification' (DfE, 2014b, Section 3.23, p.20). This contrasts with the situation in Scandinavia, where settings require one third of the staff to be educated to degree level, and where the educational role of early years is clearly recognised and valued (Oberhuemer, 2011). Whilst Save The Children recommended every nursery should have a member of staff holding qualified teacher status (Save The Children, 2016), the UK government recognise apprenticeship or on-the-job training routes are also valuable (Sellgren, 2018). This is interesting and could link with the significant contributors to effective early years practice found by Hapoo et al., (2012). That is, in addition to specialised kindergarten teacher training, practitioner experience, life history, background and work attitude affects efficacy.

In this age-phase, knowledge of SEND is additional to core qualifications and the *EYFS Development Matters* practice guidance document contains little practical direction to practitioners for children not making expected progress (DCSF, 2008a). This is concerning because only one fifth of children with SEND were found to achieve a 'good' level of development on the EYFS (DfE, 2017b). Although the EYFS recognises 'children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates' (DfE, 2014, p.6), training to recognise and address different types of learning and developmental need is found to be occasional and almost incidental in early years (MacFarlane et al., 2016). Indeed, many settings are relying on experienced SENCOs who have built up a knowledge bank and who have accessed training in less-austere times (McDonnell et al., 1997; Clough and Nutbrown, 2004; Cooksey and McDonald, 2011; Smith et al., 2015; Lamb and Blandford, 2017).

Training for early years settings has been reduced or stopped in many Local Authorities (DfE, 2017c), so difficulties arise when settings do not have experienced SENCOs or when these staff move on. Additionally, changes to nursery funding mean many settings can ill-afford the costs of sending staff on training courses (DfE, 2017a). In response to this, and to the blended learning recommended as practical and effective in the *Nutbrown Review* (2012), several online portals which offer information, resources and training, are emerging. Whilst these are of considerable value, actual peer-support and contact is shown to help develop confident, skilled professionals (Lamb and Blandford, 2017). This is corroborated by posts made on the SENCO Forum (DfE, 2018b).

In the Primary Phase

The situation in the primary phase and beyond is, supposedly, more straightforward. The Teachers Standards set common expectations about the knowledge, understanding and skills new teachers

should possess (DfE, 2012c). However, gaps exist in Initial Teacher Training (ITT) provision packages, including assessment, behaviour management and knowledge of SEND (Carter, 2015). Bernardes et al. (2015) therefore recommended that the core content for ITT should sufficiently prepare newly qualified teachers to support pupils with SEND and the *Carter Review* (2015) itself recommended improved cover of assessment (1d, p.9), child and adolescent developmental knowledge (1e, p.9), pupil behaviour management (1f, p.10) and SEND (1g, p.11). Packages such as the National Association of Special Educational Needs' online course (NASEN, 2015) aim to up-skill existing practitioners, although again research shows the success of online learning is significantly enhanced by the existence of professional learning networks (NASEN, 2015; Cook *et al.*, 2017).

New SENCOs must complete the National Award in Special Educational Needs Co-ordination (NASENCo) within three years of taking up the post (DCSF, 2009b; TDA, 2009; DfE and DoH, 2015; Smith et al., 2015). Professional knowledge and understanding, leading and co-ordinating provision and personal and professional qualities are studied in a 60 credit, Master's level course (NASEN, 2019). SENCOs who have completed the training were found to have increased confidence in each of these three areas (Lamb and Blandford, 2017). However, ensuring SENCOs are part of the leadership team, receive financial and budget training, and receive setting support for those undertaking the award as well as opportunities for individuals to network with other SENCOs, are areas that still need to be addressed (ibid 2017). Passy et al. (2017) found 70 percent of head teachers reported having at least one member who had trained for the national award in their school, and that they would 'train staff as necessary in order to comply with the legal requirements to have one trained member of staff in their school' (p.92). Other settings apply the requirements of the Code of Practice in creative ways. For example, multi-academy trusts (MATs) may share an officially appointed SENCO across the group of schools (DfE, 2017). The SENCO role may also be operationalised by a member of staff with the actual named, figurehead SENCO being a member of the Senior Leadership Team (Bernardes et al. 2015; Passy et al. 2017). This requires an exploration of the recognition and reality of the role and status of SENCOs (Lindqvist et al., 2011a).

2.2.6 The Status and Professionalisation of SENCOs

Traditionally, SEND has been viewed as being of less importance than other areas of education (DfES, 2003a; Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 2014; Isaksson and Lindqvist, 2015). Also, SEND is perceived differently by various occupational groups (Lindqvist et al., 2011) so the emergence of increased professionalism and improved aspirations and outcomes for pupils with SEND has created conflict (DCSF, 2007; DfE, 2012b; Hellowell, 2017a). This is despite the SENCO role being described as important, because historically it has been perceived as having low status and has often been limited to operational rather than strategic and managerial functions (Cole, 2005a; 2005b; Morewood, 2011,

2012). This is magnified between early years and statutory-school-age provision, partially due to different training levels, but also because of different levels of recognition and value (Hargreaves and Hopper, 2006). Indeed, historically early years provision has been viewed more in terms of day-care rather than highly important years for education (Roberts-Holmes, 2013).

There are moves to professionalise the early years' workforce in recognition of the potential of these years (Miller et al., 2014; Preston, 2013). However, the concept of Early Years Professional Practitioner (EYPP) does not meet the criteria employed within sociological theories of the professions (MacDonald, 1995; Lloyd and Hallet, 2010). This means that whilst the Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) and Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS) aim to increase knowledge and raise standards (NCTL, 2013), difficulties in securing graduate-level staff persist (Sellgren, 2018). This is partly because the Early Childhood Professional Practitioner (ECP) course does not confer qualified teacher status, resulting in their professional status remaining ambiguous and problematic (DCSF, 2008b, Section 2.5; Roberts-Holmes 2013). Indeed, the persisting lack of recognition and status was identified in the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) Survey (HESA, 2018). This is contrary to the vision set out in the Early Years Workforce Strategy (DCSF, 2008b) which envisioned practitioners who are 'respected and valued as professionals' (p.19) who 'will be recognised and rewarded for what they do' (p.27). Pay, conditions and retention in the sector reflect this (Kendall et al., 2012), so whilst the most recent workforce strategy (DfE, 2017c) recognises the need to develop career paths, much remains to be done.

SENCo status in school-age settings is higher than in early years due to the requirement to hold qualified teacher status (Cowne, 2005; Griffiths and Dubsky, 2012). Teaching is ranked ninth out of twelve professional occupations (Hargreaves et al., 2007), with the status of secondary teachers and head teachers being rated superior in status to those in primary education. However, this, and lowered course entry requirements, has implications for future recruitment and retention (Morewood, 2012; Cameron and Lindqvist, 2014). Furthermore, although the Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) envisaged enhanced status for SENCos, the variation in how the role is operationalised in different schools means differences in power and influence persist (Tissot, 2013; Liasidou and Svensson, 2014; Qureshi, 2014; Curran et al., 2017).

This is important for both strategic leadership and the multi-disciplinary working which is an essential part of the SENCo role. 'Feeling valued' is a significant contributor to professional practice (Nolan et al., 2012, p.94) and status is linked to agency in multi-disciplinary working (Levinson et al., 2009; Messenger, 2013; Meyser and Lees, 2013). Ekins (2015) identifies a dual hierarchy of respect, where greater professional knowledge and status (for example, that of paediatricians or educational

psychologists) is sometimes juxtaposed with greater importance being placed on the knowledge of those who see the child on a daily basis in their learning environments. Indeed, perceptions of higher status lead to increased respect, trust, co-operation and enactment (Abbott et al., 2004; Cameron and Lindqvist, 2014; Glazzard et al., 2015; Lindqvist, 2013). For that reason, the status and identity of SENCOs contributes significantly to how they meet the needs of CYP with SEND (Morewood, 2012), and to their role in developing knowledge, understanding and practice in their settings.

In the past, SENCOs have mainly worked at an operational level (Hallett and Hallett, 2010; Pearson, 2008b; Wedell, 2004), but the role should now be empowered at the strategic and senior management level and be recognised by other teachers and staff (Qureshi, 2014). This is important since how SENCOs are identified and positioned, including by themselves, has significance for their practice (Happo et al., 2012). Most SENCOs working in the primary years will hold the role alongside that of class teacher or other school-based roles (MacKenzie, 2007). Gedge (2018) questioned 344 SENCOs in England about their role and their status in the school. The results are shown in Figure 1:

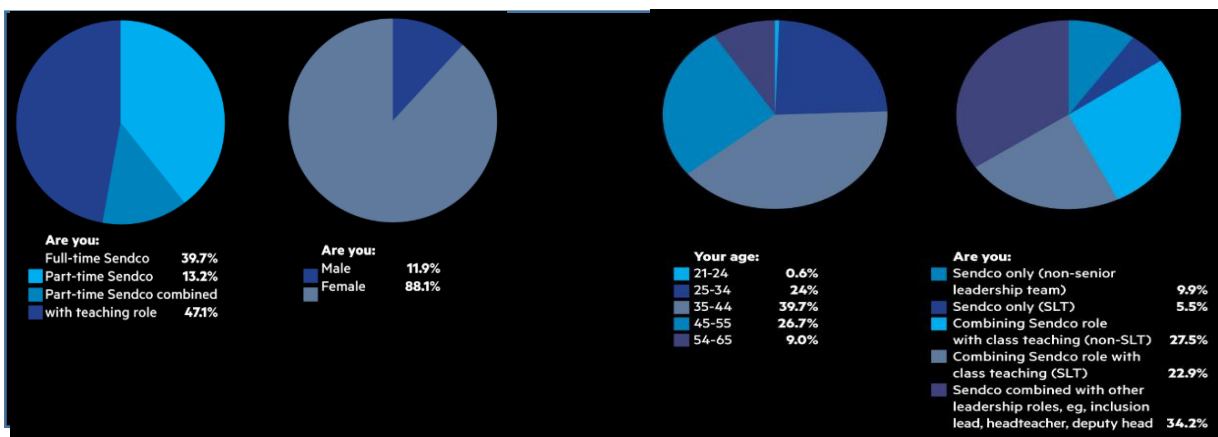


Figure 1 - From Gedge, N. (2018) *Undermined, underused and misunderstood: life in schools for SENDCOs*. Times Education Supplement (13-02-18), p.8.

In addition to role and status information, this provides valuable information about the experience and career phase of SENCOs. Career development theory recognises distinct teacher career phases (Super, 1957, 1990), which may be a staged process linked to identifiable concerns and developments (Fuller, 1967; Fuller, and Brown, 1975) or non-linear and discontinuous (Huberman, 1989, 1990, 1993). Certainly, there is a difference between novice and expert practitioners (Meyer and Land, 2005; Land et al., 2008; Pearson, et al., 2011; Kington, 2012; Wolff et al., 2015) which involves some kind of developmental process (Castejon and Martinez, 2001). SENCOs are viewed as expert practitioners (Cole, 2005b; Abbott, 2007; MacKenzie, 2013; Pearson et al., 2015; Qureshi, 2015a). The majority are also experienced practitioners (Gedge, 2018).

Sammons et al. (2007) investigated the influences relevant to teachers at different phases of their careers, and found that role-related career progression was only part of the scenario. Complex factors influence teachers and their commitment at different phases of their working lives. For instance, Kington (2012) identified relationships with pupils as a key motivator in the middle career-phase, though the excess paperwork and workload that accompany role progression can affect this. Curran et al. (2018) found 71 percent of SENCos enjoy their role and feel a keen sense of moral and ethical responsibility in relation to their work. However, the considerable workload and lack of protected time and funding was cited as the reason they would leave the role, with only 34 percent intending to be in the role in five years' time (ibid).

Whilst much of teacher career development theory can be applied to the early years, the situation here is more complex because of the qualifications range (see Section 2.2.5). Restructuring of the early childhood qualification systems has created a progression (DCSF, 2008b; Roberts-Holmes, 2013; QAA, 2015), but a lack of formal professional recognition and progression pathways persists (Lloyd and Hallet, 2010; Oberhuemer, 2011; Preston, 2013; DfES, 2013; DfE, 2017c). The Early Years Foundation Stage merged the concepts of education and care (DfE, 2008; DfE, 2014b) and the Effective Provision of Preschool Education (Sylva et al., 2004) and Researching Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2002) projects made clear connections between highly qualified staff and high-quality service for children and families. This contributed to the creation of Early Years Professional Status. However, the aim of having a graduate Early Years Professional in all children's centres and PVI sector nurseries by 2015 (Allen, 2011; Roberts-Holmes, 2013) has not been achieved. Whilst linked to workforce development that values empowerment (DCSF, 2008b; DfE, 2017c), the professional status of early years staff, whether they have Early Years Professional status or not, remains ambiguous and problematic (Roberts-Holmes, 2013). Indeed, the development of different qualification levels, whilst well-meaning, has not been well thought out in terms of the consequences for the profession (Oberhuemer, 2011). For instance, Kendall et al., (2012) found 'younger practitioners were happy to continue in their present role or to gain promotion in their current setting' (p.551) whereas experienced practitioners expressed an interest in progression outside the sector. Rather than seeing themselves as part of the professionalisation agenda, some practitioners saw their progression as leading out of childcare into more 'desirable, higher status careers' (p.551). In contrast, Lloyd and Hallet, (2010) and Urban (2010) found status was not a key motivator in early years, with career progression being framed more by personal and social priorities. This challenge of developing a single career pathway was recognised more recently (DfE, 2017c). Early years occupations are therefore currently being mapped on to *The Skills Plan* (Salisbury et al., 2016, 2017) with the aim of clarifying

career pathways. This is important, since opportunities for progression and development are shown to support staff retention (Kendall et al., 2012; Lamb and Blandford, 2017).

2.2.7 Summary

Section 2.2 explored the SENCo role. The presence and status of SENCos varies between countries, including within the UK. Enactment of the role also varies between settings, linked to the leadership, knowledge, training and status of settings and their staff. Such differences mean SENCos and other setting staff can experience and perceive the role differently. In order to change this scenario, accessible training and support for practitioners is needed. However, financial cuts have created a situation in which SENCos are often reliant on existing knowledge and experience (Emanuelsson, 2001). Furthermore, the status and career development of SENCos varies between settings and between age-phases. These differences are important because of their impact on role enactment and so how EHCPs are enacted.

2.3 SENCo Practice

SENCos in England predicted that co-ordinating EHC plans would be a challenge that would require knowledge and skills outside of their current remit (Pearson et al., 2015). Whether these predictions hold true is yet to be explored (Boesley and Crane, 2018), however, the literature describes SENCos as microcosms of the wider policy arena, and as being important agents of change with power to influence (Dyson and Gains, 1995; Hallett and Hallett, 2010; Lindqvist, 2013; Hellawell, 2017b). This section of the literature review explores SENCo practice, including the implementation of EHCPs, to gain an understanding of this scenario.

2.3.1 Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs)

In England, an EHCP application is needed where the educational provision for a child requires funding and provision that cannot be met solely by their educational setting.⁴ EHCPs are legal documents which set out the education, health and social care support needed by children with complex SEND. They focus on the outcomes the individual would like to achieve, (DfE and DoH 2015, Section 3.20) and are intended to provide access to integrated provision, as identified in the *Children and Families Act 2014* (Part 3).

⁴ The Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) states early years providers should consider how best to use their resources to support children with SEN, and LA funding arrangements should reflect this need (sections 5.59 and 5.60). Also, all mainstream schools are provided with the resources to support those with additional needs, identified as the notional SEN budget although this is not ring-fenced (Sections 6.95 and 6.96). Schools are required to spend up to £6,000 before applying for an EHCP to access extra resources (DfE, 2017e), although some local authorities expect the school to meet the first £10,000 (Adams et al. 2017, p.9).

Applying for an EHCP requires detailed evidence and advice from a range of partners, for example, educational psychologists, health visitors, speech and language therapists and paediatricians. Two terms of 'graduated response' evidence from the setting must also be provided (Liasidou and Svensson, 2014; DfE and DoH, 2015; Wedell, 2016). Research about the graduated response (assess, plan, do, review) is limited. However, the American Response to Intervention (RtI) approach, which has parities, has been used to gain understanding of the graduated response (Greenwood and Kelly, 2017). Conditions that support RtI were found to be:

- partnership and collaboration;
- continued professional development;
- clarification of roles;
- shared commitment;
- support embedding the model within the settings; and
- practitioner engagement.

The lack of prescription offered in the Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) is an opportunity for settings to exercise professional judgement. Consequently, the national structure can be flexibly applied to the needs of specific settings (Greenwood and Kelly, 2017). However, differences in interpreting and applying legislation, individual professional practices and the ability of parents to advocate on behalf of their child can lead to inconsistencies (Sales and Vincent, 2018a). Indeed, the success of flexible enactment can actually depend on how the broader purposes of assessment and SEND are viewed by the individual practitioners and the settings in which they practice. This is often dependent on the initial teacher training (ITT) received or on the continued professional development of staff offered by individual settings. Thus, SEND provision is dependent on the ethos of settings, and the knowledge and experience of individual staff (ibid). Evidence of differences in enactment is present in the literature. Scott (2016) discovered that whilst some authorities were simply cutting and pasting from the old statement to the EHCP, some families had found the EHCP needs assessment very empowering. Variations in experiences of the EHCP needs assessment and planning process, and the resultant EHCP were also found by Adams et al. (2017), but Sales and Vincent (2018) found that the financial constraints many professions operate under appear to be contributing to inconsistent outcomes.

EHCPs are a more person-centred approach, compared to the previous process of statementing because they have increased the involvement of the CYP and their parents (Sales and Vincent, 2018a). However, issues around communication across all agencies which constrain the person-centred approach, and limited training on identifying SEND, are present (Scott, 2016; Adams et al., 2017). So whilst some schools are taking a greater responsibility for delivering support before requesting an EHC

needs assessment (National Autistic Society, 2015), many early years providers are still reliant on the support from Area SENCOs, who are constrained in the amount of help they are able to offer (Griggs and Bussard, 2017). Area SENCOs support early years staff with EHCP applications and support them to develop inclusive early learning environments (DfES, 2003a). The EHCP process was felt to be a positive development in the support and care of children with SEND in this age-phase, though there is need for careful, timely management of applications. This includes a balance between allowing children to develop in their own time and putting additional support in place as soon as possible, along with a need for clear, concise information and guidance for early years settings and their SENCOs (Griggs and Bussard, 2017). Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) (2014; 2016) jointly inspect how local areas identify and meet the needs of CYP with SEND, including timings and how quickly and accurately needs are assessed and how well parents, families and children with SEND are included in the assessment. The importance of discovering how effectively needs are met to improve the outcomes of these CYP, using a wide range of sources, is recognised (DfE, 2017f; Lamb and Blandford, 2017; Sales and Vincent, 2018).

Whilst increased joined-up provision was envisaged (DfE 2011; Lamb 2009), it has been shown that children with SEND who do not have health and social needs are now less likely to qualify for an EHCP (Bernardes et al. 2015)⁵. Additionally, 35 percent fewer EHCPs are being issued compared with the former statements of Special Educational Need (DfE, 2017f) and in just over 40 percent of cases, families have had to wait longer than the 20 week cut-off date for an EHCP assessment (DfE, 2017f). Moreover, an EHCP still does not guarantee that the services needed are given (Tickle, 2017; RCSLT, 2017) due to capacity issues in health and social care. There is also evidence that those children who do not meet the threshold for an EHCP, for example, those with social and emotional and mental health needs, struggle to get their needs recognised and met (Parish and Bryant, 2015; Boesley and Crane, 2018). More recently, a survey of head teachers found that 94 percent of head teachers were finding it harder to resource the support required to meet the needs of children with SEND than they did two years ago. This survey also found that 30 percent of schools were not receiving services from health and social care to support their pupils; there were long delays for a referral for an EHCP assessment; and only 32 percent of the resultant EHCPs were felt to accurately reflect and help to address the needs of their pupils with SEND (Hall and Mulholland, 2018). There is therefore a paradox in that policy that promotes joined-up support for CYP with SEND is set amidst a reality of decreased

⁵ 15.4 percent of children in English schools are identified as having SEND and 2.8 percent have statements of special educational needs or an EHCP (DfE, 2015a).

availability of resources and support, with the result that settings are both increasingly responsible and isolated.

2.3.2 SENCo Responsibilities

SENCos are central to the EHCP process, co-ordinating provision and the graduated approach within their setting, and liaising with professionals and agencies beyond their settings to secure the necessary assessments and guidance and provision for CYP; but their responsibilities are wider than this. Section 2.2.4 explored their developing role regarding the strategic direction of SEND and their more traditional responsibility for the operational management of the SEND policy within their setting (Curran et al., 2017). This dual foci is evident in the Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) which states that key responsibilities of the SENCo may include:

- advising on the budget, resources and graduated response and advising and supporting colleagues;
- being a key point of contact and liaising with parents, key professionals and other providers;
- working with senior leadership and governors to meet *Equality Act 2010* responsibilities;
- developing the setting's approach to identifying and meeting SEND and overseeing the day-to-day operation of the SEND policy; and
- co-ordinating provision for children with SEND including ensuring that records of all pupils with SEND are up to date.

(DfE and DoH, 2015, Section 5.54 and Section 6.90).

Gaps exist, however, between official models of SENCos roles and responsibilities and what happens in the variety of settings and schools (Lingard 2001; MacKenzie 2007; Pearson 2010). This is due to different interpretations of the role, and is due to the high, even unrealistic policy expectations of what SENCos can do for the education of pupils with SEND in ordinary schools (Norwich, 2010). Kearns (2005) identified five SENCo role variations, driven by different priorities and preferences and linked to different levels of autonomy, status and personal approach. These are arbiter (concerned with the deployment of resources), rescuer (work closely with children and teachers), auditor (concerned with administration), collaborator (concerned with liaison and development), and expert (specialist knowledge and qualification). MacKenzie (2013) identifies five drivers for SENCos and teachers, including improving attainments, being an advocate, building confidence, changing systems and making a difference. These drivers are also needed when applying for and implementing EHCPs (Smith et al., 2018).

Whilst Kearns (2005) and MacKenzie (2013) both reflect the Teacher Training Agency's attempt to capture the core purpose and responsibilities of the role (see Section 2.2.3), the match is neither perfect or clear (TTA 1998). Pearson (2010) attributes this state of affairs to the existence of '*aporía*' (p.31) or contradictory imperatives, for example, the contradiction between efficiency and effectiveness (Biesta et al. 2016). To a certain extent, priorities are informed by, and dependent on, the needs and values unique to each setting. Indeed, Szwed (2007b) identifies that it is perhaps neither possible or desirable to dictate exactly how each setting allocates and supports the SENCo role. It can therefore be argued that the Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015), by nature of its 'empty architecture' (Allan and Youdell, 2015, p.3), provides an outline for local flexibility. However, statutory responsibilities must be met. Szwed (2007a; 2007b; 2007c) suggests the meeting of needs should be underpinned by certain factors. These include a transparent system grounded in a stance about diversity, involvement of a range of stakeholders, clear lines of communication and accountability with SLT and rigorous, systematic evaluation of factors such as pupil outcomes, parent satisfaction and enhanced confidence and skills. Although EHCPs are a significant statutory responsibility for SENCos, with effective implementation requiring such underpinnings, this is not always realised in practice (Hellawell, 2017b; Greenwood and Kelly, 2017; Sales and Vincent, 2018). For example, Scott (2016) identifies the need for more transparency over funding, improved communication and the development of better expertise and Griggs and Bussard (2017) identify the main barriers to effective EHCP implementation being time constraints, lack of clarity about when an EHCP is appropriate, Local Authority (LA) resource constraints and a lack of communication and consistency between settings.

2.3.3 Effective SENCo Practice

Whilst not all SENCos are teachers (DfE and DoH, 2015, p.80), a central message of the Code of Practice is that high-quality teaching should be the first response to SEND. Coe et al., (2014) explored notions of effective teaching, identifying it as 'that which leads to improved student achievement using outcomes that matter for their future success' (p.2). They found that student progress is the most appropriate measure of effective teaching, and that the significant components of great teaching are good content knowledge and high-quality instruction, including the use of assessment and strategies (such as modelling, scaffolding the learning and giving adequate time). This is interesting because all SENCos monitor progress and guide learning (DfES 2003; DfE and DoH 2015; Lamb 2009; Mengoni and Oates 2014), so need competent skills in these areas. Additionally, effective teaching/practice needs such skills to be combined with differentiated elements such as professional identity, relationships with pupils, and agency (Jo, 2014).

ASK research (2018) found there were seven key features underpinning promising SEND support: culture, leadership and management; high-quality teaching; use of expertise; personalisation; flexible

use of evidence-based strategies; progress tracking; and effective communication and collaboration. Effective SENCo practice has also been linked to indicators of successful implementation (see Figure 2 below).

Effective practice is also connected to the concept of competence (Illeris, 2014), which is concerned with how individuals effectively meet demands and often relates to 'a particular professional position, social role or personal project' (Rychen and Salganik 2003 p.43). It is not just about mastering an area of professional knowledge and skill, but also how the individual applies their knowledge and skill to meet new challenges. The concept of a professional toolbox, containing strategies, resources and knowledge (Carter 2015; Mroz 2006; Winch et al., 2015) is often used in relation to professional practice. The professional competencies needed for SEND were discussed by Smith et al. (2015) and the dimensions of SENCo practice are outlined in the NASENCo Learning Outcomes (NCTL 2014) (see Section 2.2.5).

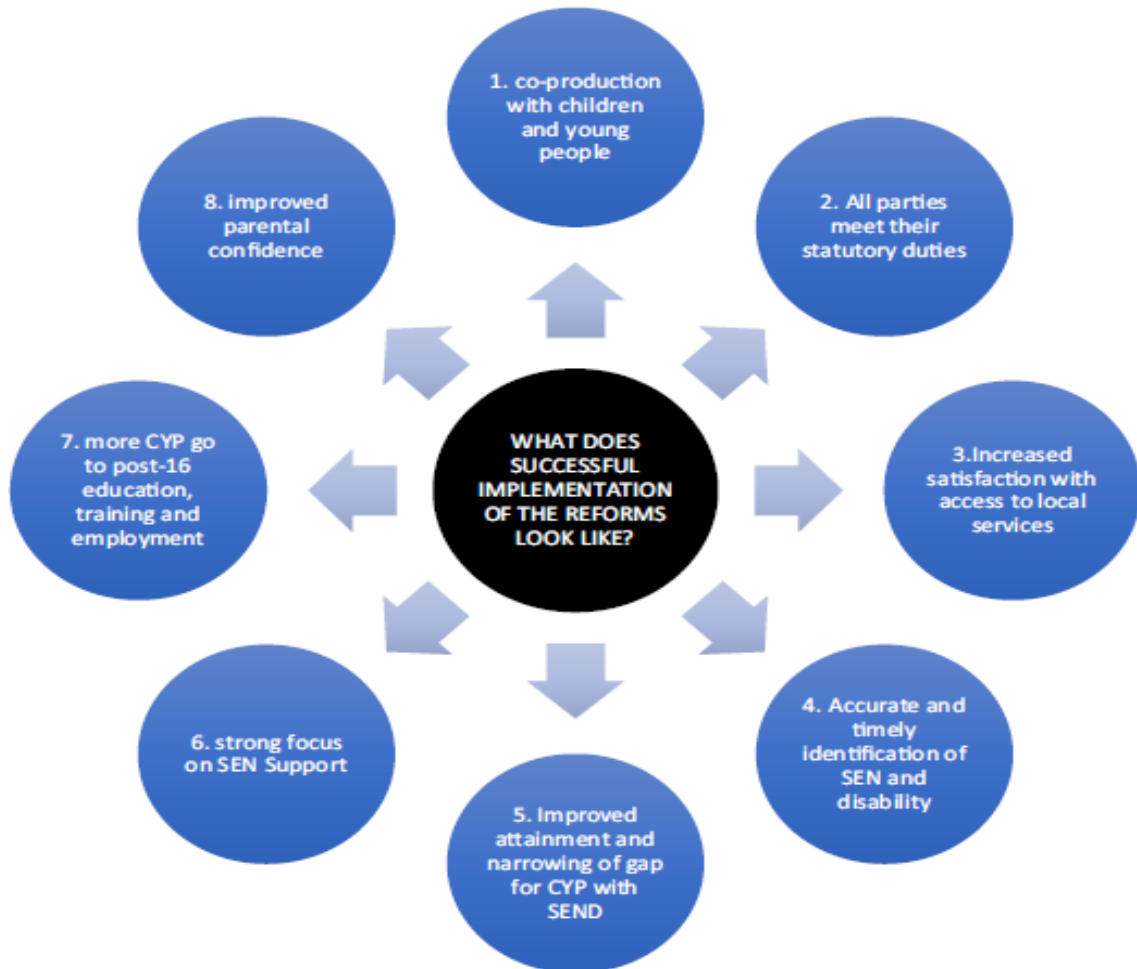


Figure 2 - Successful implementation of reforms. From Imich, A. (2018) *Where are we now? Impact of legislation from national perspective*. p.174 in Lamb et al., (2018).

Whilst these are identified, Szwed (2007a) argues that such dimensions are limited and functionalist. What actually constitutes good practice is harder to capture since no clear definition of good SENCo practice exists in part due to the variations in settings and manifestations of the role (Dyson and Gains, 1995; Davies et al., 1998; Wedell, 2004, 2015; MacKenzie, 2007; Pearson, 2010). Indeed, whether SENCos are just meeting the standards or are achieving beyond this is questioned by some (Davies and Lee 2001; Lindqvist 2013). Szwed (2007a) found that 'effective' SENCos had 'moved beyond a narrow rational view of their role to a more holistic, value-led approach guided by personal experience and professional preference and expertise' (p.449). She also found that effective SENCos were heavily involved in building a school community through developing and involving others. The dimensions of 'good' SENCo practice present in the literature are summarised below:

- monitoring progress, being a good listener, having good interpersonal and management skills, positive relationships with staff within and without the setting school are evidence of good practice, enhanced if the SENCo is part of the leadership team (Szwed, 2007b);

- the importance of nurturing environments, combined with caring attitudes and accessibility, each of which contribute to positive relationships and effective practice (Burton and Goodman, 2011);
- training in both specialist-teaching skills and management skills – important to enhancing SENCo's ability to develop and support good practice in settings, access and deploy specialists and monitor pupil progress (Rosen-Webb, 2011);
- time, teacher openness to change, target setting, and evidence of tried interventions, empowerment, decision-making and approachability, with effective implementation dependent on practitioner skills and competence (Qureshi, 2015b).

Some authors identify what impacts on effective SENCo practice. For example, Tissot (2013) identifies the lack of SENCo's on leadership teams as 'stifling the vision of the role as well as its implementation in practice' (p.39). Instead, SENCo's are immersed in paperwork and limited in how they can develop and deliver accessible and socially just education. There is also an awareness that the flexibility and interpretation permitted by the Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015), coupled with the reduction of the role of LAs in setting and staff development (Greenwood and Kelly, 2017), and the realities of the financial and market-driven context (Hellawell, 2017b), are impacting on individual SENCo's ability to be 'effective'. This creates conflicts and dilemmas for SENCo's, with both the wider culture and their setting culture having an impact on their praxis.

2.3.4 Joint Working

It is generally accepted that SEND is 'best met by planned, cross-professional approaches, rather than independent initiatives' (McCartney, 2002. p.67). This requires effective collaboration between different institutions as organisations, though it has long been recognised that their separate finances, purposes and values contribute to different understandings and practices (DfES, 2003b; Salmon, 2004). The word 'team' occurs 30 times within the Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015). Point 1.22 (p 24), 'Collaboration between education, health and social care services' states:

- 'When carrying out their statutory duties under the *Children and Families Act 2014*, local authorities must do so with a view to making sure that services work together where this promotes children and young people's wellbeing or improves the quality of special educational provision (Section 25 of the *Children and Families Act 2014*); and
- 'Local authorities and health bodies must have arrangements in place to plan and commission education, health and social care services jointly for children and young people with SEN or disabilities' (Section 26).

Integrated assessment and planning from 0-25 is a key principle of the Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015). Indeed, it has been suggested that the effectiveness of support systems for SEND depend on how well education, social care and health services collaborate in the commissioning, planning and delivery of joint services (NASEN 2015; DfE 2015b). Two main rationales underlie this mandate for increased collaboration; one is concerned with holistic support, and the other, less visible rationale, is concerned with changing economic and social conditions that drive demands for more cost-efficient and effective provision (Bernardes et al., 2015; Curran et al., 2017; Nicholson et al., 2000).

Economic cuts and changes to the power of LAs (The Kings Fund, 2010; National Audit Office, 2013) impact on the resources and capacity of agencies. Also, whilst joint commissioning, strategic needs assessment, and wellbeing boards decrease fragmentation and differing management and administration systems and so enable more streamlined staffing and cross-over of service provision, paradoxes exist (Norwich and Eaton, 2015; DfE and DoH, 2015). There is no fiscal commitment in the new legislation and policy (*Children and Families Act 2014*; DfE, 2014b; DfE and DoH, 2015), so it is not clear who will pay for services (Mooney, 2012; Lehane, 2016; Scott, 2016). Changes related to governance and accountability (Norwich, 2014; DfE, 2015b; Gross et al., 2015) appear to support austerity economics, but also identify moves to a user-led model in line with a landscape of choice and neoliberalism. Lehane (2016) suggests that 'fragmentation is key in a system where support is bought and sold' (p.4), a contrast that Allan and Youdell (2015) consider both contributes to and belies the 'complex alliances' (p 7) needed in joint working. Finally, Ball (2008, 2013) and Veck (2014) identify a bigger trend away from seeing education from a social point of view to regarding it from an economic point of view, a perspective that both supports and contributes to the cost-effective rationale for joint working.

Although some LAs believe that the Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) has provided the stimulus to forge stronger and more collaborative working between the services that will continue to develop and evolve (Ofsted and CQC, 2014) this is not borne out in the literature. Tétrealt et al., (2013) found that the Canadian '*Agreement for the complementarity of services between the health and social services and the education network*' (Ministry of Education, Canada, 2003) produced minimal impact on actual practices of collaborative work although in certain specific contexts, motivated stakeholders were able to effectively realise collaboration in small-scale systems. This concurs with O'Brien et al. (2006) who found that although the structure of service delivery might acquire a more universal 'wrapper' (in terms of governance and strategic planning), professional cultures and boundaries of operational activity can remain just as complex and elusive as ever. Indeed, the joint local area SEND inspection for the study area (Ofsted and CQC, 2018) found that the joint strategic needs assessment lacked a focus on CYP with SEND and there was limited engagement with parents and professionals in

devising strategy. Indeed, health and care professionals are not actively involved in the assessment process, with the result that gaps are not always being effectively identified or met (ibid, p.2-3).

There is a lack of evidence about the circumstances in which joint working makes the most difference to outcomes, and makes the best use of people and resources (Barnes, 2008; DCSF, 2008a). Thus, there is no comprehensive model of the factors influencing its success (Salmon, 2004), and the evidence to support the efficacy of service integration central to current SEND policies and legislation remains elusive (Eaton, 2010). What we do know something about are the challenges and facilitating factors that affect joint working. The 2020 Children and Young People's Workforce Strategy (DCSF, 2008b) differentiates between practical barriers and capacity issues. Practical barriers include how teams are co-located and managed, the challenges involved with rolling out common tools and systems and how workforce development is funded. Anning et al., (2010) suggested that some of the main difficulties appeared to be those of trying to combine the cultures of distinct services and professions into new ways of working and sharing professional knowledge. Norwich and Eaton (2015) found tensions between the models of disability and thinking that professionals hold, with opportunities missed to bridge this. Differences in working practices create barriers and boundaries for integrated provision (Gough et al., 2014; Nolan et al., 2012), and a lack of a shared language/terminology contributes to difficulties sharing information and communicating effectively (Messenger, 2013; Ekins, 2015).

Capacity issues exist increasingly in an era of austerity, with cuts affecting some parts of the workforce/team more than others. Concerns that professional colleagues in other services or sectors will not play a full role, or do not have the skills and capacity to do so due to different priorities, training cuts and staff-turnover (DCSF, 2008b) therefore exist. This is a position that can contribute to poorly co-ordinated and slow-to-respond services in reality (Gough et al., 2014). Indeed, a lack of professional trust across services and agencies (Ekins, 2015) has meant that CYP have often had to be reassessed before provision and support is provided by different agencies (Ofsted, 2010b), with agencies competing rather than co-operating at times (McConkey, 2010; Ekins, 2015).

In contrast with these challenges, Young et al. (2008) found that the most effective and cost effective early support occurred where the agency relationships were 'straightforward' or 'only relatively complex' (p.230). Siraj-Blatchford et al. (2007) explain that individuals working in the context of inclusion need to develop an understanding of all aspects of child development and the role of other team members. This necessitates the consideration of multiple perspectives and respectful relationships: features which, in addition to critical thinking, reflection and a strong professional identity were found by Cartmel et al., (2013) to both enable and empower successful transdisciplinary

working. Although Norwich's idea of connected specialism does not specifically pertain to joint working (Norwich, 1996), his idea that SEND, and by extension specialisms, are not disconnected from mainstream education, and cannot be separated from each other due to the multiple needs of such children, has significance here. Messenger (2013) suggests that shared reflection in communities of practice (Wenger et al., 2002) and in *third spaces* (Bhabha, 1994), such as was found in Children's Centres, can bridge some of the challenges. These are proposals that Jones (1998) identified in her consideration of personal and management development. Jones was concerned with ownership and application of reforms, discovering that engaging people's hearts and minds, reflecting on progress, supporting each other, challenging each other's activities, learning from, and developing each other were central to leadership. Indeed, strong, effective leadership is crucial to effective joint working.

Finally, issues of responsibility, role, status and training are significant within the context of EHCP implementation, where closer working with families and with professionals from education, social care and health sectors, to clearly identify and provide the support needed for individual children with the most complex needs, is required. However, in reality the history of low status and the different training requirements for SENCos in early years and statutory school-age provision (DCSF, 2009b; TDA 2009; DfE 2014c; Griffiths and Dubsky 2012) results in different levels of contribution to multi-disciplinary team working (Ibarra, 2004; Cowne, 2005; Messenger, 2013) which are significant in practice.

The need for a base of SEND knowledge is clearly documented in the literature (Carter 2015; Lawson et al., 2013; Qureshi 2015b; Symeonidou and Phtiaka 2014). Different knowledge sets, be they parental, self-knowledge of CYP, or SENCo, setting and team knowledge is involved. Nolan et al. (2012) and the Workforce Reform (DCSF., 2008b) identify the need to share values and language (Annex B, p.67) when engaging in joint working. The SEN Policy Research Forum (Smith et al., 2015) identifies that things need to make sense and be manageable for schools to be able to implement them. Thus, competence itself is not enough. Attitude and respect is also important, so practitioners must be reflective and think about their principles and values in addition to acquiring professional skills and knowledge (ibid).

Sharing knowledge requires an absolute respect for collaborative and collegial approaches (Nicolescu, 2002). This includes recognising that at times one professional needs to take the lead or priority over others. This recognition 'involves deep inner reflections...as well as openness to mutual, meaningful interactions with others' (Chinn and Kramer 2008, p.148). Indeed, joint working should ideally reject any attitude that refuses dialogue or discussion (Cartmel et al., 2013; MacFarlane et al., 2016). Furthermore, Thompson (1995) identifies 'practice wisdom' (p.26) as that used to address everyday

concerns and realities of practitioners and Messenger (2013) differentiates between specific qualifications (explicit knowledge) and expertise that you can develop through experience (tacit knowledge). This interaction between different knowledge banks, specific training and experience, and between theory, values and practice is central within SENCo practice and SEND provision. The reality can be different in practice, however, with SENCos' experience being limited (Szwed, 2007a; Rosen-Webb, 2011), setting values and attitudes being problematical (Ainscow et al., 2013; Adoniou, 2016b; Hellowell, 2017b), or knowledge bases being inadequate or 'eroded' (MacFarlane et al., 2016, p.250).

2.3.5 Funding

The dedicated schools grant allocated from the Education Funding Agency includes a high-needs block from which the majority of funding for SEND, and particularly complex SEND, is provided (DfE 2017e; Parish and Bryant 2015). When the high-needs funding reforms of 2013 were introduced, a decision was taken to continue to allocate this block of funding to LAs 'in the interests of stability' (Parish and Bryant, 2015, p.9). However, the amalgamation of Local Education Authorities and Social Care in 2008 to create LAs, and increased privatisation and fragmentation of services offered by LAs, has made navigating the system, and so applying for high-needs funding, next to impossible in reality (Bernardes et al. 2015; Lehane 2016).

Alongside this, the *Health and Social Care Act 2012* introduced changes in the commissioning of health care. Whilst most health services are still commissioned by different levels of NHS England, some services are now commissioned by LAs. Shifts in social care spending away from central government funding to locally-raised revenues (Humphries, 2016) adds further complexity, with a lack of transparency, accountability and consistency revealed (Parish and Bryant, 2015; Scott, 2016). Money is passed from government to LAs, but different LAs take different approaches to funding children with EHCPs (Bernardes et al., 2015; DfE 2017; Norwich 2014). Although the Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) imposes duties around joint commissioning and integrated provision, including timely assessments and identification of services, precise responsibilities for funding remain unclear (Scott, 2016). Clinical Commissioning Groups are responsible for ensuring that collation of health assessment information within the agreed timescale is achieved and that the health services that are identified on the EHCP are provided, but currently all funding for specialist children's services is in a block contract, so there is no flexibility to offer and fund personal budgets from health (ibid).

It was anticipated that many families would request personal budgets to enable direct purchasing of services (Bernardes et al., 2015; Robertson 2012). However, only 18 percent of parents and young people report being given the option of having a personal budget, 28 percent of whom took the option

up. This amounts to a total of five percent of all individuals with EHCPs (Adams et al., 2017). Moreover, in practice many case officers were unable to provide information on personal budgets (CEDAR, 2017) and the allocation of personal budgets takes additional time (Adams et al., 2017). Indeed, there are complex funding arrangements, including short break and direct payments, of which SENCOs need to be aware (Gough et al., 2014). Furthermore, the initial findings from the evaluation of the Pathfinder Programme (DfE, 2015a) found that having access to a personal budget did not appear to have a significant influence on experience. Therefore, whilst there has been some impact on services and some rise in providers, the burgeoning of providers that some predicted devolved funding would lead to, has not yet been seen. Rather, a more complex scenario appears to be developing, with austerity and privatisation of LAs leading to cuts in services, support and training on one hand (Veck, 2014; Barnardo's, 2016; Hellowell, 2017b), and Academies and private, voluntary and independent early years providers (PVI) operating under different funding mechanisms to maintained settings, on the other.

Academies, which are independent, state-funded schools, are not required to be transparent with regard to their funding streams and spending (Mansell, 2013). This means they can use their notional SEND budgets in different ways. Whilst they 'must include provision imposing obligations on the proprietor of the school that are equivalent to the SEN obligations' (*Academies Act 2010*, p.2), many, in fact, have fewer pupils with SEND on their roll (Norwich and Black, 2015; DfE, 2018a). Academies receive their funds direct from central government, rather than via the LA. This gives them greater flexibility, but it is not always clear who is responsible for what. Whilst some are using this to buy in additional services, others are allegedly 'hoarding' resources (Bernardes et al., 2015. p.11).

In early years, PVI) are funded on the actual numbers of children they have in a financial year rather than on a fixed data point. This allows them to be paid promptly for increases in numbers of children and so manage their cash flow (DfE 2012a). The government free childcare scheme (DfE, 2017a) has created additional funding difficulties (Thomson, 2017), so whilst early years are required to have arrangements in place to support children with SEND, their tighter budgets can impact on their ability to pay for additional support, resources and training. Indeed, the Local Government Association is currently carrying out a review of SEND provision in England, due to a growing concern that central government funding levels are not adequate, or are being cut unlawfully (Hayes, 2018). Indeed, Ofsted/CQC local inspections are identifying a high proportion of local areas who are failing to implement the 2014 SEND reforms effectively (Donovan, 2018), a situation that has implications for CYP with SEND and their families, and for SENCOs.

2.3.6 Future Directions

Whilst the first four years of SEND reforms (2014-2018) focussed on transferring statements to EHCPs, successful implementation now requires training and culture changes (House of Commons Education Committee, 2018c). Griffiths and Dubsky (2012) evaluated SENCo training and identified the need to change the 'landscape' of beliefs and values as opposed to merely 'gardening' (p.165). This is because the effective application of change depends on interactions within specific ecological systems (Pearson and Gathercole, 2011), with the attitudinal and contextual factors of these systems having significant impact on implementation (Coldwell and Simkins, 2011; Griffiths and Dubsky, 2012). SENCos and their setting staff therefore need to be cognisant of their beliefs and values (Meadows and Caniglia, 2018). Although the impact of teacher education on early childhood programmes (Kelley and Camilli Rutgers, 2007; Oberhuemer, 2011) and the optimising of outcomes by informed professionals (Qureshi, 2015b) have been shown, attitudes and ethos have been found to be central to optimal professional practice and provision (Corbett, 2001a; Emanuelsson, 2001; Hardy and Woodcock, 2015; Spratt and Florian, 2015; Frost et al., 2018).

Staff involved with SEND are often driven by altruism and moral capital (Lloyd and Hallet, 2010; Phillips and Dalgarno, 2017; Fray and Gore, 2018; Frost et al., 2018), so professional and corporate aspirations and achievements can be different (Hargreaves and Shirley, 2012). Furthermore, resistant attitudes exist within the domain of SEND (Data.gov.uk, 2018; House of Commons Education Committee, 2018a; Robinson and Goodey, 2018), and training and cultural changes are needed to address these (Liasidou, 2011; Carter, 2015; Council for Disabled Children, 2018) if EHCPs are to be implemented at more than just a superficial level (Robinson et al., 2018; Robinson and Goodey, 2018). This is because a whole-school approach to supporting CYP with SEND, along with effective engagement with parents, is considered to have the most impact on attainment (Lloyd, 2008; Blandford, 2013; Lamb and Blandford, 2017). The Code of Practice tasks SENCos with advising and contributing to the professional development of setting staff (DfE and DoH, 2015, Annex 2, p.276). EHCP implementation can therefore require SENCos to both challenge and develop colleagues perceptions of specialist SEND pedagogies (Thomas and Loxley, 2007; Ekins et al, 2016) and develop and empower staff to utilise resources within the setting and access the expertise of others outside the setting (Sakellariadis, 2011).

Learning is a process (Hilgard and Bower, 1966) and a product (Harris and Schwahn, 1961), and adult learning is optimised by motivation, connection to one's life, experience, and self-direction (Lindeman, 1926, 1945; Knowles, 1970). Developing the professional development of their colleagues in order to progress their setting's SEND provision requires SENCos to have skills and knowledge in these areas. This includes questioning the notions that underlie our knowledge in order to change our beliefs and perspectives (Taylor, 2008; Howie and Bagnall, 2013), such as happens in transformative learning

(Mezirow and Marsick, 1978). It also includes transactions between individuals and their environments in recognition that experiences can correct and modify existing knowledge and actions (Dewey and Bentley, 1949; Elkjaer, 2009). Pragmatism is such a learning approach that requires learners to actively participate in activities linked to their learning (Biesta et al., 2017), so is well-suited to practice-based learning (Elkjaer, 2009). Schön (1983) explored 'the kinds of competence valued in professional practice' (p.vii), finding that professional knowledge is best when 'reflection-in-action' (ibid p.49) occurs. This requires practitioners to reflect on their own learning and work to identify how best to improve and develop. Whilst this aligns with situated learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991), to be effective, changes to the discourses in which practices are constructed and to the social relationships which constitute practice are also required (Kemmis, 2005; Ghaye et al., 2008).

This is particularly relevant to the implementation of EHCPs, which involves multi-professional team working and the leadership and development of setting staff knowledge and practice. Indeed, Passy et al., (2017) suggest adopting an approach 'that encourages regular reflection on the effectiveness of SEND provision in school' (p.96). Such an approach would contribute to the care of self and others (Foucault, 2010) as well as to re-framing, which changes who we are and how we do things (Ballou et al., 1999; Chreim et al., 2007; Machin et al., 2011; Woolhouse, 2015). Certainly, the skills of SENCos and their setting staff may be best served by learning opportunities that take a pragmatic approach, combining transformative and reflective learning with practice. This is significant since whilst the potential of a CPD pathway has been identified (Lamb and Blandford, 2017), others have identified the strength of CPD that has a strong focus on outcomes for CYP (Cordingley, 2015). This includes identifying the aspirations of the CYP and their families themselves, which may require shifts in how SEND is construed by settings.

2.3.7 Summary

This section explored issues related to SENCo practice and their involvement with Education and Health Care plans (EHCPs). Notions of effective practice reveal key issues, especially differences in how settings and individual practitioners understand and prioritise SEND, and funding challenges, which mean efficiency must be balanced with purposes, values and beliefs. Furthermore, the SEND Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) tasks SENCos with developing practice and provision, which involves acknowledging, engaging with, and sometimes changing, setting cultures. This requires the SENCos themselves to possess the knowledge and skills needed to guide training effectively.

2.4 Conclusion

This review explored the literature to reveal the issues and gaps connected with the research problem. The first section investigated concepts of citizenship and identifies conflict between the values

informed by these, and the focus of the current political and economic context. The study therefore aimed to uncover more detail about organisational and individual influences, and their effect on the practical implementation of the policy to progress this understanding further. The second section uncovered differences in SENCo role enactment, status and knowledge. Such differences can affect work in settings and have implications for joint working, so finding out about the changes to roles, responsibilities and relationships that have been created by the SEND Code of Practice and EHCP implementation (DfE and DoH, 2015) was important. The third section revealed what is known about effective practice. Much related to general teaching is transferable to SENCo practice, especially the place assessment plays in enabling quality support by providing clear evidence of need, response to approaches and progress. Furthermore, different setting approaches and ethos exist, based on diverse understandings, with implications for SENCo status and the implementation of EHCPs in practice. This is important, since how the role is actualised by individual SENCos and the setting they work in affects how support for individual children and their families is realised. Indeed, whilst the Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) 'responsibilised' SENCos as policy subjects (Hellowell, 2017b, p.5), in reality SENCos must implement EHC plans within existing structures and sometimes limitations. The study therefore also aimed to find out if the differences in educational phase, setting, status and training route have relevance to EHCP implementation. Finally, the literature review identified the need to explore any changes to the identify development of SENCos because of the revealed values of citizenship and social justice, coupled with the import of how SENCos are positioned and the contribution of a strong sense of identity to empowered practice. In conclusion, this review summarises the substantive literature to reveal the salient issues for SENCos implementing EHCPs, and in so doing, contributes to our understanding of the influence the SEND Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) is having on their practice. The next chapter identifies the theoretical concepts employed to explore these issues.

CHAPTER 3 – CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.0 Overview

In this chapter, I present the conceptual framework developed for this study. Conceptual frameworks are a scaffold of ideas and approaches which explain the research issue, within which strategies for the research design can be identified (Leshem and Trafford, 2007; Adams, and Buetow, 2014). By situating a study within and alongside existing concepts, cohesion between the research problem and approach is enhanced (van Manen, 1997; Creswell, 2007, 2009; Cooksey and McDonald, 2011; Robson, 2011; Wisker, 2012; Savin-Baden and Howell Major, 2013). These concepts are also used to identify patterns of data and suggest explanations (Proctor and Capaldi, 2006; Haig, 2014). Conceptual frameworks consequently provide the ‘space in which the input of prior ideas ..., mix, interact, and coalesce into new perspectives’ (Adams and Buetow, 2014, p.98) so enhancing the coherence, criticality, and creativity of academic work. The chapter consists of four sections:

1. rationale and framework for this study;
2. internal or individual influences on SENCo perceptions;
3. external, institutional and organisational influences on EHCP implementation; and
4. change theory, continuing professional development, and agency.

3.1.1 Rationale and Framework

The literature reveals identity to be one of the key influences on sustained commitment and motivation of educational professionals (Day et al., 2006a; Day and Gu, 2009; Jo, 2014; Vähäsantanen, 2015). It also shows that changes in educational practices impact on the identity and agency of practitioners (Isaksson and Lindqvist, 2015). Chreim et al., (2007) consider the relationship between institutional environment and organisational context, and how organisational changes impact on role identity, boundaries and action. In contrast to changes imposed by institutional factors, changes initiated by those whose practice is affected have a higher probability of success (ibid), and engagement at a deeper level is a central component in the adoption of change and innovation (Luttenberg et al., 2013). Engagement at a deeper level can also challenge normative positions, and lead to changes in identity (Adoniou, 2016a, 2016b). The analytical lens adopted for this study therefore centred on SENCo’s experience of EHCP implementation in practice, to reveal the influences on change and action they deem to be important.

Investigating the meanings and experiences of individual agents enables the ‘what’ (characteristics of the situation) and ‘how’ (indicates the implementation and concerns for change) of an issue to emerge (Blaikie, 2007). Deeper insight into the import for the individual (Geertz, 1973) is also required if we

are to understand the 'why' of an issue (Blaikie, 2007). However, the meanings and interpretations of agents have often been neglected in studies of institutional theory and agency (Zilber, 2002). For that reason, this study sought to uncover the factors contributing to identity and agency, within the broader context and influence of structure (Bourdieu, 1977). The framework that has evolved utilises and adapts Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1982).

Macro-system (institutional level) and exo-system influences (organisational level) are contained in half of the model (see Figure 3). These have both commonalities (legislation and policy) and variances depending on the phase of education, setting type and qualification levels of practitioners. Influences at these levels affect how SENCos enact their responsibilities, including how they provide 'professional guidance', work 'closely with other agencies' and determine 'the strategic development of SEN policy and provision' (Code of Practice, DfE and DoH, 2015, p.108).

The other half of the model represents the individuals operating within these systems, and so incorporates the 'policy implementer' role of SENCos (Singh, et al., 2014; Ball, 2015; Frost et al., 2018). This aligns with Bronfenbrenner's understanding of dynamic, bi-directional influence (Hayes et al., 2017), which is illustrated by being on top of the second drawing. This micro-system considers SENCo identity, since individuals play out their respective roles, according to their conception of who they are (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000), and personal and role identities are enacted in social or collective situations (Watson, 2006). In this study, identity is conceptualised as a triad (personal, collective and professional, see Section 3.2.3). Chreim et al. (2007) explored the reconstruction of professional role identities present in a medical clinic, by examining both the personal and collective identity influences on micro-level agency within a wider policy context. They found five main contributors: personal life changes and dissatisfaction; construction of an ideal identity; framing the role change; patterns of actions and inactions; and confirmation of role change evidenced by the changed perceptions of colleagues within the collective work setting.

Erikson's idea of real and ideal identities (Erikson, 1959) are represented by constricted channel (real) between the upper and lower sections of the model. This contrasts with the wider channel which signifies more open (ideal) interactions between the upper and lower sections of the model. This links with Callero's (1985) idea of role-identity salience, and with Adoniou's work on the match or mismatch between practice/work and ethos/approach (Adoniou, 2013, 2016a, 2016b). The central band therefore represents the meso-system or elements that interact with, contribute to, change and influence this match/mismatch in practice. The model can therefore capture how policy has been actualised compared to how SENCos imagine it could be actualised in an ideal set of circumstances.

This potential is linked with CPD, as having the capacity to influence change and affect progress, and so impact on SENCo agency.

In this study, agency is conceptualised as inter-related but distinct from identity in that whilst they drive and impact on one another, they are separate concepts (Kant, 1952; Korsgaard, 2009). This is in line with a theory of self-formation proposed by Holland et al., (1998): that is, identities are viewed as the bridge between agency and structure, since ‘identity is an important base through which people create new activities’ (ibid, p.5).

3.1.2 Conceptual Framework Model

Section 3.1.1 detailed the theory contributing to the conceptual framework. This section details how these were synthesised to create the model used in this study, which can be seen in Figure 3:

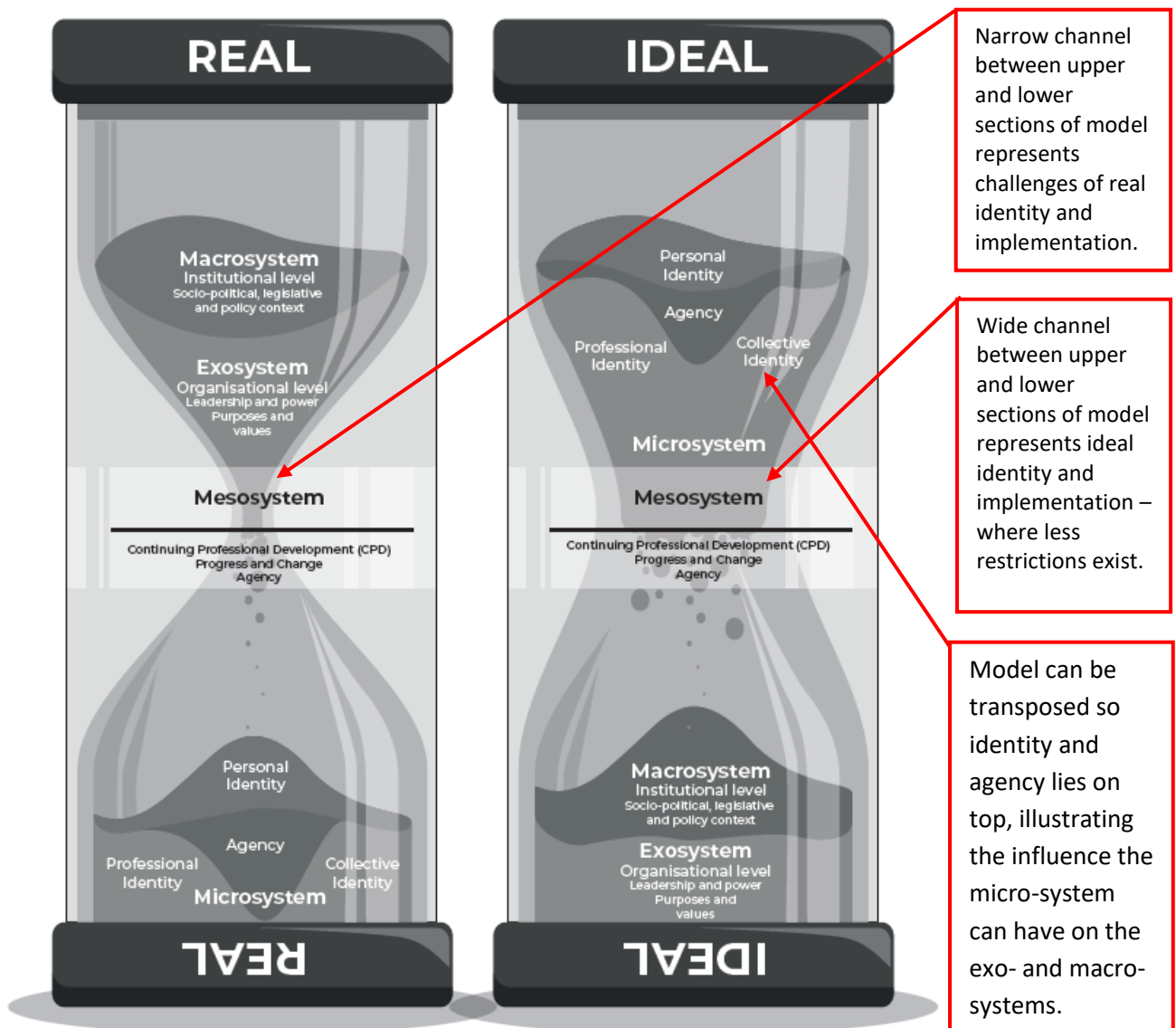


Figure 3 - Conceptual Framework Model

This model, which progressed through several iterations, is original in that it synthesises and adapts the theories discussed, including Bronfenbrenner's levels (1979, 1982), identity theory (conceptualised as a triad, see section 3.2.3, including the concept of real and ideal identity (Erikson, 1959)), and agency (Kant, 1952; Holland et al., 1998; Korsgaard, 2009). Whilst Bronfenbrenner's levels are represented in the model, there are three main differences. First, the levels do not appear as concentric circles, but as levels within the halves of the timer, representing the effect levels have on each other including that movement and influence occurs between them. Secondly, the chronosystem is implicit in the model, since it is conceptualised as a timer. Thirdly, detail about identity and agency have been added to the micro-system. This includes professional, collective and personal aspects of identity since the wider context has an influence these. Conversely, strong professional, collective and personal identities can influence the meso, exo and macro levels, and so the timer represents Bronfenbrenner's idea of bi-directionality (Hayes et al., 2017) in that it can be transposed.

Erikson's theory of real and ideal identity is also used differently in this conceptual framework in that it is synthesised with bio-ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1982). Whilst Bronfenbrenner considered the bi-directional influences of nature and nurture on development (Bronfenbrenner and Ceci, 1994), Erikson (1959) viewed an individual's identity formation to be an ongoing process, where the present, or real identity is that which is 'more or less actually attained but forever-to-be-revised' (p.140) while ideal identity represents 'a set of to-be-strived-for but forever-not-quite-attainable ideal goals for the self' (p.140). We should thus view cultural conditions in terms of how they inhibit or shape identities. The left-hand timer therefore represents real identity, where SENCos experience actual constrictions in their practice (represented by the narrow channel between the upper and lower sections of model). In contrast, the right-hand timer represents ideal identity, in that there are less constraints, and possibly more enablers (represented by the wide channel between the upper and lower sections of the model). Finally, in this model, agency is added to both the micro and the meso systems. It appears in the micro system, as connected with self-formation (Holland et al., 1998) and in the meso system as a distinct power (Kant, 1952; Korsgaard, 2009) which enables stances to be taken, decisions and choices to be made, and matters to be influenced.

The model was developed to include and present all these theories so as to explain the research issue, identify strategies for the research design (Leshem and Trafford, 2007; Adams, and Buetow, 2014), consider existing concepts and help identify patterns of data and suggest explanations (Proctor and Capaldi, 2006; Haig, 2014). This distinctive model was therefore central to both designing and conducting this study.

3.2 Individual Influences

Although the SENCo role has been identified as having the potential to affect the attitudes, aspirations, and achievements of children and young people (CYP), families, schools, organisations and professionals involved with or experiencing SEND (MacLean, 1992; DfE and DoH, 2015) so is therefore pivotal in how EHCPs are implemented, both internal (sometimes referred to as individual) and external influences moderate their practice. Key concepts related to internal or individual influences are therefore considered in this section.

3.2.1 Experience

Individuals are connected with reality through their experiences and it is through these experiences that each person forms an understanding of the world (Dewey, 1933; 1938; 1958). Dewey considered the relationship between individuals and their environments to be reciprocal, with each acting upon and changing the other. 'Biographicity' is a term denoting individual responses related to social conditions (Illeris, 2014, p.152). It signifies that the subjective experience of each individual's life story is influenced by changes in the environment and by societal conditions (Alheit, 2009). Although Carr (2003) suggests that knowledge and understanding are detached from individual beliefs and preferences, others argue that identity is the medium through which experiences and society influence individual understandings, reactions and ways of life (Giddens, 1991; Bauman, 1973; 2000; Côté and Levine, 2002; Jenkins, 2004; Illeris, 2014). This study considers identity to be established and developed by individual experiences (Stern, 1985), in which case, SENCo perceptions will be influenced and shaped by each individual's personal, professional and collective experiences. In keeping with this, Maher and Vickerman (2018) explain that the experiences of SENCos (during their personal lives, their own schooling, teacher training, and career) determine the salience of the social and educational ideologies held. Ideologies continue to be shaped in a dynamic, life-long process (Elias, 1978). Furthermore, the ideologies of SENCos are also 'shaped by their experience of being bonded together with others who are part of their occupational and wider social network such as government and school policy-makers, school senior managers, teachers, pupils, parents and each other' (Maher and Vickerman, 2018, p.18). Discerning the experiences that have shaped the values and beliefs of SENCos will therefore increase understanding of what underlies and drives their practice.

3.2.2 Language and Constructs

Language is 'ideologically saturated' (Renfrew, 2015, p.98) in that it grows out of contexts, be these social, professional, geographical or historical, so it is 'suffused with the views, opinions, and conceptual horizons' of the speaker's environment (ibid). Bakhtin's (1986) idea of *dialogised heteroglossia* signifies how an individual's use of language is modified by their environment,

experiences and specific contexts, so *logos* and *praxis* are therefore inseparable (Bruner, 1990). This means we must consider the status of the *text*, by being mindful of what the relationship of lived experience has to its inscription, and how true it is to its subject (Renfrew, 2015). Furthermore, Bernstein's theory of language codes differentiates between a public, generally held language and specialist languages associated with specific professions (1959; 2010). This has implications for the effective transmission of SENCo perceptions, because specialised terminology and assumptions of familiarity may be present.

Experience, language and thinking shape how we construe the world. Constructs are plans for action, created and adapted through experience and used to predict and direct an individual's activities (Stevens, 1998; Jankowicz, 2004; Winter, 2013). They therefore need to be revised in response to new experiences if they are to continue to inform actions appropriately. Ideally, constructs should cohere internally as well as externally (with the observations of others), since psychological balance entails the consistency of an individual's constructs with their world, and especially with the constructs of others (Kelly, 1955; Winter, 1992; Stevens, 1998). Such coherence gives us a joint frame of reference, or metalanguage (Noaparast, 1995). Personal construct theory is such a metalanguage or system, which can be used to access individual perceptions and agreement (or not) within and between individuals, a group or an organisation. However, constructs can be used differently in different contexts (Fransella et al., 2004), thus we should think in terms of the 'transcontextual identity' of a construct (Hinkle, 1965, p.22), and be aware of the import of different language codes and contexts.

Liasidou (2012) and Hellawell (2017b) recognise the need for SEND professionals to 'work on themselves and their underlying beliefs and attitudes' (Hellawell, 2017b, p.3). This is in response to the increased 'responsibilisation' (p.5) that neoliberal policies demand (Ball and Olmedo, 2013; Ball, 2015). Salient beliefs and attitudes towards practice, including conflicts between them, can be identified by accessing construct systems. Personal construct theory can thus be used to identify the similarities and boundaries that inform and shape future actions (Kelly, 1980; Stevens, 1998). The purpose of this study was to uncover what these constructs are and to reveal how SENCo identity and practice is adapting and evolving, and how it is being influenced and moulded.

3.2.3 Identity

Identity, as a person's source of meaning and motive, is different from a given role, and as such has significant import for the agency of SENCos and for how they carry out their responsibilities, enact the Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015), and implement EHCPs (Van de Putte et al., 2017; Robinson et al., 2018; Robinson and Goodey, 2018). Moreover, identity change is recognised as a core factor in educational change (Geijsel and Meijers, 2005; Pantic, 2015; Buchanan, 2015; Vähäsantanen, 2015;

Eteläpelto et al., 2017). Studies have defined identity in different ways. It is connected with the concept of self, which is viewed by some as a stable, unchanging essence (Cooley, 1902) and by others as evolving (Mead, 1934; Giddens, 1991). *Bildung* is a German term referring to a process of self-cultivation and maturation in which harmonisation of the individual's mind, heart, selfhood, and identity is achieved (Mollenhauer, 2014). This can involve challenges and changes to the individual's beliefs. Korsgaard (2008) talks of 'self-constitution', which is the task of identifying and orienting one's life around projects and values of one's choosing. Ball (1972) separates substantive from situated identity, proposing that one is a core presentation of self that is fundamental to how a person thinks and the other is more malleable and adaptive, according to the context or situation. Finally, Jenkins (2004) suggests that humans can best be understood in terms of their individual, interactional and institutional order because these interact and inform professional philosophies and personal belief systems and consequently inform actions (O'Connor, 2008). Taking these various definitions into account, this study conceptualises identity as triadic, comprising personal, collective and professional elements. It considers that these elements will evolve in response to experiences and learning, and that solidarity or discontinuity with a context's ethos and approach will influence how closely ideal identities are realised in practice.

Personal Identity

An individual's personal identity is an essential component of the multifaceted reality of people's lives (Erikson, 1959; Stryker and Serpe, 1994; Stryker and Burke, 2000). It contributes to the performance of professional roles (Ball and Goodson, 1985; Geijsel and Meijers, 2005), because knowledge of the self informs the way professionals construe and construct their work (Kelchtermans, 1993). Dias and Cadime (2016) found interesting evidence of this. They investigated the impact of teachers' personal and professional variables on inclusive education, finding that attitudes that are more positive were present when teachers had experience with or knew someone with SEND. This shows an interrelationship between personal and professional identities, with one informing the other, as was also found in a study of teachers by Day et al. (2006b). Indeed, life events create turbulence and change, cut across different roles and identities and influence professional practice, for example, by informing knowledge and experience, levels of energy and drive, and morale (Stronach et al., 2002). The realities of professional life, such as high levels of stress and workload also impact on personal lives (Day et al., 2006a). Identity is therefore impacted by interactions between personal and professional contexts and between the individual and the collective contexts they work in.

Professional Identity

Professional identity is concerned with role identity, which is concerned with subject knowledge and job responsibilities (Callero, 1985; Kelchtermans, 2005) and perceptions of professional ideals, goals,

interests, and values (Day and Kington, 2008; Gaskell and Leadbetter, 2009). A number of sources and external conditions (biographical, professional knowledge, context of setting and wider educational contexts) contribute to professional identity (Varghese et al., 2005).

Professionalisation is associated with a specific body of knowledge, group member identity, specific learning opportunities and accreditation (Lloyd and Hallet, 2010). Evetts (2011) suggests that being able to identify oneself with a body of knowledge has inherent worth, and that the professional identity created by this can become an important part of an individual's overall identity. Such knowledge also contributes to an understanding of role and clarifies how and what can be contributed (Anning et al., 2010), which is central to successful communication and inputs to multi-agency working (Buckley-Walker et al., 2013; Trodd and Chivers, 2011). Professionalisation helps individual practitioners to understand the value of sharing their knowledge with other professionals and the importance and worth of respecting and seeking information from others (Beijaard et al., 2004; Messenger, 2013), and contributes to the confidence to challenge situations by equipping us to look 'beyond our immediate role and ask [] considered questions' (Trodd and Chivers, 2011, p.11). This is important when embedded assumptions of the hierarchy of particular professions exist (Ekins, 2015).

For SENCOs who wear multiple professional hats - for example, being an existing member of the SLT, the safeguarding officer, or a class teacher - there is added import for their sense of professional identity, including how teachers and other members of staff in their settings regard them (Cameron and Lindqvist, 2014; Qureshi, 2014; Passy et al., 2017). Professionalisation also denotes the process 'of identity formation via socialisation and absorbing values that may be, but are not necessarily in keeping with the profession' (Phillips and Dalgarno, 2017, p.2). This contrasts with professionalism which is concerned with being an ethical, compassionate and virtuous person who practices in a moral and competent manner (Moore and Clarke, 2016). Liasidou and Svensson (2014) suggest that a professional context that brings to the fore values and professionalisation would necessitate a re-conceptualisation of the aims and priorities of the education system, requiring critical and ethical forms of thinking to be fostered (Allan, 2007; Goodley, 2007; Lingard and Mills, 2007), thus balancing professionalisation with professionalism (Pratt et al., 2006; Phillips and Dalgarno, 2017). Significantly strong professional identity constructions, which influence high levels of professional practice, are created when mismatches occur between who practitioners are as people and what they do in practice (Callero, 1985; Adoniou, 2016b), are worked through (Isaksson and Lindqvist, 2015; Hellawell, 2017b). Moreover, discrepancies between the actual and ideal self are a form of identity crisis (Strachan and Jones, 1982) and continuing debate about where SENCOs position themselves (or are positioned) in professional hierarchies, means that their professional identity is still evolving (Qureshi, 2014).

Collective Identity

Identity also comprises of collective identity, which is concerned with relating to a profession or team (Callero, 1985; Kelchtermans, 2005). Slee (2011) recognises that the emphasis on individuality and achievements present in western societies can lead to collective indifference, which occurs when an individual's identity is seen as being more fundamental to their self-definition than their collective identity (Gaertner et al., 1999). However, the actions and reactions of individuals are embedded within specific contexts and climates (Dilthey, 1961), and individuals alter their behaviour in response to their group membership (Ibarra, 2004; Lewis and Crisp, 2004). This is important because the practice of many professionals means they are involved with, and function across, several teams (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1999), and commitment (to a team or a setting) is affected by an individual's sense of being included and belonging (Veck, 2014). This is significant because commitment influences how people think and act within groups (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) and feeling peripheral can affect self-esteem, motivation, and collaboration (Ellemers et al., 2002). Hardy et al. (2005) explored the relationship between collective identity and effective collaboration. They defined collaboration as 'cooperative, inter-organisational action that produces innovative, synergistic solutions and balances divergent stakeholder concerns' (p.72) and proposed that collaboration depends on membership ties, which is described by others as group cohesion or collegiality (Lewis and Crisp, 2004; MacDonald, 2004; Educational Institute of Scotland, 2010).

The SENCo role is emphasised by the government in England in terms of leadership and professional identity, rather than one that is more 'socially critical' (Szwed, 2007a, p.438). However, SEND education is seen by many as being fundamentally an issue of human rights, equity and social justice (Glazzard, 2013; Liasidou and Svensson, 2014; Isaksson and Lindqvist, 2015). Hence the sense of social justice is a strong part of the collective identity of SEND professionals (Glazzard, 2014; Armstrong, 2017; Maher and Vickerman, 2018). This can put SENCos in a difficult place, because of how they conceptualise the aims and priorities of an education system that is situated in a neoliberal, standards-driven climate (Cole, 2005b; Davies, 2005) and an approach based on social justice can require more critical and ethical forms of educational thinking and acting (Goodley, 2007; Lingard and Mills, 2007). This has implications for the collective identities of SENCos since they work across interconnected teams who make sense of, and prioritise things differently (Lewis and Crisp, 2004; Geijssel and Meijers, 2005; Hellawell, 2016). As a result, it may be necessary to consider other viewpoints when involved with new professional teams (Trodd and Chivers, 2011). The challenge for SENCos is that they must do this while operating within their own settings, where alliances and loyalties contribute to wellbeing, commitment and effective practice (Renshaw et al., 2015).

Real and Ideal Identity

This study adopts the position that whilst there is some continuity, identity adapts and develops over time (Mead, 1934; Giddens, 1991). This is in line with Erikson (1959), who considered that persons have a real identity (which is forever revised and is what they are able to attain within social reality) and an ideal identity (which is 'a set of to-be-strived-for but forever-not-quite-attainable ideal goals for the self', p.140). However, work-identity violations create conflict and stress (Pratt et al., 2006; Chreim et al., 2007). Alignment can be achieved and is important because role-identity compatibility influences effort and performance (Burke, 1980; Callero, 1985; Desrochers et al, 2004). This links to the work of Korsgaard (1996; 2008; 2009), who considers that agents act when they identify with a principle. She proposes that standards of efficacy and autonomy are linked to self-constitution and integrity, and are best achieved when there is a high degree of coherence (Korsgaard, 2009; Cuneo and Harp, 2014). Consequently, the variation in the degree of closeness (cohesion) or distance (fragmentation) between real and ideal identities of individuals has implications for SENCo practice, including the implementation of EHCPs.

3.3 External, Institutional and Organisational Influences

Understanding the particular institutions and organisations that SENCos operate within is a necessary part of understanding their perspectives. This is because historical, cultural and political understanding helps us comprehend given contexts, which in turn enables us to appreciate the actions and reactions of individuals, as embedded within their specific climates (Dilthey, 1961). This section considers the key external, institutional and organisational influences on EHCP implementation and practice.

3.3.1 Context

Human perceptions and actions are considered to be part of their context because they occur socially, with and through other people who are also part of the situation (Spillane et al., 2004). We experience life in terms of patterns, connections, and relationships, with these constituting the meaning of experiences and of lives (Dilthey, 1961). Furthermore, human action inevitably involves the overlap and interlocking of different meanings. Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model (1979, 1982) considers the interaction of contexts and individual perceptions and actions. Five systems interact in this model:

- macro-system - involves overarching settings. In this study, this is the wider socio-political, legislative and policy context. Whilst the individual is not an active participant, they are affected by what happens in this system, although the impact can be bi-directional in that micro-systems can also affect the macro-system;

- exo-system - is the environment, including the cultural context in which an individual operates. While consistency with the overall environment is important, unique differences are both present and possible within this. In this study, this is the ethos and purpose of individual settings;
- meso-system - is the interaction between the different settings the person is involved with and the individual. In this study, this is the arrangements and interactions between the SENCo, their setting and support and professional services, parents and families, and this is where they negotiate and work. It is here that policy enactment is realised and here that CPD, identity change, and agency have the potential to develop practice and influence the higher-level systems;
- micro-system - is a person's experiences, activities, roles, and relationships. In this study, this is the SENCos' individual experiences of EHCP implementation and their individual, professional and collective identities; and
- chrono-system - is the temporal and spatial elements. Actions and experiences change over time and between spaces. In this study, this level is represented by variation in SENCo agency and practice between settings and over time, as both they and their settings learn and develop.

In keeping with the relativist ontological approach to this study, uncovering how these systems are operating in the area of EHCP implementation focused the investigation, allowing me to locate SENCo experience and perceptions of policy enactment, practice, and potential (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2010).

3.3.2 Policy

Policy changes both what people do and who they are (Ball, 2015). It is the result of struggles between different social actors, whose interests, aspirations and values compete for ascendancy (Fulcher 1999; Tisdall and Riddell 2006). Currencies such as finance, standards, priorities, and knowledge, are held differently by the various contributors (Liasidou, 2011), and how individuals are positioned within these determine how 'state regulation and instrumentalism' is moderated in practice (Deleuze, 1995, p.6). This study investigates the implementation of part of a policy, that is, EHCPs. Principally this is the responsibility of SENCos, who must enact these in a context of competing and contradictory institutional agendas, especially those of educational excellence, efficacy and equity, social justice and personalised support (Liasidou 2012). Due to these competing demands, SENCos can experience internal dilemmas as part of enactment (Callero, 1985; Qureshi, 2015b; Hellawell, 2017a). In addition, detailed guidance on implementation is limited (Norwich, 2014). The 'architecture' of this policy is

therefore empty and content-free, and requires the various actors to take responsibility and 'go and get it' (Allan and Youdell 2015, p.7). Ball (1993; 2015) identifies that policy can be operationalised locally both as a *text* and as a *discourse*. Policy as text is concerned with the processes of interpretation and translation through which policy is then enacted. This means that policies are differentially represented by different actors in different contexts (Ball, 2013). As a text, policy is a reference for both mandatory and recommended practice, whilst at the same time being subject to local implementation. This leaves the possibility for policy not being implemented fully, or for inconsistencies between policy and practice to exist (Lamb, 2009). Indeed, the need to balance individual and societal concerns within the reality of finite resources (Riddell et al., 1998), and the presence of value tensions such as autonomy versus control (Norwich, 2014; 2015), means that we cannot naively assume the existence of a 'benign commonality' (Graham and Slee, 2008, p.277) of policy implementation. This is affirmed by the recognition that the SENCo role is subject to many interpretations (Garner, 1996; Cole, 2005b; Pearson, 2010; Hellowell, 2017a). In practice therefore, policy as text involves the interpretation and application of guidelines to facilitate a level of practice, which although individually enacted, ensures that a level of implementation and accountability is present across different contexts, settings, and enactors.

In contrast to policy as text, when the policy is adapted to meet the setting and environment at a more superficial level (Sachs, 2003; Robinson, 2012; Pantic, 2015), policy operationalised as discourse has implications for who we are and how we identify ourselves. Enactment at this level involves meanings and interpretations as part of contested and negotiated process, with changes achieved usually as an outcome of struggles and compromises (Ball, 1993, 2015; Ozga, 2000). Policy as discourse recognises that creating ownership of a reform movement is a necessary requirement for a successful outcome (Burke, 2013; Luttenberg et al., 2013). Accordingly, it is concerned with how its subjects are formed and re-formed by it, including the ways the policy shapes their values, actions, and behaviour (Gee et al., 1996). Policy discourses therefore both reflect and create social reality (Ball, 2015), thus we must be prepared to identify and interrogate the normative assumptions that shape and drive policy if we are to have reform agendas that do more than 'tinker at the edges' (Graham and Slee, 2008. p.278; Allan and Youdell, 2015; Lehane, 2016). This involves the identity of subjects since engagement in policy as discourse is a deeper, active process where interrogation to resolve conflicts, as a form of social justice and response, takes place.

3.3.3 Leadership and Power

Legitimacy to lead other school members and thus to influence the support of pupils with SEND depends on two conditions (Struyve et al., 2017): authorisation and endorsement (Dornbush and Scott, 1975). Authorisation is granted by those higher up in an organisation, for example, by formal

membership of the senior leadership team, and endorsement requires other actors in the organisation to recognise and respond to the given position and power (Boesley and Crane, 2018). Both involve inter-level influences (Chreim et al., 2007), and have implications for an individual's identity and agency.

Power permeates civil society and provides the conditions and discourses in which individuals are produced as both subjects and objects (Codd, 1988). Unequal power relationships related to disability exist within society (see section 2.1.1) and are evident in SEND policy, with 'othering' perspectives being revealed by terms such as *need* and *reasonable adjustment* (Dunne, 2009, p.42; Liasidou, 2011; Glazzard, 2013). Professionals themselves have constructed powerful discourses (Brantlinger, 1997; Allan, 2013) and asymmetrical or unequal power relationships have been institutionally sanctioned and established in practice (Liasidou, 2011; 2012), as evidenced by, for example, the relative stability of institutions such as schooling and the National Health Service, with limited challenges to the existing orders (Allan, 2013). Indeed, Tomlinson (2014) suggests that professionals with a high degree of knowledge and expertise have a vested interest in maintaining the institutional and ideological status quo, both in terms of the SEND industry and in terms of their status and power. The tenets of the Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) require individual SENCOs to negotiate within such power hierarchies in ways that can increase their professionalism (Rix et al., 2005; Hellawell, 2015, 2017a). However, legislation and policy stop short of ensuring their official status, leaving an uncertain scenario that reflects the 'illusory interiority' (Graham and Slee, 2008, p.277) and unchanged stance in the policy reform (Lehane, 2016).

This is important to consider when the Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) itself talks of enhanced SENCO roles, responsibilities and relationships (in sections 6 and 4.13). Certainly, the evolution of the SENCO role away from supporting students with SEND towards supporting and developing SEND provision in a setting has increased their leadership responsibilities (DfE and DoH, 2015). Consequently, SENCO training packages study different leadership and management approaches. For example, distributed leadership, which actively involves personnel in tasks that are shared across an educational setting (Spillane et al., 2004; DCSF, 2009a; Lumby, 2013, 2016) to empower staff (Hulpia et al., 2009; Hulpia and Devos, 2010), and transformational leadership, which engages personnel in the identification of goals and solutions and can reduce staff resistance to change (Burns, 1978; Fusarelli and Lindle, 2011; Ishimaru, 2013). Simplistic consideration of leadership approaches, however, belie the reality where settings have enacted the recommendation that SENCOs be a member of the SLT to different extents (Norwich, 2010; Done et al., 2016b), and because the introduction of teacher-leadership roles can require the local, prevailing beliefs and expectations be reshaped (Smylie, 1997). Struyve et al. (2017) investigated the position and responsibilities of SENCOs as negotiated in two

different school settings, finding that SENCOs receive legitimacy to act as leaders when their expertise is recognised, when their colleagues acknowledge their task in supporting and developing teaching and learning, and when school principals are willing to confer power. Interestingly, Done et al. (2016b) proposed that SENCOs can negotiate the power relations within which they are individually embedded, suggesting that where formal authorisation/membership of the SLT is not present, they can enhance their capacity to influence school provision if they are sensitive to leadership priorities and are able to speak the same language. This consideration of leadership and power is important because SENCO practice is connected to their recognition and position, both inside and outside of their settings.

3.3.4 Purposes and Values

Value tensions are present in education generally, perhaps especially in SEND, since no overall and coherent set of values can justify policy and practice at all levels and in all settings (Norwich, 1996). This results in tensions and dilemmas between competing and conflicting priorities and purposes, for example between using resources efficiently and supporting and caring appropriately (Jones, 1998), meaning that the priorities of settings and their SENCOs can be opposed. Praxis is the interplay between theory and practice (Foucault, 1981; Deleuze, 1995). It is action 'supported by a belief and value system and an ethical code' which is informed by its context, including power systems, social, historical and resource conditions (Formosinho and Oliveira-Formosinho 2012, p.591). This involves an interaction 'between context independent and context dependent (situated) factors' (ibid p.597), with each contributing to the enactment and moderation of policy (Deleuze, 1995; Taylor et al., 1997; Ball, 1990, 2013; Ball and Olmedo, 2013) (see also Section 3.3.2). Consideration of purposes and values is also important because they link with a third level of inclusivity as proposed by Corbett (2001a). This involves the deep culture of fundamental belief systems that are often obscure and difficult to grasp. It is at this level that children feel either included or excluded and it is also this level that motivates and drives SENCO practice, which some consider to be a vocation (MacKenzie, 2013). This coheres with the work of Emanuelsson (2001) on proactive schools (see section 2.2.1), and with the fourth way proposed by Hargreaves and Shirley (2012) (see section 2.3.6), both of which give priority to the ethos of settings and staff.

Beliefs, values, and principles inform a person's reasoning and involve both their personal and professional selves, since one's practice is inextricably linked to one's personal values (Glazzard, 2013). Indeed, these are part of an individual's knowing reason, forming part of tacit, or implicit knowledge, which is built from experiences and worldview (Dewey, 1958; Pan and Scarbrough, 1999). Although there is a degree of constancy (Beatty and Feldman, 2012; Priestley et al., 2012), values, beliefs, and principles develop and change 'as they are articulated and lived' (Sikes et al., 2007, p.367). Praxis

contributes to this by helping transform implicit or tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge, which is an important part of the holistic, values-led approach to SEND provision (see section 2.1.8). Moreover, Lawson et al. (2013) identify that SEND practice is linked to the values and ethos of the school, organisational practice and to the attitudes of individual staff members. Such values and principles that may exist for SEND practitioners include:

- equity and social justice (Liasidou and Svensson, 2014);
- taking a holistic view, including a child's circumstances and what they need to grow, develop and achieve their potential (Scottish Government, 2009);
- diversity and equality (General Teaching Council of NI 2004);
- desire to make a difference (MacKenzie, 2013);
- integrity and honesty (Teachers' Standards (Early Years), NCTL, 2013); and
- values about the roles of different stakeholders and the purposes of education (Dyson, 1990).

However, the literature also reflects conflicts in values of care, social justice and holism (Glazzard, 2014) when teachers are expected to care about and prioritise children's performance (Ball, 2003). Slee (2011) recognises this, suggesting that for inclusion and SEND education to be successful, it needs to be disentangled from neoliberal education policies and from functionalist models of education that emphasise education for the purpose of productivity. Instead, we need to broaden out what we count as success (Lloyd, 2008; Rochford, 2016), to recognise and value progress in all forms and foster independence. This has implications for the work of SENCOs, since their role in training and developing setting staff is identified (DfE and DoH, 2015, p.276), and recognition of outcomes desirable and appropriate for students with complex SEND, such as those eligible for EHCPs, will potentially reduce such conflicts between productivity and holism.

The reforms introduced by the SEND Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) are incremental rather than disruptive, so attitudes, aspirations, and achievements are evolving rather than being revolutionised (Christensen, 1997; Christensen et al., 2008). Different organisations, settings, and individuals show variation in their understanding of SEND and adoption of the reforms (Lawson et al., 2013; Lawson and Jones, 2017; Donovan, 2018). However, Laess (2010) suggests that sustainable development requires approaches based on a broad comprehension of the particular space-time context rather than individual differentiation to meet specific contextual dynamics. Attitudes are key to this because they reflect and inform practice and influence potential. Staff involved with SEND are often driven by altruism and moral capital (Lloyd and Hallet, 2010; Phillips and Dalgarno, 2017; Fray and Gore, 2018; Frost et al., 2018), but this can result in professional and organisational aspirations and achievements being viewed differently (Hargreaves and Shirley, 2012). Van de Putte et al. (2017) recognise that

practice consists of 'mutual entanglements of multiple forces' (p.888). Hence SENCos are part of an *assemblage* (Deleuze, 1995) whose functioning is driven and governed principally by what it connects with (Lather, 2015). The attitudes of individuals and the ethos of settings are central to this (Corbett, 2001a; Emanuelsson, 2001; Hardy and Woodcock, 2015; Spratt and Florian, 2015; Frost et al., 2018). Goertz (2006) investigated to what extent school settings adopt or modify top-down policies and what factors explain such adaptations. He found that short-term influences on policy implementation include insufficient time, paperwork and capacity issues and longer-term issues include having the time and skills to train and support staff, with staff-turnover hampering the development of working relations and communication. Time, capacity and empowerment have also been found to modify the aspirations and implementation achieved by SENCos (Liasidou and Svensson, 2014).

SENCos often possess a strong sense of purpose and social justice combined with desires for career enhancement. As a result, their aspirations can be dual. On one hand they desire equity, meaningful education and educational excellence for the pupils under their care (Liasidou, 2012; Maher and Vickerman, 2018). This includes being passionate about their role and getting the best for their students (Szwed, 2007a; MacKenzie, 2013; Woolhouse, 2015; Hellawell, 2017b). They may also desire professional career progression which the SENCo role can facilitate (Rosen-Webb, 2011; Hellawell, 2017 b; Passy et al., 2017), despite the demands of the role being a significant factor in retention (Pearson, 2008a; Burton and Goodman, 2011; Cameron and Lindqvist, 2014). Achievement for SENCos may therefore be viewed in terms of altruism and/or personal gain (Hargreaves and Shirley, 2012; Crehan, 2016).

Achievement for the CYP with SEND means enhancing progress, outcomes, and life-chances (DfE and DoH, 2015). This is important as official figures show there is a larger attainment gap for pupils with SEND than for any other group (Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), 2018), and improved outcomes can be regarded as the 'ultimate long-term investment' (National Forum on Early Childhood Policy and Programs, 2008). Robust assessment helps raise educational standards, but progress for CYP with SEND needs to be demonstrated more holistically (Rochford, 2016). Moreover, there has perhaps been an over-focus on proving the good-practice and performativity of organisations rather than on securing better outcomes for the actual CYP (O'Dwyer, 2018), and Cordingley (2015) found that CPD with a strong focus on pupil outcomes has a significant impact on student achievement, especially when individual and whole school needs are aligned. However, whilst we can talk of such possibilities, Giroux (2004, 2015) challenges whether this is merely rhetoric in a socio-political context that prioritises finance and commerce 'over human needs, public responsibilities and democratic relations' (2004, p.xvi). Instead, the questions that should be being asked are:

i) What aspirations do the CYP with SEND have?

ii) What support do they need to achieve them?

(Runswick-Cole, 2018).

Whilst this aligns with the child-centred aim of EHCPs, in reality this is restricted by economics and by attitudes that perceive SEND as a collection of disorders rather than differences, marginalising their citizenship (Hughes, 2015, 2017).

3.4 Interaction, Practice and Potential

Whilst section 3.2 and 3.3 considered internal and external influences separately, in reality overlaps, conflicts and interactions exist. The conceptual framework modelled on page 49 suggests that it is here, in this space or meso-system, where actions are realised. This section therefore considers concepts with the potential to develop practice at both micro (individual SENCo) and macro (organisational) levels.

3.4.1 Progress and Change

The word progress implies action and betterment, and is included in the title of the Green Paper: 'Support and Aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability – progress and next steps' (DfE, 2012b). This paper was the precursor of the *Children and Families Act 2014* and the Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015). Freire (1973) identified that problematising the issue that needs to progress empowers agents to the action that will create the needed change and betterment. In this way, people become transforming agents of their own social reality, and the action is undertaken with, rather than to or on them. This idea informs this conceptual framework: ideologically the participants are central to the research, consequently their voice must be foregrounded to identify their conflicts and realities. Such problematising will enable realisable possibilities to emerge from the practice and experience of SENCos.

It is unlikely that the Government considered progress in this participatory way, rather the SENCo 'struggle' is a by-product rather than their intention (Allan and Youdell, 2015; Lehane, 2016). Kant (1992) argued that there is a difference between a collection of rules and their realisation in practice: the use of a policy or set of rules must be a priori but how it is applied is a posteriori, dependent on the perceptions, constructs, and purposive action, of individual actors. Kant's proposal (1952) that the realisation of our moral obligation and beliefs accords with happiness, or discomfort where they are poorly realised, links to this 'struggle'. This is also true of Freire's idea (1973) that the existence of disparities empower individuals to seek changes and solutions. Viewing the situation from the SENCo perspective aims to reveal their beliefs and experience, and hence, such underlying disparities and

saliences. This will progress understanding of the impact of the Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) on SENCo practice and identity, including experienced individual and group influences.

Change management (Leith et al., 2014) requires the ability to look at the big picture, identify the key issues, and find effective ways to address these. Opportunities for developing and changing SENCo practice and SEND provision are set within a complex operational and policy context. Dewey (1938) identified that the 'control of individual actions is affected by the whole situation in which individuals are involved, in which they share and of which they are co-operative or interacting parts' (p.53). Power and resistance are part of this (Jermier et al., 1994; Done et al., 2015). For example, power inequities have historically undermined inclusive education reforms (Liasidou and Svensson, 2014), and the range of projects that SENCos are involved in has been defined by the power organisation in their settings (Kearns, 2005). Also, the forces of ableism and disablism can be at odds (Vandenbussche and De Schauwer, 2018), and the ill-defined roles and status of SENCos challenge the trust, rapport, and collegiality of their colleagues (Kearns, 2005).

To address this, Morewood (2012) suggests that SENCos need to raise the capital of those in positions of 'weakness' (p.76), which includes enhancing their own capital (Hargreaves and Hopper, 2006; Hargreaves et al., 2007; Hargreaves and Shirley, 2012). This is because the power differential favours policymakers, whilst the knowledge differential can favour the professionals and families affected (McSpadden McNeil, 2006, p.683). Also, the recipients of policy alter it as they carry it out (Ball, 1993; Levinson et al., 2009; Ketelaar et al., 2012). The surrounding community is key to this because it can either empower or limit change. However, change agents can encounter collegial resistance to inclusion-related initiatives (Lloyd, 2002). SENCos can also find themselves in this position because their commonly held values of social justice and desire to meet the needs of those with SEND can set them against values of efficiency and performativity (Glazzard, 2014; Biesta et al., 2016; Ekins et al., 2016; Hellowell, 2017b). Ball (2003) proposes that caring and performance are incompatible and Cibulka (1996) identifies the dilemma between different visions of the role of education; academic and/or social. A further dilemma exists between finite resourcing and comprehensive support (Riddell and Weedon, 2014; Maher, 2016). Staff acceptance or resistance to the SEND reforms is linked to how organisations and individuals position themselves in relation to these dilemmas (Liasidou and Svensson, 2014; Done et al., 2015; Hellowell, 2017b). Indeed, Done et al. (2015) consider this in terms of Deleuze and Guattari's (2004) 'war-machine' (p.404), suggesting that new territory is created when minority status shifts to that of political constituency.

This is made possible by 'bio-power' (Foucault, 1978, p.142), in terms of knowledge and 'critical consideration of broader ethico-pedagogic and ethico-political issues' (Done et al., 2015, p.97).

Consequently, policy change contains the potential for SENCOs to exercise agency even when constraints exist. How this is manifested depends on setting cultures and on the skill of SENCOs, with both influencing motivation and morale (Gaertner et al., 1999; Liasidou and Svensson, 2014; Gu, 2016; Frost et al., 2018). Certainly, changes in identity, and thus motivation, purpose and morale, occur as knowledge, understanding and skills progress (Ketelaar et al., 2012; Bukor, 2015), with career development and phase also having an impact (Kelchtermans, 1993; Conway and Clark, 2003; Happs et al., 2012; März and Kelchtermans, 2013) (see section 2.2.6).

3.4.2 Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

Praxis 'infused by theory, supported by a belief system and an ethical code' (p.591) is the condition most likely to transform practice (Formosinho and Oliviera-Formosinho, 2012), because such an approach empowers practitioners to recognise their own positioning (Foucault, 1980; Deleuze, 2004). Indeed, Robinson (2017) identifies that optimal practitioner development involves 'critical-theoretical' (p.176), field experiences and reflexive learning within collaborative professional learning communities. This coheres with praxis (see Section 3.3.4), which is defined by Reed (2010) as 'the integration of practice, experience, interpretive reasoning, and reflection applied toward purposeful action' (p.25). However, although this orientation towards action or emancipation conforms with Freire's conclusions on pedagogy (1970), Chinn and Kramer (2008) stress that emancipatory action must be combined with ethical knowing to create the social and structural change that can improve people's lives. Therefore, CPD should ideally combine reflection, 'technical and competent practice' (Casey, 2012, p.76) and participation with acquisition (Pearson et al., 2011) and interestingly, the focus of the SEND reforms is now shifting to developing knowledge and understanding (Education Select Committee, 2018c).

All professionals should be continuously learning as one of the defining principles of professional practice, to keep their skills and knowledge up-to-date and assure high levels of expertise (Schön, 1983; Ghaye, 2011). The need for teachers to undertake CPD has been firmly established in education policy since the *Education Reform Act 1988*, and in early years the *Nutbrown Review (2012)* recommends that CPD is available to all. However, the ambiguity surrounding the professional status of early years staff (Lloyd and Hallet, 2010), as well as the increasing difficulty in accessing and funding ongoing training and staff cover, contributes to a less defined position in reality. Additionally, although CPD is recommended in England, unlike other countries it is not a statutory requirement, consequently it may not be prioritised or resourced (Smart and Walley, 2018).

As the principal source of CPD for school-based SENCOs, whether the NASENCo training effectively combines reflective practice, participation and acquisition has been questioned (Pearson et al., 2011).

Done et al. (2015) question 'whether SENCoS are supported on the award to develop a criticality that empowers them to distinguish between different concepts or models of inclusion so they recognise why, when and where to apply particular concepts and approaches' (p.89). Whitehead and Huxtable (2016) recognise that critical and ethical understanding underlie and inform provision by permitting assumptions to be contested and by allowing integrity violations to be addressed (Boylan and Woolsey, 2015). However, in reality, SENCo workload and time pressures are restricting this process since the NASENCo course, which involves 60 credits at level 7, must be completed in addition to everyday SENCo work. In response to this, Lamb and Blandford (2017) identified interest in a SENCo qualification pathway. Such a pathway could build on a block of initial knowledge, and would allow SENCoS to develop their criticality as their knowledge and experience grow. It could also start at level 3, providing early years SENCoS with a progression route. Lamb and Blandford (2017) also identified the value SENCoS place on the peer contact and support that the National Award (NASENCo) provides and support networks, mentoring and linking NASENCo learning outcomes to practice could enhance understanding and practice (Passy et al., 2017).

3.4.3 Agency

SENCoS have been identified as 'agents of change' (Pearson, 2010; Van de Putte et al., 2017) who are 'responsibilised' (Hellowell, 2017b, p.5) with securing and developing provision for learners with SEND in their settings. Agency refers to the thoughts and actions taken by persons that express their individual power (Bourdieu, 1977, 2002). Eteläpelto et al., (2017) identify a link between professional identity and agency in that agents are more likely to fulfil roles when they identify with the values and beliefs involved with them (Korsgaard, 2008). Professional agency represents the idea that professionals have the power to take stances, to make decisions and choices, and to influence matters. All of these affect their work, their involvement with and commitment to reform and change, and involve their professional identities (Priestley et al., 2012; März and Kelchtermans, 2013).

Consideration of agency can therefore help us to understand educational change and supports the negotiation of teacher identity (Vähäsantanen, 2015). However, acknowledging the importance of agency is not without difficulty due to different conceptualisations that overlap and intersect with other concepts such as identity, professional knowledge and skills, and beliefs and values (Moate and Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2014; Pantic, 2015; Pyhältö et al., 2015; Toom et al., 2015; Biesta et al., 2016; 2017). Indeed, the consideration of agency necessitates the examination of a range of concepts which are not mutually exclusive (Norwich, 2014). Rather, they entwine in complex patterns and are set within the wider arena of policy frameworks and powerful political and economic dynamics. That is, strong professional agency:

- is central to identity development (Beijaard, 2009; Vähäsantanen, 2015);
- fosters work-related learning, commitment, and well-being (Cribb and Gewirtz, 2007; Day and Gu, 2009; Hökkä and Vähäsantanen, 2014);
- contributes to resilience (Day et al., 2006b; Gu and Li, 2013; Pantic, 2015);
- is an important factor in change and development (Vähäsantanen, 2015; Van Der Heijden et al., 2015); and
- is important for retention (Gu, 2016).

Although constraints, such as stress and workload can restrict agency (Vähäsantanen, 2015), Ketelaar et al. (2012) found that a high degree of agency and ownership had a positive effect on teachers' responses to innovation. Yet defining agency is a difficult task. Some suggest that professional agency is 'practiced' by taking a stance and being able to influence one's work and professional identity (Taylor, 1985; Eteläpelto et al., 2017). Eteläpelto et al. (2017) describe their 'subject-centred sociocultural approach' (p.663) which has some similarity to the ecological approach adopted by Emirbayer and Mische (1998) and Priestley et al. (2015). Others, for example Pyhältö et al. (2015), define agency as a 'capability' which is evidenced in the ability to act and to self-regulate. An alternative definition is offered by Biesta et al. (2016, p.626), who describe it as an 'actor-situation transaction', linking it to structuration theorists such as Bourdieu (1977), Bhaskar (1998), Berger and Luckmann (1967) and Giddens (1984). However, across definitions of agency, there is a broad consensus of the interplay between person, practice, and culture (Edwards, 2016).

If it is assumed that agency is not 'solely lodged in the body of an individual agent' (Van de Putte et al., 2017, p.885), so is exercised and will be manifest within certain sociocultural and material constraints and resources (Edwards, 2007; Eteläpelto et al., 2017), then the framework suggested by Chreim et al., (2007) is relevant as it examines how inter-level influences are significant for the reconstruction of professional identity and the execution of change. They found that the agency of the professionals involved in a change was a stronger enabler of role reconstruction and enactment than the imposition of change by institutional factors. This has similarities with Archer's social realist theory (Archer, 2000, 2003, 2012), where reflexivity (when the individual considers what matters and what to do next) enables a person to navigate the structural and cultural properties pertinent to a change (Willis et al., 2017). Taylor (1985) describes a human agent as one who has some understanding of self. That is, where there are strong evaluations, or a strong identity, a positive situation exists which can be engaged to accomplish action, and where there are weak evaluations, or a weak identity, the person's sense of agency is more negative and the tendency is towards a feeling of disempowerment, with resultant inactivity.

Agential concepts include self-efficacy, locus of control, autonomy and self-reliance, and concepts which interact with agency include resilience and confidence. These are now explored to make their meaning and contribution explicit. Self-efficacy is the belief that individuals hold about their ability to achieve desired outcomes (Huberman, 1989; Klassen and Chiu, 2010; De Neve et al., 2015) and determines how opportunities are perceived, how choices are made and the effort and persistence rendered. Teachers' self-efficacy in relation to SEND was researched by Ekins et al. (2016), who found that the Key Stage that teachers work in directly relates to their self-efficacy. Teachers working with younger pupils were found to have higher self-efficacy in contrast with those working with older pupils. They also found self-efficacy in collaborative situations, for instance in partnership working, to be generally lower than in instructive and behaviour management situations, for instance, in preventing disruptive behaviour, and that knowledge of SEND policy, and experience of teaching children with SEND have a strong positive relationship with self-efficacy. This concept of self-efficacy is thought by some to be linked to locus of control, which relates to a person's perception of internal control over external conditions (Rotter, 1966): for example, when individuals perceive the outcomes to be dependent on or influenced by their own skill or efforts, they have a greater sense of power and influence. Conversely, when individuals perceive their own skills and efforts have little impact on outcomes, their sense of powerlessness and ineffectiveness increases. For this reason, individuals 'will act differently in different contexts and at different times depending on how they perceive [their] locus of control' (Pantic, 2015, p768). This means that the different arrangements and levels of authority in diverse settings influence SENCo's sense of control and effectiveness.

Autonomy is also linked to an individual's sense of empowerment and is concerned with independent practice, where individuals self-determine and self-govern their work (Cribb and Gewirtz, 2007; Sammons et al., 2007; Day and Gu, 2009). Professionals are autonomous practitioners, who are accountable for the informed but independent decisions they make (Evetts, 2011). However, the SENCo role is not formally recognised as a profession in England, with SENCos here operating within control-driven contexts. This means that although the Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) identifies SENCos as agents of change (Done et al., 2016b; Fitzgerald and Radford, 2017), realisation of this function depends on how their settings have enacted and empowered their role (Hökkä and Vähäsantanen, 2014; Pantic, 2015; Pyhältö et al., 2015; Toom et al., 2015; Biesta et al., 2016; 2017). Self-reliance is linked to this, as it denotes reliance on one's own capabilities, judgement or resources. Neoliberal education policies value self-reliance and enterprise in students and staff (Slee, 2011; Glazzard, 2014), and Lamb and Blandford (2017) found that the most common training for SENCos working in Further Education was through experience, self-training and learning from colleagues. They also found that early years SENCos rely on incidental experience and occasional training events such

as professional development days. Evidence of self-reliance in early years was also found by McDonnell et al. (1997) who discovered that whilst few workers had studied an early childhood SEND programme that provided the knowledge, skills, and experiences necessary for working effectively with young children with developmental delays, many had found other, sometimes creative ways, of accruing the necessary knowledge and skills.

Another concept fundamentally linked to agency is resilience, which is the ability to cope with and recover from adversity and change (Gu, 2016). This is an important resource for managing moral stress such as that created by role-identity conflict, with a balance between resignation and resistance being identified as an important tool in the repertoire for the resilience of long-serving SEND professionals (Hellawell, 2015). Additionally, Day et al. (2006b) found that levels of pupil attainment positively and negatively affected teachers' ability to sustain their commitment and their capacity for resilience and Sammons et al. (2007) suggest that resilience is dynamic and influenced by environmental, work and personal contexts. This is important if we consider inter-level influences on SENCo identity and agency (Chreim et al., 2007). Finally, confidence, which is a feeling of assurance or certainty, especially in oneself and one's capabilities, but also in other people or things, is also linked to concepts of agency. Significantly, Gu and Day (2013) suggest that it is reasonable to expect individual teachers to have different levels of confidence in, control over, and resilience against demands and within situations that are 'neither innate or stable' (p.22).

Certainly, from an ecological perspective, agency results from 'the interplay of individual efforts, available resources, and contextual and structural factors as they come together in particular ...unique situations' (Biesta and Tedder, 2007, p.137). Agency then is not something people have, but rather is something they can achieve given certain configurations of influences. These influences include past experience, present factors and a motivation to bring about a future that is different from the present or the past (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). Priestley et al. (2016) suggest that 'people who are able to form expansive projections about their future trajectories might be expected to achieve greater levels of agency than those whose aspirations are more limited' (p.140). Also, such aspirations are often rooted strongly in teachers' values and beliefs, as shaped by personal and professional experiences (Kelchtermans, 2005; Belo et al., 2014).

This is important because although the Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) identifies SENCos as change agents, and 'responsibilises' (Hellawell, 2017b, p.5) them in line with the trend in current policy initiatives (ibid), their implementation of this depends on influences both within and without themselves. Agency is thus linked to identity through context and experience. It interacts with power, with all of these influencing how policy enactment takes place. Indeed, intersections and interpersonal

interactions and relationships are key for teachers' collaboration, and for acting strategically with other agents to 'reshape or retain' structures (Pantic, 2015, p.769). This means that collective agency is also needed for systemic change, since it is through individuals that organisations act (Archer, 2000; Priestley et al., 2012). Furthermore, a shared sense of purpose is found to be the most significant factor in effective professional development (Teacher Development Trust (TDT), 2014), maintaining resilience (Ballet and Kelchtermans, 2009) and enhancing pupil progress and outcomes (Cordingley, 2015).

3.5 Summary

This study sought to discover the influences that enable EHCP implementation, and changes in SENCo role, responsibilities, relationships and identity resulting from this, by exploring their experience and perceptions of enactment of this area of the SEND Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015). This chapter presented the bio-ecological model created to allow consideration of both internal and external influences, and the theories and ideas which informed this were described. At the internal level, experience is considered since this contributes to an individual's perceptions of the world, with these perceptions being manifest in the personally-held construct systems that inform each person's identity and actions. Different facets of identity are therefore considered, since these contribute to SENCo perceptions of their real and ideal practice. These also interact with the specific ecological systems that SENCos practice in so at the external level, institutional and organisational influences are considered. Key concepts include policy and how this is realised in specific contexts, with the contribution of leadership and power, and purposes and values, being central to this due to their influence on setting priorities and practice. Finally, the concepts of progress and change, the contribution of CPD, and the notion of agency are all considered, because of their potential to shape and develop how individual SENCos support EHCP implementation within their particular setting's ecosystem.

CHAPTER 4 - METHODOLOGY

4.0 Overview

In this chapter, I explain the research approach and present the values and assumptions used in the study to render the lens through which the research is conducted overt, since the research design is linked to these (Clough and Nutbrown 2012; Denzin and Lincoln 2013). This chapter also details:

- the aims and research questions;
- the study design;
- ethical issues, including quality and transferability and data storage;
- data collection and analysis; and
- the integration strategy.

4.1 Approaches to the Research

Since worldviews influence how individuals approach research and the design choices they make, this first section sets out my outlook as the researcher.

4.1.1 Ontology

I adopt the position that social reality is the product of individual understandings that are created and shaped in transaction with each of our contexts. Consequently, this study adopts a relativist ontology which posits that reality is dependent on the ways we come to know it (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Patton, 2002). A relativist approach recognises that the worldview of the researcher, and the worldview of those being researched, both contribute to meaning-making (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Hence, the results of an inquiry are shaped by the interactions between the inquirer and the inquired upon. This transaction is central to the meaning-making of a relativist approach (Guba, 1990) as relativists believe that the world cannot be seen as it 'really is' or as it 'really works' except through a values window (Guba, 1990, p.24). Researchers are thus regarded as human constructivists, who collect and assemble information about a problem, with their worldview and understanding being integral to the pattern and meaning-making process (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013).

Critics of pure relativism highlight the need to consider the constraining impact of social structures (Bhaskar 1998; Willig 1999). In response to this, relativist ontology recognises that our understanding of the world is relative to 'our specific cultural and social frames of reference' (King and Horrocks 2010, p.9). This is relevant to this study, which explored SENCo perceptions of EHCPs, a specific response within our current socio-political and historical context. The relativist approach has also been criticised as value-laden and fictional (as opposed to *factual*) (Denzin and Lincoln 2013). Indeed, some argue

that a systematic inquiry is impossible to achieve using this approach due to the researcher's own biases (Carr, 1995; Robson, 2011). Others argue that adopting a relativist approach does not preclude a systematic inquiry (Pring, 2000, 2015), and that this is possible if the central role of the researcher is acknowledged. This necessitates questioning how we know what we know. The next section therefore sets out the epistemological stance adopted for the study, exploring what we can know and the criteria such knowledge must comply with in order to be called knowledge rather than merely belief (Blaikie, 1993).

4.1.2 Epistemology

Epistemology underpins the rationale for the methodological approach (King and Horrocks, 2010). Considering it carefully enables research to demonstrate design integrity, where the nature of the research, conceptual framework, research questions, overall strategy, design, and methods align (Marshall and Rossman, 2006). In this way, a study can be situated within structures established by others and explanation can take place within recognised frameworks. This enhances an inquiry's criticality, comparability, and coherence (Proctor and Capaldi, 2006; Adams and Buetow, 2014; Haig, 2014).

The paradigm used in this research is pragmatism (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2010a; Morgan, 2014), which recognises that actions:

- cannot be separated from the situations and contexts in which they occur;
- are linked to outcomes and are open to change; and
- are dependent on individually and socially held worldviews (Morgan, 2014).

Pragmatism takes a middle road between realism and constructivism. Whilst realism posits that there is a reality that exists apart from human experience, pragmatism recognises that this can only be encountered through human experience (Morgan, 2014). Conversely, while constructivism seeks to understand the social world that people have constructed – a construction which informs and is reproduced in activities (Blaikie, 2007; May, 2011) - pragmatism is also concerned with the outcomes of such activities. Pragmatism concentrates not on individuals, but on how shared beliefs shape action. Indeed, theorists such as Weber (1949; 1971) propose that the starting point for the systematic analysis of society is the subjective meaning used by people in social settings. Kvale (1995) suggests that this requires the personal, local and community conceptions to be revealed.

In order to access these conceptions, the epistemological approach must pay attention to the contexts, experiences, and interpretations of actors. Such material can be regarded as subjective. Although it is argued by researchers adopting a more positivist, realist stance that experience, by its

very nature, is subjective and so not entirely trustworthy, Dewey (1958) argued that such a tendency to discredit concrete human experience is serious because it undervalues the importance of these. Responding to this, Guba (1990) explained that concepts and structures for description and explanation can enable subjective material to be viewed within objective frameworks. This is the role of the conceptual framework (see Chapter 3). Epistemological integrity also requires issues of trustworthiness and credibility to be interrogated. This can be achieved by probing and pondering the issues related to subjectivity/objectivity, causality, validity and transferability (Patton, 2002), (see section 4.4.1).

With a pragmatic approach, validity is addressed if findings are substantiated by the convergence of different perspectives. Triangulation then becomes a process of confirmation (Knafle and Breitmayer, 1991; Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2010). Indeed, transferability of findings is facilitated when the phenomenon being researched emerges from different voices and settings, and from different methods (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Finally, a pragmatic approach extends the meaning and understanding achieved by an inquiry. It does this by using different methods to reach different aspects of the research problem, and so extends the understanding from that which would have been obtained by one method alone (Irwin, 2010).

4.1.3 My Position to the Research/Reflexivity

Relativism requires consideration of the interpretive lens used. This involves researching the researcher to reveal perspectives, conflicts, for example of priority, and possible sense-making dilemmas or biases (Allan and Slee, 2008). Such perspectives, conflicts, dilemmas, and bias may be professional, personal or academic. This involved examining my own perceptions and biases because the social world of researchers shape and mediate their inquiries (Blaikie 2007).

As a Speech and Language Therapist, I know that listening to individuals is central to comprehending and valuing them. I also know that others often convey thoughts and information that change and develop my own thinking and knowledge. However, I am also part of the 'SEN industry' (Tomlinson, , 2014, p.11), which means that I have pre-existing perspectives that influence my view and that perhaps encourage me to perpetuate the role of key professionals. I have had regular contact with SENCos, both as a Speech and Language Therapist and as the parent of students with additional needs. I have also taught and marked on the NASENCo award. As a result, I have seen SENCo practice and potential from several different angles. However, I am not a SENCo, so am an 'outsider' though I am also an 'insider' in that I have a high level of knowledge and experience of SEND and working with SENCos. Consequently, my researcher position is that of an 'outsider-within' (Collins, 1986, p.14;

1999), thus occupying a *third space* (Bhabha, 1994) which can lead to greater reflexivity. This is because being located in a peripheral yet inclusive place gives us a useful vantage point. Outsider-within can expose elements of reality that are concealed by insider approaches, since they are more likely to notice anomalies that have been ignored due to taken-for-granted assumptions (Collins, 1986). This enables the familiar to be 'made strange' (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995, p. 11), that is being prepared to 'look again', look 'around and about' phenomenon and not to 'take for granted' what is typically taken for granted (ibid, p. 11). The outsider-within is also a situational identity, that seeks to recognise and place itself within the particular hierarchies and power inequalities that exist for the group, since it is not placed within these itself.

I recognise however, in line with Milligan (2016), that as a 'cross-cultural', or across disciplinary boundaries researcher (p.239), the research design and data collection methods chosen can affect how participants view the researcher. Because of this, my stance became much more of an 'in-betweenener' (p.248). On entering the field, SENCos viewed me as an outsider, but as relationships, rapport, and trust built, they began to view me as a knowledgeable outsider and subsequently as an in-betweenener who facilitated the research and dissemination of their stories. Caine et al. (2013) stress the need to recognise the centrality of the relationship and engagement between the researcher and participant that is needed to elicit the data from which the understanding and social significance of participant experience and perceptions can emerge. Hence the researcher's presence and investment must be considered carefully, since 'experience linked to one's social past can and must be mobilised in research' (Bourdieu 2004, p.113).

The position of the researcher is also integral to the analysis and interpretation of descriptive data (Miles and Huberman 2014; Sapsford and Jupp 2006; Silverman 2011). Analysis of this nature cannot rely merely on codes from a codebook, which can limit the understanding of the text by being overly prescriptive (Weber, 1985; Saldana, 2016). Instead, it must rely on a degree of human recognition, reasoning, and inference. Consequently, the analysed data are subject to interpretations guided by the conceptual framework of the research, which although founded on theory and literature, are also shaped by researcher *a priori* values and beliefs (Layder, 1998).

Connected with this is the consideration of language, as the medium through which data is collected and analysed. It is through language that meaning is reached (Bruner, 1990). As an outsider-within, I am aware that whilst we use language as a means of embodying something to make it manifest, this manifestation can be partial or enigmatic to others. Taylor (1985) considered this problem accessing

meaning, explaining that an expressive account of meaning cannot avoid subject-related properties. This is because it is an 'external clothing of thought' (p.235). As such, it is individual but takes place within a community made up of others who share some of the same experiences, views, and understanding. We use language to both frame and share so it can represent both individual and shared reality. This coheres with my researcher position ontologically, epistemologically and as an outsider-within.

4.2 Aims and Research Questions

Four key issues emerged from the literature review. These were:

- Changes to roles, responsibilities and relationships created by the SEND Code of Practice and EHCP implementation (DfE and DoH, 2015).
- Differences in educational phase, setting, status, and training route that have relevance to EHCP implementation.
- Organisational and individual influences on the practical implementation of the policy.
- Potential changes to the identity development of SENCOs because of the above.

Aims were written to enable these gaps and conundrums to be explored. These informed the research questions. Generating and refining the research questions is central to planning and executing a project successfully. This is because they determine how the research problem is responded to so they must reflect the purpose, boundaries, and direction of the research (Robson, 2011). This study investigated policy implementation in a time of reform, and the import these reforms have for SENCOs. The study sought to explore the differences, changes, and influences identified in the literature from the perspective of SENCOs, because uncovering the meaning and consequence that a situation has for the people involved can enhance our understanding of practice (Geertz, 1973; Hartley, 2009). Indeed, an approach that provides an understanding of the practitioners' perspective is more likely to avoid a shallow, prescriptive view of the domain under investigation and is more likely to reveal the dynamic, interrelated and complex elements at play (Goodson, 2013). For that reason, the research questions needed to articulate what the study sought to know about the intentions and perspectives of the people involved in the situation examined (Agee, 2009). They also needed to allow the specific contexts in which people live and work to emerge. Three research questions were developed to drive the investigation.

Since research questions indicate the intent, borders, and course of the research, they influence choices about how a study should be conducted. Strong research designs link the methodology closely to the research questions to increase cohesion and consistency (Agee 2009; Leshem and Trafford

2007; Robson 2011). Objectives specify how the research aims and questions will be met. The research questions, aims, and objectives are detailed below:

Research Question 1 - How do SENCoS perceive the impact of the Code of Practice on their roles, responsibilities and relationships?

Aim and Objectives - To discover perceived changes to the position of SENCo by:

- focussing on talk about roles, responsibilities, and relationships within their critical event narrative interviews, identified through coding (using NVivo and Word text searches);
- identifying closely linked role, responsibility and relationship constructs using 'eye-balling' of original grids, and by using principal component analysis and scattergraphs (individual grids);
- identifying the significant constructs within the repertory grid interviews using ideographic analysis; and by
- identifying from the highest and lowest ranked items on the group repertory grid.

Research Question 2 - What do SENCoS perceive to be the key positive and/or negative influences on the implementation of this policy?

Aim and Objectives - To consider the role of educational phase, setting and training route in relation to EHCP implementation by:

- comparing and contrasting the data sets both within and between primary years, maintained school, NASENCo qualified SENCoS, and early years, non-maintained nursery, Level 3 SENCoS. This will be facilitated using case classifications and matrix queries in NVivo for critical event narrative interviews;
- using cluster analysis to calculate the strengths of associations between elements and construct clusters per participant, depicted on dendograms (repertory grid interviews);
- examining the rankings by educational phases, setting and training route (group repertory grid); and by
- examining these linked to the pen-portraits of settings and individual SENCoS.

Aim and Objectives - To investigate the perceived organisational and individual influences on the practical implementation of the policy by:

- using worklines (see section 4.7.1) to reveal significant collectively experienced events;
- using the coding which captured organisational and individual influences, both effective and ineffective, within the critical event narrative transcripts;

- identifying constructs of organisational and individual influences, both effective and ineffective, within the repertory grid interview data;
- using similarity scores, produced by cluster analysis, to demonstrate the import of these organisational and individual influences (repertory grid interviews); and by
- using the group ranking of the key constructs to reveal the most significant and insignificant influences for the SENCoS as a group (group repertory grid).

Research Question 3 – How, if at all, do these influences contribute to their developing professional identity as SENCoS?

Aim and Objectives - To consider the impact these changes and influences have had on SENCo identities by:

- using themes related to personal, professional and collective identity from the critical event narrative interview analysis, including the analysis of question 10 (which specifically relates to identity);
- using the distance between repertory grid elements (identities) to reveal individual role-identity salience (repertory grid interviews);
- using cluster analysis, dendograms and scattergraphs to reveal the relationship between ‘real’, ‘ideal’, ‘helpful’, ‘unhelpful’ and ‘not ideal’ identities;
- revealing the qualities associated with these identities, from the constructs created during the repertory grid interviews;
- looking for similarities, if any, with key individual themes present within the critical event narrative interviews and repertory grid interviews; and by
- using the constructs ranked highest and lowest on the group repertory grid, both by individuals and by the group collectively.

These methods and processes are explained in the following sections.

4.3 Study Design

This section sets out the main components of the study design.

4.3.1 Cohesion

Part of the design process involves contemplating methodology at a meta-level, since methodological principles underpin, justify and inform the choices and actions taken (Berman and Smyth, 2015). Choices about how we view social inquiry, and what approach fits our view must therefore be made (Schwandt 2007a). This involves unpacking implicit understanding and reconstructing it as explicit

knowledge, a process that helps define and refine the research problem and approach. Coherence and consistency between these choices (worldview, research questions, methodology, methods of data collection, and strategy for analysis) is essential (Creswell, 2007, 2009; Braun and Clarke, 2013; Denzin and Lincoln, 2013; Merriman, 2014). Hence Leshem and Trafford's model (2007) (Figure 4) was used to check the cohesion and so to support the development of the approach taken in this study:

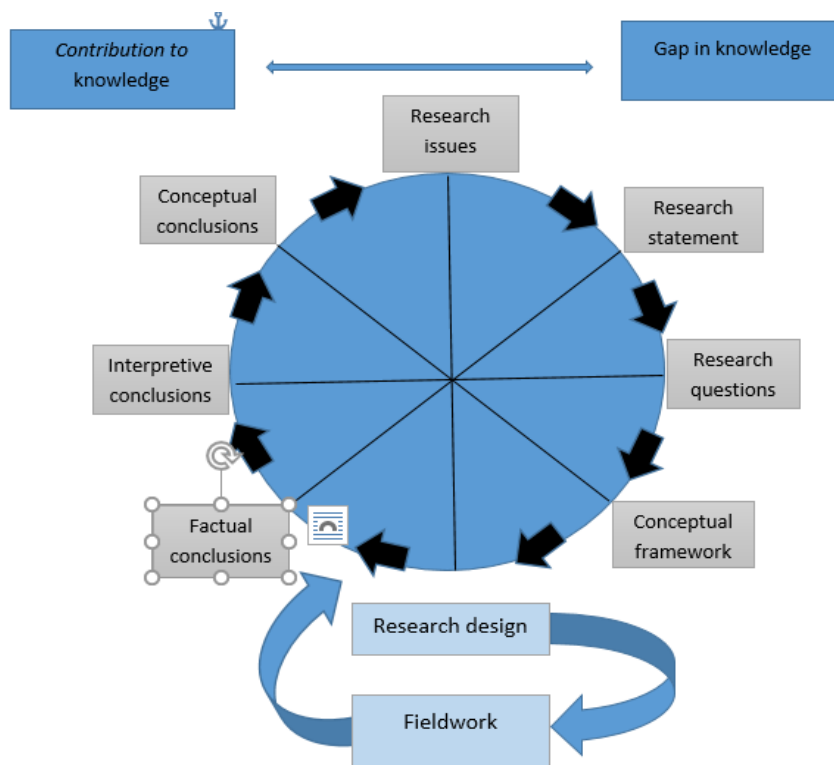


Figure 4 - Visualising the research process (Leshem and Trafford, 2007, p.102).

4.3.2 Methodology

Uncovering SENCos' perceptions required a methodology that could consider complexities, listen to participant voice and value participant experience. The methodology also needed to be congruent with the ontological and epistemological approach taken, whilst being pragmatic about the demands placed upon SENCos, who are very busy professionals. Although positivist researchers can view interpretative research as an inferior, subjective process (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013), interpretivist researchers argue that the scientific method is not sufficient because complex factors must be interpreted alongside the context they exist within (King and Horrocks, 2010). Pragmatic constructivism disputes and bridges this binary position of positivism and interpretivism. Instead of adopting a mutually exclusive objective or subjective stance, where nomothetic and ideographic studies are opposed (Haas and Haas, 2002), it takes a practical approach to addressing research problems (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). It views multi-strategy research as apposite (Pawson and Tilley 1997), and focusses on what will 'work' best to investigate the research problem (Creswell, 2009;

Blaikie, 2010; Robson, 2011). It mixes research approaches in ways that offer the best prospects for answering the research problem (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004), so can involve both descriptive and numerical methods.

Situated philosophically in the works of Peirce (1905), James (1907) and Dewey (1916) and more recently Rorty (1999), pragmatism is often applied when the practical consequences and useful applications of what we can learn about the problem is the concern. It differs from constructivism, which considers that individuals construct their own unique systems of understanding through the progressive internalisation of actions (Piaget 2001). Instead, pragmatic constructivism seeks to explain how individuals act within the constraints of their developing understanding of the contexts in which they find themselves. Stevens (1998) argued that constructivism is compatible with other ontological positions by using Kelly's (1955) personal construct psychology to examine how the combination of relativism and objectivism can be made workable by the addition of 'minimum realism' (p.284). 'Minimum realism' assumes that at least some aspects of reality are independent of our experiences, beliefs and values, a condition that Damasio (1994) described as a dual restraint (biology and culture, personal and social). Indeed, pragmatic constructivists recognise that real-world constraints affect our 'knowing processes' (Stevens, 1998, p.288).

This study investigated SENCo perceptions and implications for their identity by centring on their experiences of EHCP implementation. Crotty (2015) explains that whilst idealism is what is confined to the mind and relativism proposes that 'the way things are' is really just 'the sense we make of them', realism recognises that 'what is there' can be identified, though it must be described in terms of how something is seen and reacted to (p.64). Knowles (2013) argues that 'understanding ... perspectives is largely a product of understanding the impact of biography – those experiences that have directly influenced an individual's thinking' (p.102). Indeed, recounting and explaining experience allows us to view the world through other's eyes, and so access lives and knowledge different to our own (Dewey, 1958). Highly specialised experiences can thus be made accessible to others.

4.3.3 Mixed-Methods

Both descriptive and numerical methods were adopted to access the experiences and perspectives of SENCos. Mixed-method typologies are dependent on choices based across four dimensions: theoretical perspective, priority of descriptive or numerical strategy, sequence of data collection, and point at which the data are integrated (Creswell 2009; Terrell 2012). A sequential, parallel design (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2017) was used in this study. This is illustrated in Figure 5 below:

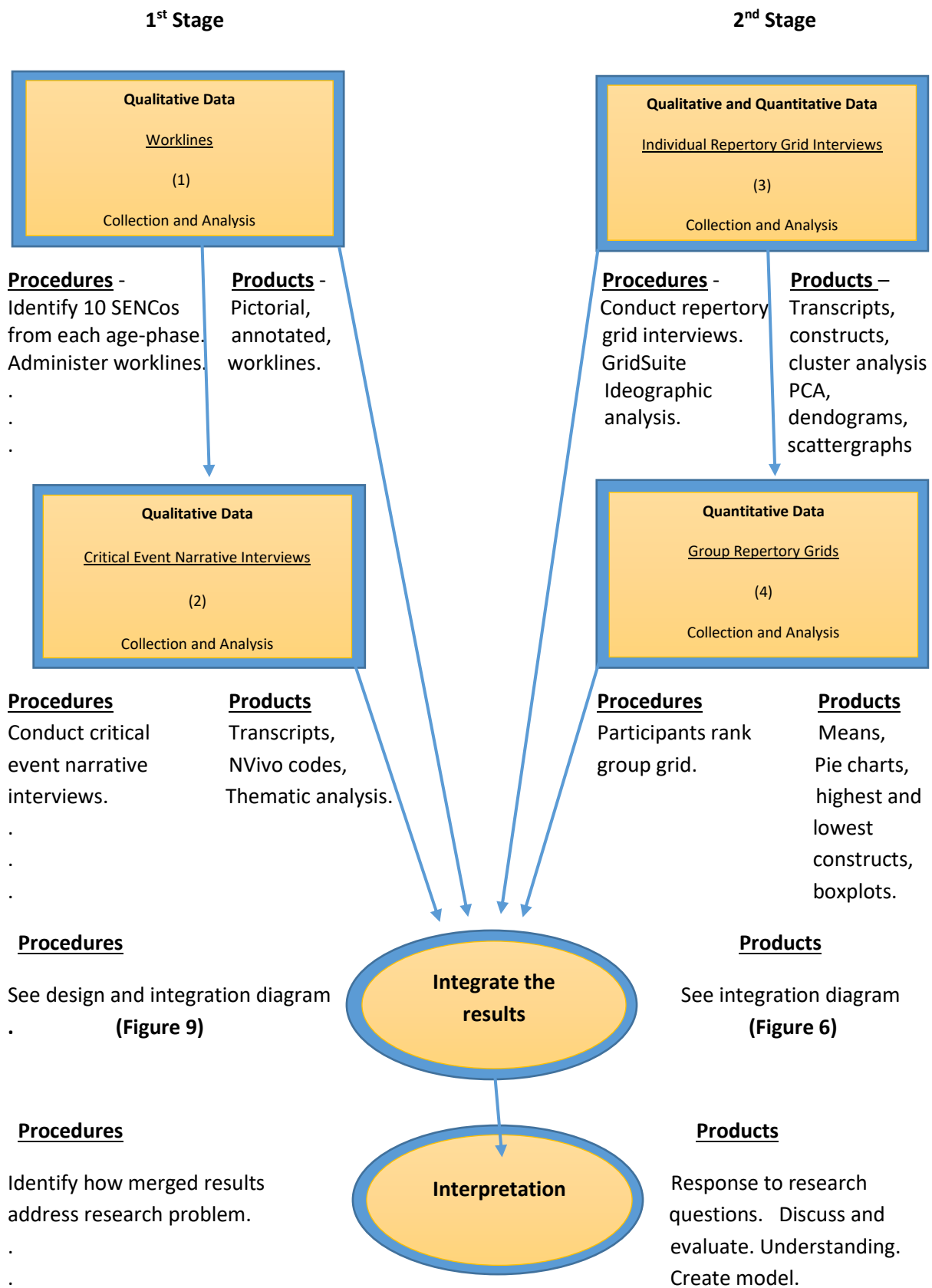


Figure 5 - Sequential parallel design (based on Creswell and Plano Clark, 2017).

Whilst the use of multiple mixed-methods can strengthen the investigation by using perspectives from both data types, there are associated advantages and disadvantages (Denscombe 2014; Robson 2011; Tashakkori and Teddlie 2010b). Using several methods enables different aspects of the same phenomenon to be captured, and so increases the understanding and strengthens the rigour of the data collection (Denzin 1978). This enables complex and potentially interrelated issues and concerns to emerge (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2010; Morgan, 2014; Bingle et al., 2015). However, the need to develop skills in more than one method and the chance that findings from different methods might not corroborate one another are disadvantages (Denscombe, 2014). Additionally, too much data can be collected, meaning that it cannot be analysed adequately. This study design mitigated against this by limiting the number of participants (to nineteen), by limiting the number of data sets for each participant (to four) and by using a data reduction technique (see section 4.8.2, *Descriptive Analysis*).

Integrating the different data sets during analysis is also a significant challenge of mixed-methods research (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2010a; Bazeley, 2018). Whilst the design and administration of the research tools are important to the outcomes of a research project (Alvesson and Karremen 2011; Savin-Baden and Howell Major 2013), it is the quality of data analysis that renders method successful. This requires fidelity to, and elucidation of the 'things themselves' (Wertz et al 2011, p.138). Miles and Huberman (1994) advocate interweaving data collection with analysis from the start in order to correct and develop data collection tools, to keep the amount of data requiring analysis manageable and to enable an iterative process, where both *a priori* knowledge and the initial conceptual framework interact with *a posteriori*, emerging themes. This process, which aligns with the pragmatic relativist approach, is described in detail in section 4.9.

In mixed-methods research, the descriptive and numerical methods inform each other (Nastasi et al., 2010). Descriptive methods allow the research to listen to, and value lived-experience through participant voices (Creswell, 2009; Goodson 2013). Numerical methods allow the inter- and intra-participant perceptions to be explored by identifying the significance of influences (inter and intra, enabling and constricting). The sources of data used in this research are worklines (descriptive), critical event narrative interviews (descriptive), individual repertory grids (descriptive and numerical) and group repertory grids (numerical). In sequential parallel designs, descriptive and numerical data sets are collected and analysed separately, then linked using a protocol. Figure 6 illustrates how this was operationalised in this study by mapping the links between each data source, the purposes or questions that each answers, and the conceptual framework levels used in the integration:

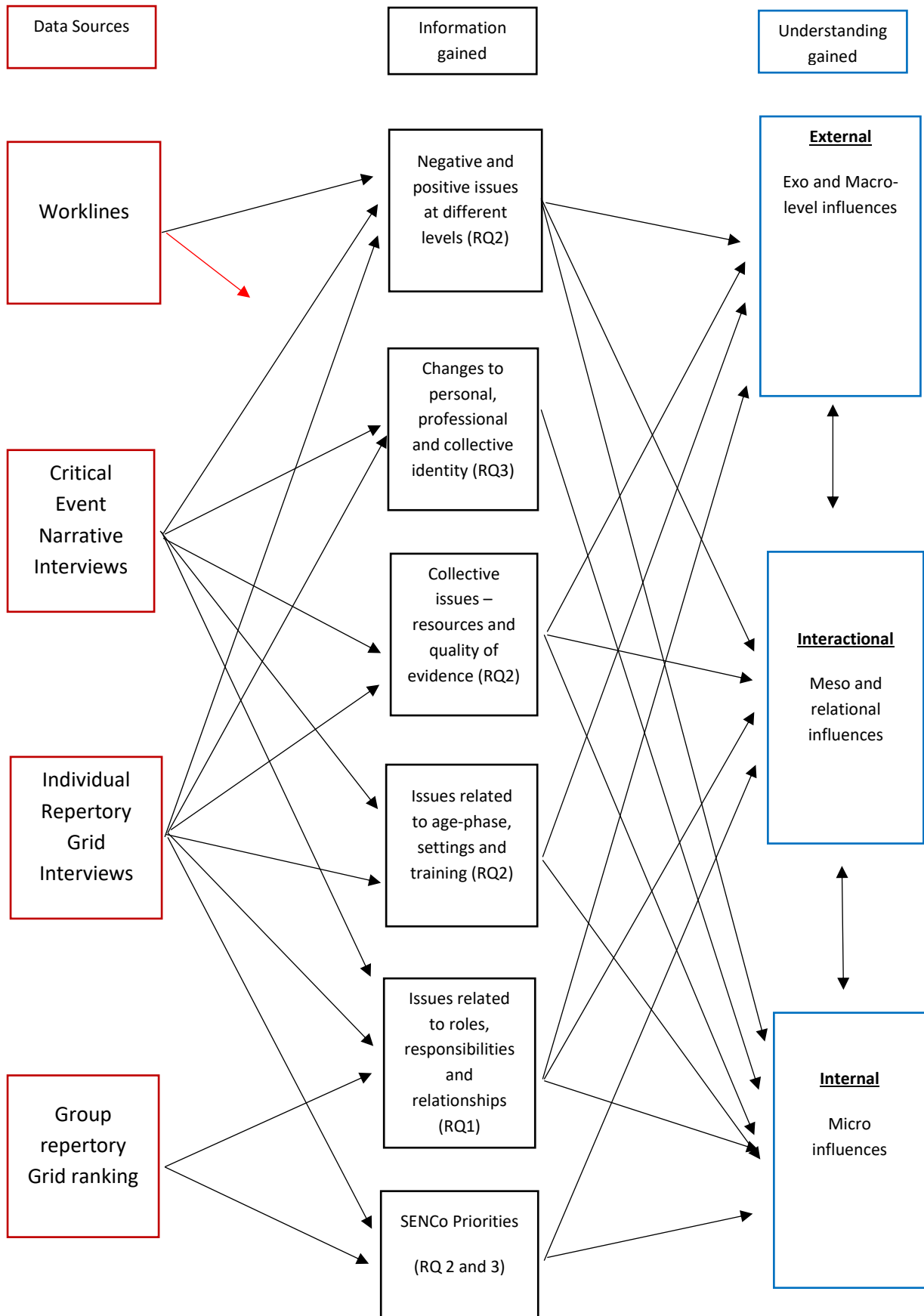


Figure 6 - Visual model of research inputs and contributions to knowledge about SENCo perceptions of EHCP implementation (adapted from Bazeley, 2018, p,34).

4.4 Ethics

Educational researchers aim to respect diverse persons, knowledge, democratic values, and academic freedom. They do this within a framework of ethical responsibility (*British Educational Research Association (BERA) Ethical Guidelines for Educational Researchers*, 2011). BERA's guidelines (2011, 2018) were consulted, both during the design and during the data collection stages, to ensure the study adhered to ethical standards, as were other frameworks, including the *University of Worcester Ethics Policy* (2014), the *Economic and Social Research Council Ethics Framework* (ESRC, 2016), and the *European Early Childhood Educational Research Association Guidelines (EECERA Ethical Code for Early Childhood Researchers*, 2014). The *General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018* (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2018) and the updated *Data Protection Act 2018* became legislation during the study, and were also consulted to ensure compliance.

The consideration of ethical issues is integral to the research design. This involved identifying risks and how they would be minimised (Seedhouse, 2009). Risks and their minimisation included:

- The collection, storage, and protection of personal data and the need for participant confidentiality. The risk of identification was minimised by using pseudonyms on all data. Anonymity was then ensured by converting these pseudonyms to codes.
- The footprint created by reflecting on, and possibly changing, participant perspectives and possibly their actions and feelings (Gudmundsdottir, 1995; Caine et al., 2013). This risk was explained in the participant information sheet, and support sources for SENCOs to use, should this footprint cause difficulties, were specified.

Anticipated ethical concerns and their mitigation included:

- The negative impact of time taken out from role by participants to participate: mitigated against by arranging all interviews at a time and place most convenient for the participants.
- The possibility that participants might divulge details about actual EHCP applications, and so about specific children and young persons and their needs: mitigated against by removing any identity information (names, dates, and places) during transcription and by storing original recordings under pseudonyms in password protected facilities.
- The possibility that a participant's availability and willingness could change: for example, due to workload and staff changes in their place of work. This was mitigated against by specifying a mechanism to withdraw, and the processes for removing individual data, and by a main-study participant number of 16 which was considered high enough to sustain withdrawals.

- Individual SENCo responses in the semi-structured interviews and individual repertory grid interviews may not be representational of the rest of the group: mitigated against by acknowledging and discussing outliers in the analysis of the data.

The ethics application, which details the ethical risks and concerns anticipated in this project, is included in Appendix 1. The University of Worcester Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee reviewed this application, and approval was obtained in February 2017, following minor amendments. These amendments included:

- specifying a third-party mechanism to withdraw, by adding a question to the information sheet asking focus group participants to agree or disagree to respecting each other's confidentiality; and
- making sufficient provision for handling data that may contain third-party detail.

A further ethical application was made to secure approval to contact the owners/managers and head teachers (who as gatekeepers had already given consent for the SENCos in their settings to be approached). This was in order to approach the additional sample needed for the group repertory grids. Approval for this was granted in January 2018. Unforeseen ethical issues also arose during data collection:

- One gatekeeper voiced concern related to an unconnected university matter. This was resolved by sending out specific module information and by sign-posting this individual.
- Participants often mentioned Speech and Language Therapy, sometimes in positive terms but sometimes as a concern. I reflected on this situation, wondering if there was a potential conflict of interest. Following discussion with my supervisory team, I concluded that my involvement with the participants was as a researcher, so I did not have a duty to divulge that I previously practiced Speech and Language Therapy.

SENCos are very busy professionals, often with duties additional to the core role: for example, class teaching commitment and additional senior leadership team responsibilities such as phase leader, deputy head teacher or safeguarding officer. Additionally, experience of EHCP implementation varies between settings, with some SENCos having a lot of experience and others none. When planning the research, recruitment of participants was consequently a major consideration.

4.4.1 Quality and Transferability

Ethical research adheres to standards of quality, so issues of reliability and validity must be addressed, in keeping with the requirements for rigorous, systematic and empirical methodology (Blaikie, 2010; Denzin and Lincoln, 2013). Since it is not possible to exactly replicate a social setting to check the

quality of the research (Seale, 2004; Silverman, 2011; Robson, 2011), social research achieves rigour by applying trustworthiness criteria (Schwandt, 2007b; Robson, 2011; Patton, 2015; Twining et al., 2017). Rigour in social research is also achieved by making explicit the constructions and strategies applied. This increases the authenticity of, and confidence in, the interpretations made. This study uses the following descriptive terms (with their numerical equivalent being included in brackets after): credibility (validity); transferability (external validity); dependability (reliability); and neutrality (objectivity). The next sections explain how this study addressed these.

Credibility

Credibility is concerned with the degree to which data can be demonstrated to be accurate and appropriate (Denscombe, 2014). Although in descriptive research, it is not possible to demonstrate, in an absolute way, that the data are 'right', it is possible to make evident the accuracy and appropriateness of the data. In this study, this was achieved by asking participants to check and verify their interview transcripts. It was also achieved by validating stage one findings with participants at a dissemination event. Maxwell (2002) equates this to interpretive validity, which is ascertaining the accuracy of representations in terms of what things mean to the people being studied. Triangulation also enhances credibility and trustworthiness by checking whether a finding corresponds with other propositions in operation at a particular time (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Denscombe, 2014; Patton, 2015). This study achieved this by using methodological triangulation and the conceptual framework (Silverman, 2011). Credibility was also achieved by using grounded data collected from fieldwork, with scrutiny made possible by the explicit description of the analytical strategies used (Denscombe, 2014). Finally, both convergent and divergent findings are reported in order to enhance the quality and integrity of this research.

Transferability

Due to its ontological and epistemological stance, descriptive research does not consider research samples to be representative of the whole population and so does not assume that the findings or claims made from the data are generalisable (Twining, et al., 2017). As a method, critical event narrative inquiry enables us to hear the voice of different SENCOs, and so access a range of experiences and conceptualisations (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2005). However, such a multi-voiced approach brings challenges of authoritativeness and application (Gudmundsdottir, 1995; Elbaz-Luwisch, 2005). In small-scale descriptive research, the reader must use the information provided about the rigour and context of the research to arrive at a judgement about how far it *could* apply to other comparable instances, rather than to what extent the findings *do* apply to such instances (Robson, 2011; Denscombe, 2014). Riessman (2008) argues that the very case-centeredness of narrative can enable it to produce general concepts and knowledge just as other case-based methods do. For example, in

medicine and law, pathologies or incidents are closely studied to uncover new information, and treatment or law is developed to meet newly arisen situations. This is then applied to other similar instances, leading to further development of understanding of these particular pathologies or incidents. The transferability of the findings of this study is possible through similar mechanisms because the information uncovered in this study has been contextualised. Transferability is also possible because the collective themes and group ranking demonstrate that issues of identity, practice, and constraints reach beyond the individual.

Dependability

In social research, the researcher is closely bound to the research instruments since the researcher has often both developed and administered these. Dependability is concerned with whether another researcher using the same instruments would produce the same findings. Since replicating a social situation exactly is unlikely, the research procedures and decisions need to be ‘seen’ so they can be evaluated in terms of how they constitute reputable processes and reasonable judgements (Denscombe 2014; Lincoln and Guba 1985). Consequently, they serve as proxies for being able to replicate the research and they open the research process ‘for audit’ (Denscombe, 2014, p.298). One way of doing this was to establish inter and intra-coder reliability to ensure the data analysis is consistent and dependable. This is a standard measure of research quality (Kolbe and Burnett, 1991).

Inter-coder agreement measures the extent to which independent coders make the same decisions in evaluating the content of scripts (Lombard et al., 2002). In this study, a member of the School of Education (not connected with the research) coded the same transcript section. Key terms were explained and discussed in preparation for this task. Intra-coder agreement measures the extent to which a single coder makes the same decisions in evaluating the content of scripts. The researcher’s intra-coder reliability was assessed in this study by coding the same transcript section three times, each a month apart. Different methods for assessing and reporting the agreement or coder reliability exist (Lombard et al., 2002, 2004; Krippendorff, 2004), including kappa measures. In this study, Excel was used to produce a simple percentage calculation (where 0% equals no agreement and 100% equals total agreement). These figures are shown below in Table 1:

Table 1 - Inter and intra-rater agreement scores.

	Total items coded	Agreement (number of items out of total)	Percentage Agreement (%)
<i>Inter-rater reliability</i>	81	43	53.09%
<i>Intra-rater reliability</i>	81	54	66.67%

This indicates intermediate to good agreement (where agreements of less than 40% are poor, 40%-75% are moderate to good and greater than 95% is excellent: Fleiss, 1981). Whilst these scores are not high, intra-rater reliability is higher than inter-rater reliability. Furthermore, some codes, for example, the 'number of EHCPs created', showed a consistent match for both reliability ratings (3,3,3/3,3). Other codes, for example, 'support for SENCos' (2,2,3/1,2) required recognition of description rather than these concepts being actually named. This reveals different and/or emerging understandings and interpretations of some concepts. Inter-coder reliability was also achieved through joint ideographic analysis. This ensured that the meanings represented by the verbal labelling of constructs were similarly understood (see section 3.2.2). Finally, Schwandt (2007b) argues that descriptive and numerical methods are apposite. By supporting each other, their use can increase dependability. This is because numerical data can support and extend descriptive interpretations, and descriptive data can explain numerical findings. In this study, both methods are operationalised in this manner.

Neutrality

In narrative interviewing, the traditional separation of researcher and research participant is less defined. The role of the researcher is to gather participants' personal stories. This requires close working and trust, so an ongoing consideration of possible ethical issues is necessary (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Elbaz-Luwisch, 2005; Webster and Mertova, 2007). The research cannot be free from the influence of the researcher's own values and assumptions, because these affect the focus, the research tools and the analytical framework applied to the data. Indeed, in descriptive research, the data is not 'out there, waiting to be discovered' (Denscombe, 2014, p.300); rather it is produced by the way it is collected and interpreted. Although some methodologies, such as phenomenology, proceed on the basis that the attitudes and prejudices of the researcher can be controlled to enable a detached approach, this research takes the position that the researcher's identity, values, and beliefs play a central role in both the production and analysis of the data. Since neutrality is thus not possible, the question of transparency was addressed by using the literature to inform the development of the research instruments, and by piloting these tools and analytical strategy (see section 4.5). Inter-subjectivity also requires analysis to be explicitly conducted and presented, so that others can follow the procedures and understand the conclusions (Malterud, 2012). Explicit processes demonstrate the appropriateness of the methods, and support the findings and knowledge produced by the research. Subjectivity was also addressed by documenting the researcher's observations, reactions and perspectives in a research diary, a process which supported reflexivity (Clandinin, 2007; Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2015).

4.4.2 Access to data

Data must be stored securely to maintain the privacy of research participants. Storage must also make the data accessible for re-analysis, replication, and potentially to build on findings. Details about the storage and access of data generated in this study can be found in the application for ethical approval (see Appendix 1). Specific information about the storage of, and access to, data is also contained in the research data management (RDM) plan. This was updated during the study to comply with the *Data Protection Act 2018* and with the GDPR (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2018). This plan addresses the six accountability principles of the GDPR, and considers the protection of both raw and processed personal data (see Appendix 2). Additionally, the participant information sheet created for this study meets the privacy requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2018). This includes a privacy notice and a record of the processing activity.

4.5 Pilot Project

First, participants were recruited for a small-scale pilot study. Primary years SENCOs, who had been students on the NASENCo award at a university in the region, were identified. Their involvement commenced after their studies had finished, minimising any vulnerability or conflict of interest. SENCOs working outside the chosen LA were included to avoid compromising recruitment for the main study. Early years pilot participants were identified through professional contacts. In this way, twenty potential pilot participants were identified and invited to take part. Two primary years and two early year SENCOs pilot participants were subsequently recruited.

The pilot project took place between April and June 2017. This allowed the proposed methods and analytical strategies to be tested to check how well they worked in practice (Denscombe, 2014). Finding out the issues and learning lessons from them promotes the methodological rigour and trustworthiness of research (Kim, 2011; Denzin and Lincoln, 2013). As a result, changes were made to the research tools, including:

- adding a Senior Management Team (SMT) box on the workline;
- re-ordering the interview schedule;
- having participants talk through and explain their workline at the beginning of the semi-structured interview;
- finding the most suitable rating scale for the repertory grids; and
- obtaining a short description of their setting from participants, to enable thick description (Geertz, 1973).

Piloting the research tools confirmed that they were fit for purpose and would address the research questions. The pilot study also highlighted the intensely reflective process of the chosen methods, and reinforced the need for the researcher to actively listen and show sensitivity. Piloting taught the researcher how to conduct the techniques by allowing me to train and practise before the research went 'live'. This included learning and practising the software packages used in the analysis (NVivo and Gridsuite). Additionally, trialling the initial thematic coding list allowed coding to be developed and changed, including:

- setting up of NVivo codes and case classifications;
- identifying new codes from the pilot data;
- using optimal use of level headings in interview transcriptions to facilitate searches and investigations; and
- trialling of different repertory grid analyses to identify those most suitable for this research.

The main study was conducted following this pilot project.

4.6 Participants

A main-study sample size of 16 (8 early years and 8 primary phase SENCoS) was identified as small enough to allow detailed analysis and large enough to allow for participant withdrawal. It was also recognised that obtaining a large group of participants for the data collection methods would be difficult due to the reality of SENCo workloads. The sample size therefore aligned with my ontological position of relativism, whilst pragmatically acknowledging and planning for potential recruitment challenges.

4.6.1 Sampling

Purposive sampling is usually used in numerical research to enable generalisation of research findings from a representative sample (Carter and Little, 2007; Twining et al., 2017). Although not seeking to generalise conclusions in this way, this study used purposive sampling because the SEND Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) has been implemented slightly differently in each Local Authority (LA) in England. This means that the administration, paperwork, and support available varies between each LA. This study selected participants from within a single LA to ensure some consistency of process experience (May, 2011). The chosen LA was also accessible to the researcher. As a result, arrangements for SENCo interviews could be flexible to minimise inconvenience to participants.

Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) scores (Association of Public Health Observatories, 2016) and school statistics for the numbers of pupils receiving free school meals (DfE,

2016c), with SEN (DfE, 2016d), and having a statement or EHCP (DfE, 2016b) were used to situate the LA in relation to national averages, allowing comparisons with other locations and situations. These statistics are shown in Table 2:

Table 2 - Statistics showing position of study area compared with the National Average.

% scores (Statistics Accessed: 24-10-16)	Study Area	National Average
IDACI scores	15.2	21.8
Free school meals – state-funded schools	11.1	13.6
Pupils with SEN (all schools)	15.8	14.4
Pupils with statements or EHC plans	2.9	2.8

LA data was then used to identify schools with three or more students with EHCPs (where 3% of school roll is average, DfE, 2016a; DfE, 2016b). This ensured that the primary years SENCOs approached had experience of implementing EHC plans. Purposeful sampling of early years settings was not possible because no similar database exists for this phase.

4.6.2 Recruitment

A database of SENCOs was created to focus recruitment. Seventy primary years settings were identified using a County Council school search engine. DfE School Information and Statistics (DfE, 2016d) were used to discover settings that had three or more EHCPs. This process identified 46 settings, which were approached by telephone and email and invited to participate. Data on the number of EHCPs in early years settings is not publicly available. Instead, County Council pages on a government website (gov.uk/EarlyYears/PublicEnquiry) and sites such as www.daynurseries.co.uk were used to identify settings. Subsequently, a database of 78 identified early years settings was created. However, direct recruitment of early years SENCOs resulted in the recruitment of only three participants. As a result, snowball sampling (Sapsford and Jupp, 2006) was used, with each recruited participant identifying other potential early years SENCOs to approach.

Main study recruitment involved a four-stage process:

1. Head teachers or managers of settings were written to and emailed to inform them about the study.

2. Permission to approach their SENCoS was obtained verbally during a follow-up telephone call since no consent forms were returned from the initial approach. SENCo contact details were provided as part of this consent, which enabled the participant information sheets to be emailed directly to the SENCoS.
3. A telephone call was then made to each SENCo to invite participants to take part and enable any questions to be answered.
4. Informed, written consent was then obtained.

The letters, information sheet and consent form used in this process are included in Appendix 3. Only one participant volunteered from this initial approach. All other participants were recruited following an average of three telephone calls and follow-ups. Unfortunately, four primary years and three early years SENCoS participants subsequently withdrew due to work commitments. This necessitated further recruitment. Fifteen main-study participants were thus recruited: eight early years and seven primary years SENCoS. Their biographical details are summarised in Table 3:

Table 3 - Participant biographical details.

Participant Code	Senior Leadership Team (SLT)	Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)/training level	Years as a SENCo	Achieved the National SENCo Award (NASENCo)
EY-1	Yes	Level 3	3-10 years	No
EY-2	Yes	Level 6 (ECP)	< 3 years	No
EY-3	Yes	Level 5	3-10 years	No
EY-4	Yes	QTS	10+ years	No
EY-5	Yes	QTS	20+ years	No
EY-6	Yes	Level 3	3-10 years	No
EY-7	No	Level 3	< 3 years	No
EY-8	No	Level 3	3-10 years	No
PY-1	Yes	QTS	3-10 years	Yes (2009)
PY-2	Yes	QTS	< 3 years	Yes (2017)
PY-3	No	QTS	3-10 Years	No
PY-4	Yes	QTS	20+ years	No
PY-5	Yes	QTS	< 3 years	Yes (2017)
PY-6	Yes	QTS	< 3 years	No
PY-7	Yes	QTS	10+ years	Yes (2009)

Table 3 shows that of the early years SENCOs, six were on the senior leadership team (SLT) and two were not, qualification level ranged from level 3 to qualified teacher status (QTS), and SENCO experience ranged from two to 19 years ($M = 6.1$ years, $SD = 5.67$). Of the seven primary years SENCOs, five were on the senior leadership team, four had completed the NASENCO award, and SENCO experience ranged from one to fourteen years ($M = 7.1$ years, $SD = 5.76$).

Recruitment of head teachers and managers to rank the group repertory grid was poor, and only one head teacher and one manager (out of 15) completed this task. The others were contacted again only once in recognition that these individuals are very busy and had already been generous with their staff time. Recruiting additional participants was decided against due to the amount of data already collected, the need for a further ethical approval amendment and the difficulties recruiting SENCOs and head teachers already encountered. As a result, this data set ($N=2$) was not analysed and used.

4.6.3 Retention

Only one of the four pilot participants completed the group repertory grid-ranking task meaning the second stage pilot project was incomplete. Since the administration and analysis of the individual repertory grids had already been piloted, and the ranking process for the group repertory grids is a more straightforward process, this did not affect the study. In addition, between the two stages of data collection, three participants had changed jobs, one was on maternity leave and one was just about to go on maternity leave, so 15 main-study participants took part in the individual repertory grid interview but only 14 completed the group repertory grid ranking ($EY = 7$, $PY = 7$).

4.6.4 Timing

Consideration of SENCO workloads was necessary. Timing of school holidays and the nature of seasonal work duties, for example, the preparation of documentation for pupils transitioning to different settings in the coming academic year, influenced the timetabling of interviews. In consideration of this, interviews were conducted at the convenience of participants, including early in the morning and around deadlines and term-dates. SENCO workloads and term-dates also influenced when participants checked their interview transcriptions.

4.6.5 Data Collection

Signed consent was obtained prior to data collection. All interviews were audio-recorded using two electronic devices. This ensured there was a backup, which proved essential, for instance when high levels of electronic interference were present in interview environments. Interviews were transcribed as soon as possible after the interview (Kvale, 2007). All transcriptions were emailed to participants

for validation before analysis began (Bryman, 2012). The audio recordings were then deleted, in accordance with the ethics application and data management plan.

4.7 Main Study - Stage One

Two methods were used in the first stage of data collection, which took place during June and July 2017. Fourteen SENCoS were interviewed in their own settings to minimise their time commitment and maximise the convenience for participants. One SENCo was interviewed at the University, at her request. Each interview took around an hour.

4.7.1 Worklines

Description

Narrative is used as a method in this study. Clandinin and Rosiek (2006) argue that a pragmatic ontology of experience is well-suited for narrative because it aligns with Deweyan theory of experience (Dewey, 1933, 1938, 1958), and Webster and Mertova (2007) suggest that narrative can illuminate the real-life experiences of individuals whilst maintaining regard for their worldview. This is because narrative is concerned with how an individual's experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful (Caine et al., 2013; Clandinin and Connelly 2000). Indeed, Gudmundsdottir (1995) suggests practitioners use narrative to make sense of experiences, since it helps to explore the thinking and knowing that inform our understanding of experiences (Diekelmann and Schulte, 2001). Schön (1983) found that in professions working with people, stories are used to explain and justify thinking and actions. Thus narrative has been described as both a mode of knowing and a means of representing and conveying that knowing (Bruner, 1986, 1990, 2002). It involves seeking, hearing, reflecting on and interpreting the stories of participant's experiences of the phenomenon being investigated. It also requires consideration of 'the social, cultural and institutional narratives within which individual's experiences are constituted, shaped, expressed and enacted' (Clandinin, 2007, p.42).

Considering experience as a phenomenon can help us explore matters such as an individual's professional practice, while also understanding that practice takes place with other professionals and colleagues, in a setting, in a LA, and so on (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). As a tool, narrative enables consideration of the landscape, whilst focussing on the professionals whose practice has been most affected by the introduction of EHC plans. This is important as access to what an experience means for the people living that experience (Geertz, 1973; Webster and Mertova, 2007) can enable the reality of policy enactment to emerge (Ball, 1990, 2015).

Critical event narrative inquiry is a more focussed form of narrative that highlights and captures the events participants consider to be significant (Clandinin and Huber, 2002). Critical events are moments or episodes that have enormous consequences for personal change (Sikes et al., 1985). Arising out of the critical incident technique (Shapira-Lishchinsky, 2011), critical event narrative inquiry is concerned with an 'event or situation which marked a significant turning point or change in the life of a person or an institution...or[of] some social phenomenon' (Tripp, 2012, p.24). This idea of a 'significant turning point' aligns with theories of transformation (Gudmundsdottir, 1995), and so has implications for identity development (Geijsel and Meijers, 2005; Ibarra 2004; Weinrich and Saunderson, 2003).

Experience grows out of previous experiences and also informs future experiences (Dewey, 1933, 1938, 1958). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explain that the idea of a continuum is relevant when we think about policy since 'there is always a history, it is always changing and it is always going somewhere' (p.2). Worklines (Day et al., 2006b) can capture this continuity. They can also capture the critical events or turning points, so were used to enable each SENCo participant to focus on their experience of EHCP implementation. Since SENCos are very busy professionals and narrative can be time-consuming (Clandinin and Connelly 2000), the worklines were requested to be completed as a pre-interview task. This enabled significant events to be identified (Day et al., 2006b; Bingle et al., 2015) and facilitated recollection and embodied identity (Woolhouse, 2017). Using worklines in this way also enabled the face-to-face interviews to be focussed and time efficient.

Administration

Participants were sent the workline task to complete prior to their critical event narrative interview. They were requested to draw a line on a chart to portray how the critical events of EHCP implementation, both positive and challenging, had affected their identity as SENCos. Then they were asked to code this line, in order to identify the recorded events as being either institutional, organisational, professional or personal experiences. Participants reported that the thought and contemplation required to complete these helped them gain awareness. However, due to work and time constraints, three participants could not complete their workline before their interview. Instead, these three completed their worklines as a preliminary task at the first interview. This meant that these worklines tended to be less reflective and contained less detail, which may have had an impact on the resultant data. Other participants reported difficulty in coding the peaks and troughs using the given schema, so coding was not present on all worklines and some lines were annotated using the participant's own descriptions.

To compensate for these differences, each SENCo was asked to describe their workline at the start of the face-to-face interview, an approach first used by Day et al. (2006b). Participants then used their

workline to identify the event they perceived as being the most significant in their experience of EHCP implementation. This provided a narrative of their experience of EHCP implementation. The worklines therefore created both a rich data set in the form of depictions and descriptions, as well as focus and structure for the face-to-face critical event narrative interviews, enabling these to be effective and efficient (Mertova and Webster, 2000).

Analysis

Each workline narrative was recorded, then transcribed. The drawn events were coded as to whether they were at an institutional, organisational, professional or personal level. These events were also identified as being positive (depicted as a peak) or negative (depicted as a trough). This information was then collated (see Appendix 13). Each drawn workline was also transferred onto acetate so they could be viewed collectively, and by sub-group, for example, age-phase. This enabled similarities and differences in the peaks and troughs experienced by SENCOs to be explored.

4.7.2 Critical Event Narrative Interviews

Description

In narrative, the interviewee and interviewer engage in a process where the narrator describes their own experience so that the listener, although unable to share the experience, can perceive it (Zoloth and Charon, 2002). The inherent reflection on experience enables the interviewee to refine and discard unnecessary detail and so to retain the elements that are of changing and lasting value to them (Schön, 1983). The reflective process of narrative allows the details significant to the event to be processed and held. Thus, values and narratives are 'inexorably intertwined' (Gudmundsdottir, 1995, p.29) since both are interpretative tools that inform our worldviews. As change experiences, critical events may therefore lead individuals to prefer one action over another when encountering similar situations again (Shapira-Lishchinsky 2011; Sikes et al., 1985). For that reason, Webster and Mertova (2007) suggest that we should also consider the values and attitudes of the characters. In this study, the repertory grid technique was used to access these (see section 4.8.1, *Descriptive Analysis*). Additionally, Measor (1985) identified three different kinds of critical event:

- extrinsic critical events which can be produced by historical or political events;
- intrinsic critical events which occur within the natural progression of a career; and
- personal critical events, for example, family events or illness.

Narrative therefore pays attention to: the scene (the institutional and organisational landscape: macro-level); the characters (principally the SENCOs in this study, including their values and attitudes: micro-level); the plot (implementation of EHCPs as set out in policy); and the events (SENCO

experience of EHCP enactment in reality, including the contexts and perceived causes and consequences of these). These components are all contained in the conceptual framework.

In interviews, the interviewer seeks to capture the interviewee's experiences and perspectives by using some form of structure or schedule (Kvale, 2007). Because critical events are not necessarily sensational or undesirable and may be recognised only as critical afterwards, they are impossible to predict or plan for (Webster and Mertova, 2007). As a result, they cannot be accessed using a strict list of formal questions created prior to the interview (Angelides, 2001). Furthermore, interviews are special forms of conversational practice in which knowledge is brought into being through a process of social exchange (Kvale, 2007). Consequently, consideration of the discourse (rules that govern communication exchanges) and language is important, since these are central to how versions of reality are constructed and conveyed during interviews (Bruner, 1986, 1990; King and Horrocks, 2010). Schwandt (2007a, 2007b) highlights the need for the interviewer to have a consciousness of thoughts, meanings, interpretations and human interrelations. Kvale (2007) and Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) explain how the 'potentialities of meanings in the original stories are differentiated and unfolded through ... interpretations [present] in the narratives' (p.19-20). The researcher position of 'outsider-within' (Collins, 1986, 1999) is pertinent to this since the interface between the researcher and participants' experiences and meanings can lead, via reflection, to changes in self-understanding. It may also lead to increased awareness and/or changes to taken-for-granted values and approaches (Milligan, 2016). This is particularly the case with critical event narrative interviews (Mertova and Webster, 2000; Webster and Mertova, 2007), when both the researcher and the researched often discover new aspects and connections.

This facet of interviews, coupled with the power asymmetry that exists in research interviews, required acknowledgement and careful ethical consideration. Burr (2003) and Pascal and Bertram, (2012) call for the democratisation of research relationships where knowledge is co-produced. An ethos of collaboration was thus sought in this research (Creswell, 2009). However, the interview relationship is rarely truly egalitarian (King and Horrocks, 2010). This is because the researcher has decided the agenda, and the participants must trust them enough to be willing to share their experience (ibid). Thus, while *a priori* knowledge facilitates intelligent probing and exposure, through an awareness of nuances, this knowledge must be juxtaposed with some form of structure that enables the inconsistencies, contradictions, and unknowns to emerge (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009).

Administration

An interview schedule was developed that would both encompass the conceptual framework ideas and allow each participant to talk about their own most significant experience of EHCP

implementation (Day et al., 2006a; 2006b). The worklines supported participants' reflections and verbal communication, allowed participants to lead the initial interview phase, and helped to establish rapport. Open-ended questions allowed participants to express what they wanted to say using whatever direction and words they wanted, and the worklines were also used to support and guide both questions and responses (Bingle et al., 2015; Day et al. 2006a; Woolhouse 2017). This helped the interviews to be conducted in such a way as to encourage participants to describe, as precisely as possible, what they experienced and felt, and how they acted. This helped similarities and differences of experience to emerge (Kvale, 2007; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). The critical event narrative interview schedule can be seen in Appendix 4.

Participants identified their own critical event from their workline. One participant identified a critical event that did not relate to EHCP implementation. Since this event had been critical to her practice and was prioritised above everything else, her interview focussed on this event. This is both a strength and a limitation of this method. All other participants chose critical events specifically related to their experience of EHC plan implementation.

Analysis

Narrative Inquiry uses a variety of analytic practices. Polkinghorne (1995) differentiates between the 'analysis of narratives' (p.12) to identify and explain themes that hold across stories, and 'narrative analysis', in which the researcher collects descriptions of events and actions and then configures them into a story (p.12). This study used the former approach, guided, but not limited by, the conceptual framework (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2005). Familiarity with the data is important (Sapsford and Jupp 2006). This was built-up during the interviews, by timely transcription and by listening to the audio-recordings several times to ensure transcription accuracy as well as by multiple readings of these transcriptions. Indeed, during transcription, content un-noticed by the researcher during the course of the interview was identified. This added detail and new dimensions to the researcher's remembered experience of participant interviews. Data analysis was not undertaken until the transcriptions had been checked and approved by participants.

Riessman (2002, 2008) proposes that it is possible to conduct a category-centred model of analysis (involving deductive and inductive coding) with close analysis of individual cases as well as across data-types. This study adopted this approach by commencing coding using a 'template analysis list' (Miller and Crabtree, 1992, p.19). This list allocated text to broad pre-identified concept codes (for example, 'impact of policy', 'identity'). As the analysis progressed, this initial list was continually revised and developed as new codes were identified (e.g. emotions, wording). Figure 7 illustrates this process:

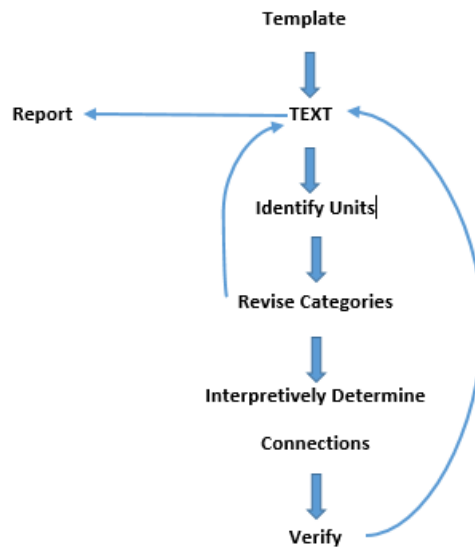


Figure 7 - Template Analysis Style (Crabtree and Miller, 1992, p.19).

However, some narrative inquiry researchers view coding as incompatible with interpretive methodologies (Hendry, 2007). This is because prescribed methods of coding can limit meaning-making (Packer, 2011). Such researchers prefer a completely data-informed approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Sapsford and Jupp 2006; Strauss and Corbin 1998). However, as a researcher using a pragmatic approach, I recognise the value of using an initial, deductive start list that is identified from the themes contained in the literature. I also recognise the need to show commitment to the data by modifying and adding to this list inductively to enable the *a posteriori* (derived from the data itself) themes to emerge.

This is similar to the coding position taken by Saldana (2016) and Malterud (2012), which is compatible with pragmatic-constructivism, an approach that values and recognises participant perceptions whilst recognising these are never ‘pure’ but are embedded in a social web of interpretation and conjecture. Consequently, the analytical strategy of this research involved synchronising *etic* (investigator imposed) and *emic* (indigenous) codes, allowing the pertinent themes to emerge progressively during data collection, in a discursive process that combined both inductive and deductive codes (Layder, 1998). Such an abductive approach supports the credibility and transferability of the research design, and is better grounded empirically (Sapsford and Jupp, 2006; Silverman, 2011; Miles and Huberman, 2014). Three stages of data coding were therefore conducted:

1. pilot - trial, adjust and develop tools and analytic strategy;
2. exploratory - index and conceptualise themes to identify key concepts; and

3. confirmatory – verify and expand on process codes identified in the previous stages (Silver and Lewins, 2014; Saldana, 2016).

An NVivo project was set up to facilitate this. An initial template of codes for pilot and exploratory coding was developed and case classifications, to enable interrogation of the coded data, at a later stage, were set up. The template was then used to code the pilot transcriptions. It was then revised and developed to more accurately reflect the concepts and meaning units revealed in this preliminary data, and also to incorporate themes arising from the emergent literature (Malterud, 2012; Miles and Huberman, 2014; Saldana, 2016). Hence revision and adjustment of the codes was ongoing, and informed the data collection by allowing blind-spots to be identified and addressed (Miles and Huberman, 2014). For example, a blind spot or omission that became apparent during pilot coding was the exclusion of affect (psychological and emotional state or responses) in the initial coding template. An example of an adjustment was the amalgamation of positive with effective, negative with ineffective because the data revealed these to be overlapping rather than distinct concepts.

Main study transcripts were then uploaded into NVivo. In-vivo coding continued alongside coding to the initial thematic list to allow participant voice and priorities to emerge. This cycle of coding identified themes and revealed additional gaps and meaning units present in the data, for example, the concept of *wording* emerged, identified as important to learn and 'get right' in order to secure an EHCP and identify the most appropriate support. Next, case classifications, which use participant information to identify features such as setting type, role on SMT, length of time in role and training level were used to run matrix queries to explore and interrogate the complexities within the data further. Appendix 5 contains the initial thematic coding sheet and a screenshot of NVivo showing the deductive (marked by red dots) and inductive coding nodes.

Although exploratory coding and analysis can reveal patterns (Nespor, 2006. p.300), some researchers caution that a narrow focus on codification for pattern-making can oversimplify the phenomenon under investigation. (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2011; Saldana, 2016). Others identify the importance of data reduction (Roldán Vera and Schupp, 2006; Happo et al, 2012; Malterud, 2012), which makes the volume of data manageable. In this process, data are condensed by identifying and sorting the meaning units it contains (Malterud, 2012). Codes are grouped into themes. Empirical data are thus reduced to 'a decontextualised selection of meaning units sorted as thematic code groups across individual participants' (ibid p.799). These themes form the response to the research problem. This response involves confirmatory coding, and in mixed-methods research also involves the integration of the multiple data sets (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2010a). Critical event narrative interviews were therefore examined, for the presence of the themes identified in the individual repertory grid

ideographic analysis and for the presence of the four salient constructs identified by the group repertory grid rankings. The data were also integrated by examining the predominant themes present in the workline and critical event narrative interview analysis for links, and by comparing and contrasting these with the themes and priorities revealed by the repertory grid interviews. Whilst NVivo enabled a degree of this linking and sorting, including the creation of network maps, searching for the presence of the repertory grid themes in the narrative transcripts was more easily achieved using Microsoft Word's 'find' function. Integration is described in more detail in section 4.9.

4.8 Main Study - Stage Two

Stage two data collection took place between June and July 2017 and between January and February 2018. The individual repertory grid interviews took place in the SENCOs' settings (N=14) or in the University (N=1), with each interview taking around an hour to complete. The group repertory grid ranking was completed at a dissemination event (N=6) or electronically (N= 8).

4.8.1 Repertory Grid Interviews

Description

Repertory grid interview technique (Fransella et al., 2004; Jankowicz, 2004) was used as a method which could identify and help make sense of SENCOs meaning and value systems. It was important to discover how SENCOs individually and collectively, think, act, change and professionally develop since this knowledge could provide new awareness of how to approach the reform, change and improvements necessary to better equip pupils (Goodson, 2013). This was also important since there is some criticism that often, findings from educational research are not used to support professional practice (Pring, 2000).

Grid data are potentially rich in the information they reveal about the underlying structures and construing which direct a person's responses and actions (Fransella et al., 2004). Although often positioned in a realist ontology and positivist epistemology, Stevens (1998), Winter (2013) and Crotty (2015) identify how repertory grids are, in fact, compatible with relativism and pragmatic constructivism. Caputi et al. (2012) also identify them as a pragmatist method that can yield a more holistic view of the participant's meaning system. Indeed, they have been 'regarded as one of the first 'mixed methods' approaches to psychology, being amenable to both quantitative and qualitative analysis' (Winter 2013, p.278).

Arising out of the personal construct theory of Kelly (1955), repertory grid technique focusses on a person's constructs, that is, the reference axis whose content and emphasis form an individual's

psychological outlook. In turn, this axis, or construct system informs and influences an individual's actions and reactions (Castejon and Martinez, 2001). Indeed, 'it is in terms of this system that we evaluate outcomes and elaborate changes in the interpretative system itself' (Fransella et al., 2004, pp.5–6). Kelly's Personal Construct Theory (PCT) considers that each person 'actively construes their world, 'by formulating anticipations, testing them out, and if necessary revising them' (Winter, 2013, p. 277). Originally applied in 'transitive' (Kelly, 1955, p. 453), dimensional approaches to therapy, such as cognitive behaviour therapy, Kelly himself anticipated some of the possible developments in the use of the grids, for instance to explore the construing not only of individuals, but also of groups (Winter and Reed, 2015), and he considered that 'a good theory should suggest predictions concerning people's behaviours in a wide range of circumstances' and 'encourage the invention of new approaches to the solution of the problems of man and his society' (ibid. p. 24). Indeed, PCT itself is perhaps less well known than Kelly's techniques for the assessment of such construing, with the repertory grid, in particular, being known and applied in the fields of education, organisational and forensic psychology, politics, the arts, sport, anthropology, market research and artificial intelligence (Fransella, 2003; Walker and Winter, 2007). More recently, Kington et al. (2014) utilised repertory grid method as a means of gaining insight into how teachers construe their practice and the nature of the 'selves' that form their role as teachers (p. 537). They propose that from a Kellyan perspective, the dimensions used by the teachers themselves to describe how they work effectively with learners must be identified by the teachers themselves rather than being imposed either by the researcher or gleaned from the literature. Repertory grid technique can therefore provide insight into the thought processes and perceptions of others. Such insight can, in turn, help us to understand aspects of their situation, concerns, and likely actions and reactions. Indeed, grid method allows us to identify these schemata, or constructs (Kelly, 1955) and so their perspectives, which in turn drive individual SENCos' identity, agency, resilience, and notions of effectiveness. Grid method also allows the interviewee to be involved straight away by requiring them to make distinctions, and it enables individual thinking (Fromm and Paschelke 2011). This is compatible with the active collaboration which is valued in this research (Creswell, 2009), see section 4.7.2.

A repertory grid consists of three main components: elements, constructs, and ratings, with the ultimate usefulness and validity of a grid depending on the creation of a 'good' grid that enables the schemata to emerge (Fransella et al., 2004). The choice of elements influences the constructs that the grid educes (ibid), so it is first vital to identify the most appropriate elements (Kington et al., 2014). Homogenous elements ensure the study stays within the context being investigated (Kelly, 1955). For that reason, time was spent piloting elements to ensure they would reveal the constructs salient to the research problem. The following five elements, representing SENCos' identities and perceptions

of effective and ineffective professional practice, were consequently identified as likely to elicit information about roles, responsibilities, relationships, influences, and identity:

- Myself as a SENCo now.
- A professional who has been helpful with EHCP implementation.
- A professional who has not been helpful with EHCP implementation.
- The kind of SENCo that I would like to be.
- The SENCo I would not like to be.

In grid technique, the elements are compared and contrasted to elicit bi-polar constructs. A dyadic approach, that enabled each element to be compared with each of the other elements, was used. This allowed systematic coverage of all five elements. This structure also enabled the comparison and amalgamation of constructs between and across grids (Caputi and Reddy, 1999). Some elements were harder for participants to compare, for example, 'myself as a SENCo now' with 'the SENCo I would not like to be'. These dyads were positioned further down the grid so that participants were confident with the procedure by the time these comparisons were made.

In this technique, participants identify a characteristic that the two elements being compared have in common. This response is recorded as the emergent pole on the grid form. Participants then identify which of the remaining three elements do not display this characteristic or display it the least and are asked to identify what is different about this element. This provides the contrast, which is recorded as the implicit pole on the grid form. This means of eliciting constructs is based on the difference method (Kelly, 1955; Epting et al., 1971), as adapted by Kington et al. (2014). Although the difference method can result in 'bent' bi-polar constructs (that is, the emergent and implicit poles are from two different constructs, rather than being contrasting ends of the same construct (Yorke, 1983), it has been shown to produce a better interaction between the constructs elicited. The difference method also produces a better spread of ratings (Hagans et al., 2000; Fransella et al., 2004).

A strength of repertory grid technique is their ability to uncover an individual's constructs and identify the priorities and structural patterns within that individual's system of beliefs and values (Leach et al., 2001). Such an analysis is not possible using data gathered using traditional questionnaires or interviews, or purely descriptive data. These strengths and patterns are discovered by ranking a pre-set construct. The ranking reveals the relative positions of elements and enables analysis of a single grid, or of several grids with the same elements (Jankowicz 2004). This is followed by rating which provides an evaluation of the relative position of the elements in relation to the constructs (Caputi et al., 2012; Jankowicz 2004), and allows a map of how the individual weighs and regards given constructs

or values to emerge. By comparing the rankings with the ratings allocated to each element for the elicited constructs, an individual's priorities and particular concerns emerge. Detail of how this process is conducted follows.

First, constructs are elicited for each of the 10 dyads. As each construct is elicited, participants rate each of the five elements for each emergent construct, on a scale of one to five. This reveals how strongly each element (identity) is perceived to hold each construct. The rating protocol (Leach et al., 2001) identified the element as:

- 1 –closely linked to the construct;
- 2 –somewhat linked to the construct;
- 3 – neutral;
- 4 – somewhat linked to the opposite; and
- 5 –closely linked to the opposite.

(Kington et al., 2014, p.540)

To 'anchor' the bi-polar constructs (ibid, p.541), participants had to rate at least one of the dyads used to elicit the emergent pole as a one (1). They also had to rate the element they identified as different from this pair of elements (the implicit pole) as a five (5). The remaining three elements could be rated using any of the numbers. Once all ten constructs were rated in this way, participants used the same scale to rank the pre-set construct (effective versus ineffective). A ranking of one indicates most effective, and a ranking of five indicates least effective. In contrast to rating, in ranking each number on the scale can only be used once, so the three remaining elements must each be given a different rank. This reveals perceptions about the effectiveness of each element. These rankings are then compared to the ratings given for each of the ten elicited constructs, and the numerical difference between the rating and ranking was recorded in each grid. These differences are totalled at the end of each row. A screenshot of these processes can be seen in Figure 8 below. A low score, between zero and four, indicated constructs that are closely linked to perceptions of effectiveness. An example of this is shown above, in the first row of the grid, where a score of three is obtained for 'aim to identify needs, set targets and support progress'. A high score, that is ten or above, indicated constructs that are not closely linked to SENCos' perceptions of effectiveness.

Emergent Pole						Implicit Pole
Thinking about effective EHCP implementation, what is a central thing that this pair have in common?	Myself as a SENCO now.	A professional who has been helpful with EHCP implementation:	A professional who has not been helpful with EHCP implementation:	The kind of SENCO that I would not like to be.	The SENCO I would like to be.	Which identity does not exhibit this characteristic? What makes this identity different in terms of effective EHCP implementation? (least like)
4 Both aim to identify needs, set targets + support progress	1 ^①	2 ^①	3 ^①	5 ^②	1 ^②	4 They might not set accurate targets - they might tweak them to fit school, miss it out for convenience 3
5 Narrow, very specific. Not taking in to account the whole child eg. current stresses	5 ^①	1 ^②	5 ^①	1 ^②	5 ^①	1 Take child into account on an almost daily basis and accordingly to time we tweak the provision: personalised; adaptable; flexible 16 4
Effective	2	3	4	5	1	Ineffective

Figure 8 - Screenshot of individual repertory grid demonstrating rating (middle two rows) and ranking (bottom row).

A high score may also indicate that the left hand (emergent) and right hand (implicit) descriptions needed to be reversed. This is usually the case if the emergent construct is negative. Where this is the case, the procedure for reversal was applied. That is, the ratings in each column are reversed. This process is demonstrated in Figure 8. That is, the ratings 5-5-1-1-5 (large number in the centre of the second row of grid) resulted in a totalled score of 16. In order to address this the ratings in each grid of this row are reversed, becoming 1-1-5-5-1 in this instance (see the small number in the top left of each of these same grids). The resultant score of four indicates that this participant identifies quite strongly with ‘taking the child into account on an almost daily basis’. A range of ratings can also be seen in Appendix 7.

Grid technique has, however, been criticised for producing valueless information if not used alongside descriptive methods (Sampson, 1972). This is because it is not a standardised technique, because its effectiveness depends on the careful choice of elements and because it is often grafted on to a positivist paradigm when it is based on an interpretivist ontology (Marsden and Littler, 2000). Also, although repertory grids allow a deeper understanding over traditional interviews (Kington et al., 2014) they can still only reveal a partial, temporally and spatially limited picture of individual SENCOs’ thinking and understanding of effective EHCP implementation. Other charges such as the complexity of the method and the over-simplification of the bi-polar format (Marsden and Littler, 2000), as well as the inherent difficulties of the researcher ensuring that the meaning of the participant is adequately captured, exist (Eagleton 1996; King and Horrocks 2010). Indeed, this complexity was experienced in this study, with the researcher taking some time to understand and learn the technique.

Administration

Repertory grid interviews took place after participants had checked and returned their critical event narrative interview transcripts. This allowed any questions about these to be answered in person. Before the second interview commenced, participants wrote a brief description of their setting and identified two professionals, one who had been the most helpful and the other who had been the least helpful in supporting the implementation of EHCPs. Whilst the participants identified the professions of these, the personnel themselves were unnamed so were not known, other than by the SENCo participant themselves. A range of SENCo experience was revealed by this, in that the same profession was sometimes identified as being most helpful and as being least helpful (by different SENCos). Examples of this include educational psychology, speech and language therapy, and SEN support services. Examples of these completed sheets can be seen in Appendix 6.

Time was spent explaining and demonstrating the process of comparing and contrasting the elements. Elements were written on separate A5 cards to allow each dyad to be clearly presented. These cards also helped the rating and ranking process, since participants could manipulate and move these around to support their thinking about how closely each element displayed each construct. The pre-structured form included ten dyads and one pre-set construct. Easier comparisons appeared at the beginning, and difficult comparisons appeared later in the form. First, the constructs were elicited. An example of a construct elicited for 'myself as a SENCo now' and 'a professional who has been helpful with EHCP implementation' is 'accommodating all opinions to inform a child-centred approach' (emergent pole). The element that did not display this characteristic was 'the kind of SENCo that I would not like to be', with the implicit pole, or difference, being identified as 'disregards parent and professional opinions because *they know best*'. Each element was then rated for how closely they are linked to this construct. Each dyad was worked through in a similar manner, before the pre-set construct was ranked.

Totalling the differences between the rating and ranking allowed a basic statistical interpretation of the data to be made. These numbers were shared with participants at the end of their interview. This enabled validation and discussion about the findings, with participants commenting that they recognised their values and priorities, or not. Following this interview, participants were sent their completed grid to check alongside their interview transcriptions. This enabled any misunderstandings to be addressed and ensured that participant meaning had been captured accurately. Follow-up emails to ensure clarity of meaning occurred in a small number of cases (N=3). A completed grid is included in Appendix 7.

Analysis

Analysis of repertory grids tends to be of two types (Caputi et al., 2012; Fransella et al., 2004; Jankowicz 2004):

- structural or numerical analysis (examining the relationships between the constructs and/or elements); and
- content or descriptive analysis (examining the constructs themselves).

The following sections explain both of these.

Numerical Analysis

Grid method does not confine itself to what is verbalised (Fromm and Paschelke, 2011). Instead, grids can be viewed as mathematical entities due to their bi-polar character (Kelly, 1955). This means that numerical analysis can be used to identify the relationships between the elements and constructs (Caputi et al., 2012; Fromm and Paschelke 2011; Shaw 1980).

Initial interpretation of the grids involved visual inspection for low and high totalled numbers, with these basic statistics being shared with each participant at the end of their interview. Individual grids were then 'eye-balled' as a preliminary exercise to identify any similarities in the ranking of elements (Fransella et al., 2004; Fromm and Paschelke, 2011). This can reveal groups who perceive things in a similar manner, and so can reveal the presence of subgroups, perhaps reflecting, for example, education phases, leadership position or training. Each grid was also 'eye-balled' for closely ranked constructs.

Individual grids were then entered into GridSuite software (Fromm and Paschelke, 2011) to enable the similarities and differences between the elements and constructs to be explored. Cluster analysis (CA) was used to calculate the strengths of associations between elements and construct clusters for each participant. Euclidean distance analysis produced dendograms that identify the associations (most and least) using distance coefficients, where short Euclidean distances indicate similar profiles. These were depicted as groupings on each individual dendogram, with high similarity figures (70–100%) being significant. This analysis revealed how each participant related to the element identities (myself now, a helpful professional, an unhelpful professional, my ideal SENCo and the SENCo I would not like to be) and so disclosed alignments and role-identity salience (Callero, 1985). This process also highlighted which constructs were closest to each participant's perception of effective and ineffective EHCP implementation and identified strongly linked constructs. Individual dendograms were

therefore analysed to reveal the constructs that were closely linked with 'effective' (70% or higher) within each age-phase.

Principal component analysis (PCA) was then used, with the correlation between elements and constructs being portrayed by scattergraphs. PCA uses Pearson's 'r' correlation, and plots the construct that correlates most with other constructs (x or horizontal axis), then finds the construct accounting for the next highest amount of variance (but which does not correlate with the construct chosen for the horizontal axis at 5% significance level) (Pallant, 2010). The remaining constructs are then plotted on the graph according to co-ordinates taken from their correlations with these axes or constructs. The elements are plotted according to their correlation with the constructs. This creates a visual and spatial representation of both the relationship of identities to constructs and self-other integration (Makhlouf-Norris and Norris, 1972; Strachan and Jones, 1982; Caputi et al., 2012). PCA can reveal the constructs most closely associated with effective EHCP implementation. Scattergraphs, however, do not give definitive 'answers'. This could be achieved, in a larger sample, using factor analysis to determine the correlation between the elements and constructs, the per cent variance accounted for by the constructs, and groupings of constructs by their factor loading (Kington et al., 2014, p.541). Furthermore, although non-parametric statistics can investigate correlations between variables in smaller sample sizes, this was not possible in this study because only the given construct (effective-ineffective) was shared by the participants. Instead, PCA was used to identify the two elicited constructs most similar to the pre-set construct of effective and ineffective. These results can be seen in Appendix 8, and are presented and discussed in Chapter 6.

Descriptive Analysis

Content analysis was carried out using an ideographic approach to identify intra-personal constructs (Brophy et al., 2003; Fransella 1988; Kington et al., 2014). Ideographic analysis is a form of data reduction. It involves writing each elicited construct on individual index cards. These cards are then sorted into broad categories according to their meaning. However, identifying themes common across a group of individuals is not without difficulty due to the subjective nature of experience (Hogan and Hornecker, 2013). This relies heavily on how the researcher understands the meanings and language of the individual participants, selecting and grouping the themes accordingly (Alvesson and Karremen 2011; van Manen 1997). To mitigate against this, sorting was carried out along with the research supervisor most experienced in grid analysis. This enabled discussion around meaning and categories. In this way, 150 constructs were condensed into 21 significant core constructs. These constructs were used to create the group grid. Photographs of these stages are included in Appendix 9.

4.8.2 Group Repertory Grids

Description

Grid technique can also be used to explore the construing of groups (Kelly, 1955). This is because personal construct psychology is also regarded as social psychology (Winter, 2013), and repertory grids enable the views of all contributors to be compared. Comparisons can clarify the influences and contexts linked to more effective and less-effective behaviour, and can also identify the competencies participants link and rate as important to effective practice (Sharpley, 2013; Kington et al., 2014). This is achieved by using individual grids to identify salient constructs, then enabling the group to identify the relative significance of these using a group grid assembled from these salient constructs (Brophy et al., 2003; Fransella 1988; Kington et al., 2014). This enables more general testing of constructs and can reveal the collective priorities. The 21 core constructs identified by ideographic analysis created a standard group grid. This number kept the integrity of the bi-polar constructs elicited in the individual repertory grid process. An example of a completed group grid can be seen in Appendix 10.

Administration

Timing of the administration of the group repertory grids was influenced by the imminent March 2018 deadline for transferring Statements to EHCPs. Participants were acutely aware of this, and the impact on their workloads and they requested that the group repertory grid ranking task be completed early in the term (January and February 2018). Each participant ranked the 21 constructs on the standard group grid according to their relative importance for them. The most important construct was ranked first, and the least important construct was ranked twenty-first. Each rank could be used only once, with equal ranking disallowed. Reliability of the tool is enhanced when it is administered to participants who did not contribute to its creation (Crudge and Johnson, 2000). For this reason, an additional sample, of managers and head teachers of participating settings was invited to rank the standard constructs also. Unfortunately, only two of these did so, with many replying that they just could not justify the time to engage in this task. As a result, this additional sample was too small to be used.

Analysis

The main purpose of the group grid was to reveal collective priorities. This was revealed by calculating the mean average ranking of each construct. Low means indicate constructs prioritised as most important, and high means indicate constructs prioritised as least important. Pie charts illustrate the significant findings obtained from this process.

Standard Deviations were also calculated to reveal the spread of scores (in a normal distribution, 68.27% of the values will lie within one standard deviation). Constructs with a significant distribution

of scores were then charted on boxplots, with a narrow distribution revealing close agreement between participants (Pallant, 2010). In boxplots, the rectangle represents 50 per cent of the cases and the whiskers (the lines protruding from the box) go out to the highest and lowest rankings and delineate the first and fourth quartile of the range. Circles outside this range are classified by statistical analysis as outliers; that is, lying out-with the range of other cases (Pallant, 2010; Robson, 2011). Inside the box, the line represents the median or middle value, and the cross represents the mode or most common rank.

Although not the primary aim of this tool, the ranking task also revealed the priorities of each individual SENCo through each one's three highest ranked constructs. However, further extensive statistical analysis or the identification of clear numerical differences between, for example, phase, training or leadership responsibilities was precluded by the small sample size (N=14).

4.9 Integration

This study collected and analysed multiple data sets using a parallel, convergent design (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2017). A clear strategy to allow the integration of these is required, since individually the data sets do not fully address the research problem (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2010a; Bazeley, 2018). Instead, used together, they can serve different purposes, including:

- one data source can be used to illustrate or contextualise, and so enhance, information produced from a different data set;
- information from different data sets can be used to create a coherent picture of the field of study;
- information from different data sets can be combined or juxtaposed to elaborate an issue; and
- data sets can be compared and contrasted to verify or elaborate on the interpretation of data

(Bazeley, 2018).

Time was thus spent considering how the 'purposefully interdependent' findings and results (Bazeley, 2018, p.7) would be best connected to 'mutually illuminate' the research problem (Bryman, 2007, p.8). In pragmatism, the term *warranted assertion* (Peirce, 1905; Dewey, 1916) signifies an assertion derived from empirical data. The warrant connects a research finding to a conclusion and, to be convincing, must be supported by a comprehensible and logical argument. Guidance on how to successfully interweave different data sets to accomplish this is, however, marked by 'little explicit discussion' in much of the literature (Maxwell and Miller, 2008, p.470).

Integration involves 'recomposing' (Erickson, 1992, p.217) the categories revealed by analysis by connecting them 'into a relational order within an actual context' (Maxwell and Miller, 2008. p.468). This is an iterative and abductive process and much more than a simple compilation of different data sets. In this study, the process began by using the conceptual framework to guide the study design and the data analysis, as well as to order the findings and results (Greene, 2007). This process is illustrated in Figure 9.

Although in Figure 9 this appears to be linear, there was interaction between columns 5 and 6, both of which are conceptual (Silver and Lewins, 2014). As a preliminary process, all results and findings were listed to reveal insights and issues related to the research questions, grouped under headings (see Appendix 11). This interim step allowed preliminary connections and meanings to emerge. Patterns of association were then explored and negotiated by matching this inductive information to deductive concepts. This iterative process enabled emerging insights and issues to be linked to the component parts of the conceptual framework by sorting and re-sorting the findings and results using index cards, and by continually returning to the transcribed and coded data (see analytical logic model, Bazeley, 2018, Appendix 12). In this way, the emerging understandings and interpretations were questioned (Patton, 2011), and hunches were followed up and substantiated, shaped or rejected.

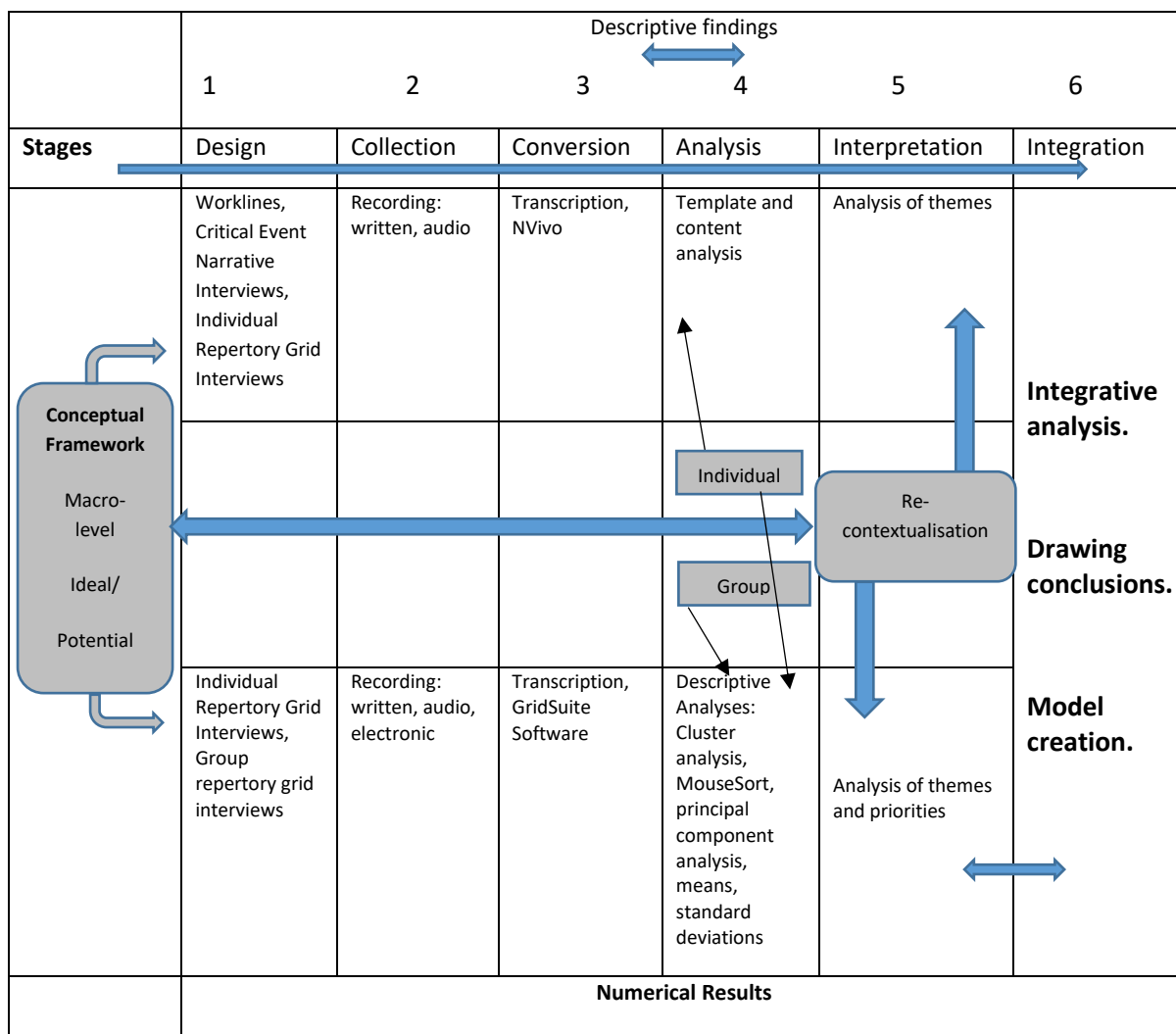


Figure 9 - Design diagram for integrated study (adapted from Castro et al., 2010).

Writing, along with matrices and network maps (Miles and Huberman, 2014), moved this process along by enabling what was in the data at a meta-level to be seen and manipulated. Hence the process of writing the results and discussion chapters (5,6, and 7) also served as part of the analytic and integrative process (Richardson, 1994), which identified seven inter-connected themes, with associated sub-themes (see Appendix 19):

- institutional,
- organisational,
- relationships,
- identities,
- quality of evidence,
- knowledge and skills, and
- outcomes.

Integration also requires contextualisation. This is because the themes and issues uncovered by categorising analytical procedures need to be connected to the ‘conditions that give rise to it; the context in which it is embedded; the action/interaction strategies by which it is handled, managed, carried out; and the consequences of these strategies’ (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p.97). Participant profiles are used by some as a relational method (Seidman, 1998; Gilligan et al., 2003; Day et al., 2007). Although this research is experience and process oriented as opposed to being case-oriented (Onwuegbuzie and Combs, 2010), profiles were used to contextualise each main theme. They do this by providing examples of how the themes are manifest in the different SENCo contexts (these can be found in Appendix 20).

In summary, integration requires the researcher to take the various results and findings, that were once part of different data sets and synthesises them into new, hybrid compositions (Crotty, 2015). A valuable researcher attribute for this task is the possession of knowledge that ‘gives flexibility to see and take advantage of alternative possibilities’ (Bazeley, 2018, p.97). The researcher presence and *a priori* knowledge are both recognised and central in this process. Indeed, O’Cathain (2010) explains that the quality of mixed-methods projects can be judged by the quality of the data, effective integration, and the validity of the inferences drawn (see section 4.4.1), with each contributing to, and making transparent the resultant *warranted assertions* (Peirce, 1905; Dewey, 1916).

4.10 Summary

This chapter presents the methodology used in this study to uncover SENCos’ perceptions of EHCP implementation. This involved collecting different data sets. Chapters 5 and 6 detail the findings and results obtained from the analytical procedures applied to each data set. These chapters present the data in order to evidence the key findings and analytic processes. This will allow readers to appraise the conceptual perspectives presented in this chapter, and also to in-directly experience the perspectives of the participants (Erickson, 1986).

CHAPTER 5 - FINDINGS FROM WORKLINES AND CRITICAL EVENT NARRATIVE INTERVIEWS

5.0 Overview

In this chapter, I present findings obtained from the analytical procedures applied to the workline and critical event narrative interview data.⁶ Two collectively experienced challenges and the participant's perceptions of positive and negative influences, identified by level (institutional, organisational and personal) emerged from the worklines. Findings obtained from the critical event narrative interviews include influences pertinent to both age-phases (early years and primary), as well as those important to either early years or primary years. Information about participant perceptions of roles, responsibilities and relationships and identity also emerged from this data set.

5.1 Worklines

The worklines were completed as a pre-interview task⁷. They provided a visual depiction of the peaks and troughs of EHCP implementation experience, as perceived by participants, and captured a snapshot of the SENCo's view at the specific time they were completed. PY-3 explained: *'This is me at the moment.... this time next week it could be crashing back down again, but that's the point that I'm at, at the moment'*. Explanation of the experiences portrayed in the worklines were narrated at the start of each participant's narrative.

A completed workline is included in Figure 10. The experiences were identified by level (institutional, organisational, professional, or personal, see explanation in sections 3.1 and 4.7.1). In this example, the first trough depicts the initial introduction of the Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) (institutional). The second trough depicts dealing with parents who were in denial. This involved supporting staff (professional, organisational) and occurred at the same time as the illness of a close relative (personal). The two peaks depict a successful EHCP implementation point (professional) and writing and delivering a training programme (organisational, professional, personal).

⁶ Participant pseudonyms have been changed into codes to ensure anonymity. Early years SENCos are indicated by using the initials EY followed by a number (e.g.. EY-3) and Primary SENCos are indicated by the initials PY followed by a number (e.g.. PY-2).

⁷ Although sent out as a pre-interview task, some worklines were completed in detail ready for the interview (N=12), and some were completed on the day before the interview began (N=3, 1EY and 2PY SENCos). This was due to SENCo workload. They also varied in how much detail they contained. Therefore, although every participant explained their personal workline at the start of each critical event narrative interview, when and how they had completed these may have negatively impacted on the thought and level of reflection these SENCos were able to give their critical event narrative interviews.

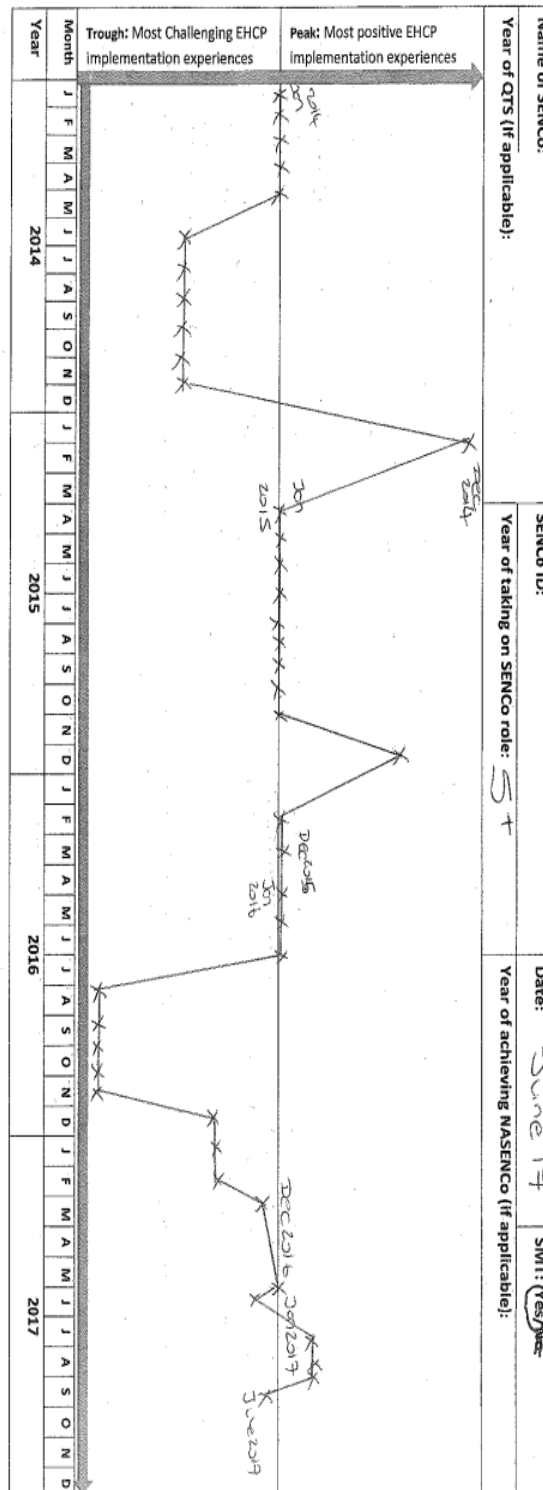


Figure 10 - Completed workline, illustrating the peaks and troughs in EY-3's experience of implementing EHCPs.

Two findings emerged from the worklines when they were viewed collectively. The first was that most worklines started at a low point or showed a dip around September 2014 (N=14). This coincided with the introduction of the new Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015). The uncertainty that accompanied this was described by P-7:

Everyone from the County Council [was] in the same position... They weren't clear, they were learning as well, about the process and everything ... they hadn't got everything in place (PY-7).

Many participants (N=11) conveyed the frustration of not being able to find answers at this stage, with information varying between EHCP caseworkers. PY-5 explained this: 'I found it quite hard to get any information I needed from County ... it was nearly impossible to get hold of anyone'.

The second collective finding, shown in Figure 11, was an identifiable dip around the autumn term of 2016:

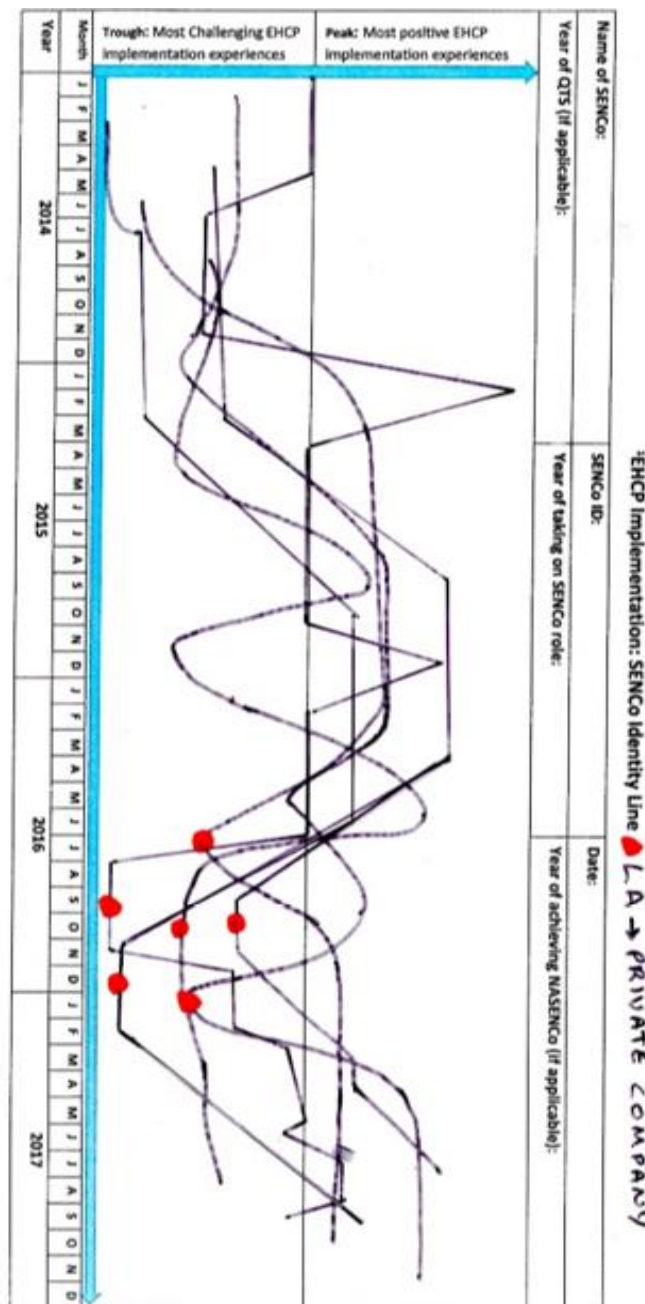


Figure 11 - Workline depicting the challenge or dip when support services moved from Local Authority to private company provision.

This coincided with the County Support Services, including Area SENCOs and caseworkers, being taken over by a private company, with implications for how settings secured their services. PY-4 described this: *'I don't do funding, I'm a SENCO, not an accountant ... I thought 'Now I have to use an Amazon Shopping trolley to buy services'* and PY-3 commented:

It's not the learning support team now, it's 'the providing company'...and those people in the past whom you could have just called upon ... I can't speak to some of those in the way that I would have done before (PY-3).

The impact this change was having on the accessibility of support and advice was echoed by all early years (N=8) and five primary years SENCOs. The coded, narrated worklines also revealed information about EHCP implementation experiences. These were coded by level (institutional, organisational, professional and personal), by nature of experience (positive or negative), and by educational phase (early years or primary). At the institutional level, early years SENCOs identified the help they received from the Area SENCOs as positive, as were the Early Years Support Tracking documents. In contrast, reduction in the Area SENCO support was perceived as negative, as was uncertainty around the EHCP application process when the SEND Code of Practice was introduced. Furthermore, training and support was less available, which meant they were relying on existing knowledge banks which they felt would deplete with staff-turnover. Primary years SENCOs valued the training they could access online through organisations such as NASEN (National Association for Special Educational Needs). They also identified the incomplete information available when the SEND Code of Practice was introduced as negative, as were changes to caseworkers (number of, knowledge of, and familiarity with setting), difficulty accessing information from County (perceiving that electronic forms and information was not *'user-friendly'* (PY-5)), the removal of 12 month targets, and the impact of privatisation of support services.

At the organisational (setting) level, early years SENCOs viewed the support they receive through SENCO cluster groups as positive, as were good relationships with other professionals. However, they identified negative aspects to working with other professionals, including difficult access and having to chase up reports and information from them. They also perceived that some professionals wait until the child moves to school before becoming involved. Primary years SENCOs viewed their links with other professionals as positive, especially in academy settings. Establishing organised systems in their settings for the collection of evidence was also viewed positively, as was the support they receive from SENCOs in other settings and securing funding and specialised provision or placements as a result of successful EHCP applications. Conversely, the need to consider funding and the time needed to apply for and access emergency funding was viewed negatively.

At the professional level, early years SENCOs viewed the training they had received positively, and this enabled them to deliver training to their setting staff. The negative experiences reported at this level were the challenges of working with parents not yet ready to recognise the possibility of SEND, and of learning SEND terminology. Primary years SENCOs identified '*getting parents on board*' (PY-1) as a positive experience, as was achieving the NASENCo award. For this group, the workload, volume of paperwork, having an EHCP application rejected and consequent frustration were all seen negatively. Finally, at the personal level, early years SENCOs described the sense of achievement they felt when applications were successful as positive, but also recognised as negative, times when they had been personally affected by individual cases. The primary SENCOs did not identify any positive personal level experiences, and their negative experiences included the impact the work and negative experiences with some professionals had on their home-life.

5.2 Critical Event Narrative Interviews

All critical event narrative interviews were conducted in a similar manner, although differences in when and how the worklines were completed may have impacted on the level of reflection made by individual interviewees. Coding of the transcribed interviews revealed themes common to both age-phases and themes specific to either early years or primary years. These are described in the following sections.

5.2.1 Findings Applicable to Both Age-Phases

Quality of Evidence and Resources

The themes of quality of evidence and resources were common to both age-phases. These were interlinked and influence SENCO implementation of EHCPs, either positively or negatively. The issues covered by these themes were: routine collection; wording; communication with, access to and support from professionals; personal knowledge of children; workload; commitment; physical resources; support of SENCO; and having dedicated time for the role.

Routine Collection

The need to track progress effectively was identified. This included embedding the collection of evidence into routine practice to make it less onerous and prevent delays. EY-1 commented on the online learning journal, Tapestry (2018), which her setting used with all children to '*photograph and write up the observation and link it to all the areas of the EYFS it gives us a breakdown of the grey areas....it tells us the ages and stages they're at.*' EY-6 commented that keeping evidence routinely reduced the need for significant extra work:

I just need to photocopy that out of the file or get that plan out ... keep notes throughout so I just sent my notes rather than have to put it in this big, massive statementrather than it be something that you write up at the end (EY-6).

PY-5 described the difficulties she experienced when first starting the SENCo role because evidence had not been previously collated in a routine, organised manner, and how this changed once systems were in place:

I was searching for things rather than it being in a logical place...it's a time-consuming process trying to collate all the information, especially some that I did last year, ... I didn't have all of the systems in place whereas this year ...I know where to find that piece of information, so it's easier (PY-5).

These three statements demonstrate how routine, organised systems help the collation of evidence needed for an EHCP application.

Wording

The participants felt how evidence is articulated and applications are phrased affected the success of EHCP applications. EY-7 had someone to help her 'improve how I would put it across' and PY-3 commented:

We put this on one and it got rejected and we put this on one and it got accepted. So you go into it thinking ...is it going to be down to the way I word it? Is it going to be down to the way I present the evidence? (PY-3).

The data showed careful wording was required for applications that accurately reflected the child's needs. Documents that presented the child in detail and set out evident steps of progress were valued because they supported and directed provision and progress, as PY-7 explained:

Some of the EHCPs we've had through have been two or three pages long, not a lot of detail, could have been written for Joe Bloggs. Whereas others I've had have been really meaty, have reflected the child and been really valuable documents that can be used to move forwards (PY-7).

PY-7 especially valued the 12-month targets, since withdrawn, because they kept the plan current and were 'really specific, pinned everything down'.

Caseworkers write EHCPs, and the SENCos expressed frustration with the quality of some documents. They identified variation between these, with better-constructed EHCPs being carefully worded and more detailed, compared to others which were less detailed. For example, PY-7 described one caseworker who was able to draft an agreed document on his iPad whilst with the parents, leaving only grammar and phrasing to be addressed later. In contrast, other workers took few notes, and as time passed between the meeting and writing the report, 'memory gets their interpretation as

opposed to their factual intake of the meeting', resulting in reports and plans that were 'woolly' and lacking in personal detail.

Communication with Professionals

Linked to the efficient collection of evidence was the issue of communication with support services and professionals, which is encapsulated by PY-1, who commented, *'the lack of support from County at the time was really appalling. I think the lack of knowledge, the changing procedures, changing of viewpoints - the inability to communicate it very well'*. Three main issues made this challenging - SENCo communication skills and knowledge, SENCo workload and timetable demands, and the accessibility, or otherwise, of advice and support. PY-6 described the challenge of this:

You deal with children day in, day out and parents at the end of the day and on parents' evening and things. But it's not the telephone calls and dealing with professionals. You don't tend to do that in the classroom... Give me five thousand children, no problem. Put somebody on a telephone that you're not quite sure what you're asking or what the answer's going to be is quite anxiety provoking for me.... I felt guilty being on the telephone during the school day. Because when I was a teacher, if you had to make phone calls you did at before 8:45, between twelve and 1, or at 3 (PY-6).

In contrast, PY-7 demonstrated she had learned the skills of negotiating and communicating with other professionals. She had also learned to persist and have confidence in her own knowledge and skills: *'If I have something urgent now I phone up and I check, and they just know... to give in to me in the end... You learn how the system works'*. The data suggests successful communication was based on relationships. PY-5's comment illustrated this:

Once my contact base grew I got a really good relationship... I'm always going, "Have you got any resources on ..." I was forever ringing somebody, you've got to pick people's brains (PY-5).

Notably, although all the SENCos (N=15) felt they shared information with others, receiving information back was described as problematical. This affected the timeliness of applications and EHCP deadlines. It also affected how current targets were, and so how effectively they felt the child's needs were able to be met by the setting. EY-1's comment illustrated this:

All these specialists involved. If they've come out to see the child it takes quite a while to get the report or the summary from them. So I find a lot of time is spent saying, "We need to write this child a new provision map, can you send this?" and it's quite a while then chasing everybody to get everyone's together to then go, "Right, these are the targets, let's write his map" (EY-1).

One setting had addressed these difficulties by appointing a specific member of staff *'to chase referral forms and liaise with external agencies ... chasing paperwork is a massive job'* (PY-3). Most participants (N=13) reflected difficulties accessing advice and support. EY-8 said:

It was a bit of a drag ... having to keep chasing everybody to get the reports in from medical professionals' and 'I was really making a strong effort to do it and then when I wasn't getting feedback from the other people that I needed the evidence from, it was very, very frustrating (EY-8).

Also, sometimes information was not shared with setting SENCos due to confidentiality issues. This meant settings were reliant on parents to convey and share information, however, *'mum isn't the most confident person so it was quite difficult to encourage her to do it' (EY-8)*. This had implications for parity, with some parents more able to discover and convey pertinent information than others.

Access to Professionals

Early years SENCos felt access to professionals has become harder. Two professional groups (Health Visitors and Speech and Language Therapy) were described as key to accessing wider professional involvement: for example, they were described as being *'the first port of call'* (EY-1) and *'our way in'* (EY-7). This may be because these services were financed by the National Health Service, so settings in this age-phase could access them without impacting their own budgets. However, half of the participants recognised that these services had long waiting lists and limited time. SENCos were also realistic about the workload and prioritisation of different professionals: for example, PY-4 commented, *'the paediatricians ... they're stretched to the limit and quite a few of them seem to have gone on long term sick. I don't think it's anyone's fault, it's just the system is buckling under a massive workload'*. However, difficulties in accessing professional expertise impacted on the EHCP application process, as PY-6 explained: *'We're waiting for an educational psychologist, we don't have any educational psychology availability ... we can't make a decision until we've had that report done'*.

Access to professionals in the primary phase was reported as being easier by SENCos working in academies (N=5)⁸. However, a lack of knowledge from professionals about the specific information needed to support an EHCP application was reported. PY-3 explained how her setting addressed this:

The reports let us down and in some cases we rejected the reports because they didn't give us what we needed ... now we're a lot more savvy in terms of when we're seeking professional reports, we're making it very explicit to them what we want from the report ... we need [the] observations and recommendations to be very specific and [are] actually saying to the professionals, "Here are the criteria for the EHCP." We're asking them to look more closely at the wording and matching and making sure that they're using the language that's in there... it's working really well now' (PY-3).

⁸ Academies are state schools funded by the Department for Education, independent of Local Authority control but still subject to Ofsted inspection. They are self-governing non-profit charitable trusts who may receive additional support from personal or corporate sponsors. They are often part of a multi-academy-trust (MAT), which are a group of schools who collaborate strategically - see **section 5.2.3**, 'Academisation'.

This level of direction regarding the evidence needed for an EHCP application was facilitated by the contracts this particular academy had with the professionals concerned. Indeed, participants working in academies (N=5) explained that such contracts increased their access to professional support and secured more consistent staffing, so also enabled them to develop better links and relationships with these professionals.

Support from Professionals

The resources and input provided by external professionals were valued, as participants recognised that these enhanced provision and helped them to meet individual children's needs. PY-5 described this:

It was ... finding the right support and making sure the agencies that we needed were involved and making sure that we had targets and ideas and things to try from professionals ... We'd exhausted all of the teachers' ideas, we'd exhausted all of mine, so we had a lot of external input (PY-5).

There were, however, limitations to how much support was appropriate. PY-6 explained about one child: *'Mum feels that we're not putting the right provision in ...we feel we're doing everything we can. ...that's a difference of opinion and we've sought regular access from professionals to support us with that'*. Multi-professional assessment information and advice were also valued, because they supported settings to secure and/or justify provision appropriate for individual children. Professional support in identifying limitations and securing additional or alternative placements through EHCPs was also valued. Central to this was *'whether we were the right setting for [them] and whether we could, meet [their] needs to the best'* (EY-8), or whether *'there still needs to be something more in place'* (PY-6, original emphasis retained) beyond what a particular setting could provide.

To be effective, resources and suggestions needed to be available and implemented by setting staff. This was not always an easy process. PY-5 commented, *'The biggest thing was making sure that teachers looked at the advice and did some of it'*. However, PY-4 felt other professionals were not always properly informed, so their advice was sometimes misdirected: *'A lot of reports ... from health, they're like, "The school should be doing this" ... my hackles rise slightly and I think, "We are already doing that'*. Such issues affected the EHCP assessment and application process itself. This was more of an issue for primary years SENCOs, who did not have an Area SENCO or forum to help them prioritise and co-ordinate EHCP applications and implementation.

Personal Knowledge of Child and Family

Knowing the individual child, and having a good relationship with the family and carers, was identified as important. Such knowledge and relationships were considered to be central to the assessment and

to personalised support and a holistic approach. For example, knowledge about individual family circumstances and issues such as sleep patterns enabled practitioners to make informed decisions and tailor the approach taken. EY-2 talked about this:

One of our babies suddenly started screaming ... any time they walked away ... I said, "Let's talk to mum and dad and find out what's going on at home"... and that was the important factor. It was actually that his routine had gone to pot (EY-2).

In this instance of joint working, knowledge about the impact and disruption an illness had on this child's routine enabled the nursery to understand his behaviour and to work with the family to address the problem. Ideally, the relationship with the family and carers should be central to intervention, as EY-6's comment illustrated: *'I always think that if you haven't got them [parents] on board you've got no chance of doing anything'*. In contrast, EY-6 and EY-7 talked about working with parents who were less approachable, and the need to be aware of, and work with the reasons underlying this. Instances given for this include one where a father had recognised there were potential additional needs, so professionals worked with him to reach the mother, and another where a father was in denial about his child's additional needs, requiring a different approach to be implemented.

Individual knowledge also made a difference to the detail about a child's specific needs conveyed to settings the child may transition to. EY-8's comment demonstrates this: *'When she went to school... the little girl... on paper was the little girl that walked in'*. That is, the individual knowledge the early years setting had of this child enabled them to pass detailed and specific information on to the school setting to help them continue with her individual care. Everyday knowledge about each child was needed in addition to the specialised but 'snap-shot' assessments provided by professionals, because it enabled priorities to be identified and support to be tailored. However, SENCos felt professional knowledge was often prioritised over the information provided by parents, family and setting staff. PY-7 talked about this in relation to the remote role of the caseworkers who wrote the EHCPs:

Some of them are taking away a picture from the parent, from the school and then coming up with their end bit. But I wouldn't say it's...- accurate?... they don't value the parents, they don't value what the school is saying (PY-7).

Whilst professionals and caseworkers were theoretically listening to those with personal knowledge and contact with the child, the information provided was not always regarded or included in reports and recommendations. EY-3's comment reflected this: *'you are only a nursery nurse or a deputy manager and these have got degrees here, but actually no, I know this child best'*: this shows even though EY-3 felt intimidated by the professionals, she was able to overcome this feeling in recognition that the personal knowledge and understanding she held about the child was also important.

Workload

Managing the SENCo workload was identified as a significant part of the role, being mentioned specifically by the more recently appointed SENCos (EY-1, EY-2, EY-7, P-2, P-5, and P-6). P-5 described her realisation of this: *'the size of the SENCo role is huge and I think the enormity hit me when I first took it on, I was like a cat in headlights'*. SEND paperwork, and particularly the paperwork required for a successful EHCP application, was a substantial part of this workload. PY-5 spoke of the shock she experienced: *'it just felt massive and I just didn't know ... there is no getting around the fact that it is a time consuming, fact-finding, paper finding exercise'*. Managing this had required self-awareness and the help of others, *'otherwise you'll run yourself into the ground'*. EY-2 explained the effect the paperwork had on her: *'I just dipped back down again... there were just so many different pieces of paper ... Should I be using this one? Should I be using that? I need to use this one to go with that one'*. Participants also perceived that completing an EHCP application involved a lot of repetition. PY-2 commented: *'there's a lot of repetition ... that is one thing that is required and one thing that takes a lot of time'* and EY-5 says: *'it is quite repetitive ... you feel, I've answered that there, what do they want me to put here?'*. Despite these challenges, the participants accepted having accurate, up-to-date paperwork was a necessary part of securing appropriate support for CYP, which included accepting this could affect their work-life balance. PY-2 said: *'a lot of my time has been taken with that, a lot of my own time'*, and PY-4 commented, *'You've got a tonne of work to do and you have to go to all these endless meetings... so instead of going home to your family, you have to trot off to that'*. These comments demonstrate their acknowledgment that the work could require them to work over and above the time allocated for the job.

Purpose and Commitment

Balanced with the workload was a recognition that the role was demanding and required dedication and commitment. This was driven by a sense of passion: for example, PY-1 stated, *'it is my baby, it is what I love'* and *'it is my passion, it's what I feel very strongly about'*. However, this sense of purpose can be dampened by the realities of the workload, frustration, stress, and pressure, and several SENCos (N=7) recognised this had affected them both personally and professionally. Nonetheless, participants viewed the role as a vocation rather than just a job, describing the sense of achievement and job satisfaction that meeting the needs of individual CYP had given them: for example, PY-6 explained, *'That's been a real achievement... completing that as a successful piece of work. My high point up there was completing that application, the recognition ... that she needed special school provision'*. This sense of achievement went beyond meeting the needs of the CYP, as evidenced by PY-7:

It is such an achievement for us to go on a journey with a parent. There was a young lad who came to us, had failed at his previous school ... He'd got no paperwork behind him so we had to start from the beginning... Eventually we applied for the EHCP and I mean his whole family life, everything, was about to collapse, and then he got a place at the secondary special school... it's transformed not only his [original emphasis retained] life ... it's transformed the parent's life. They've got their life back and they can be a family again... it's such a success (PY-7).

However, this sense of achievement was not as strong for all. PY-4, who has been a SENCo for over 20 years, recognised:

When I first started ... I thought I was really going to help everybody and it would be marvellous but I'm not sure that happened. I think you just do your best and hope that you're going to help people through their school experience in a positive way rather than feeling that they're not quite good enough (PY-4).

This demonstrates a more resigned attitude, also demonstrated by the other long-serving participant, EY-5: *'we are doing the best that we can within the limits of our resources'*. These comments demonstrate their view that they could only do so much. Indeed, resources, and the limits or possibilities attached to these, emerged as another theme.

Physical Resources

Many resources to support CYP with SEND cost money. This included funding SENCo hours (see also *'Dedicated Time for the Role'* section, p.124). Most participants (N=12) commented about funding cuts. For example, EY-5 described *'a lot of changes ... it has been difficult ... in terms of finance and nursery education funding that's available to us'*. P-4 states matter-of-factly: *'I don't think you're going to get that funding 100%, so why don't you go for 80% and cut your losses?'*. This demonstrated a pragmatic approach to the reality of securing the additional (but finite) SEND funding needed to supplement the school's SEND budget. Contrasting with this, participants working in academy schools described having *'greater autonomy on how we can spend our money'* (PY-3) and being able to *'buy in'* (PY-2). This shows that these particular academies were using their budgets creatively to provide support for pupils with SEND, above that which was available through state provision.

There was evidence that the climate of austerity and budget cuts was affecting resources, and comments related especially to training, assessments, and support. In the study county, the private company responsible for support-services provided the training for early years SENCos. EY-6 commented that before this was privatised, *'there was a lot of training that was cheaper than what training is now'*, and:

We used to have X and Y [two Area SENCos] ... I probably owe a lot of my knowledge to both of those because they came in and gave me lots of time because we had so

many children and it was so much for me to get my head round at the start ... they were always very on board ... but unfortunately that's been cut now (EY-6).

EY-1 commented that now, *'the training is very expensive but... it's in the directory'*. EY-4 felt this was *'because [the private company] realise that that is how they might be getting their money, via training'*. However, this had an impact, as EY-5 explained:

We don't send people on as much training as we were... Training used to be much more subsidised. We would be able to perhaps send somebody on a morning workshop... that perhaps cost £15 ... we're now talking about at least £35 plus VAT and then if it's during the day we've got to cover them ... We used to pay people if they went on training in their own time in the evening but resource- funding wise that's become more difficult (EY-5).

Because of this, EY-3 *'paid for it [her training] privately'*, and EY-5 explained that instead of sending staff on training courses, *'some people are ... doing online training through the Skills Network'* because *'we would need much more financial resource to enable them [newer staff] to do more training and to have more time out to look at paperwork and everything'*. Of the primary years SENCOs, four out of the seven had completed the mandatory NASENCo training, and one hoped to start soon. The remaining two primary participants were doing the role of SENCO whilst their head teachers held the official position of SENCO. One of these, PY-3, commented, *'I would have liked to have done [it] but financially I wasn't in a position to fund it myself and clearly the school had made the decision that they weren't going to fund it either, so that's where we're at'*.

Resourcing also affected the support settings can provide for CYP with SEND, with EY-5 explaining that *'inclusion and integration is good if the resources are there to support it'*. However, most participants (N=12) reported reductions in resources, with early years SENCOs, in particular, mentioning the impact of service cutbacks. Interestingly, EY-5 felt that in contrast to the past when *'this area was exceptional in what it had to offer for children'*, now she was:

Expected to work with sometimes quite a high proportion of children at any one time, and ...being expected to work with them in a mainstream group with very little extra funding when I knew that years ago those children would have had a lot of support in a small group, probably they'd have been in a group of six or eight children with a specialist teacher and two support assistants (EY-5).

This demonstrates the impact cutbacks have had on staffing numbers and expertise. Access to specialist services and assessment had also been affected, as EY-4's comment illustrates:

Unfortunately, we don't have EPs [Educational Psychologists] like we used to... right until they are submitted now, we don't have EP input, it is only after, when an EHCP has been requested, so we have to rely on ourselves to know exactly where the child is at and where they should be going (EY-4).

This is evidence that SENCOs and their settings had to take more responsibility for, and be more pro-

active in, the initial identification of SEND. The negative impact on access to specialist services and assessment also continued after the need for an EHCP has been identified (N=6). EY-8 explained: *'we couldn't get the reports in, we couldn't get the professionals in, and ... the dates were being missed'*. This issue created a continual strain, including when targets needed to be updated to ensure focussed and accurately targeted provision, so *'you could be waiting months for targets'* (EY-8).

The situation was generally more positive in the primary phase. Five of the seven primary SENCos reported increased autonomy in that they were able to buy in services, linked to their independent spending power as academies. PY-2 talked about this difference: *'My previous experience ... trying to get education psychologists in from County was very, very difficult. We have gone with independent education psychologists and that has been far more effective'*. Academisation had also *'allowed us to play with the funding that goes into the inclusion budget [so] we are increasing the amount of speech and language that we have'* (PY-2). Others reported the value of buying in support services: for example, PY-3, who explained that because they were paying for educational psychology they could now specify exactly what evidence and wording were needed (see *'Access to Professionals'* quote, PY-3, p. 116).

The third aspect of resources relates to the support SENCos received. EY-1 talked about the changes in the support she has received since taking on the role in 2014:

There was a lot more support in place from outside agencies, the inclusion team that was part of the County Council then ... they were very much on the end of the phone and they'd come in and observe and be very much on hand at the drop of a hat to come in and help (EY-1).

EY-7 commented: *'because of funding, we haven't got anyone we can ask'*. EY-4, an Area SENCo, described the experience from her perspective: *'cuts and cuts and cuts and that has impacted on settings. They haven't had the support that they used to and that possibly they need'*. Lack of support was also evident in the primary years. PY-3 explained that, *'some of the support that was available in the past pre-SEN reform doesn't seem to be there now because everything has been outsourced'*. These comments demonstrate the view that compared to previously, support was less available.

Support of SENCos

Support for SENCos also depended on the ethos and attitude of services, settings and individuals, and participants identified this was led by leadership. PY-7 clearly identified the support her head teacher gave for innovation and development: *'she makes such a difference – she's like 'go for it' – has a 'can do, will do' attitude'*. This is corroborated by PY-1, who said: *'The Head is very good at saying – that's not my area of expertise, that's yours – tell me why, prove to me, and if I could prove it, it would*

happen'. PY-6 also described the support her head teacher and staff gave for what can be a difficult role:

I can't speak highly enough about [the Head], how much time he'll give just to listen ... and he'll either point you in the direction of ... people he knows that are in an SEN position or ...say, "Just calm, you can do this. Let's look at what we've got to do." He is very reassuring - although he's put you in a position of responsibility, it's not to manage that job on your own' and 'We are incredibly [original emphasis retained] supportive of each other [as a staff]' (PY-6).

Support from the senior leadership team, as well as the rest of the staff, was recognised by others. PY-5 stated: *'the SLT helped out, I had contacts with a couple of other SENCos who were really good...The teachers were brilliant, they let me do things, they were really supportive'*, and EY-1 said: *'I think with having the team and staff on board and getting trained up I think that's the most significant part for me'*.

All of the participants felt they worked in settings that provided good support for them, although some (N=3) had moved from settings where such support had been lacking. One nursery group had SENCos working on three different sites, who worked together to provide one another with support, but most early years SENCos (N=5) worked in isolation from their SENCo peers. Consequently, they valued SENCo cluster group meetings for the opportunities these gave for listening to peers and sharing experiences and suggestions. However, it was not always easy to get the time off to attend these. SENCo conferences were also valued, although these had stopped at the time of data collection. EY-8 explained:

They were brilliant, they had speakers who used to come and speak ... it was really nice to see it from somebody else's point of view and you come back to nursery and think, "If I had a child how could I change our environment to suit them?" (EY-8).

A similar forum existed for primary years SENCos. Whilst this was usually viewed positively, PY-3 commented: *'There is a SENCo cluster group occasionally but I haven't attended one recently because I find they tend to be a bit of a moaning session rather than anything productive'*. Primary years SENCos also had access to other networks, such as the local Teacher Alliance, which held termly network meetings and an annual conference. Such opportunities to build contacts and share experiences and ideas were highly valued. PY-1 described the value of *'networking, networking. Communication with other people'*, and of *'having those people together, so we could all bring our experiences to it, we could all bring our own frustrations to it, and then we looked for answers as a group as opposed to individuals'*. This was also expressed by PY-5: *'the inclusion meetings ...have been another really important part of that networking and finding information and that sort of thing'*, and by PY-6: *'network meetings are really good to make links with and just be able to drop emails to the specialist*

there or other SENCOs just asking for their advice'. These statements illustrate that these SENCOs perceive support from and contact with peers to be an important resource. Sharing in this way meant each SENCO did not have to create things from scratch, and they suggested this could also prevent mistakes being repeated. In this respect, primary years SENCOs valued the support of their NASENCO award classmates. For example, PY-5 said: *'It's been amazing being with other people and bouncing ideas off and just seeing how it's done in other places, it has been really good'*, and PY-6 described it as, *'very supportive [with] lots of other SENCOs ... just to network is a good reason to do it as well as having to have the qualification'*.

Dedicated Time for the Role

SENCOs with dedicated roles felt they had been allocated sufficient time for the role (PY-1 and PY-6). However, all other SENCOs felt the role needed a lot more time than had been allocated (N=13). For instance, PY-2 commented: *'My allocated SENCO time is three days a week. It takes more than three days a week, a lot more than three days a week'*. Many participants (N=11) were therefore supplementing their allocated hours by using time from their other responsibilities, by working extra hours, or by taking much of the work home.

Participants felt combining the SENCO role with teaching brought challenges, so it was better when these were not mixed. For instance, PY-6 stated: *'for people who are in teaching as well, I don't know how they manage to mentally think, "Right, I've got my teaching head on now, I've got my SENCO head on now'*, and *'there are deadlines with SENCO work. You have to get things done and to do teaching as well'*. In contrast, PY-3 and PY-6 both felt that still being involved with teaching had advantages, including:

- being realistic about the demands for evidence and implementation put on other staff;
- having hands-on teaching experience of children who need an EHCP; and
- having some time away from the SENCO work, which can be intense and emotionally draining, because *'you don't have the practicalities of teaching and immersing yourself in that to sort of lose yourself sometimes'* (PY-6).

Five early years and all primary years participants were combining the SENCO role with other non-teaching roles, such as safeguarding officer or key-stage leader. Combining it with such roles was felt to be advantageous because each role complemented and supported the work of the other. However, early years SENCOs commented about the impact time constraints had on their ability to *'do more things with it [the role]'* (EY-7), and that these time constraints limited their opportunities to *'upskill themselves'* (EY-5). Also, the challenge of giving staff *'time-out'* to complete paperwork for their key children was identified by four early years SENCOs, even though participants recognised that tracking

progress, when early years practitioners increasingly *'have to rely on ourselves to know exactly where the child is at and where they should be going'* (EY-4), is essential.

5.2.2 Early Years Findings

NVivo coding of the interview transcripts revealed five issues that did not appear in the narratives of primary participants. These were therefore specific to early years:

Good Knowledge of Child Development

Early years practitioners need a good working knowledge of development. This allowed them to implement appropriate targets and strategies. It also allowed them to recognise possible developmental difficulties, although the participants felt this knowledge was not always robustly held. EY-5 stated: *'All practitioners who are trained study some child development ...but I'm not sure that there's been enough focus on ages and stages of development'*. The Area SENCo (EY-4) expressed her concerns about this, including what happened when this knowledge was not well established, explaining her experience of setting staff who were *'just taking their chronological age and just going with that. They are thinking "Why would I be looking earlier because they are actually ... [indicates a chronological age]"*. This statement demonstrates that some staff did not appreciate the chronological age and developmental level of a child could be different. This is particularly important since, due to cutbacks and changing provision, SENCos and their settings must now take more responsibility for, and be more pro-active in, the initial identification of SEND.

Whilst settings were starting to make good use of the Early Support Tracking Documents (2016) to help them identify developmental levels more accurately, many practitioners in this phase *'always want to ensure you see the best'* (EY-4), so could be overly optimistic in their assessments of how a child was progressing. For example, EY-4 also stated: *'they'd got [this child] at 16 to 26 months and I would definitely have put him at 0 – 11 and then looking at it, they realised. That does happen quite a lot'*. Such over-optimism meant needs could go unreported, with the consequence that support was not secured because the evidence provided did not accurately convey the need for additional help. Interestingly, the SENCos who were most concerned about this also had the most experience or higher levels of training (EY-2, EY-3, EY-4, and EY-5).

Introducing the Possibility of SEND and/or Initiating the Process of Gaining the Necessary Support

Starting a conversation with parents about possible developmental difficulties or additional needs was seen as a responsibility requiring skill and tact:

.... It's tricky ... the conversations with the parents ... because it's hard for you to say, "Oh, we think there might be a delay in this" for parents'.... it's just finding the right words to put out. I had this lady sort of as a backup to help me improve how

I would put it across. But ...all the funding has gone now and there isn't that person (EY-7).

And:

I wasn't comfortable, I just couldn't do it on my own because I knew how devastated mum was going to be with the conversations ... knowing what a parent feels like when somebody comes to you and says, "I'm a bit concerned about"... it's being able to put yourself in that position and empathise (EY-2).

These comments show these participants did not feel fully equipped to manage these situations alone, that they valued support and back-up for such conversations, and that they wanted to do this with sensitivity. Good levels of support from Area SENCOs had been previously available, however cutbacks to, and reorganisation of that service in 2015 mean this support was less available. The Area SENCO participant (EY-4) commented further on this:

As of this year, we will probably only be giving three visits, for the whole [original emphasis retained] year, for those children who may need an EHCP. So the settings are going to be having to do that, and take that responsibility and onus on themselves ...that might be quite tough for them (EY-4).

Broaching the possibility of SEND needs with parents and carers also has implications for the next theme.

Obtaining Parental Permission

Knowing when and how best to seek and obtain parental permission to enable early assessment and input without acting precipitously was a concern. Whilst EY-2 said, 'I don't like to worry too soon...so I say, let's watch first', EY-4 balanced this with the shorter time children spend in this phase: 'you haven't got that much time in early years. The minute September arrives in the new academic year, prior to the children starting school the next September, you have to be on the ball and ready to go'. EY-7 recognised the benefits of early intervention, but her experience demonstrates this cannot always start straight away:

If I could have got parents on board, quicker, then the process might have been quicker. I think it is probably easier to get in when they are younger and get the ball rolling earlier for them is going to be better for them (EY-7).

This highlighted the delicate balance between waiting and acting that takes place within early years settings. Although settings must collect two terms of evidence to identify and secure the provision children need for starting school within a short timeframe, getting the parents on board and obtaining parental permission could take time and needed to be handled sensitively.

Status

Status could be a problem for early years practitioners. EY-6 said: 'I was like, *have I got enough experience to be even doing this? ... it's that realisation that actually I was good enough to do it*', and EY-3 described feeling '*quite undermined because you are only a nursery nurse or a deputy manager and these have got degrees*'. Moreover, although settings were working with the children every day, the participants felt their information was not always weighted as heavily as the evidence from specialised settings and professionals. Examples of this were given by EY-3: '*Because of my profession I knew, and I had that gut feeling and trying to get people to listen to me. I had it when she was at nursery, I was telling them, I was like, please [original emphasis retained]*', and by EY-1:

It would have been much better if they had listened to myself and my colleague who worked with him every single day ... if they'd listened to us and actually supported us and given us some strategies (EY-1).

In both these instances, the issue of not listening to these early years SENCOs influenced the timing and accuracy of assessments and so the identification of these children's needs. The issue of listening to and valuing expert professionals over that of early years SENCOs, who see the child regularly, could also complicate parental awareness although the early years SENCOs recognised their individual, day-to-day knowledge of children and their families supplemented the 'snap-shot' view professionals were often restricted to due to the demands of their service and ways of working. On this, EY-6 showed tenacity when she said, '*It's just about knowing that even if a professional doesn't agree with you or a professional thinks different ...that you're not wrong about thinking that about that child*'. Interestingly, these issues with status did not appear in the narrative of the early years SENCOs who hold QTS (EY-4 and EY-5), which suggests there may be some difference in how both they and others perceive their status.

Inclusion Advisor/Area SENCO role

Area SENCOs (also known as Inclusion Advisors) were highly valued by participants. They helped early years settings collate evidence for individual children, and they presented this at the Preschool Forum. The Preschool Forum is a multi-disciplinary meeting that considers support needs, including the need for an EHCP. EY-8 commented that at the beginning, she: '*had quite a lot of input and help from our Area SENCO who came in and helped me to word and collate all of the correct evidence*'. EY-5 was a very experienced SENCO. Nevertheless, she too valued their help and support: '*It was positive to be confident about the information that I was submitting ... she was confident so that was a positive experience for me*'. However, the support Area SENCOs were able to offer had reduced (see EY-6's comment on this in section 5.2.1).

Physical Resources

SENCOs in this phase were at the forefront of recognising possible SEND. If there was no other professional involvement, recognition depended on the knowledge, skills, and experience of the individual settings and their SENCOs. Financial cuts, and the privatisation of Support Services meant early years settings and their SENCOs were now also more isolated. EY-7 observed: *'all the funding has gone now and there isn't that person. I could phone up somebody but I don't think I'll probably get the same relationship with what I had with that lady'*. There were fewer Area SENCOs with less time to cover settings, which had impacted on available support and reduced contact, and changes to which Area SENCOs were allocated to which settings had affected working relationships. Furthermore, the conferences Area SENCOs previously organised for networking, support and training had stopped at the time of data collection. EY-4 (an Area SENCO) explained this scenario from her perspective:

When we had cuts, in 2012 ... we were nearly taken out of the scenario because we were too expensive as teachers. Our Unions fought for us to create a level playing field because schools have the advantage of having a fully qualified teacher as their SENCO whereas early years settings obviously don't have to...There [was] a time when we worked with neighbouring authorities on certain documentation and shared stories and ways of working but by this time, due to cuts, that was one of the areas which had to go (EY-4).

This illustrates the battle to retain the role. It also demonstrates that Area SENCOs themselves had less capacity to network and share practice. The cuts affected other services too, as EY-4 also explained: *'Due to NHS cuts, the paediatrician is no longer involved in Preschool Forum...that has not helped. There is the [Child Development Centre] rep. so they do get the information but that was a really useful person to have'*. There had therefore been changes to the support early years SENCOs received, and to how evidence was presented to the Preschool Forum.

5.2.3 Primary Years Findings

NVivo coding also revealed four issues that did not appear in the narratives of early years participants so were specific to primary years SENCOs. These are discussed below.

Senior Leadership Team (SLT)

Being part of the SLT enabled SENCOs to influence the direction and priorities of the setting. PY-7 talked about being able to contribute to *'moving forwards and always changing and evolving'* to meet the children's needs. Conversely, not being part of the SLT constrained this, as PY-3 explained: *'the biggest barrier for me was not being on the SLT because there were so many things that I needed to say that I just couldn't say because I wasn't part of that'*. In comparison, PY-1 felt that her setting recognised her knowledge and viewpoint prior to her being part of the SLT: *'I've always been really lucky here, even before I became part of SLT. That my opinion was valued and it was something that*

was, as long as I could justify it ...the reasons behind it, and if I could prove it, it would happen.' This demonstrates some settings listened and valued the SENCo voice more than others.

Academisation

Becoming an academy gave settings more autonomy in how they used their budget and what they delivered, allowing provision to develop to meet the particular needs of the setting, catchment, and children. They had done this by increasing staff ratios, securing specific services for their children (such as counselling, educational psychology or speech and language therapy), and by developing innovative programs. PY-1 explained this: 'We went academy because we are very much on the edge at all times because of our cohort of children. It meant more funding and has been the right thing for us to do'. PY-2 gave more detail about this autonomy:

So we buy in so it's separate anyway, to previous experience where there have been long waiting lists for things. Because we're buying in and paying for the service, we've found that when we're asking them to come they come very quickly, so the services here have been really good.... Now we really want to focus on ... really engaging our parents and getting the parents involved with the children and helping to educate the parents so that then they are able to support the children (PY-2).

However, academisation also meant not every setting in multi-academy trusts (MATs) needed to send their SENCo on the mandatory NASENCo training. This is explained by PY-3 when asked if anyone in her setting had completed, or planned to complete the NASENCo award:

I don't think so, no. I do the day-to-day operational work of the SENCo and [the Head] does more of the strategic, that is how it works ... and there's another colleague as well, so between us, we cover the SEN, that's how we manage it... The Head is the named person (PY-3).

In this instance, the MAT met their need for a qualified SENCo because another school in the consortium had a SENCo who had achieved the mandatory NASENCo qualification. This was the situation for two of the seven primary years participants.

Caseworkers and Support Services

Caseworkers write the actual EHCPs, based on collated evidence. They are employed by the LA or more recently, by the private company. However, many of the experienced caseworkers had recently left, to be replaced by caseworkers who came from a variety of backgrounds. Some had no experience of working in education. PY-7 described this situation:

A lot of caseworkers have left, they've got new ones in and the styles vary quite a lot. I think at the beginning everyone's style was quite similar but as time has gone on... I'd say that they have got woollier. I feel there is not a lot of difference between them and the old statements really except they are up to date (PY-7).

Schools had previously been able to build up a relationship with one or two caseworkers, who *'knew the dynamics of the staff, they knew what we could manage and they understood the setting and what we could deliver'* (PY-7). In contrast, SENCos were working with numerous caseworkers who did not have a relationship with or knowledge of settings, their provision, and staff. Indeed, PY-7 felt that *'they don't value what the school is saying – they are there to write an EHCP'*. She contrasted the work of the experienced caseworker previously allocated to the school, who: *'drilled it right down to the specifics'* with then having to work with up to 11 caseworkers, who sometimes changed mid-assessment, resulting in reports and information going astray. Moreover, P-7 commented: *'there's a real discrepancy between caseworkers and the value of what you get at the end of it'*. This demonstrates that EHCPs vary depending on the caseworker. However, SENCos also recognised the workloads and stress of caseworkers. PY-6 commented:

I know the amount of EHCPs going in at the moment are massive. They've got to still manage all of those and every SENCo is going, "I want you to answer my phone... to talk to me. I want my child to be the priority," and they can't... so it's a balancing act for them as well (PY-6).

Nevertheless, SENCos worked with the actual children and families on a day-to-day basis, and so saw the impact delays and uncertainties had in real life. PY-7 noted: *'It sat in her inbox. She wasn't his caseworker anymore, and so Mum was like, a few weeks later, "Why haven't I heard anything?", "Oh I'm not his caseworker anymore" – "Did you not forward stuff?"'*. PY-6 described this difficulty interfacing between the organisation responsible for writing the EHCPs and the parents and families:

An EHCP application that had been submitted in June 2016 by the previous SENCo, for a child currently in Year 4...We didn't hear back until the end of March. And it was very difficult supporting that parent through that... (PY-6).

Moreover, SENCos still needed answers and experienced *'the frustrations of phoning the caseworker on a weekly basis'*, and *'it's very difficult to get a clear answer from anybody when you phone a caseworker'* (PY-6). Indeed, all primary years SENCos (N=7) reported the frustration of obtaining consistent answers to their queries. PY-3 said: *'You ring SEN services and generally the person who answers the phone can't answer the question, they've got to find somebody who will then ring back and it's just not a very effective system of communication'*. This had implications for obtaining timely answers and for SENCo workloads, and was particularly difficult for more recently appointed SENCos, who did not know whom to phone.

National Award in Special Educational Needs Co-ordination (NASENCo)

Completing the NASENCo award was valued, but had a significant impact on workloads. Also, the award was often undertaken soon after taking on the SENCo role, meaning SENCos complete it at the same time as getting to know a new role. This was described as 'hard', but also helpful:

That's been the most challenging thing, doing the award, it's been really beneficial doing it this first year whilst I've been finding my feet because I've used a lot of what I've been doing and what I've learned to implement as I've been going along. I would recommend doing it, although it's been extremely hard work because you're getting your head around one role and a lot of my home time and my holidays have been taken up writing assignments for the SENCo award, which is what I knew when I signed up to it. It's worked really well but it has been an extremely hard year ... there have been things that I've wanted to do that I just haven't had time to do (PY-2).

PY-5 commented: *'It needed to be done and it was just time, it was managing everything, but there was no way around it. I think whichever cohort you speak to feels exactly the same'*. This illustrates acceptance of the need to complete the award along with resignation that it is a lot to manage.

The three primary participants who had not completed the award each had several years of SEND/SENCo experience. When PY-4 was asked if she had done the award, her response was very clear: *'No, I've done the experience'*. PY-3 linked her decision not to do the award to her personal life:

I think so at some stage, it's probably a personal choice for me to work part-time, I have two young children. I think had I been full-time I think perhaps my opportunities here would have been different. I think certainly to validate everything I've done, ... I started in 2004, so 13 years on here I am. If I was to apply for another job there's nothing official on paper that recognises everything that I've done (PY-3).

However, she also explained the school was not prepared to fund her to do the course, and she was not in a position to self-fund (see quote on page 125). This is evidence that although the award is mandatory, not all settings or SENCos are engaging with it. In contrast, PY-6 intended to start the course in January, but had concerns about returning to learning:

It's just challenging yourself again, isn't it? I haven't written an essay since 1996 and putting yourself back out there and pushing boundaries and comfort zones and stepping out those (PY-6).

This demonstrates that as well as adding significant work to an already busy workload, the award involves the challenge of returning to study at Level 7, which in some cases may be after many years away from formal learning.

The next sections present specific findings obtained from the analysis of the critical event narrative interviews.

5.2.4 Roles, Responsibilities and Relationships

Roles

Participants from both phases described the SENCo role and responsibilities as *'huge'* (EY:N=1, PY:N=4), and sometimes even *'overwhelming'* (PY:N=2). Sometimes it made them feel frustrated. In early years, this was because in addition to holding the SENCo role, they *'have all the other children to look after as well'* (EY-8). In the primary years, this frustration was related to chasing evidence and *'pulling things together'* (PY-3).

SENcos in both phases identified an increased role in training and supporting staff (EY:N=5, PY:N=3). EY-4 commented: *'it was relatively challenging to start with because we had to do training over the first few months and then people were rather panicky at the start of the academic year about what information they needed'*. This comment related to EHCP process knowledge, which was the initial pressing concern. EY-2 also commented on this: *'we've just informed everybody on what the GRs are and what the paperwork process is just so that they feel confident and that they're actually responsible as well to ensure that the children are getting what they need, it's not just, "The SENCo deals with them"'*. This is evidence of the shared accountability identified in the SEND Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015): that is, class-based staff were now responsible for identifying the levels children are working at, writing individual provision maps and for implementing the interventions. The more experienced SENcos also reported training their staff on more specific areas of SEND (EY-3, EY-5, PY-4, and PY-7). Additionally, some SENcos (EY:N=3, PY:N=2) either had or were in the process, of building up a SEND team in their setting to share aspects of the role. Finally, SENcos in both phases identified their role as more office and paper-based than it had been before the reforms (N=13).

Responsibilities

Responsibility for SEND identification and provision was now more devolved. In early years, EY-1 connected this to financial cutbacks and consequently reduced support from the Area SENcos: *'it's very much on the nursery nurse's discretion really of identifying and getting the ball rolling'*. EY-2 felt this was a lot to expect of staff: *'Early years staff in some respects are not trained for full-on SENCo'*. However, staff needed to be made aware that their role was to promote development, *'regardless of whether you've got QTS, Level 2, Level 3, Level 1, nothing at all, that is your job'* (EY-2). In the primary phase, SENcos appreciated *'shared accountability with other people'* (PY-3). Class teachers held more responsibility, and settings had developed shared level and intervention information to assist them in this, although some settings were further ahead with this than others (PY-1 and PY-2). In these settings, software such as School Pupil Online Tracker was linked to interventions. These settings expected information on baselines, starting dates and assessment levels at the end of intervention to

be shared, and such evidence was enabling these SENCOs to make careful, evidence-based decisions on future resources and provision.

Relationships

Four types of relationship (with children, with parent and families, with staff and with professionals) emerged. Good relationships with children underlay effective interventions. In early years, these were built up through regular contact. In the primary years, these were sometimes established through unconventional means: for example, an excursion to go boating (when both staff and children were learning and challenged together) (PY-7). Good relationships with parents and families helped permission to be obtained and enabled a more holistic understanding of individual children and their needs to be gained. This helped identify the most effective approaches and priorities for help and support. PY-2 said, *'it's given me the opportunity to talk to parents to see what they actually want to move forward. Also with my colleagues, it's listening to them, talking to them and all their suggestions and ideas, ...everybody's ideas can be taken on board to move forward'*. Good relationships with staff working well together as a team provided support for the SENCO, and enabled consistent input for children. EY-6's comment illustrated this: *'With additional needs, it's making sure that everybody is singing from the same hymn sheet ... if that child gets a different approach from certain staff it's not going to help them'*. This required information about the child and their care to be clearly shared between families, staff and involved professionals.

Finally, SENCOs felt relationships with professionals, where there was a knowledge of the setting and staff, led to effective practice. Good relationships with professionals appeared to make support for SENCOs more accessible. However, the opposite, when trust was not present, is exemplified by PY-7's comment: *'Like this one lady, and when you know they're not reading documents ... I know who it is, so when parents say they have got this one caseworker-I'll cancel the review and not have her'*. PY-7 juxtaposed her knowledge of different workers and desire to get the best for the children under her care with the pressures professionals could be under: *'I've got a really nice relationship with them but a lot has changed ... management ... funding ... there's a lot of different demands and stuff so it is difficult'*. So, whilst she appreciated the input and support she received from this particular professional group, she also acknowledged strategic changes had affected her relationship and liaison with them.

5.2.5 Qualification and Confidence

Although matrix queries were set up in NVivo, it was not possible to make any definite links between setting and training levels using these. This was because of the variation in setting organisation and ethos, and because of varying levels to training amongst the participants in each phase. For instance,

of the early years participants, four were qualified to level 3, one to level 5, one to level 6 and two had qualified teacher status. Of the primary years SENCOs, four had completed the National Award (NASENCo), one hoped to do so soon and two had no plans to complete it.

Matrix queries did not reveal any patterns between qualifications and confidence either. Whilst six early years SENCOs identified difficulties with confidence, four of these held qualifications at level 5 and above. Three primary SENCOs revealed difficulties with confidence. Of these, one had completed the NASENCo award in 2009, one had just completed it and the third had not done it. This suggests this is not a simple relationship, and that other influences contribute to perceived confidence. What was present in the data were comments related to confidence. For example, EY-3 (who is qualified to level 5) said:

I've chaired a lot of the "team-around-the-child" meetings and you just think, "Maybe they're right." You feel quite undermined because you are only a nursery nurse or a deputy manager and these have got degrees here, but actually no, I know this child best (EY-3).

This reveals confidence and reliance on her own knowledge and skills. In contrast with this, PY-6, who was an experienced teacher and recently appointed SENCO who had not yet completed the NASENCo award, said of herself: *'although you can come across as a really confident person who seems to know what they're doing, underneath your feet are paddling. And it's just that self-belief and reinforcement that yes, I can do this'*. This contrasts with the other two participants who had not completed the NASENCo award (PY-3 and PY-4), who both expressed the confidence to be able to *'challenge others' opinions'*. Experience may therefore contribute to confidence.

5.2.6 Identity

SENCOs are individuals, each having different experience, training, and workplaces. The participants were asked if the implementation of EHCPs had had any impact on their identity, and whilst the three longest-serving SENCOs (EY-5, PY-4, and PY-7) felt they had not had an impact, all other participants (N=12) identified changes. Their comments about these changes were coded as being about collective, professional or personal identity. Changes to collective identity included the recognition that there was *'more on my shoulders'* (PY-1), and that it was necessary to be *'more proactive – get the ball rolling a bit more'* (EY-1). There was also evidence of a change in how other staff viewed the SENCO, as illustrated by EY-6's comment: *'people think I've got lots of knowledge, which is great and I like that people think that I have'*, and by PY-5, who stated taking on the role of SENCO had: *'changed how teachers view me'*. This demonstrates participants were aware of their increased responsibilities for initiating and co-ordinating assessment and support for CYP with SEND, and that this responsibility,

along with the knowledge needed to fulfil this, is esteemed by others. It may be awareness and acceptance of this was already held by the longest-serving SENCoS.

Negative changes to professional identity included feeling vulnerable and doubting themselves at times. This was in contrast to positive changes, linked to knowledge and confidence. Changes to their professional knowledge base had given PY-6 *'a different mindset'*, had helped PY-2 *'professionally to make informed decisions'*, and made EY-2 *'want to understand more ... look for answers'*; and for EY-3, the experience of a successful EHCP application *'affirmed [her] passion'* (for the role). Additionally, EY-7 stated, *'Now I probably am a bit more confident with it'*, PY-3 described *'having to be quite firm and stand my ground on some issues'*, and PY-1 explained now she is *'More gritty, demanding on what I want from people, made me more confident to say what I feel. Made me a bit more forceful because I want the answers'*. This shows the importance of knowledge and information, and the contribution of confidence and assertiveness to SENCo identity and practice. Indeed, the participants also described changes to their personal identity, including becoming *'more feisty'* (EY-8) and *'more headstrong and a bit more confident in actually standing my ground'* (PY-3), with PY-1 also feeling the work had *'helped my communication skills'*. This reveals the determination, perseverance, and spirit that are needed to successfully implement EHCPs. The priority given to these themes by each participant varied, reflecting their individual perspectives and contexts and their particular concerns at the time they were interviewed. Further information about changes to identity was revealed by the repertory grid techniques and are discussed in Chapter 6.

5.3 Stage One Summary

This chapter presents findings from the worklines and critical event narrative interviews. Key messages relevant to both age-phases, specific to the early years and primary phase of SENCo operation, about SENCo roles, responsibilities and relationships, and changes to identity were found in the data. Issues that were pertinent to both age-phases include: the impact of privatisation of support services and difficulties in accessing valued professional expertise; the value of routine collection of evidence and importance of how such evidence is presented in an application; the impact of budget cuts on training, assessments, and support and the need to consider funding; the workload, including paperwork; difficulties communicating with support services and professionals which were affected by SENCo communication skills, knowledge, and their timetable demands; and the accessibility, or otherwise, of advice and support. Further issues that were pertinent to both age-phases include the value of training and support from peers, the need for sufficient time to do the role, the impact on home-life, the contribution of individual knowledge of CYP and good relationships

with their families and carers, and finally, that participants viewed the role as a vocation rather than just a job.

Issues that were specific to early years include: the value of the Early Years Support Tracking documents and Area SENCo support; the need for training, including about developmental levels, to maintain knowledge banks and avoid knowledge depletion due to staff turnover; the challenge of starting a conversation with parents about possible developmental difficulties and of obtaining parental permission; and that status can be a problem. Issues that were specific to the primary phase include difficulty accessing information from County, caseworker changes and influence on EHCPs produced, the position and influence SENCos in this age-phase were given in their settings, the flexibility of academies, and the value, but demand of the NASENCo course.

SENCos identified their role collating evidence, training and supporting staff and building up a team, including sharing accountability with other setting staff, and they identified that four types of relationship (with children, with parent and families, with staff and with professionals) were important. Finally, they identified changes to their collective identity, including increased responsibilities for initiating and co-ordinating assessment and support for CYP with SEND, and this responsibility, along with the knowledge needed to fulfil this, is esteemed by other setting staff. They identified positive changes to their professional identity, linked to knowledge and confidence but also recognised they can feel vulnerable or doubt themselves at times, and they acknowledged changes to their personal identity included developing determination, perseverance, and spirit. Repertory grid technique was used to investigate SENCo perceptions and identity further. The results and findings gleaned from the analysis of this method are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6 – REPERTORY GRID RESULTS AND FINDINGS

6.0 Overview

This chapter presents the results and findings obtained from the individual and group repertory grids. First, numerical results from the analysis of individual repertory grid interviews are presented by elements and by constructs, followed by the descriptive findings gained from this same data set. Then the numerical results, attained from analysis of the group repertory grid rankings, are presented. Key findings are summarised at the end of the chapter.

6.1 Individual Repertory Grids – numerical results

Fifteen individual repertory grid interviews were conducted and transcribed. The original grids, including the ratings and rankings, and the transcribed interviews were then analysed.

6.1.1 Elements

Eye-balling

As a preliminary exercise, individual grids were ‘eye-balled’ (see explanation in section 4.8.1, p.103) to reveal elements that were ranked the same. This is a process that has the potential to reveal the presence of sub-groups of participants who perceive their experiences in a similar manner, but no distinct groups emerged from this process. However, what did become apparent was that most participants (N=13) ranked the ‘ideal SENCo’ as effective, all participants ranked ‘the SENCo they would not like to be’ as ineffective and most participants (N=12) ranked the ‘unhelpful professional’ as ineffective. The rankings for each participant can be seen in Appendix 15.

Individual repertory grid interview data were then entered into Grid Suite software to conduct cluster analysis (CA), MouseSort and principal component analysis (PCA)⁹. First, each participant’s ranking for the pre-determined construct (effective and ineffective) was entered into a collective grid to enable the similarities between participants to emerge. These are depicted in Figure 12. In this dendogram, participants with similar ratings are linked close to one another, revealing that they hold similar perceptions about effective and ineffective practice (for example, PY-5 and PY-7, circled in green on the dendogram). In contrast, participants with dissimilar ratings are linked further apart which shows less similarity between their feelings about effective and ineffective practice (for example, PY-4, EY-2, and EY-1, circled in red on the dendogram). All had a match of 80 percent or above, except PY-4, who had a match of 72 percent and so is an outlier¹⁰.

⁹ The dendograms and scattergraphs for all participants can be found in Appendix 8.

¹⁰ Outliers are identified by statistical analysis as figures that lie outside the range of others (Pallant, 2010; Robson, 2011).

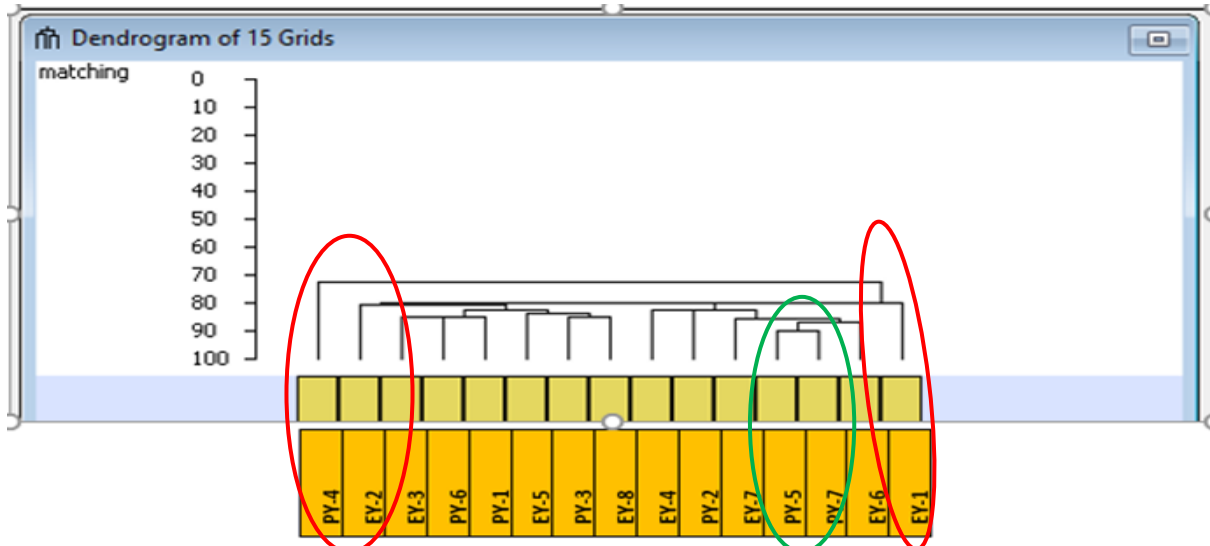


Figure 12 - Dendrogram showing similarities between participants (based on the ranking of the given constructs).

Cluster Analysis

A Cluster Analysis was then conducted to explore role-identity salience. This was investigated using the scores obtained by comparing 'myself as a SENCo now' with 'the SENCo I would like to be'¹¹. The similarity scores, reported as a percentage, are contained in Table 4:

Table 4 – Scores showing the similarity between the elements 'myself as a SENCo now' (real identity) and 'the SENCo I would like to be' (ideal identity).

Phase	Participant	Percentage similarity (real and ideal)
Early years	EY-2	70%
	EY-3	73%
	EY-5	74%
	EY-7	75%
	EY-4	77%
	EY-6	80%
	EY-1	82%
	EY-8	93%
Primary	PY-2	64%
	PY-4	68%
	PY-3	75%
	PY-6	84%
	PY-5	86%
	PY-1	89%

¹¹ This links to the concept of real and ideal identity, as revealed by Erikson (1959), Callero (1985) and Stryker and Serpe (1994). Here 'myself as a SENCo now' is proxy for real and 'the SENCo I would like to be' is proxy for ideal.

	PY-7		98%
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The higher percentages reveal a close match between real and ideal SENCo identity, whilst the lower percentages reveal a disparity between SENCos' perception of their current and ideal practice. Individual role-identity salience ranged from 64 percent to 98 percent. However, the number of study participants was low (N=15) and no relationship with years of experience, training levels or leadership status was found. For example, the SENCos with the two lowest scores in the primary phase had different characteristics. PY-2 (64%) was on the senior leadership team (SLT), had been a SENCo for less than 3 years and had just completed the NASENCo training. Conversely, PY-4 (68%) was not on the SLT, had been a SENCo for more than 20 years, and had not completed the NASENCo training. The SENCos with the highest scores also had different traits. For example, EY-8 (93%) worked in early years, was trained to level 3, was not on the SLT, and had been a SENCo for 3-10 years. Whereas PY-7 (98%) worked in the primary phase, had completed the NASENCo award in 2009, was on the SLT and had been a SENCo for more than 10 years. Therefore, no pattern emerged from these results.

Principal Component Analysis

Scattergraphs were produced to represent results of the principal component analysis (PCA) for each SENCo. These illustrate their individual perceptions of the match between their actual and ideal practice. The elements which denote these two identities ('Myself Now' and 'Ideal'¹²), are positioned close to one another on the graph when the two are closely aligned. The graphs for the participants with the closest match, or salience, (EY-8 and PY-1) are included in Figure 13 and Figure 14. In Figure 13, the close alignment between real and ideal SENCo identity is visible in quadrant I, along with proximity to 'effective' (indicated by the yellow star).

Scattergraphs have four quadrants¹³. In this first scattergraph (Figure 13), elements (portrayed by red dots) and constructs perceived to be related to effective practice are positioned on the left-hand side,

¹² GridSuite limits the characters for element and construct names. Element names in full are: 'Myself as a SENCo now' (Myself Now); 'A professional who has been helpful with EHCP implementation' (Helpful professional); 'A professional who has not been helpful with EHCP implementation' (Unhelpful professional); 'The kind of SENCo that I would like to be (Ideal)'; 'The SENCo I would not like to be' (Not like to be).

¹³ Scattergraphs plot the construct that correlates most with other constructs (x or horizontal axis), then finds the construct accounting for the next highest amount of variance (y or vertical axis). The remaining constructs and elements are then plotted on the graph according to co-ordinates taken from their correlations with these axes or constructs. Scattergraphs are divided into four quadrants due to the intersection point (zero) of the horizontal (x) axis and vertical (y) axis. High correlations are depicted by distance from the axes, and low correlations are depicted by proximity to the axes. The upper right quadrant (quadrant I) contains points that lie within the range of 0 to positive infinity for both the x and y-axis (+,+). The upper left quadrant (quadrant II), identifies points to the left of, or below zero on the x-axis and points above zero on the y-axis (-,+). The lower-left part of the grid (quadrant III) identifies points less than zero on both the x and y-axes (-,-). The lower right quadrant (quadrant IV) contains only points that are to the right of, or above zero on the x-axis and below zero on the y-axis (+,-). If all the quadrants are filled in, it shows that the constructs are operating independently of

and elements and constructs perceived to be related to ineffective practice are positioned on the right-hand side of the grid. The elements, 'Myself as a SENCo now' and the 'Ideal SENCo' are positioned close to one another, and close to 'effective' (construct 4, marked on the graph by the yellow star). This indicates that EY-8 identifies her practice as a SENCo to be closely matched to ideal and effective practice. The two elements, 'Helpful Professional' and 'Unhelpful Professional' are positioned further

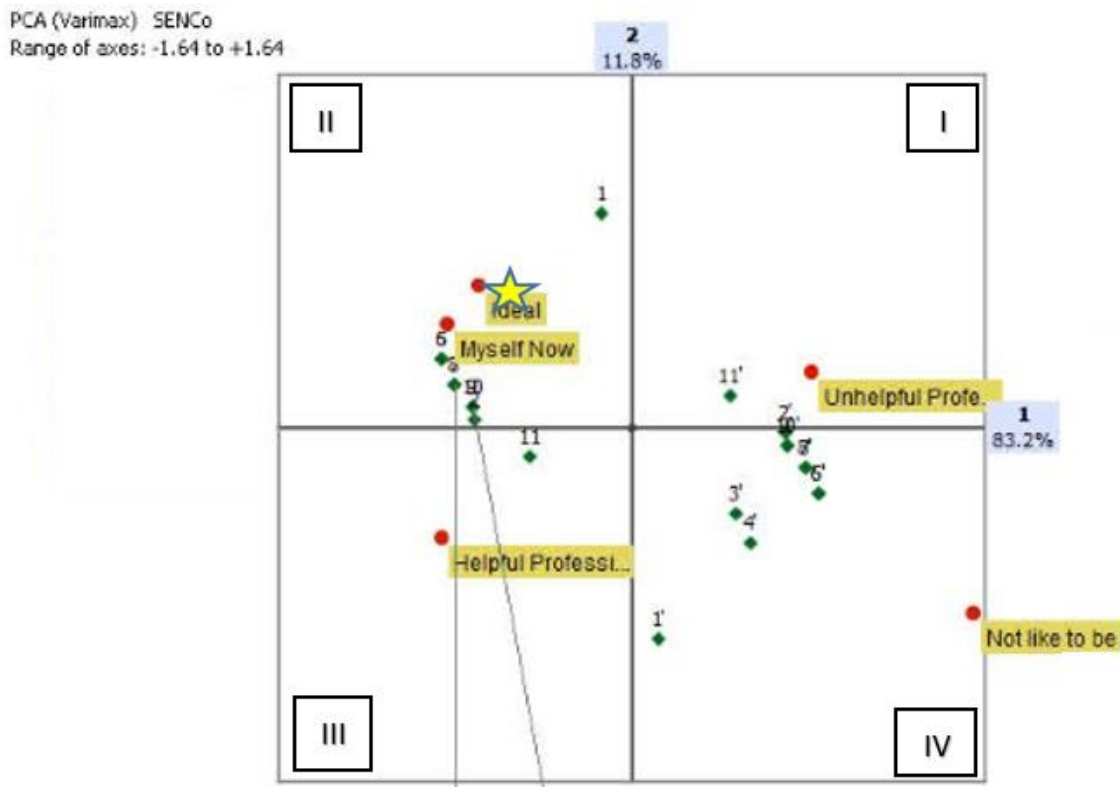


Figure 13 - Scattergraph showing EY-8's close match between perceptions of real ('myself now') and ideal ('the SENCo I would like to be') and 'effective' (highlighted by yellow star).

away, but still closer to 'Ideal SENCo' than the element, 'The kind of SENCo I would not like to be' is. The positioning of these elements on the grid shows that EY-8 considers the 'Helpful Professional' to be effective (as it appears on the left-hand side of the grid), and the 'Unhelpful Professional' to be ineffective (as it appears on the right-hand side of the grid). It also shows that EY-8 has a higher regard for these professionals than she has for 'The kind of SENCo I would not like to be'. The positioning of the various constructs is discussed in section 6.1.2.

In the next scattergraph (Figure 14), elements (portrayed by red dots) and constructs perceived to be related to effective practice are positioned on the left-hand side, and elements and constructs

one another. If quadrants are left empty, it tells us that the participant is employing certain judgemental dimensions that are dependent on one another (Fromm and Paschelke, 2011).

perceived to be related to ineffective practice are positioned on the right-hand side of the grid. PY-1 aligns 'Ideal SENCo' very close to both 'Helpful Professional' and 'Myself Now', with all of these being

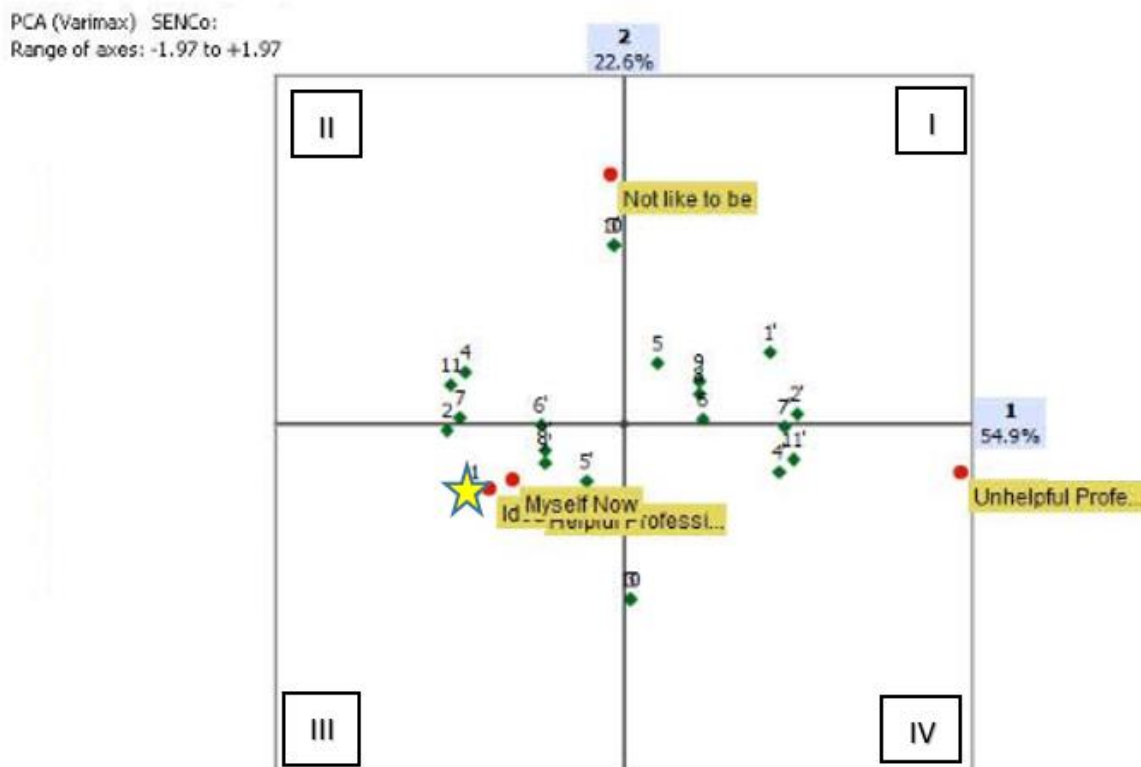


Figure 14 - Scattergraph showing PY-1's close match between perceptions of real ('myself now'), ideal ('the SENCo I would like to be') and 'effective' (highlighted by yellow star).

positioned close to 'Effective' (Construct 1, marked on the graph by the yellow star). This shows that she regards her practice, and that of the 'Helpful Professional' to be close to effective. It also shows that she regards her practice to be close to that of the 'Ideal SENCo'. In this grid, the 'Unhelpful Professional' and 'The kind of SENCo I would not like to be' are positioned at a distance from either 'effective' or 'Ideal SENCo', showing that PY-1 does not regard their practice as either ideal or effective.

In contrast to these examples of good role-identity salience, when participants perceive that their real and ideal SENCo practice are not closely aligned, the elements which denote these two identities ('Myself as a SENCo now' and 'ideal') will be positioned at a distance to one another. Scattergraphs for the participants with the biggest distance, or poorest alignment (PY-2 and PY-4) can be seen in Figure 15 and Figure 16 below. In each of these figures, the two relevant elements (depicted by red dots) are connected by a blue arrow to highlight the distance, with 'effective' again being highlighted by the yellow star.

In this scattergraph (Figure 15), elements and constructs perceived to be related to effective practice are positioned on the left-hand side, and elements and constructs perceived to be related to ineffective practice are positioned on the right-hand side of the grid. The graph shows that PY-2 does

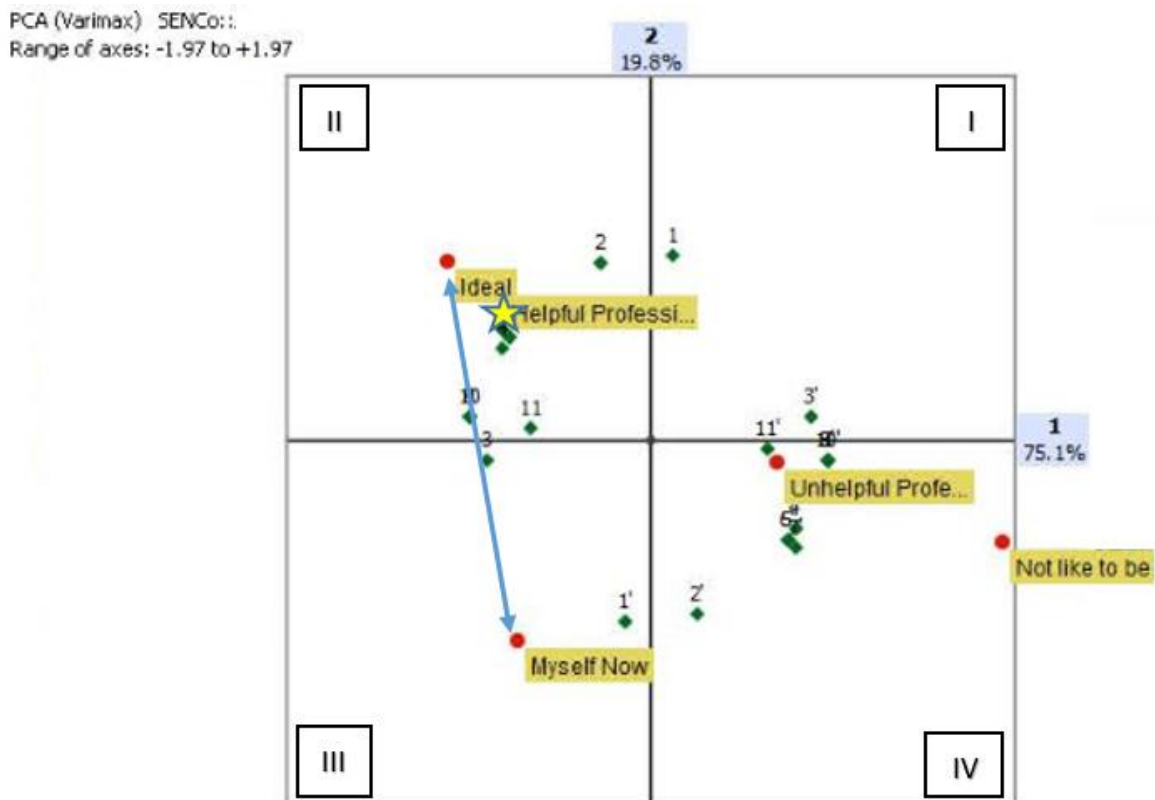


Figure 15 - Scattergraph (PY-2) showing the difference between perceptions of real ('myself now') and ideal ('the SENCo I would like to be') and 'effective' (highlighted by yellow star).

not consider 'Myself as a SENCo now' to be closely aligned with the 'Ideal SENCo', and that the 'Helpful Professional' is closer to her conceptualisation of 'effective' (Construct 1, marked on the graph by the yellow star). This indicates that although 'Myself as a SENCo now' is positioned to the left of the y-axis, and therefore on the left-hand side of the graph, PY-2 perceives that her SENCo practice is not (yet) closely aligned with 'effective' practice, which is interesting given that she had only recently taken on the role of both deputy head teacher and SENCo and had just completed the NASENCo award.

In the next scattergraph (Figure 16), constructs related to 'effective' appear on the right-hand side. This is because P-4 was an outlier and identified many negative constructs on the emergent pole. This necessitated reversal (see the explanation for Figure 8 in section 4.8.1, p. 101). The graph shows that PY-4 aligns herself closer to the 'Helpful Professional' than to the 'Ideal SENCo' (see blue arrows). It also indicates that PY-4 perceives her practice to be effective, as evidenced by the close alignment of

'effective' (marked on the graph by the yellow star) and 'Myself as a SENCo now'. The 'helpful professional' identified by PY-4 was a County SEN support worker who 'know[s] what they are doing'.

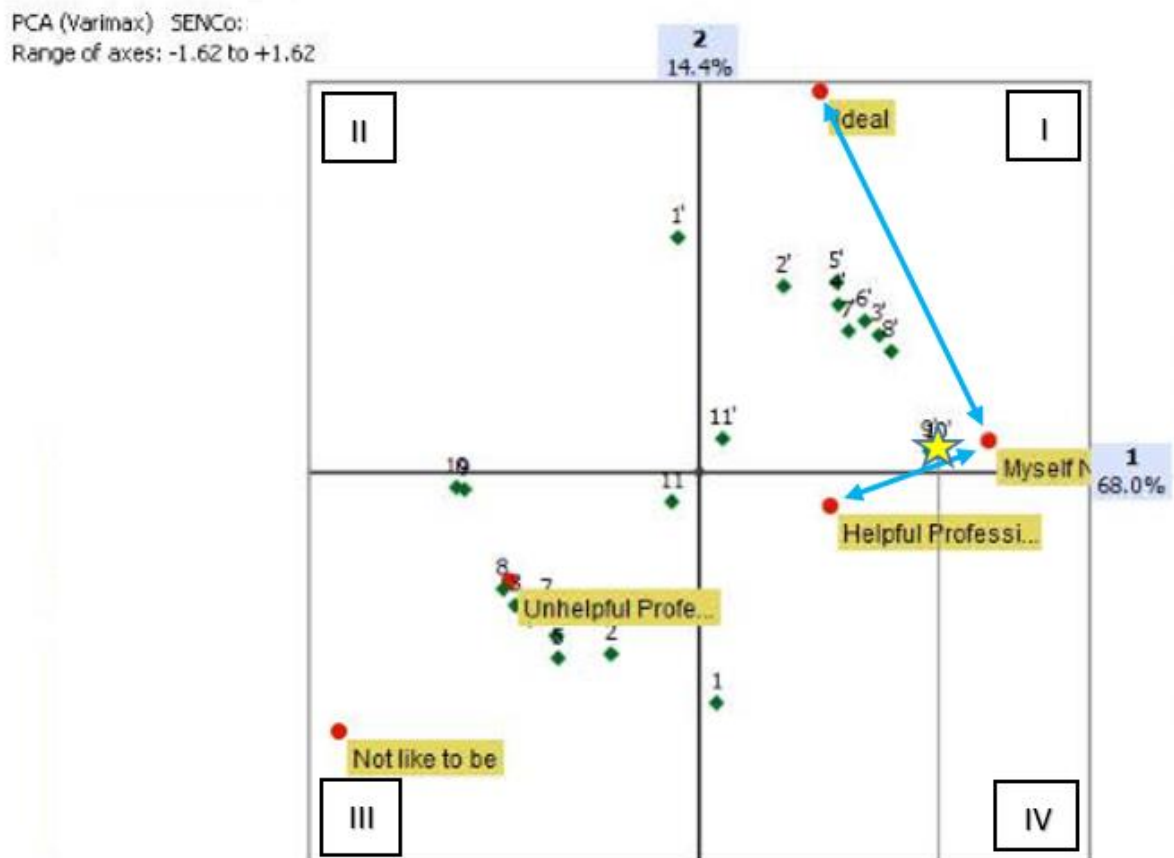


Figure 16 - Scattergraph (PY-4) showing the difference between perceptions of real ('myself now') and ideal ('the SENCo I would like to be') and 'effective' (highlighted by yellow star).

This result may suggest the esteem she has for this actual professional, and the recognition of their knowledge and practice in the area of EHCP implementation, as being better than that of the 'Ideal SENCo'.

Whilst PCA tells us something of different identities and their proximity to 'effective' EHCP implementation, care must be exercised not to convey an impression of psychological exactitude and certainty. Indeed, these scattergraphs reveal differences in the perceptions of individual participants. Additional analytical procedures were carried out to check and explore the relationship between elements further.

MouseSort

MouseSort analysis revealed the matrix similarities between the other combinations of elements, where mean centrality is 50. These are shown in Table 5:

Table 5 - Matrix similarities between elements.

Column Number		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
		Matrix similarity scores between the named pair of elements:									
Phase	Participant	Unhelpful professional and helpful professional	Unhelpful professional and ideal SENCo	Unhelpful professional and myself as a SENCo now	Unhelpful professional and the SENCo I would not like to be	Helpful professional and ideal SENCo	Helpful professional and myself as a SENCo now	Helpful professional and the SENCo I would not like to be	SENCo I would not like to be an ideal SENCo	SENCo I would not like to be and myself as a SENCo now	Ideal SENCo and myself as a SENCo now
Early Years SENCo	EY-1	64	52	61	55	57	61	41	16	30	82
	EY-2	50	45	43	34	73	66	48	30	55	70
	EY-3	68	27	41	57	55	50	25	25	48	73
	EY-4	27	68	41	36	68	77	36	23	32	74
	EY-5	45	34	18	55	89	68	50	43	45	75
	EY-6	57	59	52	30	89	77	23	16	36	80
	EY-7	55	40	55	58	80	95	28	12	28	75
	EY-8	30	32	30	68	80	82	25	9	7	93
Primary Years SENCo	P-1	52	32	30	36	66	59	57	59	57	89
	P-2	45	34	52	68	89	66	23	11	34	64
	P-3	57	32	34	45	66	64	43	27	48	75
	P-4	68	32	41	70	55	68	43	20	30	68
	P-5	36	32	41	48	95	86	25	20	34	86
	P-6	55	27	39	52	73	80	43	20	36	84
	P-7	43	39	41	45	91	93	25	16	18	98

When elements perceived as desirable and undesirable¹⁴ are compared, scores are low (revealing less similarity between these elements). For example, ‘helpful professional’ compared with ‘SENCo I would not like to be’ (column 7, shaded blue). The least similar or lowest scores are between the ‘SENCo I would not like to be’ and ‘Ideal SENCo’ (column 8, shaded blue), and between the ‘SENCo I would not like to be’ and ‘myself as a SENCo now’ (Column 9, shaded blue). Scores are higher when two desirable

¹⁴ Caputi and Reddy (1999) link ‘desirable’ with attributes that are viewed positively, such as sociability, consideration of others, affiliation, and competence. In contrast, ‘undesirable’ is associated with attributes that are viewed negatively, such as a lack of motivation or social skills, and intolerance.

elements are compared (revealing more similarity between these elements). For example, when ‘helpful professional’ is compared with ‘ideal SENCo’ (column 5, shaded yellow).

MouseSort statistics reveal how strongly each participant identified with the desirable elements or identities. These were mapped onto biographical information (age-phase, years as a SENCo, qualification level, and membership of SLT) to discover if any patterns existed (see Appendix 16). Four participants showed a high cohesion (range within 10%). These can be seen in Table 6:

Table 6 - MouseSort scores (% similarity) and biographical details.

Participant	Years as a SENCo	Qualification level	Membership of Senior Leadership Team (SLT)	Real-Ideal Saliency (% similarity)	Real and helpful professional (% similarity)	Ideal and helpful professional (% similarity)
EY-2	<3	6	Y	70%	66%	73%
EY-4	10+	6	Y	77%	77%	68%
PY-5	<3	7	Y	86%	86%	95%
PY-7	10+	7	Y	98%	93%	91%

These participants show close alignment between the desirable identities. However, other SENCos with similar qualification levels and membership of the SLT showed less saliency between their real and ideal practice, as judged by themselves, which also suggests that SENCo perception of their own practice is a personal judgement that may not reflect their actual effectiveness in practice. For example, EY-8 has high real-ideal saliency (93%), despite having less experience and a lower qualification level than EY-5, who rated herself relatively low (74%), see Table 7:

Table 7 – Example of low (EY-5) and high (EY-8) real-ideal saliency - early years SENCos.

Participant	Years a SENCo	Qualification level	Membership of Senior Leadership Team (SLT)	Real-Ideal Saliency (% similarity)	Real and helpful professional (% similarity)	Ideal and helpful professional (% similarity)
EY-5	20+	6	Y	74%	68%	89%
EY-8	3-10	3	N	93%	82%	80%

This personal judgement is also evident in primary phase SENCOs, as illustrated by PY-2, who rates herself much lower (64%) than PY-5 (86%), despite having similar levels of experience, qualification and leadership responsibility (see Table 8):

Table 8 - Example of low (PY-2) and high (PY-5) real-ideal salience – primary phase SENCOs.

Participant	Years a SENCO	Qualification level	Membership of Senior Leadership Team (SLT)	Real-Ideal Salience (% similarity)	Real and helpful professional (% similarity)	Ideal and helpful professional (% similarity)
PY-2	<3	7	Y	64%	66%	89%
PY-5	<3	7	Y	86%	86%	95%

This suggests that in this small group of participants, alignment is not a straightforward process that links clearly to phase, experience, qualification, or leadership status. Therefore, participants were no more or less likely to have a high real-ideal salience based on age-phase, extent of SENCO experience, qualification level, or position within their setting. This section presented results about elements obtained from the numerical analysis of the individual repertory grid interviews. The next section presents results about constructs found from further numerical analysis of this same data set.

6.1.2 Constructs

Eye-balling

Constructs were elicited from each individual participant so are unique and harder to compare numerically than the elements, which were pre-determined. Numerical analysis of the individual repertory grid interview data was therefore conducted separately for each participant. First, each grid was ‘eye-balled’ to reveal any constructs that were rated similarly by participants. An example of this can be seen in EY-8’s grid, where ‘*correct information to identify need*’ (construct 2), ‘*supporting child in best way they can*’ (construct 4), and ‘*child’s best interests are at heart*’ (construct 6) are all rated the same, i.e. 1,1,3,5,1 – see boxes highlighted in yellow in Figure 17:

SENCO perceptions of practice and potential: Investigating EHCP implementation in early years and primary education

SENCO ID:	Thinking about EHCP implementation, what is a central thing that this pair have in common?	Myself as a SENCO now.	A professional who has been helpful with EHCP implementation:	A professional who has not been helpful with EHCP implementation:	The kind of SENCO that I would not like to be.	The SENCO I would like to be.	Implicit Pole
28/106/117	1 The outcome for the child - they both want the child to have best start possible 2 They should be there to support the child in their first year to be covered 3 Use non-words above to make notes to be covered by SENCO and child 4 Have a role in what they should be supported to do - give them the best start possible 5 Not so positive outcome reports of what is going on 6 Clutch best intentions are at their best but don't ensure this	1 1 1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1 1 1	5 3 3 3 3 3	5 5 5 5 5 5	1 1 1 1 1 1	4. Don't have the children involved at all. People who are unhelpful in any way. 4. They wouldn't be involved. They wouldn't want to be. 4 4. They wouldn't be involved. They wouldn't want to be. 4 4. They wouldn't be involved. They wouldn't want to be. 4 4. They wouldn't be involved. They wouldn't want to be. 4 4. They wouldn't be involved. They wouldn't want to be. 4 4. They wouldn't be involved. They wouldn't want to be. 4
	Both know the need for these children to be early education with the correct support Be aware of support that children require, but understand what children need to be able to learn Ensure that children are happy and that they are not being punished for not doing things Don't implement the EHCP unless it is for the benefit of the child	1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1	5 5 5 5	5 5 5 5	1 1 1 1	1. Make sure the the support is being set out - pro-active. Instead to react 1. Make sure things are in place and going for the child 1. Make sure things are in place and going for the child 1. Make sure things are in place and going for the child 1. Make sure things are in place and going for the child 1. Make sure things are in place and going for the child
	Effective	2	3	4	5	1	Ineffective

Reference: This repertory grid is adapted from the instrument developed as part of the ESRC funded study of Effective Classroom Practice as described in: Kingdon, A., Reed, N. & Sammons, P. (2014). Teachers' Constructs of Effective Classroom Practice: Variations across a career. Research Papers in Education, 29 (1), pp. 534-556.

Figure 17 – EY-8's raw repertory grid demonstrating three constructs with the same ratings (highlighted in yellow on the grid).

Eyeballing the grids in this manner revealed that nine participants did not rate any of their constructs in the same way. Table 9 shows the constructs that were rated the same by the remaining six participants. Constructs rated the same reveal similarity between concepts, and those that appear several times can reveal priorities within an individual's system of beliefs and values. Table 9 demonstrates this. EY-8 and PY-2 both made identical ratings (1,1,3,5,1) for construct 6, and for constructs 4 and 9 (EY-8) and construct 7 (PY-2). This suggests that there is some alignment between supporting the child in the very best way and having knowledge about the legislation, guidelines and EHCP process that enables implementation. Significantly, construct 5 is the only one that was never rated similarly. This could be because this dyad compared two 'undesirable' identities ('A professional who has not been helpful with EHCP implementation' and 'the kind of SENCo I would not like to be'), making correspondence with other constructs less likely.

Table 9 - Constructs rated the same, by participant.

Ratings and participant	Construct number and description		
All rated 1,1,5,4,1 by EY-4	1. Really supportive and helpful.	6. Professional, respectful.	9. Supportive, diplomatic, empathic.
Both rated 1,2,5,4,2 by EY-5	9. To always be familiar with the children.	10. Hands-on work and experience with the children.	
All rated 1,1,3,5,1 by EY-8 (see also Figure 17)	4. There to support children by collecting the correct information to support the EHCP application.	6. Should be supporting the child the best way they can – underpinned by the same legislation and guidelines.	9. Child's best interests are at their heart – have the drive to ensure this.
Both rated 1,1,1,5,1 by PY-1	2. Want what is best for the child – the child is foremost.	9. Passion for the role.	
Both rated 1,1,3,5,1 by PY-2	6. Wanting to get/provide the very best for all pupils.	7. Knowledge held about implementation of the EHCP process.	
All rated 1,1,5,3,1 by PY-7	3. Churn out informed paperwork to meet statutory guidelines.	8. Have an overview of needs over a variety of settings.	10. Monitor provision.
Both rated 1,1,2,5,1 by PY-7	2. Determine and inform future provision for the child.	6. Accommodate all opinions to inform a child-centred approach.	

Cluster Analysis

Cluster analysis was conducted to reveal the most significant constructs (see Table 10):

Table 20 - Most important constructs as identified by Cluster Analysis.

Phase	Significant Constructs (Cluster Analysis) as revealed by percentages of 60% or above		
	60%	70%	80%+
Early Years	<p>Other staff available to support work.</p> <p>Help the child progress.</p> <p>Dedicated SENCo role so can focus and have TIME.</p> <p>Motivation, enthusiasm, and passion.</p> <p>Commitment.</p>	<p>Regular contact.</p> <p>Child's needs are foremost.</p> <p>Supportive, caring, helpful.</p> <p>Up-to-date knowledge of changes and what support is around.</p> <p>Professional, working relationship.</p> <p>Holistic knowledge and assessment.</p> <p>Able to spend time with child – over time allows monitoring.</p>	
Primary	<p>Eager to find out more, keep learning, encompassing change.</p> <p>Take child into account – personalised, adaptable, flexible provision.</p> <p>A good understanding of the options available.</p> <p>Finding the best processes.</p> <p>Good communication.</p> <p>Shared vision and practice.</p> <p>Child central to whole process.</p>	<p>The willingness to share experiences and information.</p> <p>Usually contactable/available. Quick to reply to emails and questions.</p> <p>Getting parental view.</p> <p>Identify needs, set targets, support progress.</p> <p>Gives consistent information.</p>	<p>Knowledge of application process itself.</p> <p>Knows what is expected/required so can manage/modify to make whole process easier in future.</p> <p>Look holistically at process.</p> <p>Personal knowledge of child (and their history).</p> <p>Making child's educational experience the most positive it can be.</p> <p>Really good understanding of SEND that can then be used to support and help.</p> <p>Goes beyond what is expected.</p> <p>Conscientious, caring – can create sleepless nights.</p>

Those with a match of 60 percent or above were identified¹⁵ and are listed in Table 10. Cluster analysis also revealed the relationships between the constructs¹⁶. The dendrogram for EY-6 is an example of a range of associations, from 30 percent to 100 percent (see Figure 18 below):

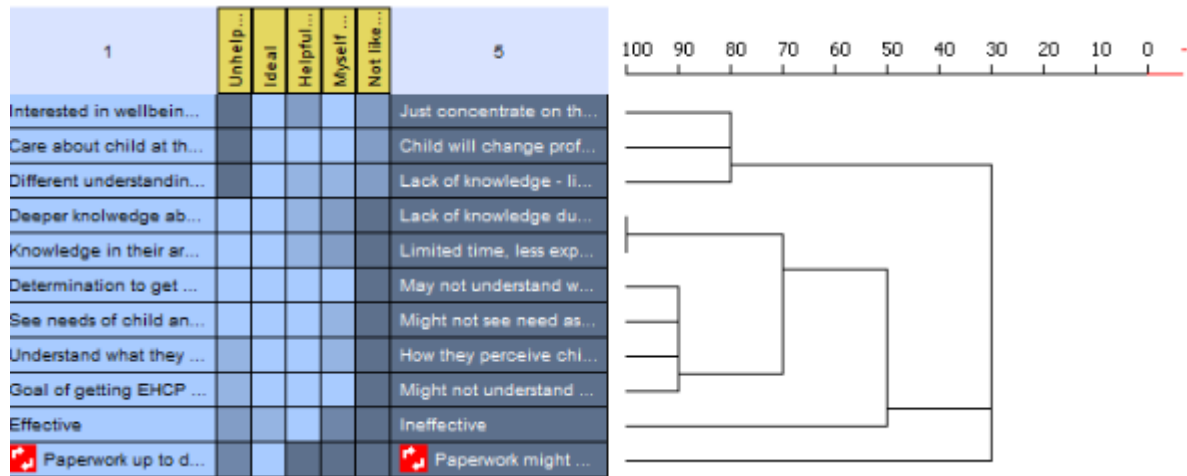


Figure 18 - Dendrogram (constructs only) for EY-6, showing range of associations, from 30% to 100%.

Figure 18 demonstrates EY-6 placed high value (at 100%) on ‘*knowledge of their area of expertise*’ and ‘*deeper knowledge about everything*’. Four constructs that were also highly rated (at 90%) are ‘*determination to get everything that you need*’, ‘*see the needs of the child and where that child is developmentally*’, ‘*understand what they are doing and how they are going to get there*’ and ‘*goal of getting and EHCP in the end*’, suggesting the purpose and commitment EY-6 felt. The three constructs rated at 80 percent (‘*interested in wellbeing*’, ‘*care about the child*’ and ‘*different understanding of what is best for the child*’) indicate that the child and their wellbeing is valued by EY-6. Finally, the last elicited construct (‘*paperwork up to date*’, 30%) and the given constructs (*effective* and *ineffective*, 50%) are less closely related to the other constructs. These results show that EY-6 identifies knowledge, meeting the needs/obtaining support and holistic care as more closely associated with her identity as a SENCo.

In contrast, the dendrogram for PY-5 (Figure 19) shows a smaller, closer range of associations (from 70% to 100%):

¹⁵ Numerically, 60 percent relates to a totalled score of 4, 70 percent equates to a totalled score of 3, 80 percent equates to a totalled score of 2, and 90 or 100 percent equates to a totalled score of 1 in the original repertory grid procedure. Thus, the significant constructs can be identified by scores of 4 or below on the raw grid and through a cluster analysis score of 60 percent or above in the analysed data. Constructs with a rating total of 0-4 were therefore deemed most closely aligned to participants’ emergent pole, revealing information about positive SENCo identity.

¹⁶ GridSuite calculates the associations (most and least) between either the constructs or the elements using distance coefficients, where short Euclidean distances indicate similar profiles. Dendograms provide visual representations of these associations.

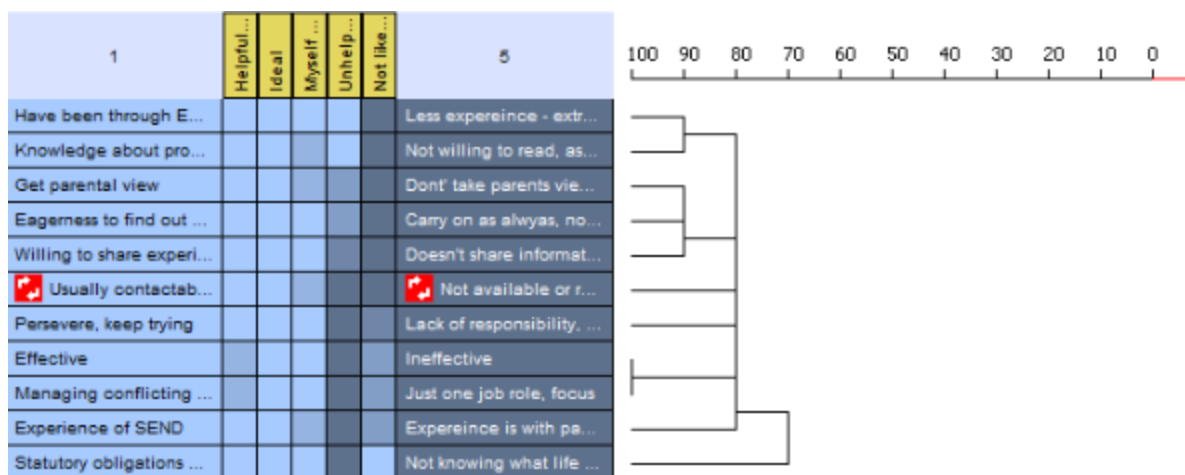


Figure 19 - Dendrogram (constructs only) for PY-5, showing range of associations from 70% to 100%.

Figure 19 demonstrates that two constructs are rated equally (at 100%). These are ‘effective’ and ‘managing conflicting workloads’. Indeed, PY-5 was a recently appointed SENCo and deputy head with part-time class teaching responsibilities. For PY-5, five constructs were very closely related (at 90%). These are: ‘having been through EHCP process’, ‘knowledge about process’, ‘get parental view’, ‘eagerness to find out more’ and ‘willing to share experience’. Three constructs are also closely related (at 80%). These are: ‘usually contactable’, ‘persevere/keep trying’ and ‘experience of SEND’. The remaining construct, ‘statutory obligations are met’ is 70 percent similar to the others on PY-5’s grid. These results indicate that P-5 recognises the need to manage many demands, and the constructs that were closely related to her identity as a SENCo at the time of data collection.

To explore the participant perceptions of their identity as SENCos further, all constructs with a cluster analysis of 70 percent or higher were identified, then coded to reveal ten overarching themes most closely associated with their identity as SENCos (see Appendix 18). These are: communication and liaison; confidence; contact; evidence; holistic; knowledge and understanding; outcomes; passion and commitment; process knowledge and support. A synthesis of what the participants said about each theme, using their descriptions of the constructs, follows:

Communication and Liaison - professional working relationships are enhanced by effective liaison, when the communication is two-way and when the views of SENCos are listened to and respected (EY: N=4, PY: N=4). Relationships with other professionals where support, knowledge, and understanding is shared are appreciated. They also recognise that good communication and liaison, both with other professionals and with parents and relatives, require diplomacy and respect. When this is not present, it is perceived as ‘being rude’ (PY-4) and as having an impact on their ability to best meet the needs of the children and young people (CYP) in their care.

Confidence – experience and good levels of understanding enable SENCOs to take a wider view, and gives them the confidence to both challenge, and suggest different ways of meeting a child’s needs (EY:N=1, PY:N=3). This is linked to the power and authority they have had conferred to them and have developed themselves. When SENCOs do not feel confident, they are less likely to challenge, persevere, or innovate.

Contact – the amount and type of contact SENCOs have with CYP and their families is important, especially for SENCOs working in early years (EY:N=9, PY:N=2), for three main reasons. The first is that regular face-to-face contact develops personal knowledge of CYP and their families. The second reason is that relationships with these CYP and their families emerge from regular contact, with trust and communication being built up through the time spent with them. These relationships are important, as they form the basis of communication about a child’s needs. The third reason is the difference between what several SENCOs described a ‘snap-shot’ view, and assessments built on regular contact and opportunities to try out and implement things on a day-to-day basis. The SENCOs therefore feel that the expert knowledge of outside professionals who have little contact needs to be balanced with personal knowledge of CYP and their families, as built up by regular contact.

Evidence – the pivotal role of evidence is recognised (EY:N=3, PY:N=2). Evidence must be robust and enable specific needs to be identified, progress to be monitored and appropriate steps of development to be identified.

Holistic Support – ‘*Going beyond what is expected*’ (PY-2) is connected to holistically meeting CYP’s needs (EY: N=1, PY: N=3). This is achieved by informing the understanding of, and support for, CYP by accessing information from many different professionals. It requires a broad, rather than a narrow view of appropriate support and outcomes, and being prepared to innovate and think outside the box at times.

Knowledge and Training – knowledge and experience of both SEND and developmental norms is needed (EY: N=7, PY: N=2). This enables them to understand and provide for a child’s needs, with knowledge of specific CYP enabling provision to be personalised. Such knowledge comes from both formal learning and time spent observing and getting to know the CYP and their families, and was particularly an issue for early years SENCOs. Furthermore, whilst the knowledge and expertise of other professionals was valued, SENCOs recognised that these same professionals did not have the personal

knowledge of individual CYP and their families that closely involved setting staff have, and felt that effective implementation required both types of knowledge.

Outcomes – outcomes for the children were identified as a priority (EY: N=3, PY: N=5). They want to do the best for the CYP in their care, and the children’s wellbeing was very important to them. The SENCos perceived that this would be achieved by *‘identifying needs, setting targets and supporting progress’*, although a specific definition of what they perceived to be *‘good’* outcomes was not revealed by cluster analysis.

Passion and Commitment – SENCos are committed to and supportive of, the CYP and families in their care (EY: N=4, PY: N=7). This involves dedication to securing the support CYP need through an EHCP, which requires perseverance. This is not merely a question of meeting statutory obligations and requires people, rather than systems, to be their main concern. It also requires commitment, passion, motivation and *‘going beyond what is expected’* (PY-2).

Process Knowledge – knowledge of current practice, processes and provision is needed (EY: N=1, PY: N=3). Good knowledge of which steps to take and when, and of what other services and settings can provide, helps SENCos to apply, provide and plan for a child’s current and future needs more effectively.

Support – primary phase SENCos identified a need for support with EHCPs. This needs to be accessible and consistent (N=5). Such support is specialised, and comes from sources outside their workplace. Workload management, on the other hand, is down to their own time management though they do recognise that some support with this is available from their settings.

Cluster analysis revealed ten overarching themes. Principal component analysis (PCA) was also conducted to discover relationships between the different constructs.

Principal Component Analysis

In this process, constructs were plotted on a scattergraph, with those that are closely correlated appearing near each other on the graph. This revealed SENCo perceptions about effective EHCP implementation, in that the constructs identified as effective were plotted close to the given, *‘effective’* construct. SENCo perceptions about ineffective EHCP implementation are revealed in the same way, in that the constructs identified as ineffective are plotted closest to the given *‘ineffective’* construct. Two scattergraphs are included here, in Figure 20 and Figure 21, as examples that

demonstrate the proximity of constructs (circled in blue) to 'effective' and 'ineffective' (indicated by yellow stars):

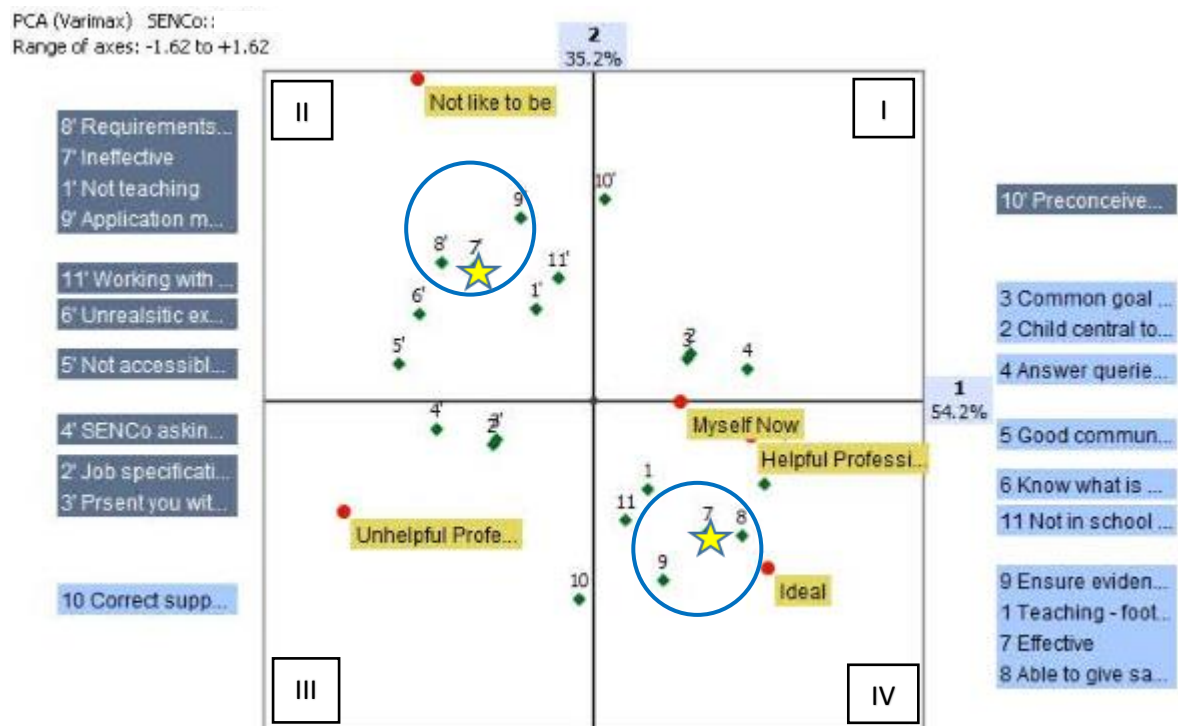


Figure 20 - Scattergraph for PY-3 where the two constructs most closely associated with SENCo perceptions of 'effective' and 'ineffective' (depicted by yellow stars), are ringed by the blue circle.

Figure 20 shows that PY-3 links the 'effective' construct (number 7, quadrant IV) closest to the construct 'ability to give answers as quickly as possible' (number 8, quadrant IV) and to the construct 'ensure evidence is there and it supports the application' (number 9, quadrant IV). It also shows that PY-3 links the 'ineffective' construct (number 7, quadrant II) closest to the construct 'requirement to answer SENCos queries not caseworker's highest priority as they are just one of many asking questions' (number 8, quadrant II), and to the construct, 'application may be more ruthless, less honest – may be about financial benefit to school (child as opposed to setting should be central)' (number 9, quadrant II).

Figure 21 shows that EY-4 links the 'effective' construct (number 1, quadrant II) closely to the construct 'ability to holistically assess a situation and decide what provision is required' (number 5, quadrant II) and to the construct 'knowledgeable about the holistic development of children' (number 8, quadrant

I).¹⁷ It also shows that EY-4 links the 'ineffective' construct (number 1, quadrant IV) closest to the construct 'assessment partial, not thorough' (number 5, quadrant IV), and to the construct 'Lacks depth and breadth of many aspects of SEND and child development' (number 8, quadrant III).

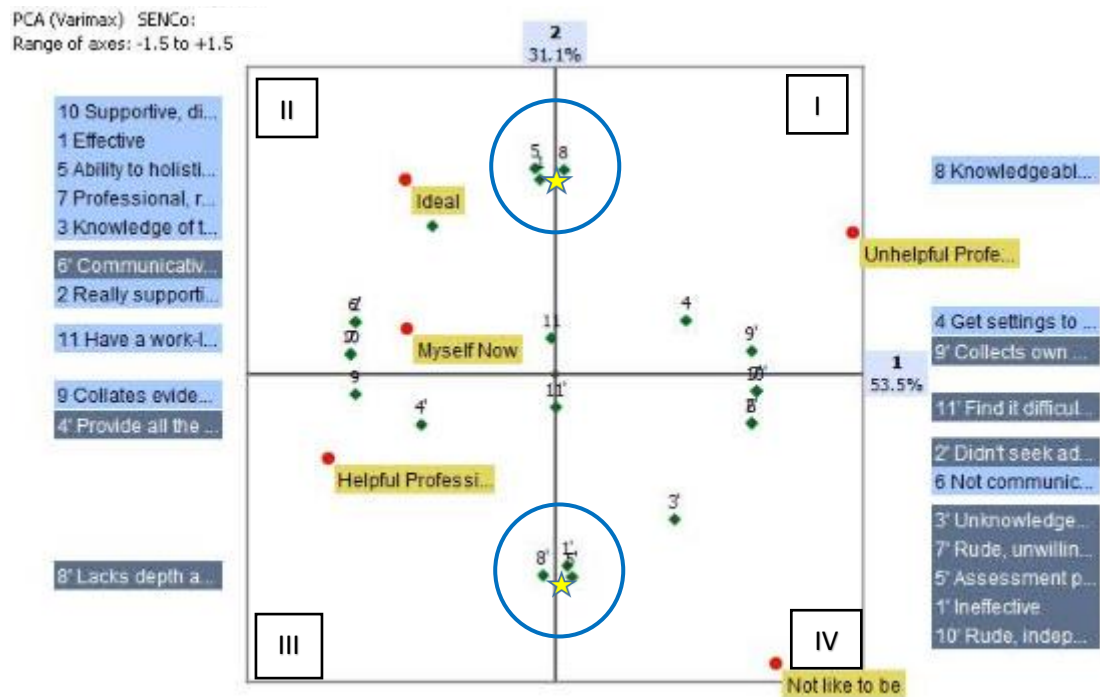


Figure 21 - Scattergraph for EY-4, where the two constructs most closely associated with SENCo perceptions of 'effective' and 'ineffective' (depicted by yellow stars), are ringed by the blue circle.

The two constructs linked most closely to each SENCo's ranking of 'effective' and 'ineffective' implementation are listed in Table 11 and in Table 12. They can also be seen in Table 18 in Appendix 11. These reveal the constructs most closely associated with their perceptions of effective and ineffective EHCP implementation.

¹⁷ If a construct correlates highly (close to 1.00) with one component, and has a low correlation with another (close to 0.00), it will appear directly on the axis, as happens in Figure 21 (Fromm and Paschelke, 2011).

Table 113 - Principal Component Analysis: the two constructs most closely related to 'effective' and 'ineffective' - early years SENCoS.

Participant	Constructs closely related to 'effective'	Constructs closely related to 'ineffective'
EY-1	'Only have role of SENCo so can focus on it'	'Time constraints and limited time'
	'They care, regular contact, understanding, empathy, support'	'Not being very supportive, not being there, not wanting to help'
EY-2	'Support, care, help all the time'	'Lack of support for the children'
	'Professionals who are there to support children and families'	'Have to follow the confines of their professional structure'
EY-3	'Working to achieve same targets for the child'	'Not looking at child as an individual'
	'Keep up to date with changes in legislation'	'Having time and finding the information out – being proactive'
EY-4	'Ability to holistically assess a situation and decide what provision is required'	'Assessment partial, not thorough'
	'Knowledgeable about the holistic development of children'	'Lacks depth and breadth of many aspects of SEND and child development'
EY-5	'Knowledge of child development and expectations at different stages'	'May not have that knowledge – may not have same experience of working closely with children that builds this'
	'Hands-on experience'	'Different priorities – spend more time on paperwork'
EY-6	'Understand what they are doing and how they are going to get there'	'Might not understand/care what they need to do – because of how they perceive children with SEND and their interpretation of what they need'
	'Share the same goal in sense of getting an EHCP in the end'	'May not understand what an EHCP can help the child with'
EY-7	'Listen to the setting'	'Not listening to what others are saying'
	'Help the child progress'	Lack of confidence and experience'
EY-8	'Ensure children are happy and fulfilling as much as they can'	'Don't see children's own interests – when they receive targets and reports they just deliver them'
	'Know need for these children to be entering education with the right support'	'Make sure the support is being set out – proactive in this process'

Table 124 - Principal Component Analysis: the two constructs most closely related to 'effective' and 'ineffective' - primary phase SENCos.

Participant	Constructs closely related to 'effective'	Constructs closely related to 'ineffective'
PY-1	'Very clear knowledge and understanding of current procedures, or the system'	'Knowledge of the systems is poor and the information they are receiving is bad'
	'Dedicated role, part of SLT, autonomy'	'Limited time with the children'
PY-2	'Really good understanding of SEND that can be used to support and help'	'Without the knowledge, can't do the very best'
	'Can turn to for support with an application'	'Need to be approachable'
PY-3	'Able to give answers as quickly as possible'	'Requirement to answer SENCos' queries not caseworker's highest priority as they are just one of many asking questions.'
	'Ensure evidence is there and supports the application'	'Application may be more ruthless, less honest – may be about financial benefit to school (child as opposed to setting should be central)'
PY-4	'Gets involved – conscientious, caring'	'Less involved, objective'
	'Historical overview so can make common references'	'New to it, may not come from education so no common references, experience'
PY-5	'Managing workload (roles can complement each other)'	'Just one job role, that is their focus'''
	'Experience of SEND'	'Experience is not in schools, not dealing with the children, parents and families (their experience is with paper, numbers and data)'
PY-6	'Personal knowledge of child, family, history'	'Sometimes it is just a piece of paper – they don't know the child'
	'Has confidence to say – okay, this is your point of view – can you consider the other needs of the child and how these impact on the bigger picture'	'Tunnel vision – only see things from their little part of the process'
PY-7	'Holistic view – takes child into account so provision is tweaked, personalised, adaptable'	'Narrow, very specific view – does not take into account the whole child, e.g. current stresses'
	Identify needs, set targets, support progress	Targets may not be accurate – may be tweaked to fit school rather than child, with detail missed out'

Table 11 and Table 12 reveal that many of the same constructs were present between different participants. For example: the construct 'support and care' was voiced by EY-1 and EY-2, and knowledge and understanding was voiced by EY-4, EY-5, PY-1 and PY-2. Also, constructs closely linked to 'effective' and 'ineffective' reflect practice that could apply to most professionals involved with EHCPs. However, individual SENCoS have different priorities, for example, EY-6 is concerned about knowing processes and about how EHCPs are understood by others, compared to PY-5 who is concerned about time, workload and experience. Furthermore, some words used by participants, for example, 'support', have a variety of meanings including care (EY-1, EY-2), resources and interventions (EY-8, PY-2, and PY-7), evidence (PY-3), and assistance for the SENCo (PY-2). The next section presents the descriptive findings obtained from the analysis of individual repertory grid interview data.

6.2 Individual Repertory Grids – descriptive findings

The construct descriptions were analysed to reveal further detail about the research problem. Ideographic analysis¹⁸ revealed twenty-one groupings of constructs. Whilst this is a high number, reducing this further would have negatively impacted on participant voice. Also, it was anticipated that the group grid ranking would reveal the existence of any overlapping constructs. At this point in the analysis, these significant constructs were grouped according to the overarching themes that emerged from the data (see Figure 22). The constructs grouped under these themes provide detail of what and how SENCoS construe these parts of their understanding. The following sections employ participant's words from the transcripts, with colloquial terms only being specifically identified, in order to maintain the narrative.

¹⁸Ideographic analysis is a form of data reduction. See explanation in 'Descriptive Analysis, **Section 4.8.1**.

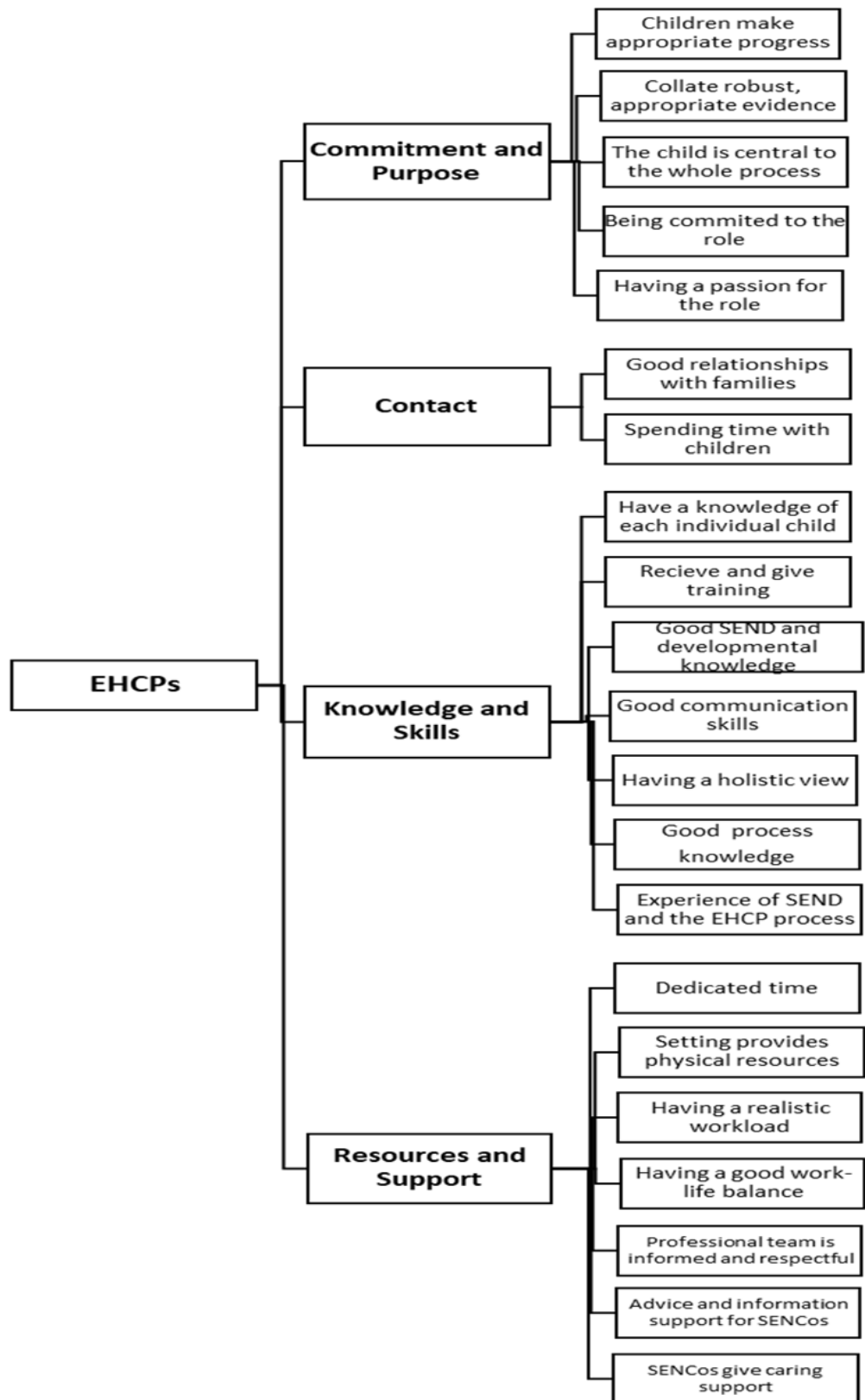


Figure 22 - Concept map of ideographic analysis findings, depicting potential links between themes.

Commitment and Purpose

Participants juxtaposed being motivated, enthusiastic and passionate about the role with not feeling motivated, enthusiastic or passionate. They identified that this might be due to limitations, for example in time, resources and support, because they feel pressured and '*driven down by it*' (EY-1), or because some SENCOs may regard the role as '*just a job*' (EY-4, PY-2). Collating robust, appropriate evidence required them to be proactive and chase outside professionals, which is more efficient when systems for collecting evidence internally are routine in settings so additional work, for themselves and setting staff, is minimised. Commitment is also needed because the role means SENCOs must be '*constantly fighting for the children*' (EY-8) and so they require drive and perseverance. Whilst they recognise the importance of paperwork in securing what individual children need, their priority is the children and their outcomes, and they desire to make individual children's educational experience the most positive it can be. Indeed, the EHCP process is about determining and informing the provision needed for the future of the child, which requires attention to detail, an interest in the whole child (including health, wellbeing, and home), and sometimes thinking '*outside the box*' so that provision is personalised and adaptable. Ideally, appropriate provision should fit the child and be realistic, with steps of progress suited to the child identified and tracked so that provision is both monitored and accountable.

Contact

All early years participants identified the importance of '*spending time with children*' (EY-5) which enables them to become familiar with the child and family, develop a '*well-rounded*' view (EY-6), and observe progress and try interventions and strategies out themselves. SENCOs from both age-phases identified the importance of having a relationship with families, and that providing them with support is a '*professional duty*' (EY-2). They emphasised gathering and listening to parental views; a process that requires all opinions to be regarded and that can sometimes decrease '*parental pressure*' (PY-1).

Knowledge and Skills

Having a knowledge of individual children, in turn, is important as it enables SENCOs to tailor provision to the children's own interests, which contribute to children feeling happy and fulfilled. This requires a holistic view, which can encompass knowing '*the history*' (PY-6), and assessment of the '*whole situation*' (PY-5), including listening to others to gain a fuller picture of needs. Such knowledge enables SENCOs to enhance and develop skills outside the '*normal range of learning*' (PY-7), since provision is '*not just about data*' (PY-6) or a '*narrow*' (PY-7) or '*restricted curriculum*' (EY-7). Experience is valued for contributing to knowledge and familiarity of settings and families. Experience also gives SENCOs a historical overview, which enables them to make common references, for example, to the recently removed curriculum levels, and gives SENCOs the '*ability and confidence to challenge others views and*

ask why' (PY-6). Developing current knowledge of the EHCP process is important to SENCOs, although some did not *'fully understand the implementation process'* (PY-6). This was linked to lack of time because the information was not easy to find, and because some SENCOs were *'not working with it all the time'* (EY-5) so *'may not be up-to-date with all the changes'* (PY-4, EY-3). Whilst some felt that there are *'unrealistic expectations in terms of what is being asked'* (PY-3), *'having a good understanding of what they are doing and how they are going to get there'* (EY-6), including a *'knowledge of the system and a very clear understanding of the requirements'* (PY-1) enable them to know and develop *'the best processes'* (PY-2). Efficient applications also require good communication between agencies, although the SENCOs reported slow responses to their queries, with some agencies being unavailable on the phone or slow to reply to emails. They contrasted this with agencies who are contactable, good listeners, respectful of other's views and willing to share both experiences and information.

Participants identified that they needed to be *'knowledgeable about areas/aspects of SEND, and where to seek out information, and the importance of conveying such information to others'* (original emphasis retained) (EY-4). They understand that good SEND and developmental knowledge comprises of understanding about the holistic development of children, including developmental levels and *'expectations of children at different age-groups'* (EY-5). It also comprises of knowledge about SEND, *'available options'* (PY-1), and *'of what goes on in different settings and organisations'* (EY-1). This information is used to help them identify when children are not achieving developmental levels, and to optimise the support and help for them. They recognise a need for *'specific training'* (EY-2), and that such training helps them *'reach full potential'* (EY-7). However, this requires time, resources and availability. Furthermore, training may not be undertaken sometimes because some SENCOs are *'stretched to the limits with the role'* (EY-2).

Resources and Support

All the participants held other responsibilities alongside the SENCO role. These enhance and inform each other and give the SENCOs different perspectives. However, they also impact on their time and flexibility, and create the need to manage sometimes conflicting workloads. The amount of time allocated for the SENCO role was a significant component in this. Settings needed to assign time and resources for the role, including time for training, liaison, and support. This helps SENCOs retain and develop their enthusiasm, motivation and passion. Time also enables contact with children and families, which informs detailed paperwork. In addition to time and resources, SENCOs identified that a *'do-able', 'realistic'* (EY-5) workload required good time management. Being able to leave work at work contributed to wellbeing, but the sheer amount of work means that they often take work home.

Moreover, the nature of the work means that it can be *'difficult to switch off'* (EY-4) and stress and sleepless nights can occur.

Support, resources, and commitment affect one another. The participants welcome the support they get from professional team working. They appreciate collegiate, respectful, listening relationships, and recognise that working together to support the child and family is underpinned by the same goal of *'what is best for the child'* (11 of the 15 participants). Whilst EHCPs require SENCos to draw on a wide range of sources, the participants felt that outside agencies do not always have a good appreciation of life in schools and may hold *'preconceived ideas of what is best for the school'* (PY-3). Primary phase SENCos need a resource or help-point manned by *'approachable personnel'* (PY-5). However, they have experienced difficulty reaching and contacting support-service personnel and have received conflicting advice. Some had been able to identify another source of support, for example from educational psychologists contracted by their academy. Others felt that EHCP applications *'end up with the whole thing on the SENCos shoulders'*(PY-6), and that they were, to a large degree, *'working in isolation'*(PY-7). This was allayed when other setting staff were available to help and give support, and they appreciated having others to *'bounce ideas off'* (EY-3) and who *'give reassurance and ideas'* (PY-3). SENCos identified their role giving educational support *'and on the emotional side'* (EY-8). This involves them *'caring'* (EY-1) and *'being there'* (EY-1), although this can impact on them personally.

In conclusion, some of these areas, for example, *'being committed to the role'* are more complex and interact with every other construct depicted in Figure 22. Other areas, for example, *'contact'*, appear to be more straightforward, though are still dependent on other areas, such as *'resources and support'* and *'good communication skills'*. The importance for EHCP implementation of the 21 constructs revealed by ideographic analysis (see footnote 18, p. 157) was explored further by having SENCos rank these in order of their importance.

6.3 Group Repertory Grids - numerical results

Fourteen SENCos ranked the 21 constructs contained in the group repertory grid. These rankings were then entered in an excel spreadsheet. Items of high importance were ranked first, second, third and so on, whereas items of low importance were indicated by being ranked last (19th, 20th and 21st). Initial analysis showed that no participant ranked the group grid items exactly the same as another. The mean, median and mode rank for each item on the group grid was calculated. The import of each construct, as revealed by this small group of participants, can be seen in Appendix 18. Mean scores revealed two constructs that were ranked as being very important, and two constructs that were ranked as less important by both age-phases. These four constructs and their mean scores are shown below in Table 13:

Table 13 - Highest and lowest priorities, as revealed by Group Repertory Grid ranking.

Construct Description	Mean Rank/Position (out of 21)
<i>The child is central to the whole process</i>	3.79
<i>Having knowledge of each individual child</i>	4.36
<i>Having a realistic workload</i>	18.0
<i>Having a good work-life balance</i>	19.71

The two constructs ranked highest indicate that the participant’s priority is the child, and that having knowledge about each individual child is important since this helps SENCos identify and evidence need, and tailor support. These are therefore two separate concepts. The two constructs ranked lowest are more similar but were not merged in the earlier ideographic process because they are still slightly different concepts in that one influences the other. Pie charts for each of these constructs demonstrate the ranking made by the whole sample. These are included below:

Child is central (mean ranking = 3.79)

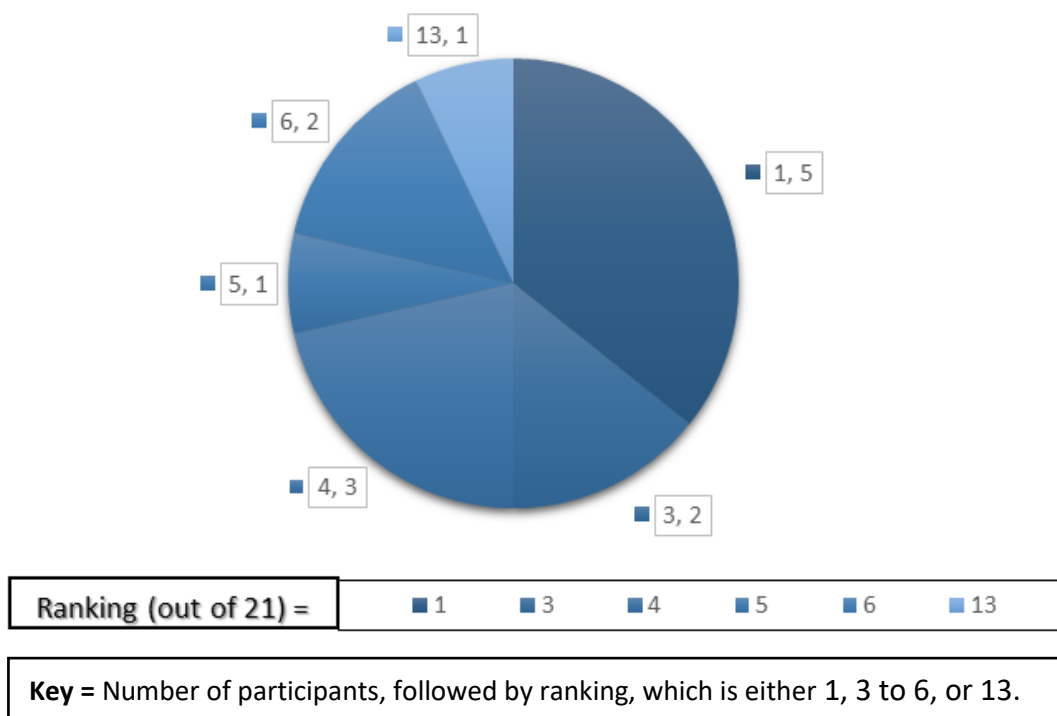


Figure 23 – Pie chart, showing the number of participants and ranking for the construct ‘The child is central to the whole process’

Figure 23 shows that half of the participants (N=7) ranked the importance of holding the child central within the whole process as most important (in the top 3), and that four of the remaining seven participants ranked it as important (ranking of 4-5). Indeed, four of the early years participants ranked it as first place, indicating that it was their most important construct.

Knowledge of each individual child (mean ranking = 4.36)

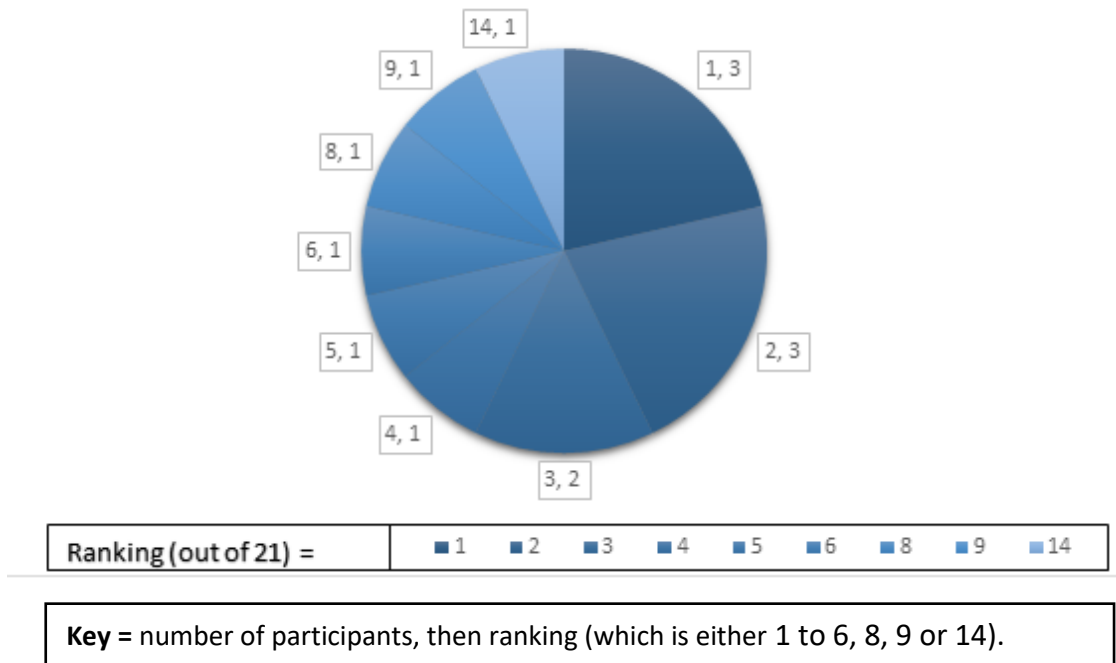


Figure 24 – Pie chart, showing the number of participants and ranking for the construct ‘Having knowledge of each individual child’.

Figure 24 shows that more than half of the participants (eight out of 14) ranked having knowledge of each individual child as most important (in the top 3), with a further five ranking it within their top 10. This was more important for the primary phase participants, where six out of the seven participants ranked having knowledge of each individual child in their top 3, with the seventh participant ranking this fifth.

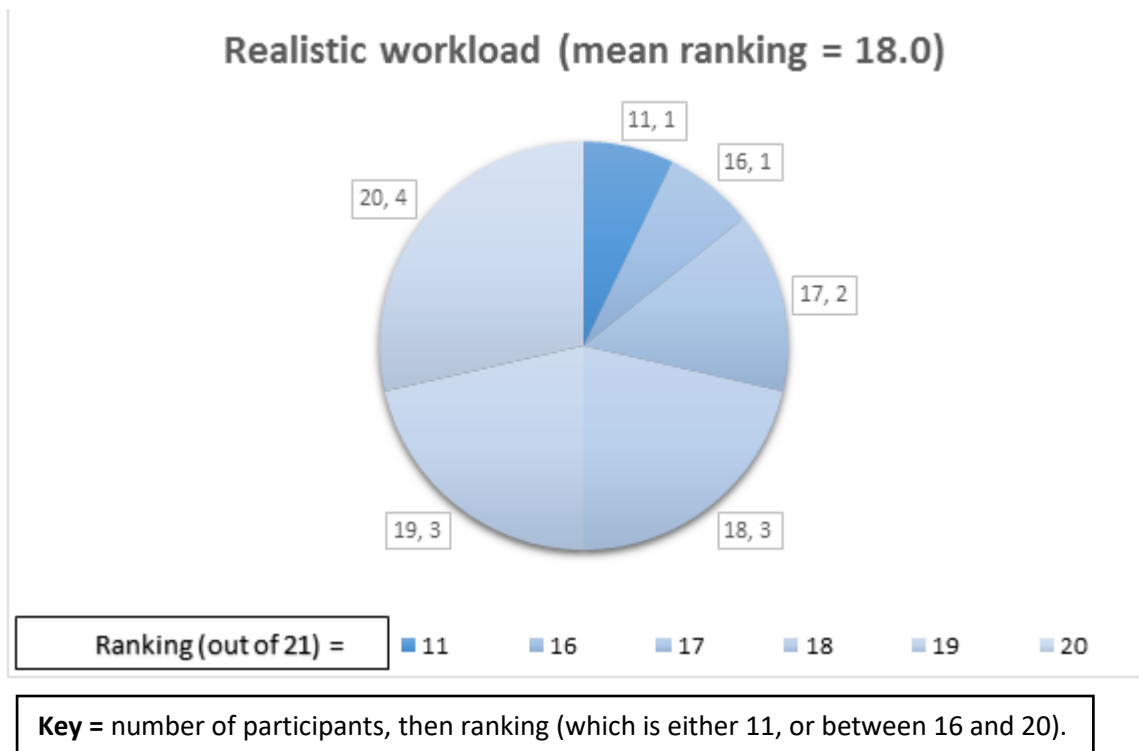


Figure 25 – Pie chart, showing the number of participants and ranking for the construct ‘Having a realistic workload’.

Figure 25 shows that half of the participants (N=7) identified having a realistic workload as their lowest priority (in the bottom 3), with six of the remaining participants also ranking this relatively low (between 16 and 18).

Figure 26 (following page) shows that eleven participants ranked having a good work-life balance as their lowest priority, with the remaining three participants also ranking it low (either 17 or 18). ‘Having a good work-life balance’ is therefore similarly ranked to ‘having a realistic workload’, and in practice, workload affects work-life balance.

Good work-life balance (mean ranking = 19.71)

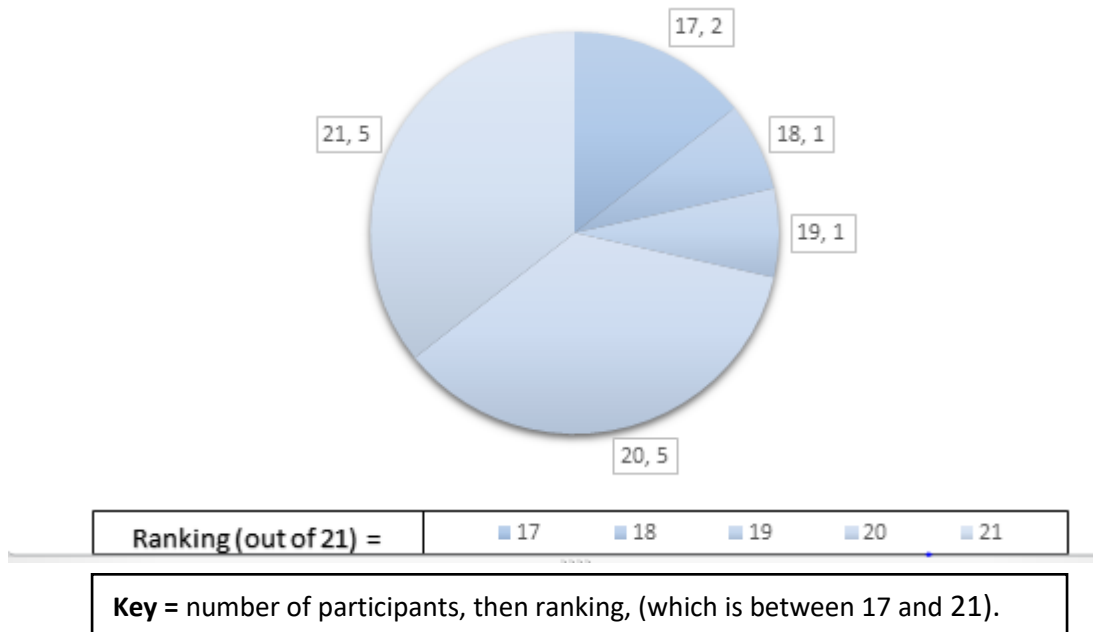


Figure 26 – Pie chart, showing the number of participants and ranking for the construct ‘Having a good work-life balance’.

These results show a similarity between both age-phases. Means (M) and standard deviations (SD) for participant rankings¹⁹ were also calculated by age-phase to explore any existing differences between them. Table 14 includes the constructs with standard deviations of less than 2²⁰ (highlighted in white) and constructs ranked in the top and bottom 5 (highlighted in yellow). Differences between the age-phases were revealed by this process.

¹⁹ These results were obtained from a very small sample (N=14). Consequently, care must be exercised about the transferability of these findings.

²⁰ A statistically significant standard deviation is one that has a score of less than 2 (SDs). This reveals consistency within the group ranking and evidence of important constructs.

Table 54 - Group grid ranking: Mean (M) ranking and Standard Deviations (SD).

Construct	MEAN - Both (Early years and Primary)	Standard Deviation - Both (Early years and Primary)	MEAN- Early years	Standard Deviation - Early years	MEAN - Primary	Standard Deviation - Primary
Knowledge of individual children	04.36	03.76	06.29	04.50	02.43	01.40
Collating robust evidence	08.29	04.75	11.29	04.65	05.29	02.50
Good-work-life balance	19.71	01.44	19.86	01.07	19.57	01.81
Realistic workload	18.00	02.39	18.57	00.98	17.43	03.26
Good SEND/developmental knowledge	08.23	05.85	05.67	03.62	10.43	06.73
Good relationships with families	06.07	02.30	05.00	02.16	07.14	02.03
Child is central to whole process	03.79	03.24	02.43	01.99	05.14	03.80

Key: significant figures are highlighted in either yellow (rankings appearing in top or bottom five out of 21) or white (Standard Deviation score is less than 2).

These findings are described below, with boxplots being used to illustrate three particular differences between and within the age-phase rankings.

Having a knowledge of each individual child:

The mean scores show that primary-phase SENCOs identify this as a higher priority than early years SENCOs (EY = 6.29, PY = 2.43), with the standard deviation score of 1.40 revealing high agreement. This may be a reflection of different working practices since the adult to child ratio is higher in early years, and each child has a keyworker.

Collating robust, appropriate evidence:

This was a higher priority for primary phase SENCOs (Mean score PY = 5.29 compared to EY = 11.29). Boxplots were created to illustrate this difference between early years and primary phase (see Figure 27). In boxplots, the rectangle represents 50 percent of the cases and the whiskers (the lines protruding from the box) indicate the lowest and highest ranking. The cross inside the box is the mode or most common ranking.

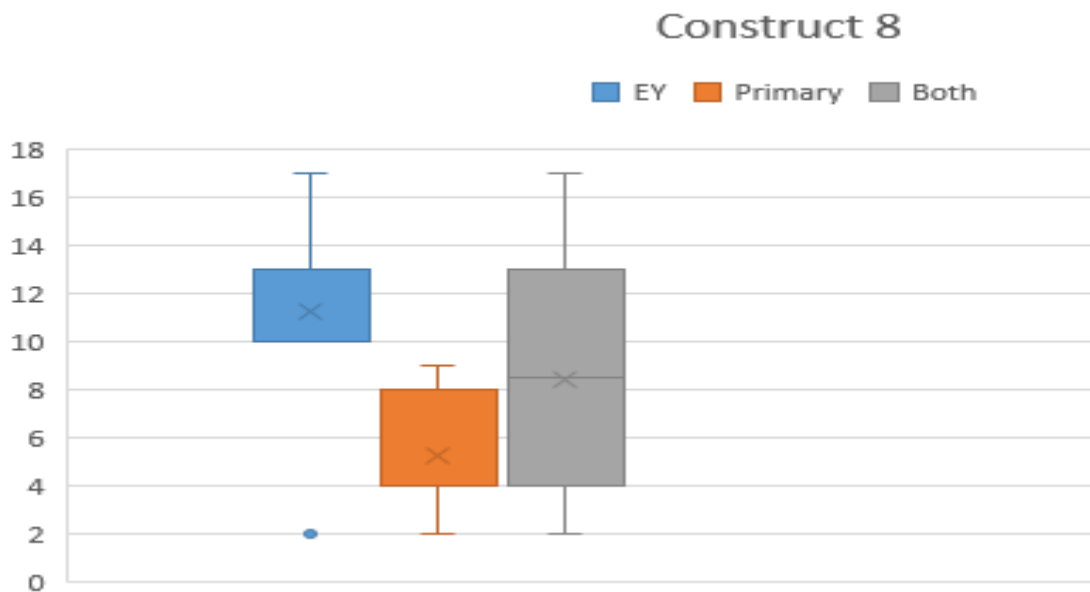


Figure 27 - Boxplot of construct 8 ('Collating robust, appropriate evidence') illustrating the spread of ranking for Early Years (blue), Primary (orange) and both age-phases together (grey).

Figure 27 shows that the most common ranking for primary phase participants was five (plotted in orange in the chart), that 50 percent of the primary phase SENCOs ranked collating robust appropriate evidence between four and eight, with the remaining rankings being within the range of two to nine. In contrast, the early years SENCOs ranked 'collating robust, appropriate evidence' between ten and 17 (with 50 percent ranking it within the range of ten and 13), showing that this was not such a high priority for early years SENCOs. This result was broken down further to reveal an additional difference between early years setting SENCOs, and the Area SENCO participant. Although caution must be exercised with this result, the contrast is marked, as the boxplot in Figure 28 illustrates (see following page). That is, Figure 28 reveals that whilst early years SENCOs ranked 'collating robust, appropriate evidence' between 10 and seventeen (Mode = 13), the Area SENCO ranked this construct as the second most important (Ranking = 2). This significant difference indicates different appreciations of the need for robust evidence, and may reflect the Area SENCO's role in overseeing EHCP requests, applications, and role presenting this information at the Pre-School Forum..²¹

²¹ The Pre-School Forum meets regularly and brings together key local professionals and agencies to discuss and clarify the nature of a child's SEND, using their assessment evidence and observations. The Forum identifies and plans for children who may need extra early years provision, helps send information to the school these children will be going to, and identifies those children with severe and complex SEND who may require an EHCP or extra support when they start school.

Setting and Area SENCos and Construct 8

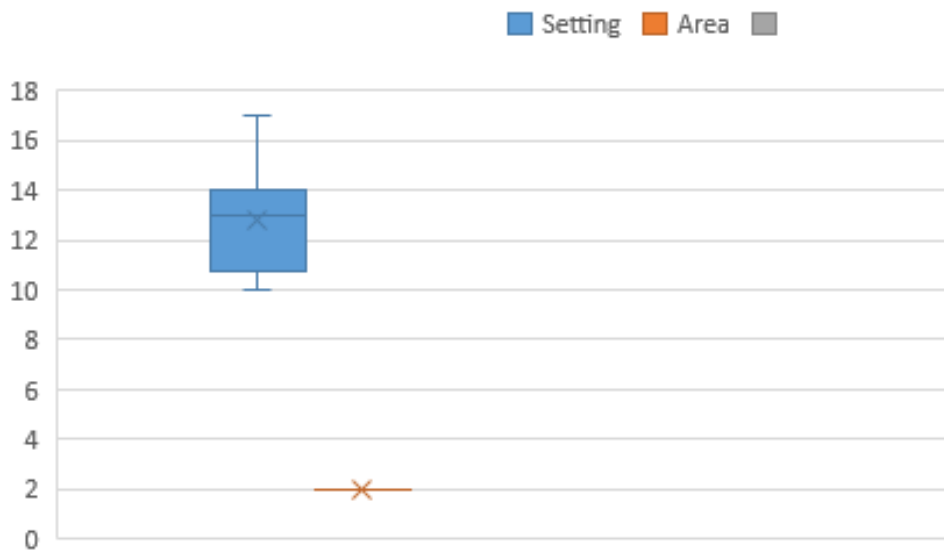


Figure 28 – Boxplot of construct 8 ('Collating robust, appropriate evidence'), showing the difference in ranking between early years SENCos working in settings (blue) and the Area SENCo (orange).

Having a good work-life balance:

There is a high consensus between early years (M = 19.86, SD = 1.07) and primary phase SENCos (M = 19.57, SD = 1.81) for this construct. There is also a high consensus between early years (M = 18.57, SD = 0.98) and primary phase SENCos (M = 17.43, SD = 3.26) for the construct 'having a realistic workload'. The participants, as a whole, placed low importance on these constructs, which may indicate that whilst they put the child first, they are doing so in spite of the reality of their workload and impact on their work-life balance.

Having good SEND and developmental knowledge:

Early years SENCos identified this as a higher priority (M = 5.67, SD = 3.62) than primary phase SENCos (M = 10.43, SD = 6.73), although this was particularly identified by the more experienced SENCos (EY-4 ranking=3 and EY-5 ranking=3, PY-4 ranking=3, each of whom had more than 10 years' experience in the role). This indicates the recognition by experienced early years SENCos of the contribution such knowledge can make to the EHCP application process.

Having good relationships with families and providing family support:

Again, this was identified as a higher priority for early years SENCos (M = 5.00, SD = 2.16), although both groups ranked this as relatively high on their list of priorities (M = 6.07, SD = 2.30), with five out of seven primary phase SENCos ranking this as seven (see the orange cross on the boxplot below) (M = 7.14, SD = 2.03). This spread of rankings, by phase, is illustrated by the boxplot in Figure 29.

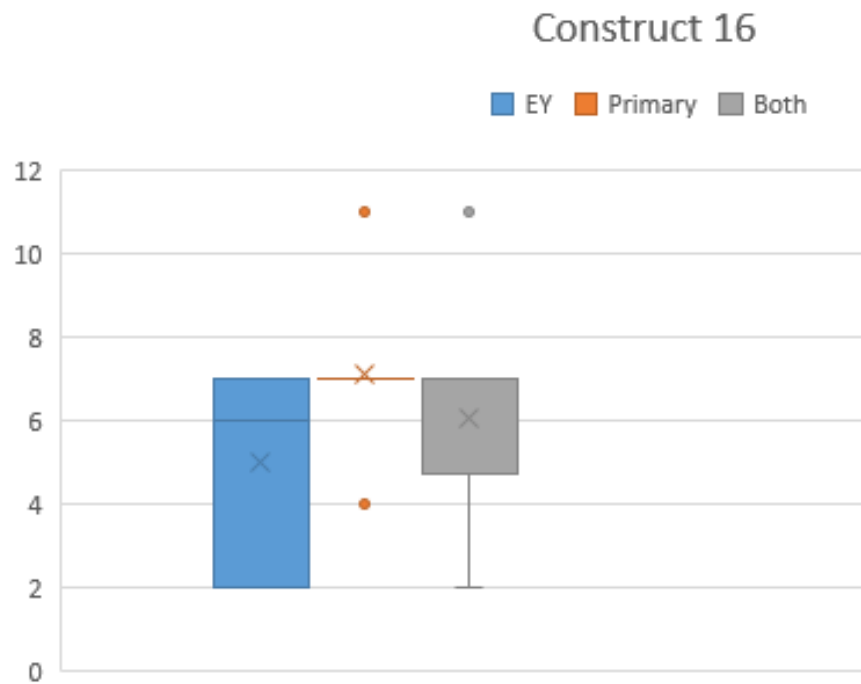


Figure 29 – Boxplot of construct 16 ('Having good relationships with families and providing family support') illustrating the difference in ranking spread between Early Years (blue) Primary (red) and both groups together (grey).

Figure 29 demonstrates that all early years SENCOs ranked this as 7 or below, with the mode value being the same as the median, at 5, and a median of 6. It also shows the high consensus of ranking by primary phase SENCOs.

The child is central to the whole process:

High consensus between both groups ($M = 3.79$, $SD = 3.24$), though identified as more of a priority for early years SENCOs (M , EY = 2.43, $SD = 1.99$, compared with M . P = 5.14, $SD = 3.80$). This is very interesting, and may reflect the holistic ethos of early years. The pie-chart in Figure 23 illustrates this finding.

Having a good knowledge of the process:

The three primary phase SENCOs who had not completed the national award (NASENCo) identified this as their top priority, a finding that although based on a very small number, is potentially very interesting because they were the only SENCOs who ranked this first. This compares with participants who had completed the NASENCo, who ranked this 10th to 15th. This is illustrated in Table 15 (overleaf).

Table 15 – Primary phase SENCo rankings for the construct 'having a good knowledge of the process', with ratings of 1 (made by the three SENCOs who had not completed the NASENCO award highlighted in yellow).

	MEAN – Both (Early years and primary)	Standard Deviation – Both (Early-years and primary)	MEAN Early years	Standard Deviation Early years	Primary phase SENCo Rankings						MEAN Primary	Standard Deviation Primary	
<i>Good process knowledge</i>	09.23	05.36	10.71	03.73	1	1	10	14	13	1	15	07.86	06.56

Key: The yellow highlighted boxes contain the primary phase SENCOs who had not undertaken the NASENCO award.

Table 15 shows that primary phase SENCOs who had completed the national award ranked process knowledge between the 10th and 15th position. This contrasts with primary phase SENCOs who had not completed the national award, who ranked process knowledge as their first priority (shown in yellow in Table 15). This indicates that those who had completed the award thought that having good process knowledge was less important though the data did not reveal the particular reasons behind this.

In summary, the constructs ranked as highest and lowest on the group grid revealed that SENCOs in both age-phases place the child at the centre of their practice and value individual, personal knowledge of children. In contrast with this, realistic workloads and good work-life balances were prioritised as low. Different professional priorities for SENCOs in early years and primary phase were also revealed, as follows:

Early years SENCOs:

- identify the need for good SEND and developmental knowledge;
- value good relationships with families and being able to provide family support; and
- the Area SENCo, rather than setting SENCOs, was concerned about collating 'robust, appropriate evidence'.

Primary phase SENCOs:

- identify having individual knowledge of each child as important;
- recognise the need to collate 'robust appropriate evidence'; and
- Having a good knowledge of the process was the top priority for the three SENCOs in this age-phase who had not undertaken the NASENCO award.

Further priorities, by age-phase, were investigated by identifying the three highest ranked constructs and the two lowest ranked constructs for each participant within the two age-phases. These are shown, in order of the frequency they occurred (from top to bottom) in Table 16 and Table 17:

Table 16 - Highest and lowest priorities as revealed by ranking, early years SENCOs (7 participants).

Highest Priorities	Lowest Priorities
Child central (N= 5)	Good work-life balance (N= 5)
Committed to role (N= 4)	Realistic workload (N= 3)
SEND/ developmental knowledge (N= 3)	Experience of SEND/process (N= 1)
Family relationship/ support (N= 2)	Training (N= 1)
Time with children (N= 2)	Children make appropriate progress (N= 1)
Knowledge of each child (N= 2)	Committed to role (N= 1)
Robust evidence (N= 1)	Physical resources (N= 1)
Communication (N= 1)	Having a holistic view (N= 1)
Children make appropriate progress (N= 1)	
N= 21	N= 14

Table 16 shows that in addition to the findings revealed by the means and standard deviations (indicated by grey in the table), half of the early years SENCOs identified that being committed to the role was important (indicated by yellow in the table). The remaining constructs appeared in the highest and lowest priorities of only one or two of this small sample of participants²², so cannot be considered to reveal any further priorities.

²² These numbers are very small. Consequently, care must be exercised about the transferability of these findings.

Table 17 - Highest and lowest priorities as revealed by ranking: primary phase SENCos (7 participants).

Highest Priorities	Lowest Priorities
Knowledge of each child (N = 6)	Good work-life balance (N = 5)
Process knowledge (N = 3)	Realistic workload (N = 3)
Child central (N = 2)	Training (N = 2)
SEND/developmental knowledge (N = 2)	Children make appropriate progress (N = 1)
Experience of SEND/EHCP process (N = 2)	SENCos give caring support (N = 1)
Robust Evidence (N = 1)	Experience of SEND/EHCP process (N = 1)
Communication (N = 1)	Physical resources (N = 1)
Dedicated time (N = 1)	
Time with children (N = 1)	
Advice/support for SENCos (N = 1)	
Training (N = 1)	
N = 21	N = 14

Table 17 shows that in addition to the findings revealed by the means and standard deviations (indicated by grey in the table), all other constructs appeared in the highest and lowest priorities of only one or two of this small group of participants²³.

6.4 Stage Two Summary

No pattern about role identity salience emerged from the repertory grid data. SENCo perception of their own practice is therefore a personal judgement that does not necessarily reflect their actual practice or effectiveness. In this small group of participants, alignment was not found to be a straightforward process that links clearly to phase, experience, qualification, or leadership status. Indeed, participants were no more or less likely to have a high real-ideal salience based on age-phase, amount of SENCo experience, qualification level, or position within their setting.

²³ Again, these numbers are very small. Consequently, care must be exercised about the transferability of these findings.

Ten themes associated with the participant's identity as SENCOs emerged from the numerical analysis. These are: communication and liaison; confidence; contact; evidence; holistic support; knowledge and training; outcomes; passion and commitment; process knowledge; and support. Although individual SENCOs have different priorities, many of the same constructs were present across different participants: for example, the constructs 'support and care' and 'knowledge and understanding'. Furthermore, the constructs most closely linked to effective and ineffective practice could apply to most professionals involved with EHCPs. The ideographic (descriptive) analysis revealed four themes (commitment and purpose, contact, knowledge and skills, and resources and support) that interconnect with these, with the group grid created from this process revealing more detail about SENCO priorities.

Calculation of the mean rankings revealed high consensus between SENCOs from both age-phases that the child is central to their practice and that knowledge of each individual child is important. There was also high consistency in ranking having a 'realistic workload' and 'good work-life balance' as low priorities. This process also revealed different priorities for SENCOs working in different age-phases. Early years SENCOs, especially the more experienced ones, identified the importance of holding good SEND and developmental knowledge, with the Area SENCO, rather than setting SENCOs, being more concerned about collating robust, appropriate evidence. SENCOs working in this age-phase also valued good relationships with families and being able to provide family support and half of them identified that being committed to the role was important. SENCOs working in the primary phase identified having individual knowledge of each child as important and highlighted the need to collate 'robust appropriate evidence. Finally, the three SENCOs who had not undertaken the national award identified having a good knowledge of the process as their top priority.

This chapter, along with the previous one, presented the findings and results obtained from the different data sets. These are integrated in Chapter 7 to collectively address the research problem (see Sections 4.3.3 and 4.9 for a detailed explanation of this process).

CHAPTER 7 – INTEGRATION AND DISCUSSION

7.0 Overview

This chapter integrates the evidence produced by numerical and descriptive analysis (see Chapters 5 and 6). The conceptual framework was used alongside network analysis (see Appendix 19) to identify seven main influences on EHCP implementation, as perceived by SENCOs. These themes are: SENCO identity, knowledge and skills, relationships, institutional or resource issues, organisational or ethos issues, quality of evidence and outcomes. These are presented in turn, with vignettes (contained in Appendix 20) and literature being used to contextualise and developed each theme. The chapter ends with a summary, where these influences are synthesised to reveal how these themes support and extend previous research in the field.

7.1 Identity

The conceptual framework considers micro-system influences, and conceptualises identity as a triad, made up of:

- collective,
- professional, and
- personal perspectives.

This section uses the results and findings to present an integrated account of each, with the main themes, revealed by network analysis, depicted in Figure 30:

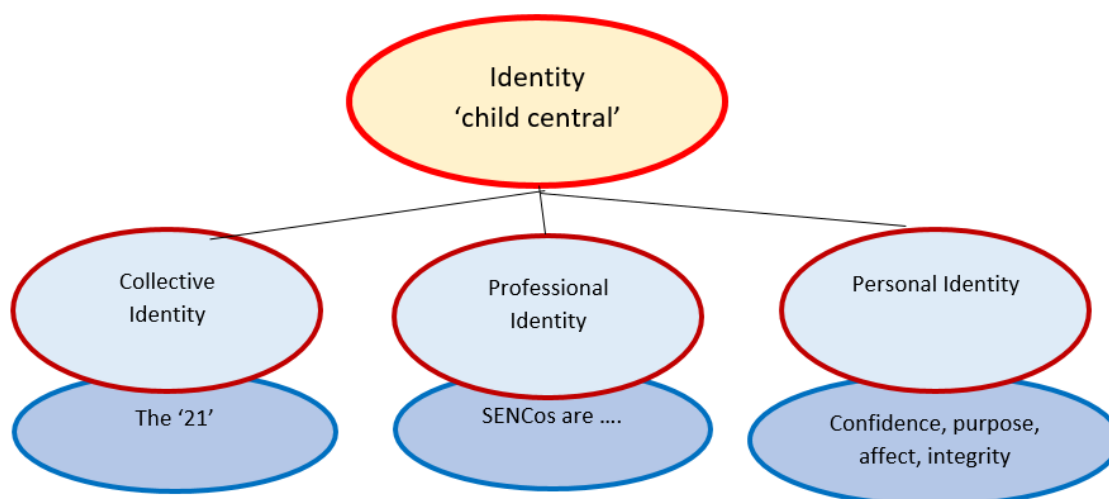


Figure 30 - Identity theme.

7.1.1 Collective Identity

This theme considers how SENCOs relate to the different teams, settings, and professionals with whom they are involved. Responses to the narrative interview identity question (see Appendix 14), and constructs most closely associated with 'effective' (see Table 11 and Table 12) were combined to reveal participant perceptions of desirable SENCO attributes. These are depicted in Figure 31:

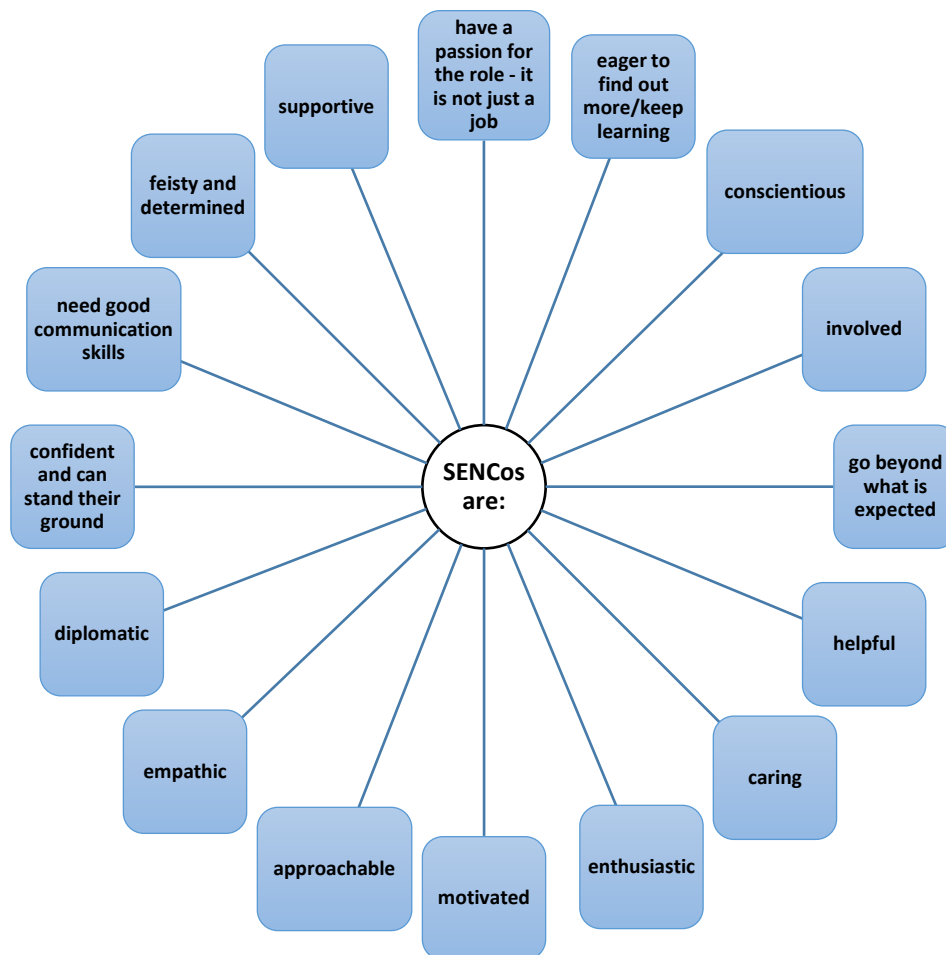


Figure 31 – Desirable SENCO attributes findings.

Interestingly, the features contained in Figure 31 are of a generic nature. This means that they could apply to any professional working in a collective capacity. Other collective identity features identified in the data include:

- recognition of the value of positive relationships (section 7.3);
- appreciation of the contribution of a range of information and knowledge to provision that considers the holistic wellbeing of the CYP (section 7.6.3);
- pragmatism that networks and connections can provide a source of support and information in a context of cutbacks (sections 7.5.1, 7.5.2 and 7.3); and

- the need to recognise, work with, and develop the ethos and priorities of their settings (sections 7.2.2 and 7.5).

What was unique about the collective identity of SENCOs working to implement EHCPs, as revealed in the narrative interviews, was the recognition that whilst accountability for collecting evidence and meeting the needs of CYP with SEND was shared with settings, applying for and co-ordinating EHCPs remained the sole responsibility of SENCOs. Indeed, they perceived that their responsibilities for initiating and co-ordinating assessment and support for CYP had increased. Furthermore, this responsibility, along with the knowledge needed to fulfil this, was esteemed by others. However, whilst Area SENCOs guided and supported early year settings with this, SENCOs working in the primary phase carried this responsibility on their own, within a context marked by difficult access to consistent, reliable information, assessments, and support. These attributes and issues were exemplified by PY-1 (Appendix 20, vignette 1) who felt she had *'more on [her] shoulders'*, and who had balanced the *'appalling'* lack of support by *'networking'* and by *'looking for answers as a group'*.

EHCP implementation requires SENCOs to work across interconnected teams. This requires collaboration, which has been defined as *'cooperative, inter-organisational action that produces innovative, synergistic solutions'* (Hardy et al., 2005, p.72). Although this study found that collaboration between education, health and care was fragmented due to time and capacity issues, the literature shows that effective collaboration also depends on membership ties, and that commitment influences how people think and act within groups (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). This is because feeling peripheral affects self-esteem, motivation, and co-operation (Ellemers et al., 2002). Whilst early years participants perceived that their status within the wider team was lower than other professional groups, meaning that their contributions were less valued, the impact of this outside their setting was offset by the support and position of Area SENCOs, and was offset inside settings by the value other staff placed on their knowledge of SEND. Primary phase SENCOs, in contrast, did not perceive their status and contributions to be of lesser value, though they reported that it had taken them time to feel equipped and have the confidence to contribute outside their setting.

Where a collective identity of *'we as a school'* exists (Vincent, 2018), an inclusionary discourse is enabled that enhances how SEND and the SENCO role are positioned by the setting. However, Castro et al. (2019) highlight issues concerning the training of those involved in EHCPs, including that most outcomes are not based on the international definition of participation as *'involvement in life situations'* (World Health Organisation (WHO), 2007). This is interesting when compared with programs such as *'No Outsiders'* (Moffat, 2015), which upholds all of the protected characteristics (*The Equality Act 2010*). The collective identity of SENCOs is therefore influenced by wider discourses related to the acceptance of diversity.

Another aspect of collective identity that also contributes to effective team working is having an awareness of role and boundaries (Anning et al., 2010; Buckley-Walker et al., 2013; Trodd and Chivers, 2011). This helps practitioners to understand the value of sharing their knowledge with other professionals and the importance of respecting and seeking information from them (Beijaard et al., 2004; Messenger, 2013), so links with professional identity.

7.1.2 Professional Identity

Group ranking of the key constructs revealed by ideographic analysis of the individual repertory grid interviews (see Figure 22 and Appendices 9 and 17) revealed high consensus between participants from both age-phases that the child is central to the whole process and that individual information about each child is important. The two lowest-ranked constructs (see Table 13) were also consistent across both age-phases and appeared to reveal a disregard for, or resignation about, the demands that the role places on their workload and work-life balance. SENCOs therefore, may sometime place the wellbeing of the children and families they work with above their own. The constructs the participants associated with effective practice were also revealed by Principal Component Analysis (see Table 11 and Table 12). These match the four ways SENCOs feel they contribute to EHCPs (see section 6.2).

The 21 constructs identified by ideographic analysis revealed these four main ways SENCOs feel they contributed to EHCPs (see Figure 22 and following explanation), with detail about what and how SENCOs perceived they contribute to EHCP implementation (see Appendix 21) emerging when these constructs were coupled with the constructs the participants associate with effective practice (see Table 11 and Table 12), and with construct cluster analysis scores of 70 percent or higher (Table 10, p. 153). That is, SENCOs considered their role was to collate robust appropriate evidence, help children make appropriate progress, hold individual knowledge of children, be suitably trained and use this to train others, and to give caring support. They did this in four main ways:

- First, the SENCO participants in this study were shown to be committed to the role and have a clear sense of purpose, including a central motivation of achieving favourable outcomes for children. This included a regard for the wellbeing of the child, an ethos of care and support, and tailored provision. Many saw the SENCO position as more than '*just a job*' and so were passionate, committed and motivated to secure favourable outcomes for the children and families in their care.
- Secondly, actual contact was perceived to contribute to the development of positive relationships and to enhance communication and liaison, both of which contributed to the provision of caring support and to the collation of robust, individualised information.

- Thirdly, the possession of knowledge and skills, including of holistic assessment, developmental norms, SEND, communication and liaison skills, and of processes and systems was perceived to increase the confidence and proficiency of SENCo practice and so the quality of evidence. These could be gained through training and experience, and were also provided by networks and connections, and by central information sources or portals.
- Finally, physical resources contributed to access to professionals and to the support available to SENCos. How these were managed was influenced by the ethos and priorities of settings, which included the time and status allocated to the role, with consequent effects on workload, pressure, and influence.

As a final point, SENCo perceptions of their own professional practice was revealed by the numerical, MouseSort results. Role-identity salience showed this was a personal judgement that may not reflect their actual effectiveness in practice, and that there was no correlation with age-phase, extent of SENCo experience, qualification level, or position within their setting. Professional identity and role-identity issues were exemplified by EY-2 (Appendix 20, vignette 2), who described her Level-6 early years practitioner training as '*life-changing*' in that it enabled her to see connections and have a better overview, though she had experienced conflict between her desire to support children and families directly, and the necessary paperwork.

The literature also finds that SENCos are committed to the role despite considerable workloads and limited capacity (Wedell, 2004; Curran et al., 2018). Regardless of this, feelings of frustration and guilt at not being able to provide the support that their CYP with SEND need, can lead to burnout and departure (Curran et al., 2018), with the workload being the second most significant reason for leaving (Pearson, 2008a). This is offset by a child-centred philosophy, that appears to be central to the professional identity of SENCos, with Szwed (2007a) identifying that 'effective' SENCos were regarded as those who held 'a more holistic, value-led approach' (p.449) and Burton and Goodman (2011) finding that nurturing environments and caring attitudes are also important contributors.

This additional, 'hearts and minds' layer enables practitioners to go beyond a merely systematic delivery of assessment and provision (Jones, 1998, p.343; Swenson and Sims, 2014; Done et al., 2015; Torrance and Humes, 2015). Indeed, commitment to a holistic approach and held values and beliefs is similar to the vocationalism identified by Plowden (1967), where values of equality of opportunity, respect for individuals and commitment to the highest education standards were explicit (Richards, 1997; Woods and Jeffrey, 2002). Furthermore, teachers' professionalism is concerned with being ethical and compassionate as well as competent (Moore and Clarke, 2016), which may explain the import SENCos placed on contact and relationships.

These participants also identified the knowledge and skills they associate with the role, recognised the support and links they have with SENCo peers, and valued their additional training, which involved, in the case of primary phase participants, formal accreditation through the NASENCo award. In this regard, they reflected the elements of professionalisation identified by Lloyd and Hallet (2010) and Evetts (2011). That is, they related to a body of knowledge and gained a sense of self-worth from other members of staff's recognition of this, an aspect of professional identity that was also recognised by Cameron and Lindqvist (2014), Qureshi (2014) and Passy et al. (2017).

Finally, although strong professional identity constructions, which influence high levels of professional practice, are created by working through role-identity conflicts (Callero, 1985; Isaksson and Lindqvist, 2015; Adoniou, 2016b; Hellawell, 2017b), in this small-scale research such discrepancies between the actual and ideal self were not found to be related to age-phase, extent of SENCo experience, qualification level, or position within their setting. Instead, it is likely that these personal judgements reflected something about the individual SENCo, including confidence, conscientiousness and the nature of their EHCP experiences.

7.1.3 Personal Identity

Individual priorities were revealed by the personal experiences present in the worklines of some participants (see bottom row of Appendix 13). Perceptions of positive and negative impact on their personal identity were also revealed by their responses to the narrative interview question about identity (see Appendix 14). Both are combined here to identify changes to personal identities resulting from EHCP implementation.

Positive Impacts

The participants felt their communication skills had improved, and they described becoming more '*feisty*', '*gritty*', '*headstrong*' and confident to stand their ground. They recognised that they needed to be persistent, '*forceful*' and '*demanding*' to secure the answers, information, and provision needed by the children in their care. Some considered that they are more able to say what they feel or to stand their ground on some issues because they needed to be more proactive and '*get the ball rolling a bit more*' (EY-1). In some cases, the work had affirmed their passion, and participants experienced a strong sense of achievement when their EHCP applications were successful. Finally, changes linked to knowledge and confidence were described. This included developing '*a different mind-set*' (PY-6), that people thought they had lots of knowledge, and that how peers viewed them had changed after they delivered training to their fellow setting staff.

Negative Impacts

Participants described being personally affected by individual cases and identified that the work could involve sleepless nights. They could be caught between the children and their families, and processes and structures. This could be difficult to manage, could lead them to feel frustrated or disheartened, and could cause worry and stress. Indeed, the role was described as sometimes being intense and emotionally draining (see section 5.2.1), which could impact on their home life. Two SENCOs described specific negative experiences: EY-2 felt disgusted by the ethos and provision of a previous setting, which had conflicted with her *'morals'* and led to her changing job (an example of an integrity violation). Indeed, although all of the participants worked in supportive settings at the time of data collection, some had left previous settings because the ethos, values, and support for pupils with SEND did not align with their own beliefs, resulting in differences in practice and purpose. The other specific experience (PY-5) concerned another professional's attitude and commitment. This had had a negative impact on provision and on relations with parents and had contributed to a reduction in PY-5's confidence. Indeed, participants described feeling vulnerable at times, had doubted themselves, and had found it hard not to take some experiences personally. They also identified that viewing the role as merely a job rather than a passion would lead to them being *'less involved'* (PY-4), which was construed negatively as *'not being very supportive, not being there, not wanting to help'* (EY-1). This might explain the low priority SENCOs gave to *'reasonable workload'* and *'good work-life balance'* (see Table 13), although participants also recognised that excess pressure and stress could dampen their passion and commitment for the work. Finally, although difficult work events were described, only two participants specifically mentioned personal events that had affected their work. EY-3 was one of these (Appendix 20, vignette 3). She had personal experience of SEND, had felt a sense of reward when her efforts secured a special school placement for a particular child, but had also had a difficult experience when her work with a challenging situation coincided with the illness of a close relative.

Personal identity contributes to the performance of professional roles (Ball and Goodson, 1985; Geijsel and Meijers, 2005) because it informs the way professionals construe and construct their work (Kelchtermans, 1993; Stronach et al., 2002). Furthermore, the realities of professional life, such as high levels of stress and workload, impact on personal lives (Day et al., 2006a). Both of these directions of influence were evident in the findings. Evidence of what Hochschild (1983) called emotional labour was also present. Emotional labour requires individuals to induce or suppress their feelings so as to present an appropriate outward appearance (Williams, 2013). Surface and deeper acting strategies are key to this. Surface acting means the outward expression is manipulated but the internal feelings are unchanged, whereas deeper acting involves the inner feelings. Although emotional labour has been linked to a lack of authenticity, concealing individual feeling is a part of professional practice

which also has a protective function (ibid). However, in professions where caring is central, current cutbacks and neoliberal systems can place demands on practitioners that conflict with their values and identity, with implications for how they maintain appropriate, professional demeanours. This accords with two facets: emotive dissonance, which can lead to more burnout, and emotional effort which works to reduce burnout, as revealed by Kruml and Geddes (2000). The personal and emotional aspects of SENCo work can be unseen, unrecognised and undervalued. So whilst this study revealed that the participants placed the needs of CYP and their families above their own workloads and work-life balance, it also revealed a strong theme of passion and commitment to the role, suggesting that the negative impacts are being offset by emotional effort.

7.2 Knowledge and Skills

The narrative interviews identified that knowledge and training were perceived to be a key influence on staff and setting perceptions and interpretations of SEND. However, training availability and affordability had been negatively affected by re-organisations and cutbacks, and changes in staff, at both institutional and organisational levels, meant that knowledge bases varied. Participants were concerned this could result in a scenario where some settings were *'unknowledgeable about SEND and where to seek information'* (EY-4), and recognised that greater understanding had informed their decisions and practice and enabled them to *'do the best'* for children. Understanding could be built by access to knowledge and by experience, although this required funding, support and having somewhere *'to seek information'*. Three types of knowledge were identified as important (as illustrated in Figure 32):

- EHCP process knowledge;
- of SEND and of child development, including expectations at different ages; and
- everyday/personal knowledge of the child, their history and circumstances.

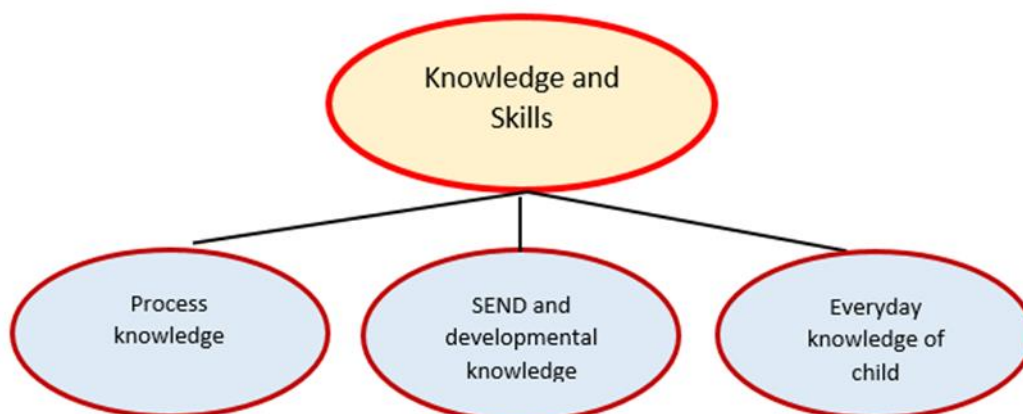


Figure 32 - Knowledge and skills theme.

7.2.1 Process Knowledge

SENCOs identified a need for knowledge of current practice, processes, and provision. They perceived that a good understanding of what was expected when, and of what other services and settings could provide, helped them to '*develop the best processes*' and to manage and modify systems so they could apply for, provide and plan for a child's current and future needs more effectively (see also section 7.5.3). Indeed, the worklines revealed that process knowledge had been the initial pressing concern of all participants when EHCPs were first introduced, with group repertory grid ranking revealing that this was still the highest priority of the three primary-year participants who had not undertaken the NASENCo training. Process knowledge was, however, affected by the information they themselves received; which was described by some SENCOs as '*bad*', inconsistent or incomplete. This was also influenced by lack of time, because information was not easy to find, and because some SENCOs were not routinely working with EHCPs.

Early years SENCOs understood that the right support helped children to be happy and to fulfil their potential. Making successful EHCP applications to gain this required them to '*understand what they are doing and how they are going to get there*' (EY-6). However, time constraints, not fully understanding what an EHCP can help the child with, or not understanding what they needed to do to evidence such an application could result in professional assessments that were not thorough or which SENCOs perceived to be partial, which meant the required support was not adequately identified or applied for. Consequently, early years SENCOs felt they needed to be proactive to ensure that assessments and evidence specifically detail the support needed. This required a certain amount of process knowledge along with assistance from their Area SENCo.

Primary years SENCOs also expressed the need to hold a good knowledge and understanding of the procedures and systems. Knowing the best order to do things in allowed them to develop processes so evidence can be collected more efficiently (see section 7.2.3). It also enabled them to identify suitable placements and to tweak and adapt their own provision to fit the child rather than requiring the child to fit the provision. This was exemplified by PY-2 (Appendix 20, vignette 4), who recognised that a good knowledge of the system, including of what steps should be taken when, allowed her to plan for and develop routine, embedded systems of evidence collection. This knowledge could also be used to inform choices about resources and provision; for instance, when and how best to use the setting's educational psychologist allocation.

The literature reveals that whilst SENCOs must go beyond systematic delivery of assessment and provision (Jones, 1998; Swenson and Sims, 2014; Done et al., 2015; Torrance and Humes, 2015), they

still need knowledge of the processes and systems within which they operate. This includes being able to plan for and integrate the required assessments and evidence collection, both by the setting and by other relevant education, health and care professionals, in order to meet the recommended 20 week timescale (DfE and DoH, 2015, Section 9.40), though many EHC assessments and resultant plans are not produced within the identified period (Tickle, 2017; Tirraoro, 2017; Hall and Mulholland, 2018; IPSEA, 2018; Sales and Vincent, 2018). Good process knowledge also supports negotiations with professionals from different institutional backgrounds, for example, health and care. This is needed sometimes to achieve the integrated assessment and support envisioned (Nicholson et al., 2000; Bernardes et al., 2015; DfE and DoH, 2015; NASEN, 2015; DfE, 2015; Curran et al., 2017). This coheres with the findings that good process knowledge enables the collection of evidence to be systematic (sections 7.2.1 and 7.5.3), and can influence its quality (section 7.6), and thus the outcomes of EHCP applications (section 7.7).

It has been suggested that SENCo possession of, or ability to access good process knowledge, is of especial importance in the context of finite resources, challenging workloads, and contractual arrangements with service and assessment providers (Hellawell, 2017b; 2018). However, this knowledge can be limited in reality, due to initial training content, amount and type of experience in practice, access to suitable training, and continual change (Szwed, 2007b; Rosen-Webb, 2011; Smith et al., 2015). Also, although process knowledge is supported and enhanced by the availability of consistent information and guidance, in the study area this was found to be limited, inconsistent, and difficult to access (see section 7.4.1); a finding that is also present in the literature (Bernardes et al., 2015; Curran et al., 2017). Furthermore, there is evidence that EHCPs have notably increased the administrative and bureaucratic workload of SENCos (House of Commons Education Committee: 2018a, 2018b; 2019), meaning that SENCos are increasingly immersed in paperwork, which takes them away from developing pedagogy and provision for their setting. This situation is important when support and training opportunities are de-centralised (Greenwood and Kelly, 2017), because uptake is then increasingly dependent on individual setting ethos and authority, on the understanding, knowledge and skills bank of current SENCos and settings, and on differing access to and utilisation of the professionals and services available in a marketised industry (Connell, 2013; Tomlinson, 2014).

7.2.2 Good Developmental and SEND Knowledge

All of the data sets identified a need for knowledge of developmental milestones, which was especially important for early years participants. However, the more experienced practitioners in this age-phase felt that sometimes there was a lack of depth and breadth of knowledge and understanding of many aspects of SEND and child development. Although developmental knowledge was not such a concern

for primary phase participants, they need to be able to make common references, which the previous National Curriculum levels, and knowledge of terminology supports. Good developmental knowledge was understood to include an understanding of the holistic development of children, as well as of specific developmental area levels and '*expectations of children at different age-groups*' (EY-5). Such knowledge helped them identify when children are not functioning at the expected level for their age and helped them to identify next steps. Understanding the difference between expected development for a given chronological age and real, age-equivalent skills and levels, is part of this. However, being realistic about these could be difficult, especially for early years practitioners, since they want to give positive reports to parents and families. The Early Years Support Tracking Document (2016) was consequently appreciated for the guidance it provided, in that it had supported them to better identify levels and to break down development into smaller, realistic steps.

The need for knowledge of SEND was identified in the worklines, narrative interviews, and individual repertory grid interviews, with the group repertory grid ranking revealing that this was a higher priority for early years SENCOs. It was felt that this knowledge would enable them to '*reach full potential*' (EY-7) as SENCOs and that it may require specific training. Such training needed to be accessible and required time to attend, with implications for setting resources and staffing. Some participants were therefore using online sources such as the Skills Network, Open University, and NASEN, and reported that access to informal learning opportunities was important. However, training may not be undertaken because some SENCOs were '*stretched to the limits with the role*' (EY-2), meaning they did not have the capacity to take on the extra demands that such training may entail. However, the SENCOs recognised that being knowledgeable about areas and aspects of SEND, or knowing where to seek out information about these, and conveying such information to others, enhanced their own, and other staff's understanding, of a child's needs. This included knowledge about the options available, including of what different settings and organisations can provide, since this helped them to identify the services which they needed to access and any appropriate alternative/complementary provision. EY-4, as an Area SENCO (Appendix 20, vignette 5), particularly identified with this issue, describing some practitioners who did not consider any developmental stage before a child's chronological age, which meant needs and evidence could be missing.

These findings confirm the findings from previous studies. That is, few early years educators feel equipped to work with children with SEND, with much of their understanding and knowledge about SEND being acquired 'on the job' or through occasional training (Clough and Nutbrown, 2004). Indeed, many settings, particularly in early years, are relying on SENCOs who have built up their experience and knowledge by accessing training in less-austere times (McDonnell et al., 1997; Clough and

Nutbrown, 2004; Cooksey and McDonald, 2011; Smith et al., 2015; Lamb and Blandford, 2017), with an 'erosion' of early years staff knowledge bases being documented (MacFarlane et al., 2016, p.254). Knowledge of developmental milestones may therefore not be robustly held (Barnett, 2011; DfE, 2014b), with the plethora of different training routes (DfE, 2014c) contributing to this scenario. This means that early years providers will continue to be reliant on support from Area SENCos, despite increasing constraints in the amount of help they are able to offer (Griggs and Bussard, 2017).

The situation in the primary phase is supposedly more straightforward and robust, since SENCos working in these phases must have qualified teacher status (DCSF, 2009b; TDA, 2009). However, the *Carter Review* (2015) found gaps in Initial Teacher Training (ITT) packages, and recommended that such courses should be developed to cover assessment (1d, p.9), child and adolescent developmental knowledge (1e, p.9), pupil behaviour management (1f, p.10) and knowledge of SEND (1g, p.11). This means that whilst some schools are taking greater responsibility for delivering support before requesting an EHC needs assessment (National Autistic Society, 2015), some teachers may have gaps in their SEND knowledge and skills (Bernardes et al., 2015). Packages such as NASEN's online course (NASEN, 2015) therefore aim to up-skill existing practitioners, although research shows that the success of such online learning is significantly enhanced by the existence of professional learning networks (NASEN, 2015; Cook et al., 2017).

This scenario is concerning, since early assessment, identification and intervention (DfE and DoH, 2015, Section 5) results in better outcomes and can prevent secondary difficulties arising (Guralnick, 2005; Goswami, 2008; Allen, 2011; *Nutbrown Review*, 2012; Barnardo's, 2016). However, it increasingly depends on setting staff recognising discrepancies in expected development and possible SEND (Oberhuemer, 2011; Lamb and Blandford, 2017). Additionally, many SENCos and their staff work in isolated circumstances (Pearson, 2008a; Curran et al., 2018), and are highly reliant on the advice and guidance provided by staff external to the setting (University of Bristol, 2015) despite access to these becoming harder (The Kings Fund, 2010; National Audit Office, 2013). Indeed, it has been suggested that EHCPs can only contain high-quality outcomes if:

- there is effective professional development to increase levels of specialism;
- standardised training is available to all professionals involved in the EHCP process, to ensure fairer provision to all CYP, regardless of their background and setting attended;
- such training is based on effective models for professional development; and
- there are specific quality assurance measures. (Castro et al., 2019)

The findings of this research, supported by the literature, therefore suggest that developmental and SEND knowledge is pertinent and, if the identification of and provision for SEND is influenced by the knowledge and experience of individual staff (Sales and Vincent, 2018), training is of key importance. Such training would need to extend beyond medical model assumptions that what is needed is more specialist knowledge and more money. Rather, because attitudes and ethos are central to optimal professional practice and provision (Corbett, 2001a; Emanuelsson, 2001; Hardy and Woodcock, 2015; Spratt and Florian, 2015; Frost et al., 2018), training must encompass the teams and networks that SENCos value and seek to build up (sections 7.2.2 and 7.3). Indeed, professional learning networks enhance learning (NASEN, 2015; Cook et al., 2017), so ideally, training should involve teams developing and supporting each other's learning rather than individuals learning separately.

7.2.3 Everyday/Personal Knowledge of the Child and their Circumstances.

The individual repertory grid interviews and group repertory grid ranking results revealed that the participants recognised the importance of holding individual knowledge of children, which they gathered through their contact with CYP and their families, rather than through training. Indeed, the difference between the 'snap-shot' view obtained by visiting specialists, and the personal knowledge gained from day-to-day contact was mentioned frequently. Whilst expert assessments and guidance were valued, the limited time such experts spend with children was perceived to result in incomplete or partial information, which in turn could mean that the identified support for children was less appropriate. Indeed, the SENCos felt that expert advice should be tempered with knowledge about the child's interests and family priorities and circumstances. Furthermore, although they valued information from many sources because it enabled them to build up a holistic picture of each child, every participant commented on the need to chase up reports and information, and on the time this expended. Evidence was therefore affected by the contact and time available to both experts and SENCos. This influence was of particular concern to EY-5 (Appendix 20, vignette 6), since knowledge about children's individual needs and circumstances was central to the support her setting strove to provide for children and their families.

This is evidence of a person-centred approach, involving increased involvement of the CYP and their parents, envisaged by EHCPs (Sales and Vincent, 2018), though in practice it is challenged by time constraints, by communication across agencies (Scott, 2016; Adams et al., 2017), and by how such information is regarded by others (Ekins, 2015). Furthermore, whilst everyday/personal knowledge enabled setting staff to tailor provision at the setting level, SENCos perceived that this was a limitation for other professionals. This is an argument for valuing setting observations and assessment, and for

an increased voice for setting SENCOs, since expert, visiting professionals rarely have the amount of contact to enable them to build up such knowledge. However, it is also argued that reliable, objective knowledge about children and their circumstances depends on well-trained personnel, who also hold good levels of understanding about developmental norms and SEND.

7.3 Relationships

The narrative interview data revealed that SENCOs have relationships with five main groups (See Figure 33):

- professionals and caseworkers,
- setting staff,
- families,
- children and young people, and
- SENCO peers and support network.

These were enhanced by stability, with the repertory grid interview data revealing that contact and two-way communication, including listening to and respecting other's views, sharing information, accessing knowledge and support, experience, diplomacy, and confidence all contributed to good relationships. Detail from the analysed data sets is combined here to reveal how SENCOs perceived these relationships.

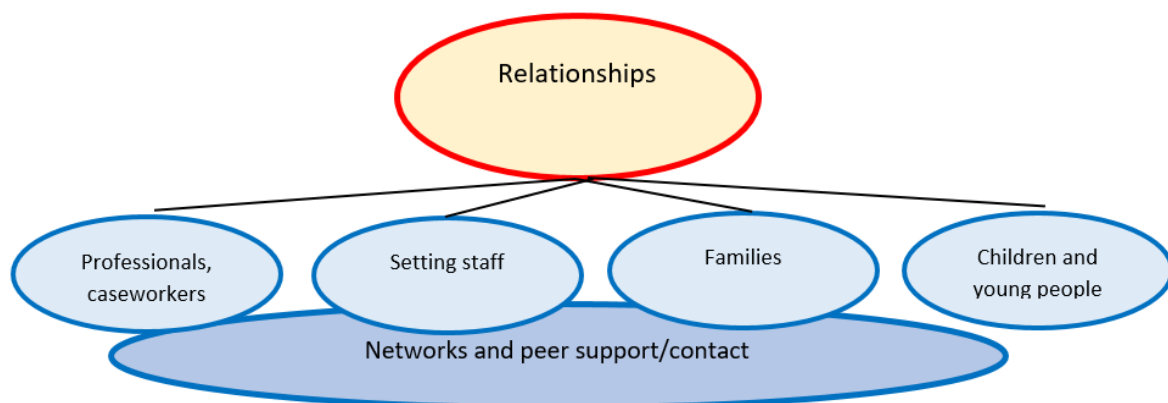


Figure 323 - Relationship theme.

7.3.1 Professionals and Caseworkers

Good relationships with professionals were perceived to make support for SENCOs more accessible, and participants were trying to build these up. Support, guidance, ideas, resources and 'backing' (PY-6) from professionals were valued, as were timely considered responses including, for example, the

careful reading of documents, and detailed, accurate paperwork. However, the pressure other professional groups and caseworkers were under was recognised, and it was perceived that strategic changes, including reduced contact time and staff reallocations, had affected such relationships, and consequently trust and liaison. Thus, while some SENCOs were working with a core team of professionals, contracted, for example, by their academy, others were working with professional team members who changed and who they felt perhaps did not have an appreciation of life in schools, or knowledge of particular settings and their resources. Obtaining appropriate evidence for an EHCP application was therefore reported as being easier when a setting had direct contracts with the professionals concerned, since this increased access, support and secured more consistent staffing, so enabling better relationships to be developed.

7.3.2 Setting Staff

Good relationships with staff who worked together as a team provided support for SENCOs and promoted effective, consistent intervention for children and their families. Such joint working required information about the child and their care to be clearly shared between professionals, setting staff and families. This required SENCOs to listen and talk to their setting colleagues and to consider *'everybody's ideas'* (PY-2), since everybody shares the goal of *'what is best for the child'* (see sections 7.1.1 and 7.5.2).

7.3.3 Families

Having good relationships with parents and families was a high priority, especially for participants working in early years. Such relationships assisted conversations broaching the possibility of SEND and helped to get parents *'on board'* (EY-7), which is necessary to secure the parental permission needed to access further assessment and support. Good relationships were also perceived to support open communication, which enabled knowledge about individual children to be gained, identified the family's priorities for help and support, and ascertained the most effective approaches for a child. Positive relationships with families and carers were therefore central to intervention since they supported conversations *'to discover what [families] want to move forward'* (PY-2).

7.3.4 Children and Young People

The narrative interviews revealed that good relationships with children were perceived to underlie effective interventions. Such relationships were built up through contact, with the amount and type of contact SENCOs had with CYP being important. Regular face-to-face contact was perceived to develop personal knowledge of children and their families, and time spent with them was felt to build up trust and communication, and to facilitate day-to-day observations and assessment. The resulting

knowledge was then applied alongside the advice of outside, expert professionals, who may have had little regular contact, and a limited relationship with the CYP and their family, themselves.

7.3.5 SENCo Peers and Support Network

SENcos are often the sole SENCo in settings. The participants, therefore, all sought to develop links both with their SENCo peers and with other, supportive professionals. This included other agencies, professional networks such as cluster group meetings, SENCo conferences, and local Teacher Alliances, as well as informal contacts with other SENcos, including peers on the NASENCo course. Indeed, such support networks provided valuable access to the experience, knowledge, support, views, and resources of others.

These relationships could give SENcos the confidence to challenge and to suggest different ways of meeting a child's needs, to be patient, and sometimes to establish '*a middle ground*' (PY-5). All five relationships therefore contributed to joined-up implementation, with participants such as PY-7 (Appendix 20, vignette 7) valuing close working relationships and the contribution each person makes to determining and informing '*child-centred*' provision.

EHCP enactment involves each of these five groups, and so encompasses multiple perspectives. Respectful relationships are therefore required (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2007; Nolan et al., 2012; Cartmel et al., 2013), and positive relationships with personnel both within and without school settings are evidence of good practice (Szwed, 2007b). Nurturing environments, combined with caring attitudes and accessibility, have been shown to contribute to positive relationships and effective practice (Burton and Goodman, 2011). However, in reality, these are affected by difficulties accessing professionals, in part due to funding issues (Hall and Mulholland, 2018), with the designated liaison officials to support this work only implemented by some counties (Tirraoro, 2017). Also, whilst EHCP enactment has achieved greater parental involvement and a more person-centred approach in some areas (Sales and Vincent, 2018), inconsistencies in the extent to which parent and pupil input is valued by professionals persist (House of Commons Education Committee, 2019). Changes to the discourses in which practices are constructed, and to the social relationships which both constitute and support practice may therefore still be necessary (Kemmis, 2005; Ghaye et al., 2008). This suggests that SENcos, who negotiate various contexts with a complexity of contributing factors, should be supported and equipped to develop positive working relationships with each of these five groups. Indeed, concepts such as communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991), originally intended as a type of informal learning organisation, also foster information sharing and a sense of belonging (Wenger, 1999). Moreover, practices that develop trust and reciprocity (Ekins, 2015), so facilitating

relationship building and knowledge exchange (Li et al., 2009), may also act to promote and optimise the contribution of these relationships to EHCP enactment.

7.4 Institutional Issues

This theme is concerned with the resources provided for SENCos at institutional, or county level. Issues related to contact, privatisation of support services and accessibility (See Figure 34), underlie two sub-themes of:

- consistent, accessible information and advice; and
- communication and liaison.

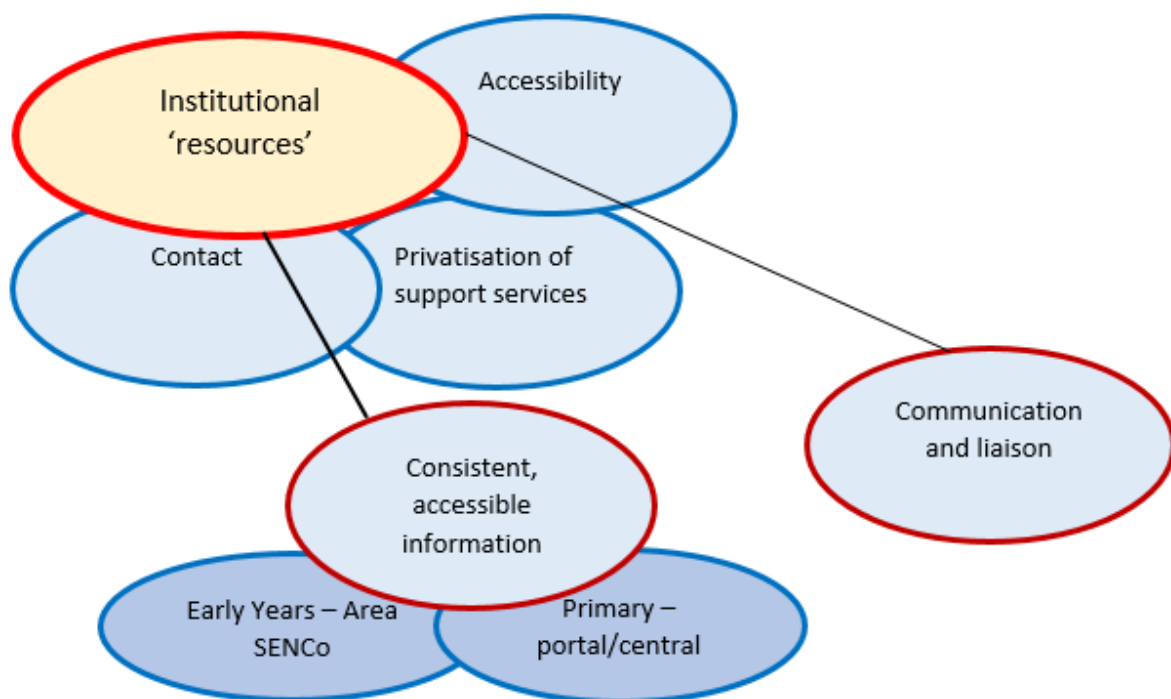


Figure 334 - Institutional theme.

7.4.1 Access to Consistent Information and Advice

Findings from the worklines indicated that all participants felt that the information and advice given to them when the SEND Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) was introduced had been incomplete and difficult to access. This meant that they were unsure of the process and procedure in the initial stages of implementation. The worklines also identified privatisation of support services as being a negative issue for SENCos working in both age-phases. Furthermore, although the narrative interviews

revealed that the resources and input of external professionals were valued and recognised as enhancing provision and helping them to meet individual children's needs, difficulties accessing professional expertise was felt to adversely impact applications for, and implementation of, EHCPs. Indeed, the climate of austerity and budget cuts prevalent in England at this time was identified by SENCOs as having affected resources, with training, assessments, and support available for EHCP applications being especially commented on. The repertory grid interviews revealed that SENCOs perceived issues with contact and accessibility to be central to these difficulties, with detail of how this particularly affected the SENCOs working in each age-phase revealed in the narrative interviews. SENCOs working in early years valued the Early Support Tracking Documents (2016) produced by the private company. They also valued highly the support and direction they received from Area SENCOs (also known as Inclusion Advisors), though recognised that cutbacks made to this service had reduced the time available to them, and also that Area SENCOs who were unfamiliar to them and their setting could now be assigned to them. In contrast to this, SENCOs working in the primary years reported persistent difficulties accessing consistent information from County²⁴, by either telephone or online, with information and forms being described as difficult to find and not '*user-friendly*' (PY-5). Furthermore, these SENCOs reported high turnover of caseworkers, and that some recently appointed caseworkers had limited knowledge of education, and of provision within specific settings. This meant that the quality and detail of EHCPs was felt to depend on which caseworker compiled it, with some plans being detailed, useful documents compared with other plans that were less so. This challenge was personified by PY-5 (Appendix 20, vignette 8), who described the search for answers as '*time-consuming*' and '*almost impossible*'.

Whilst the financial constraints that many services are operating under contribute to inconsistencies (Sales and Vincent, 2018), other inequalities have also been identified in the literature, including variations in EHC needs assessment, planning processes, and resultant EHCPs (Scott, 2016; Adams et al., 2017). This is a concerning situation in the context of flexible policy enactment (Adams et al., 2017; Johnson et al., 2017), since implementation in such a context depends on the support, knowledge, and training available to individual SENCOs and their settings. This suggests that the aim of making SEND provision less fragmented and easier to navigate (DfE, 2011; University of Bristol, 2015) has not been realised. Furthermore, whilst the provision of a central, accessible source of consistent information and advice for all age-phases, similar to that provided by Area SENCOs for early years settings, could enhance effective practice, even out some of the inconsistencies and inequalities (DfE, 2017e; DfE 2017f), and contribute to more informed and timely assessments by reducing the time

²⁴ 'County' is used here to denote both the Local Authority and private company, as this theme referred to both before and after re-organisation, and therefore involves both institutions.

SENCOs spend seeking answers, support, and information, the Area SENCO service has, in actuality, been reduced. This is despite evidence that reductions impact on the clear, concise information and guidance needed by, and provided for early years settings and their SENCOs (Griggs and Bussard, 2017; Lamb, and Blandford, 2017). This means that a valuable cross-county, central source of information and support is less, rather than more available, at a time when there are fewer joined-up, central bodies in operation.

7.4.2 Communication and Liaison

The worklines, narrative and repertory grid interviews all revealed that SENCOs identified good communication with support services and professionals as a contributor to effective EHCP implementation. Several concepts, including contact, relationships, skill, networks, and shared language were involved in this theme. The amount and type of contact SENCOs had with different agencies was important, especially in the early years. This is because relationships with children and families, and with professionals, develop through regular contact, with trust, and communication and liaison being built up through time spent with them. However, staff-turnover and changed setting allocations were felt to have negatively affected working relations. In contrast, working relations were perceived to be enhanced when communication was two-way: that is, when the views of SENCOs were listened to and respected, and when support, knowledge and understanding were shared. Nevertheless, communication with support services and professionals was challenging at times due to SENCO skills and knowledge, timetable demands, and the accessibility, or otherwise, of advice and support.

The skills required to negotiate and communicate with other professionals were often new to previously classroom-based staff and these needed to be learned, including learning '*how the system works*' (PY-5), and knowing who to 'phone. Although all participants felt they shared information, getting information back was described as problematical and requiring persistent chasing (section 5.2.1). The SENCOs reported slow responses to their queries, with some agencies, including shared, specialist placements, being unavailable on the telephone or slow to reply to emails. This meant that detail from assessments, including suggested strategies, were not known by the core placement, and so were not being implemented consistently across settings. Due to these issues, participants felt that they required confidence and persistence, which was assisted by knowledge of SEND and terminology. Certainly, recently appointed SENCOs identified that they did not yet know all the descriptive terms, systems and language used, which they felt impacted on their communication and liaison with other professionals, including making it feel quite daunting. To compensate for these difficulties, networking and communication with peers was used to source information, for support, and to share practice

ideas, but this required time and contact, including mutually convenient times to liaise, with implications for time management and for workloads. Indeed, SENCOs with classroom-based duties reported only having certain 'windows' (PY-6) in which they could make telephone calls, and attending meetings required cover. Communication and liaison were therefore negatively influenced by workloads and timetable constraints. This concern was personified by PY-6 (Appendix 20, vignette 9). Despite many years of classroom experience, she identified the communication and liaison necessary as part of the role as a new and '*anxiety provoking*' experience, which had required her to re-evaluate her time management and priorities.

This need for clear lines of communication between all involved with meeting the needs of complex SEND was identified by Szwed (2007a; 2007b; 2007c). Indeed, promising SEND support is underpinned by the use of expertise, personalisation, and effective communication and collaboration (ASK research, 2018). However, issues around communication, which limit person-centred approaches and team working, exist (Scott, 2016; Adams et al., 2017; Palikara et al., 2018), including time constraints and a lack of communication and consistency between settings, which are identified as main barriers to effective EHCP implementation (Griggs and Bussard, 2017). This study's data revealed that difficulties with communication and liaison are connected to contact, relationships, skill, and networks. However, whilst relationships are developed by contact, in practice, this is limited by insufficient time, paperwork and capacity issues, and by staff-turnover, a finding corroborated by (Goertz, 2006). In contrast, positive relationships and successful joint working are enhanced by clear understandings of role, including what and how each contributes (Burton and Goodman, 2011), and by sharing a common language, including specialised terminology, since this enables information to be shared and implemented effectively (Messenger, 2013; NASEN, 2014; Smith et al., 2015; Ekins, 2015; Roessger, 2015; Riggelman and Buchter, 2017). Interestingly, the professional networks that participants were seeking to build up have been shown to help develop confident, skilled professionals (Lamb and Blandford, 2017), enhance learning (NASEN, 2015; Cook et al., 2017), and promote the sharing of knowledge and skills (Larsson et al., 2009; Omidvar and Kislov, 2014; Pearson et al., 2015). It is therefore suggested here that EHCP implementation can be enhanced by SENCOs who value and develop their communication and liaison skills, and who build up their relationships and networks with others.

7.5 Organisational Ethos Issues

This theme is concerned with setting ethos and with the resulting interactions between policy enactment, practice and individual SENCOs (Miller, 2018). Although increased structural and professional autonomy is described in the literature (Biesta et al., 2016), the manifestation of these is

significantly shaped by organisational beliefs, with participants identifying that shared vision enables practice. Three sub-themes related to this emerged from the data sets (see Figure 35). These are:

- position and status,
- building a team, and
- systematic collection of evidence.



Figure 345 - Organisational ethos theme.

7.5.1 Position and Status

The narrative interviews revealed that all participants were combining the role of SENCo with other responsibilities, and that they had concerns about being allocated sufficient time for the role. Participants also perceived that the physical, emotional and practical support provided for them, including support for training and ensuring that the staff team assists the SENCo's work, was linked to their setting's management or head teacher. Additionally, participants from both age-phases felt that holding the role had changed how other setting staff viewed them and their knowledge, although SENCos working in early years described difficulties with their status in multi-professional teams. This included how their personal knowledge of the child and assessments were weighted compared to those of specialist placements or visiting professionals. In contrast to this, SENCos working in the

primary phase had different experiences of how their voice was valued, or not, by their setting. Membership of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) was described as enabling them to influence their setting's direction and priorities to a greater extent, and those working in academies described increased autonomy in how they used their budget, which was allowing them to develop provision to meet the specific needs of their setting, catchment, and children. This issue was demonstrated by PY-3 (Appendix 20, vignette 10), who had many years of experience but who was not part of the SLT. She felt this was the biggest barrier to her practice, since this created limitations including not being party to discussions about spending, difficulties implementing change, and being unable to contribute to professional conversations.

The statutory responsibilities set out by the *Children and Families Act 2014* must be met by settings whose priorities are both informed by, and dependent on, the needs and values present in each location. This means that it may be neither possible or desirable to dictate exactly how each setting allocates and supports the SENCo role (Szwed, 2007b; Oldham and Radford, 2011). However, the meeting of needs should be underpinned by certain factors, including systems grounded in a stance about diversity (Szwed, 2007a; 2007b; 2007c), specialist knowledge of SEND, and a whole school approach led by school leadership (Fitzgerald and Radford, 2017).

Although the SEND Code of Practice stated that SENCos 'will be most effective ... if they are part of the school leadership team' (DfE and DoH, 2015, Section 6.87), on average only 50 percent of SENCos are members of the SLT (Curran et al., 2018), meaning that the authority and time SENCos have to support and develop teaching and learning, and to influence whole setting policy and practice for all, can still be restricted (Qureshi, 2015b; Curran et al., 2018). Consequently, different manifestations of the role and practice are being perpetuated (Miller, 2018), which adds another variable to a scenario already marked by market-driven, de-centralised provision. Furthermore, although systems that increase structural and professional autonomy have been shown to increase both teacher and ecological agency (Priestley et al., 2015), this is a situation which leaves scope for organisations who may not recognise or prioritise the needs of children and young people (CYP) with SEND to de-value the role (Layton, 2005; Pearson and Ralph, 2007). Accordingly, it is likely that a wider spread of recognition and implementation may exist than was uncovered in this study, since the SENCo participants in this study, and their settings, demonstrated their prioritisation and recognition of the role by choosing to participate.

These findings also demonstrate the existence of the dual hierarchy of respect (Ekins, 2015). For example, SENCos felt that greater importance was placed on the voice of expert settings and professionals compared to the voice of early years SENCos. Although perceptions of higher position

and status increase respect, trust, co-operation and enactment (Abbott et al., 2004; Lindqvist, 2013; Cameron and Lindqvist, 2014; Glazzard et al., 2015), 'feeling valued' has been proved to be a significant contributor to professional practice (Nolan et al., 2012, p.94). This question of position and status is therefore not merely political, since it has a practical effect on SENCo agency both in setting teams and in multi-disciplinary teams (Levinson et al., 2009; Messenger, 2013; Meyer and Lees, 2013).

In early years, position and status is connected to lower qualification levels, a lack of career pathways (DfE, 2017a), and lower financial rewards (DfE, 2017c). Whilst the first of these issues would be addressed by the proposed SENCo qualification pathway (Lamb and Blandford, 2017), much work is still needed to develop clear career paths (Lloyd and Hallet, 2010; Oberhuemer, 2011; Preston, 2013; DfE, 2017c; 2017d). Furthermore, difficulties with pay, conditions, and retention (DCSF, 2008b; DfE, 2008; Oberhuemer, 2011; Kendall et al., 2012; Clough and Nutbrown, 2014) has been a contributor in many higher-qualified practitioners choosing not to join the sector (HESA, 2018). Whilst some practitioners are content to continue in their present role or to gain promotion in their current setting, others are less likely to see themselves as part of the professionalisation agenda, rather considering career progression to lead outside 'childcare' to higher status careers (Kendall et al., 2012). Status is, however, not always a key motivator in early years, where career progression can be framed more by personal and social priorities (Lloyd and Hallet, 2010; Urban, 2010), and where provision has been viewed more in terms of day-care rather than highly important years for education (Roberts-Holmes, 2013). This has implications for how the high-quality early identification and intervention described in the SEND Code of Practice is realised (DfE and DoH, 2015). Indeed, as more Local Authorities reduce the Area SENCo role, there will be less capacity to support early years SENCos, which will potentially impact further on early identification, assessment, and intervention (Lamb and Blandford, 2017). Finally, the development of different early year qualifications and routes has not been well thought out in terms of the consequences for the profession (Oberhuemer, 2011), and has contributed to different levels of knowledge and skills (DfE, 2014c) and unclear career pathways (DfE, 2017c). Clarifying these is important (Salisbury et al., 2016, 2017) since it would identify opportunities for progression and development, support staff retention (Kendall et al., 2012; Lamb and Blandford, 2017), and also contribute to confidence, position, and status.

7.5.2 Building a Team

The narrative interviews contained participant descriptions of the importance of building teams inside and outside their settings. Teamwork in settings was found to be enabled by support from the senior leadership team, with their approach cascading down to setting staff. Three main effects of teamwork in settings were identified. First, sharing the workload included working together to collect evidence,

and participants in both age-phases identified that SENCOs value sharing the responsibility for identifying and providing for SEND with their settings. Secondly, good relationships with staff working well together as a team were perceived to facilitate consistent input for children. This could include trying things out and establishing the best strategies across all setting staff. Thirdly, teamwork involved supporting one another with what can sometimes be quite challenging and emotional work. This included having others to '*bounce ideas off*' (EY-7) as well as giving and receiving training, reassurance, and support with the educational and emotional issues related to the work. Indeed, some SENCOs had or were building up, a SEND team in their setting to share aspects of the role, including with paperwork, which they recognised as having increased since the reforms.

This theme was also present in the findings from the repertory grid interviews. Despite different professional perspectives and priorities, which can affect the success and practical realisation of teamwork, participants recognised that working together to support the child and family was underpinned by the same goal of '*what is best for the child*' (11 of the 15 participants). However, whilst EHCPs required SENCOs to draw on a wide range of sources, the participants felt that outside agencies did not always have a good appreciation of life in schools and may hold '*preconceived ideas of what is best for the school*' (PY-3), with teamwork being compromised by difficulties reaching outside personnel, and by conflicting advice. Some participants consequently identified other sources of support, for example, by forming professional and peer group networks (the contribution of such networks is considered separately, in section 7.3.5). This theme was demonstrated in EY-1's practice (Appendix 20, vignette 11), in that her nursery group had built up a team of three SENCOs who supported each other and trained and supported other staff.

Planned, joined-up approaches are preferable to individual responses (McCartney, 2002). However, multi-agency working, whilst directed by central government, still appears to be a local endeavour. This results in inconsistency in working practice, due to the individual and professional wider cultural contextual elements that are present (Baker, 2010). Practical barriers include funding differences and geographical location, with a significant barrier to effective collaboration between different institutions and teamwork within organisations being the existence of different cultures, understandings, and knowledge (Anning et al., 2010)(see section 2.3.4). To ameliorate this, and promote effective joint working, leadership must recognise the benefits of team working (EIS, 2010), be able to both support and challenge each person's activities so as to learn from and develop each other, and seek to engage hearts and minds (Jones, 1998). This is because effective human resource development requires practitioners to go beyond the acquisition of competencies to reflecting and thinking about their principles and values (Cartmel et al., 2013; Smith 2015; Smith et al., 2015). Indeed,

attitudes and respect are central to team working ,and are enhanced when the role of other team members is understood and appreciated (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2007). Effective SENCoS are heavily involved in developing and involving others, and so in building their school community (Szwed, 2007a). Furthermore, effective communities of practice (Wenger et al., 2002) require recognition and development of the social relationships which contribute to practice and changes to the discourses in which practices are constructed (Kemmis, 2005; Ghaye et al., 2008). Identity awareness therefore makes an important contribution to teamwork, whether this happens inside or outside the SENCo's setting.

7.5.3 Systematic Collection of Evidence

The worklines and narrative interviews identified that managing the workload was a significant part of the role. This included paperwork, since EHCP applications must be supported by the correct information and evidence. Although the paperwork was a considerable task, SENCoS reported that embedding the recording of evidence into routine practice could make it a less onerous and more organised task, and so reduced some of the extra work and time needed for collation. However, whilst the SENCoS appreciated increased accountability and involvement of fellow setting staff for the implementation of support and provision, they recognised that the ultimate responsibility for chasing up, securing evidence and '*pulling things together*' (PY-3) was that of the SENCo. This required good levels of process knowledge, used to develop systematic procedures for evidence collection, and to embed the recording of evidence into routine practice to make it more organised and routine. This required the support and understanding of settings, including an appreciation of evidence that extends beyond employing it to judge and evaluate the setting itself. That is, assessment evidence was valued and applied formatively to identify need and to inform and direct intervention and support. Participants in both phases recognised that much of the evidence needed for EHCP applications could be obtained using progress tracking systems, which were used for every child attending a setting, with Tapestry (2018) for early years and School Pupil Tracker Online (SPTO, 2018) for both phases being mentioned. Where electronic systems were not in place, information was found more easily when settings had routine, organised procedures in place. Furthermore, participants recognised that assessments and evidence enable steps of progress suited to each child to be both identified and tracked, by establishing baselines, by informing and evidencing the graduated response, and by defining intervention outcomes to make them SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timely). Consequently, this enabled provision and interventions to be monitored and adapted, with some settings actively using such systems to identify and address gaps in their provision.

The repertory grid interviews also identified that SENCOs needed to be proactive in establishing their setting's systems, identifying and planning for the collation of the necessary evidence, and chasing up such evidence, from, for example, other professionals. Moreover, whilst the EHCP process, including the sizeable paperwork load, was recognised as necessary to determine, inform and secure the provision needed for the future of individual children, this required attention to detail, an interest in the whole child, and sometimes thinking '*outside the box*' (PY-7) to ensure that provision was personalised and adaptable. This demanded commitment, drive, and perseverance, with participants feeling that this was '*not just a job*' (EY-4, PY-2), and that they needed to persistently prioritise children and their outcomes (see sections 7.1 and 7.7). EY-6 personified this theme when she highlighted the systems she had developed to ensure evidence was routinely documented and accessible (Appendix 20, vignette12).

This is evidence that EHCP applications and implementations do require SENCOs to rigorously and systematically collect and evaluate factors such as pupil progress and outcomes, the views of CYP and their families, and the results of graduated response interventions, as set out in the *Children and Families Act 2014* and SEND Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015). However, the English legislative and policy insistence that the key focus for SENCOs is the whole setting assumes they possess the skills and power to methodically evaluate, develop and monitor provision and practice in their settings (Oldham and Radford, 2011; Hellawell, 2017b). Although Gunter (2004) found that schools were led either by values and ideas or by data and abstract processes (such as bureaucracy and policy), the findings of this study suggest that SENCOs recognised that routine collection of information about progress and responses to intervention enabled them to identify, justify, develop and deliver individualised targeted support, so their central value of meeting the needs of the child is, in fact, supported by assessment data and abstract processes; what appears to be different is how the data and processes are viewed. This is corroborated by Greenwood and Kelly (2017), who identified that implementation is affected by how the broader purposes of assessment and the nature of SEND are perceived by individual practitioners and the systems within which they practice, with schools where staff are collectively committed to a systematic approach to evidence collection able to identify when and where changes to interventions need to be made. This is because viewing systematic data collection as a means to reflect and develop interventions, has an empowering effect (Wenger, 1999; Greenfield et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2015; Carter, 2015), especially when this is supported by ongoing professional learning and development, since this also enables practitioners to identify and develop the knowledge and skills they need to progress their own practice.

Furthermore, data and abstract processes allow SENCOs to evidence EHCP applications with minimal extra work, so mitigate, to a degree, the increase in bureaucracy and administrative tasks required by EHCPs (Pearson et al., 2015). This is important since securing and resourcing support for CYP with the most complex needs is becoming 'harder' (Hall and Mulholland, 2018, p.4), with only two percent of settings reporting that the funding they receive is sufficient (ibid, p.11). The participants in this study certainly recognised this, and were applying data pragmatically to evidence and progress individual child and setting performance, as well as to secure and to inform support.

7.6 Quality of Evidence

Relationships and personal knowledge contribute to the development of individualised, detailed evidence. These are underpinned by access, communication and liaison, and contact. Likewise, understanding of SEND, developmental levels, and process knowledge underpin the quality of evidence, with high-quality evidence contributing to successful EHCP applications. The data revealed that high-quality evidence is also impacted and enabled by:

- Support and resources for SENCOs,
- Wording and timeliness, and
- Taking a holistic approach (see Figure 36).



Figure 356 - Quality of evidence theme.

7.6.1 Support and Resources

Although the group repertory grid ranking did not identify that physical resources were of high importance to participants, the descriptive results revealed that the availability of resources had a

direct and dynamic effect on how settings and SENCOs operationalise the role. For example, all participants held other responsibilities alongside the SENCO roles, and whilst cluster analysis revealed that these roles were considered to inform each other and provide different perspectives, these roles also had an impact on the time and flexibility of SENCOs, and created the need to manage conflicting workloads. Indeed, the amount of time allocated by settings for the SENCO role contributed to how workloads were identified, met, and/or shared. Furthermore, the support SENCOs received in terms of support staff allowance, and the provisions that settings could offer depended on what resources were available and how they were prioritised (see section 7.5 also). Moreover, SENCOs were having to consider funding, which included applying for emergency funding. This was a new, time-consuming responsibility. Additionally, time and resources for the role were also needed in order to stay up-to-date with legislation and policy changes, and for training, liaison and the giving and receiving of support. Contact with CYP and families, which contributed to informed, detailed paperwork, also required time. Furthermore, whilst 'having a realistic workload' and 'good work-life balance' were ranked lowest (by group repertory grid ranking), there was a recognition that leaving work at work contributed to the wellbeing of participants, though even then the nature of the work meant it could be *'difficult to switch off'* (PY-4). Finally, without adequate support and resources, the enthusiasm, motivation, and passion could be affected, and it was acknowledged that it was sometimes *'difficult to keep going'* (PY-1).

In contrast to early years SENCOs (who received support and information from their allocated Area SENCO), primary years SENCOs identified a need for a help-point where they could access consistent advice. Settings normally have only one SENCO, and participants felt that they carried the ultimate responsibility for EHCP applications, stating that in practice it *'end[s] up with the whole thing on the SENCO's shoulders'* (PY-6). Support for this work was not only determined by the finance available to settings. Accommodating, encouraging head teacher/manager ethos also contributed to the support SENCOs, and CYP with SEND and their families received. Where such an ethos was present, SENCOs also received help and support from other setting staff and were able to make creative suggestions, develop provision, by, for example, developing training packages, identifying key needs and deploying staff to address these, or by trialling innovative interventions. All of these were felt to promote the quality of evidence by upskilling staff and by contributing to the graduated response. However, participants did not have all the answers, and primary phase participants in particular described the difficulties they experienced accessing consistent information and support (see section 7.4.1). Whilst some had addressed this by finding other sources of support (for example from professionals contracted by their academy or by building up their network), the need for, and perceived benefit of, a central point of consistent information was identified by five out of the seven primary phase

participants. PY-3's comments illustrate the import and impact of resources and support issues (Appendix 20, vignette 13), including that the correct support:

'cascades, it's like a hierarchy, at the top you've got the child but then that's underpinned by the correct staffing in school and the access to resources and then that then falls onto county funding levels and then it just all feeds into the next one' and that 'unless you have got the right support in place in terms of training, access to specialist agencies and stuff... so this is almost like the SENCo that I'd like to be has an idealistic view of what it would be but the reality is the kind of SENCo I would not like to be because you are bound by the constraints' (PY3).

Whilst access and empowerment, responsive services, timely support, and improving quality and capacity were identified as priority areas over ten years ago (DfES, 2007), the current financial and market-driven context has reduced the resources available to meet these (Hellowell, 2017b; House of Commons Education Committee, 2019). Also, different funding arrangements, for example between private, voluntary and independent (PVI) early years providers and state-funded primary settings, and between academy and non-academy settings, create different resource and time allocations and approaches (Mansell, 2013; Roberts-Holmes, 2013; Weale and Adams, 2015). Consequently, the provision and use of resources and accessibility of support is affected at both institutional and organisational levels. How SEND provision and the SENCo role are recognised and supported at these levels has an impact on the information, time and training provided for SENCos from finite, often pressured, resources. This, in turn, has significance for equitable appropriate provision for CYP (Lloyd, 2008; Ainscow, 2012; National Council for Special Education, 2014; Riggleman and Buchter, 2017).

How SEND provision and the SENCo role are recognised and supported also has significance for the development and retention of SENCos themselves (Qureshi, 2015b; Curran et al., 2018; Gedge, 2018). This is because SENCo ideology and practical constraints on implementation (Palikara et al., 2018) create role-identity conflicts (Callero, 1985) and difficult-to-sustain workloads (Curran et al., 2018). That is, in addition to the significant volume of work needed to implement EHCPs, SENCos identify a commitment to CYP and their families that goes beyond a merely systematic delivery.

7.6.2 Wording and Timeliness

In the narrative data, participants identified that the success of EHCP applications and implementation were affected by how applications were worded and by how and when evidence was presented. They recognised the contribution of meticulous paperwork to successfully securing an EHCP. This required them to pay attention to detail, consider the whole child (including, for example, their health and home circumstances), and sometimes think *'outside the box'* (PY-7). Furthermore, SENCos were learning how best to describe needs, since careful phrasing was required for applications that accurately reflected, and successfully secured, support to meet a child's requirements. However,

participants reported a lack of knowledge by some professionals about the specific information needed to support such applications. Participants also reported problems accessing professionals, and that waiting for their assessment and advice could delay applications. Indeed, such assessment and advice needed to be received quickly to ensure its currency.

The SENCos who worked in academy settings felt they had more control over this because certain professionals were contracted directly by the multi-academy trust (MAT), so these participants could highlight criteria and stipulate timings. Indeed, documents that presented the child in detail and set out evident steps of progress were valued in practice because they clearly directed provision and goals. This contrasts with applications and paperwork that either just fulfilled the requirements, no more, or that were more ruthless and less honest, and which were perceived to perhaps be more about the financial benefit to the school, rather than being about the benefit to the child. Furthermore, once the evidence was submitted and the need for a plan was approved, SENCos were then dependent on the caseworkers who write the actual EHCPs. This was an important issue, since participants identified variation between these - better-constructed EHCPs were carefully worded, reflected the child's needs in detail and were *'really valuable documents that can be used to move forwards'* (PY-7), compared to other EHCPs that were light on detail and that *'could have been written for anyone'* (PY-7).

Whilst the workloads and time limitations of other professionals were recognised, participants also identified that sometimes evidence from professionals was delivered without any explanation, reassurance or support. Although they understood this might be linked to the constraints and demands on professionals, such delivery limited the implementation of any advice. Finally, information was sometimes not shared with setting SENCos, perhaps, they felt, because of confidentiality issues. In these instances, parents could convey and share information, but this was not always appropriate or possible since some parents were more able or willing to do this than others. PY-7 provided a good example of this issue (Appendix 20, vignette 14) when she explained that attention to detail enabled her to identify suitable targets.

Evidence about wording is sparse in the literature, though it began to emerge towards the end of the study. In their survey of CYP and parental experiences of EHCPs, Adams et al. (2017) found that in 52 percent of cases both the wishes of the parent and the CYP had been included in the EHCP, and 62 percent of parents and CYP agreed that the help/support described in the EHCP would achieve the outcomes for the child/young person that they had agreed. However, Castro et al., (2019) found that outcomes were poorly defined in EHCPs and that there was no clear regulatory framework. This highlights the need for quality assurance in the EHC process. Whilst the Department of Education has

released periodic reports on the implementation of EHC plans (DfE, 2016b; 2017f), these reports do not extensively examine the impact of the quality of evidence on EHCP outcomes or the quality of the content of the plans themselves. Evidence about timeliness, in comparison, is more available, with several sources revealing that the 20-week cut-off date for an EHCP assessment is being exceeded and that if timings are prolonged, advice may become outdated (DfE, 2017f; House of Commons Education Committee, 2018c; 2019). This is predominantly a resource issue, which means that whilst the SENCos were striving to meet the EHCP application deadlines, restricted professional and caseworker capacity and staff changes within these roles meant that SENCos' best efforts were being frustrated. Indeed ultimately EHCPs were written by caseworkers who worked in an administrative capacity and who had limited and varied knowledge of SEND, so contributing to a scenario in which plans vary in terms of content and information (Palikara et al., 2018).

7.6.3 Holistic Approach

The group repertory grid ranking revealed that the child was central to everything SENCos do, and also that holding individual knowledge of children was very important to them. Accessing information from CYP and their families, as well as from a range of professionals, informed holistic understanding and support. However, whilst SENCos valued expert contributions from other professionals, because they contribute to a more complete knowledge of a child's specific needs, they recognised that such professionals did not have the same personal knowledge of individual children and their families. Such knowledge was gained from time spent observing and getting to know the children and their families, and sometimes from *'going beyond what is expected'* (PY-2). It also involved a broad rather than narrow view of appropriate support and outcomes and being prepared to innovate and think outside the box. Indeed, knowing the individual child and having good relationships with the family and carers were perceived to be central to the holistic assessment of the child and their situation since this helped to identify the most effective approaches, and priorities for help and support, which could include prioritising one target over another at times. This theme was personified by EY-8 (Appendix 20, vignette 15), who explained that she was committed to person-centred care, made possible in part because nursery settings have often known the child and their family *'since the baby room'*.

Provision for CYP with SEND is connected to, and interdependent on, the education system as a whole (Norwich, 1996). It is also connected to the specialist knowledge and input of key professionals (Tomlinson 2014), so the importance of the whole and the interdependence of the parts must be recognised, both in terms of the individual and of the organisation or systems involved. Furthermore, equality of opportunity for pupils with SEND necessitates a holistic view of CYP and their circumstances (Chaney, 2012), and whilst the *Children and Families Act 2014* identifies that EHC plans should be

holistic, and involve all areas of life, this must be achieved within a system which is judged on a narrow set of academic outcomes. It must also be achieved in a system constrained by tight timelines and budget cuts, and marked by difficulties in liaison between education, health and care (Palikara et al., 2018), and whose training shows poor alignment with internationally-recognised models of goal-setting and intervention for children with disabilities (Castro et al., 2019). Indeed, though EHCPs purport to be holistic, there can be a lack of involvement from health and care professionals, which means that they are still predominantly education documents rather than the wraparound care documents described in legislation and policy (Norwich, 2014; Boesley and Crane, 2018). Moreover, whilst multi-agency training is deemed mandatory by central government, there is no specific funding available to support it, meaning that the mechanism of multi-agency training relies upon the values and approaches of the agencies involved (Hackett et al., 2016). This is unfortunate, since differences between professional groups regarding the implementation of the SEND policy exist, indicating that actions are still needed if holistic service provision is to be adequately implemented (House of Commons Education Committee: SEND, 2018c; 2019).

Interestingly, Ofsted is currently consulting on a new 'quality of education' judgement, which will look at outcomes in context and consider whether they are the result of a well-delivered and coherently planned curriculum. They also propose separate judgements about learners' 'personal development' and 'behaviour and attitudes' (Ofsted, 2019). This shift is well-aligned with contemporary international literature in the field of inclusion and SEND, where participation has been regarded as an accurate indicator of inclusion (McKay et al., 2017; Vandenbussche and De Schauwer, 2018). Biesta et al. (2017) consider that a holistic approach is one which adopts a view that encompasses more than a narrow set of educational achievements and that allows CYP with SEND to experience success, as this motivates and builds self-esteem. This links with MacKenzie (2013) who identifies the value of building up a child's self-confidence rather than focussing on the pursuit of academic success. Indeed Hayes et al., (2006) suggest that intellectual challenge, connectedness, supportiveness and working with and valuing difference mark the productive holistic pedagogies that are seen as a necessary part of SEND provision (Bottery et al., 2012; Boylan and Woolsey, 2015; Henry, 2016).

The evidence from this study indicates that the participants recognised this, and strove to achieve it in their settings. This included seeking the rounded knowledge of the child, family, and setting needed to inform and contextualise provision judgements (Done et al., 2016a). Indeed, the extent to which a holistic view of children is held, and the extent to which diversity and difference is acknowledged, has an influence on setting cultures and provision as well as underlying effective joint working (Messenger, 2013). It has been suggested that the effectiveness of support systems for SEND depend on how well

education, social care and health services collaborate in the commissioning, planning and delivery of joint services (NASEN 2015; DfE 2015). However, although additional competencies such as health-related and psychosocial knowledge and skills, can be required in a holistic approach (Isaksson and Lindqvist 2015), this presents a challenge for SENCOs when such knowledge and skills are hard to access.

7.7 Outcomes

The final theme is concerned with outcomes for the children and young people, which were felt to be influenced by:

- The application of advice formatively; and
- Identification and provision (see Figure 37).

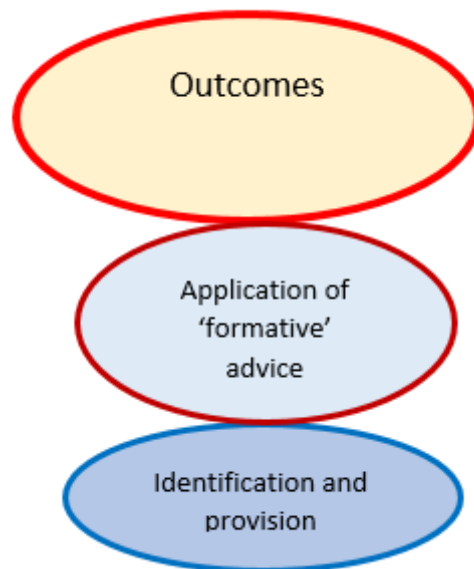


Figure 367 - Outcome theme.

Group repertory grid rankings revealed that the child was at the centre of these participants' practice, and narrative interview data revealed a desire to make individual children's educational experience the most positive it can be. This purpose underlies their motivation, enthusiasm, and passion for the work. Although securing an EHCP for a child required drive and perseverance, doing so was regarded as a positive outcome. This was because the assessment process determined and informed the provision needed, and the plan helped secure the support required. Indeed, participants identified that outcomes for children were assisted when funding was available to finance support and to secure specialist provisions or placements, both of which could be secured through EHCPs.

The SENCos in this study identified that the setting team contributed to the identification of SEND, and also to the provision of support and interventions. This included implementing the advice of outside professionals, which was mediated by personal knowledge, including of individual children's interests, and by practical constraints, for example, staffing ratios or access to professionals. Ideally, assessment information was applied formatively, since it provided information about a child's functioning and responses. In this way, assessments contributed to both evidence and outcomes, though it was recognised that this was dependent on how individual settings actually implement such advice.

Ultimately, the SENCos wanted to '*do the best*' for the children under their care. This included children's wellbeing, which was regarded as very important, so provision needed to fit the child and enable children to be '*happy and fulfilling as much as they can*' (EY-7). Provision also needed to be realistic, with '*appropriate*' steps of progress identified, and progress and interventions ought to be tracked so that provision was both monitored and accountable. This enabled responses to interventions to be identified and helped them understand '*what [we] are doing and how [we] are going to get there*' (PY-3). Outcomes should therefore be closely tied to tracking systems, as illustrated by PY-1 (Appendix 20, vignette 16), who perceived that outcomes were related to wellbeing and to detailed tracking.

A central tenet of the SEND Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) is better life outcomes for CYP with SEND, which was to be achieved through the single identification and assessment process (RCSLT, 2014; 2017), by a holistic, participation-focussed approach, and by SMART objectives (Palikara et al., 2018). However, this study reveals that there are difficulties in each of these areas: that is, in accessing consistent information and professional assessments, in the existence of different setting approaches and priorities, and in variations in the quality and detail of evidence and resultant EHCPs. Furthermore, recent critiques have identified that EHCPs may actually constrain provision for a child, and so their outcomes since children's needs are seldom static, the considerable bureaucratic demands of EHCPs divert resources away from children, and the legal status of EHCPs makes updating and adjusting them a cumbersome process (House of Commons Education Committee, 2019).

Securing an EHCP was regarded by the SENCo participants as a positive outcome since these inform and help resource support. Successful outcomes for the CYP themselves included wellbeing, positive educational experiences, and progressing and achieving '*as much as they can*'. Although some settings were carefully monitoring interventions, more specific detail about what appropriate outcomes for children with SEND were, were not revealed by the data. Interestingly, Castro et al. (2019) identified

that English EHCPs contain ‘markedly low quality outcomes’ (p.49). They also identified that the quality of outcomes depends on the LA where they were developed, the type of setting they attend, whether the outcomes are specified as short or long-term, and to some extent, the type of need of the CYP. Indeed, Castro et al. (2019) raise concerns about the quality of provision under the new SEND policy, finding that the EHCP outcomes they evaluated were not based on internationally-recognised models of goal setting and intervention for children with SEND, as they were not based on the current definition of participation as involvement in life situations (WHO, 2007). This may be evidence of the current narrowed focus of English conceptualisations and provision, which some consider to be a systemic failure (House of Commons Education Committee, 2019) and which belies the growing understanding of disability as functional diversity (McKay et al., 2017).

This study therefore provides further evidence of the hiatus between the ideology and values of SENCOs, the English political rhetoric and SEND provision (Palikara et al., 2018). The ‘SEN industry’ equates desirable educational and social outcomes as those which reduce a future of risks and costs (Tomlinson, 2014, p.11). Whilst this is not invalid, it reflects a bigger issue with the values and visions that are held towards CYP with SEND. Also, due to the limited content on SEND in initial training packages (Liasidou, 2011; Carter, 2015; CDC, 2018), the knowledge of SEND held by SENCOs themselves can be limited and insufficient to drive wider improvements and development (Davies and Lee, 2001; Cole, 2005b; Kearns, 2005). This means that EHCPs are perpetuating systemic disparities rather than addressing inequities, and the challenge of providing an education that is both broadly inclusive and individually responsive persists. Freire’s observation (Freire, 1970, 1973; Horton and Freire, 1990) about how the actors (SENCOs) are positioned in their context is therefore significant and highlights the importance of developing how SEND, and so SENCO practice is construed by settings. Indeed, the results of this study suggest this should ideally involve ‘hearts’ (Jones, 1998, p.343) in terms of citizenship and diversity acceptance, as well as ‘minds’ (ibid), in terms of knowledge, skills, and data use.

7.8 Summary and Conclusions

This chapter integrated the data sets, by combining the numerical and descriptive findings to produce a ‘negotiated account of what they mean together’ (Bryman, 2007, p.21). Seven themes were presented, with participant profiles and the literature being used to contextualise and assist the discussion. Interconnections and overlap between the themes are present, reflecting the complexity of real practice, where influences interact and affect one another. This final section therefore

summarises and synthesises these themes, and in so doing reveals how these themes support and extend previous research in the field.

First, SENCo perceptions of EHCP implementation were addressed using the revealed micro or internal influences. Identity, as a micro-level influence, was explored in section 7.1. Attributes that would be beneficial for any professional working in a collective capacity emerged, as did the value of positive relationships and networks and connections since these were important sources of support and information. Communication and liaison skills and opportunities, and organisational ethos also made important contributions to collective working, with communities of practice (Wenger, 1999) emerging as important sources of support, learning, and belonging. Indeed, these were perceived to supplement and compensate (to an extent) for the institutional resource issues. Professionally, the demands and constraints inherent to this role were juxtaposed with a clear sense of purpose: that is, a child-centred approach that prioritised holistic, personalised, caring support and favourable outcomes for CYP with SEND, which coheres with the deep cultural view identified by Corbett (2001b), Emanuelsson (2001), Hargreaves and Shirley (2012), and MacKenzie (2013). SENCos therefore valued professional contact with CYP, their families, and involved professionals, identifying communication and liaison as important, though this was challenged by workloads, timetable demands, and access. Knowledge of the EHCP process, of SEND, of developmental norms (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2007), and of individual children and their families were also identified as important, though difficulties accessing consistent information and training had created practical challenges and inequities, with differences evident between the early year and primary phases. Positive and negative impacts on personal identity were also revealed. Positive impacts included increased assertiveness and a sense of achievement, compared to negative impacts which included stress, workload, value differences and being personally affected. These have implications for motivation and retention, with emotional effort (Kruml and Geddes, 2000) emerging as an important contributor to how SENCos are managing their responsibilities and workload.

Next, the question of EHCP implementation in practice was addressed using the revealed external influences. Section 7.4 identified two main issues pertaining to the institutional level. One was early years SENCo's dependence on Area SENCos, which contrasted with the need for a central, consistent and accessible source of information and support, as expressed by primary SENCos. The other was the challenge of achieving good communication and liaison between agencies involved with the EHCP process. Both of these issues had an impact on SENCo identity, knowledge and skills, relationships, teamwork, the quality of evidence, and thus outcomes. Section 7.5 considered organisational level issues, with setting ethos and understanding being found to affect how individual settings enable their SENCos in terms of position and status. This dictated the support SENCos received from their settings

to develop the staff team and their networks, which in turn impacted on how methods for the systematic collection of evidence were established. However, although the SEND Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) 'responsibilised' (Hellawell, 2017b, p.5) other setting staff, SENCOs still held the primary responsibility for managing EHCP applications in their settings. Furthermore, while SENCOs appreciated the contribution of a range of information and knowledge to provision that considered the holistic wellbeing of children and young people, access to, and the availability of, expert institutional and organisational advice could be difficult and was dictated by the agreements their settings held with these services.

This is evidence of Van de Putte et al.'s (2017) critique of the concept of SENCOs as change agents. That is, SENCOs are not 'individual humanist subjects where agency is solely lodged' (Barad, 2007, cited in Van de Putte et al., 2017, p.885), rather they are part of an 'intra-active entanglement of multiple agencies' (Van de Putte et al., 2017, p.885). This means that they must work to develop the communities that they work within, which this research suggests must involve the ethos and priorities of their settings. Furthermore, whilst Ball et al. (2012) identify eight different actor types, Curran (2019) suggests that the role of SENCOs as policy implementers, may be changeable or static or may involve several of these types simultaneously, depending 'on the nature and activity of the individual at the time, as well as those with whom the SENCO may be working' (p.80). It is proposed that this is evidence of identities bridging agency and structure (Holland et al., 1998), and of identities being impacted by interactions between personal and professional contexts and between the individual and the collective contexts they work in. This coheres with Hotho (2008), who regards professional identity to be a product of structure and choice, with Biesta et al. (2016), who describe 'actor-situation' transactions (p.626), and with the interplay between persons, practice and cultures (Edwards, 2016) recognised by structuration theorists such as Bourdieu (1977), Bhaskar (1998), Berger and Luckmann, (1967) and Giddens (1984).

The meso-level or interactions between micro and macro level influences were therefore also considered, so as to reveal potential mechanisms of change. Section 7.2 identified three types of knowledge. These contributed to SENCO identity and although all require time and experience, not all have resource needs so the impact of external influences can be ameliorated. Section 7.3 described five key relationships that contribute to effective EHCP implementation (with professionals and caseworkers, with setting staff, with families, with the CYP themselves, and with SENCO peers and support networks). These relationships especially enhance collaborative working (Cartmel et al., 2013), support networks, holistic assessment and provision, and knowledge. They therefore also contribute to the quality of evidence (section 7.6), which encompasses the three main sub-themes of

the availability of support and resources, the impact of wording and timing, and the contribution of a holistic approach. Finally, Section 7.7 identified participant perceptions about the outcomes of the EHCP process, including how well needs were identified, and how approaches were implemented and progress was tracked by settings.

This summary identified the influences that SENCo participants perceived contribute to real, as opposed to an idealised implementation of EHCPs. Child-centred practice was a central contributor to SENCo identity, which coheres with previous research foregrounding the values of citizenship and civil rights. Further aspects, which affect how SENCos implement EHC plans within their existing structures and sometimes limitations, also emerged. The next and final chapter evaluates this study, conceptualises these conclusions further, then makes recommendations for practice and dissemination.

CHAPTER 8 - CONCLUSION

8.0 Overview

This final chapter conceptualises the findings and identifies the knowledge added to the field by this study. It is organised into five sections, as follows:

1. uses the integrated findings and discussions to explain how each research question was addressed;
2. sets out three main contributions to knowledge;
3. conceptualises the findings;
4. considers implications for practice and future directions; and
5. reflects on the doctoral process and evaluates the study.

8.1 Response to Research Questions

The data collected and analysed for the purpose of this investigation allowed each of the three research questions to be addressed, and so revealed the pertinent aspects of SENCo perceptions of EHCP implementation practice and potential. These questions and the responses are précised in the following sections.

8.1.1 Research Question One - How do SENCos perceive the impact of the Code of Practice on their roles, responsibilities and relationships?

This question sought to identify SENCo perceptions of how the additional responsibilities for SENCos, including the implementation of EHCPs, as identified by the SEND Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) are realised. This included adjustments in their roles and relationships that may have occurred in response to these changes.

Role

This study found the SENCo role was often combined with other responsibilities, such as safeguarding, since the work can be overlapping and complementary. Indeed, a considerable part of the role involved mediating, cascading information and guiding staff. Motivation, enthusiasm, passion, and commitment were required, although the role was described as huge and sometimes overwhelming and frustrating. Also, it involved a substantial workload which affected SENCos' work/life balance at times. Enactment differed depending on the ethos, values, and beliefs of individual settings, and one participant was seeking clarification of her role at performance management. Differences between the age-phases include the lower status of SENCos working in early years and the extra layer of support provided by Area SENCos for this educational stage. Primary participants, in contrast, highlighted their

need for a consistent accessible source of advice, information and support, and that SLT membership affected how the role was implemented since their status and leadership position influenced what and how they contributed to teamwork, both inside and outside their setting.

Responsibilities

Institutional responsibilities identified from both age-phases were related to the provision of support, information, and processes, whereas the key responsibility for EHCPs of SENCos in their organisation was to collate evidence and 'pull things together' for an application. This required good process knowledge about the application procedure itself so that an organisation's systems could be managed and modified to make evidence collection routine. SENCos were therefore working with their settings to establish baselines and levels, identify targets with starting dates, and detail and track desirable outcomes, progress and interventions. Good knowledge of SEND manifestations and approaches as well as good developmental knowledge allowed them to identify difficulties and to train and support staff within their organisations. However, the participant's felt this was not always robustly held. At the individual level, SENCos felt their prime responsibility was to support children to ensure their education experience was as positive as it could be. This included ensuring children under their care were happy and fulfilling their potential, and confidence and better outcomes for the whole family were part of this. These were enhanced by the timely identification of SEND and personal knowledge of the child. However, although the increased sharing of accountability (with other setting staff and professionals) was welcomed, SENCos held a considerable responsibility for identifying and addressing SEND since potentially they could be the first person to introduce the idea of SEND to a family. Some consequently felt that the expectations placed on SENCos by the SEND Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015), were unrealistic.

Relationships

At the institutional level, SENCos identified their key relationships with support services, including EHCP caseworkers and professionals. These were perceived as being more effective when these personnel had actual contact and knowledge of individual SENCos, and of their setting and staff, though re-organisation and staff-turnover was felt to have negatively impacted these. Furthermore, a high turnover of caseworkers, cutbacks to services, and the privatisation of support services previously provided by the Local Authority was felt to have contributed to the difficult initial introduction of EHCPs. This was because these changes had reduced the availability of Area SENCos and other educational services such as Portage and educational psychology, and disrupted existing relationships, meaning that new relationships needed to be formed against a background of changing service availability. This was also perceived to have had an impact on how these other services and professionals shared information and listened to settings and their SENCos.

At the organisational level, good working relationships with professionals, setting staff, parents, and families and with the children themselves were perceived to underlie joined-up provision for children. This involved working together to collect and share evidence and information and ensuring approaches were consistent, for example, to behaviour, interventions, and advice. The support of other staff was valued, and participants recognised that building up processes and understanding within their setting contributed to this. They also valued relationships with other SENCoS, Accessed: through cluster groups (early years), with peers on the National Award (NASENCo) and through teacher alliances (primary phase). Relationships with parents and families were also important, as these formed the foundation on which the possibility of additional needs was introduced. Furthermore, time and contact with, and knowledge of families contributed to holistic, individually-tailored provision, and participants valued being able to support children and their families, recognising the positive impact this could have on functioning as well as on child and family relations.

8.1.2 Research Question Two – What do SENCoS perceive to be the key positive and/or negative influences on the implementation of this policy?

This research question aimed to identify the positive and negative influences on EHCP implementation. The response is summarised here by level (institutional, organisational and individual).

Positive Influences

At the institutional level, early years SENCoS appreciated the support of Area SENCoS and Early Support Tracking Documents (2016). Participants from both age-phases identified several things organisations contribute to positive outcomes. These were:

- an ethos that supported and provisioned their work;
- embedded systematic tracking procedures used to identify progress, support needs and appropriate targets;
- the implementation of professional advice to help children make proper progress; and
- considering children individually so that provision was personalised and adaptable.

Holding a holistic view of the child was important, and participants felt that outcomes could be better achieved when the team worked together to achieve the same targets. This meant sometimes one target could be prioritised over another, a decision informed by their knowledge of individual children and their circumstances. To this end, good relationships with professionals, setting staff, children and families, as well as with SENCo peers were important.

At the individual level, the child was the most important consideration. Participants described being passionate and committed to helping and supporting children, and that their purpose as SENCOs was to ensure positive educational experiences and outcomes for them. Attributes connected with effective practice were discovered, including being understanding and supportive, having empathy, and being conscientious and caring, and it was felt SENCOs might strive to work above minimum requirements of the role since they viewed it more as a vocation and not just a job. Finally, participants recognised knowledge enabled them to '*do the best*' and that this included process knowledge, developmental knowledge, knowledge of SEND, and knowledge of individual children.

Negative Influences

Negative issues at an institutional level related to resources. Difficulties accessing local area support services and professionals were experienced by the SENCOs, and they felt these institutions did not always listen and that the answers and information provided by them could be incomplete or inconsistent. Changes in caseworkers and privatisation of support services had exacerbated this situation, and participants considered that there was little appreciation at the institutional level of the effect delays and confusion could have on the children and young people (CYP) with SEND and their families. Difficulties accessing training were related at the institutional level to reduced availability and increased cost, while at organisational level, this was felt to be impacted by budgets and staffing.

Participants had also experienced difficulties accessing other services and professions, due, it was felt, to resource issues affecting the staffing and workloads within these. The agreements and contracts settings held with these organisations also affected access, with settings that were not in a position to fund additional input finding it harder to secure assessments and support. Participants also felt that the amount of contact time available to these services meant that their assessments and support could be incomplete. Furthermore, if professional advice was delivered without explanation, its impact and implementation could be limited.

Participants reported having to spend time applying for and securing emergency funding, since high needs funding moved to be locally distributed. This added to the conflict they experienced between the need to spend more time on paperwork and the value they placed on time spent with children. Indeed, the SENCOs felt the time they had was limited, and that this had impacted on the relationships and personal knowledge they have of children and their families. Limited time was also felt to affect the quality of evidence, and was a factor in workload and paperwork volume management.

Several challenges emerged at the individual level. Participants were sometimes personally affected by individual cases, and they recognised that the role can be intense and emotionally draining. In contrast with this, they felt that being less involved or more detached may mean they have less

knowledge about individual children, which could potentially lead to applications which just fulfil the requirements, or were more ruthless or less honest, being more about financial benefit to the school, rather than having the child's interests at the centre. They recognised that the effectiveness of paperwork, and so applications, was influenced by the knowledge they have of systems as well as by the information they receive, though they felt the latter was inconsistent. Indeed, difficulties communicating and liaising with services and professionals was reported, and was perceived to have affected the confidence of some SENCOs. Finally, although some participants recognised that excess pressure and stress might dampen their passion and commitment, they ranked their workload and work-life balance as being of least importance.

8.1.3 Research Question Three – How, if at all, do these influences contribute to their developing professional identity as SENCOs?

The final research question explored whether SENCOs perceived changes in their identity as a result of EHCP implementation, and if so, what these were. Section 7.1 presented the integrated results and findings. These are summarised below:

Collective Identity

SENCOs recognised the value of positive relationships and identified attributes desirable for effective multi-professional working. Whilst they valued information from a range of personnel, since this informed assessment and provision that considered the child holistically, and appreciated the increased sharing of accountability with their settings, applying for and co-ordinating EHCPs remained their responsibility. This was recognised, though participants identified a need for support and consistent answers. Area SENCOs supplied this in early years, where status could be an issue, though this service had been reduced, whereas SENCOs in the primary phase reported difficulties accessing support and consistent answers. All SENCOs showed pragmatism in the face of these challenges, in that they sought to build up their networks and connections since these provided a source of support and information. Finally, participants were aware of the need to recognise, work with, and develop the ethos of their settings.

Professional Identity

The practice of these SENCOs was child-centred, and they sometimes placed the wellbeing of the children and families they worked with above their own. They were committed to the role, with their sense of purpose being a motivator. With regard to EHCPs, they considered that their role was to collate robust evidence, help children make appropriate progress, hold individual knowledge of children, and give caring support. This was enabled by contact, which helped build up positive relationships, and enhanced communication and liaison opportunities and effectiveness. It was also

enabled by knowledge and skills, including of holistic assessment, developmental norms, SEND, communication and liaison, and processes and systems, which they also used to train and upskill setting staff. This was important since the ethos and priorities of settings influenced the support available to SENCos, including the time, status and physical resources conferred to the role.

Personal Identity

Positive changes included increased assertiveness, a sense of achievement when EHCP applications were successful, and improved knowledge and confidence which had enhanced the esteem SENCos were held in by others. Negative changes included being personally affected by individual cases, including experiencing stress and emotions as part of the role, since they can be caught between children and their families, and processes and structures, though participants perceived that caring, involved practice, as opposed to less concerned practice, marked the difference between the role being viewed as a vocation rather than simply a position. Some had experienced conflict between their own values and that of their setting, and some described feeling vulnerable at times or had doubted themselves. This balance between emotional dissonance, which can lead to burnout, and emotional effort which mitigates this (Kruml and Geddes, 2000), is therefore an important issue to consider when contemplating SENCo identity and work.

Real and ideal Identity

Consideration of real and ideal identity provided evidence of 'an existing paradox between perceptions of ideology and perceptions of practice implementation' (Palikara *et al.*, 2018, p.92) in that there were differences between SENCos' experience of EHCP implementation and how they perceived they could or should be providing SEND support. Whilst SENCos' perceptions of their own practice were personal judgements, there was clear evidence that participants were striving to identify and provide for additional needs within contexts containing constraints, and that the implementation of EHCPs, as envisioned in the SEND Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) was not being fully realised on the ground.

SENCos predicted that co-ordinating EHC plans would provide a challenge and require knowledge and skills outside of their current remit (Pearson *et al.*, 2015), with the need to explore whether these predictions hold true identified by Boesley and Crane (2018). This study constitutes such an exploration, and makes three main contributions to the field.

8.2 Unique Contribution to Knowledge

This section summarises this study's three main contributions to knowledge.

8.2.1 Knowledge about SENCo work in early years

The first original contribution is the consideration of SENCos functioning in private, voluntary and independent (PVI) early years settings. Whilst the role and qualification specification in this age-phase has recently been described (DfE and NASEN, 2018a, 2018b), research about SENCo practice predominantly focusses on SENCos who work in school settings. Indeed, the differences in qualification and training between these age-phases are well documented, but by investigating SENCos working in both early years and the primary phase of education, this study also revealed differences in their focus and concerns with relation to their work for CYP with SEND. For example, participants working in early years identified the need for good developmental knowledge, the need to establish good relationships with children and families, the responsibility of introducing the possibility of SEND to parents and carers, the challenges involved with obtaining parental permission, their perceptions about their status, and the contribution of Area SENCos. Participants working in the primary phase, in contrast, highlighted differences created by academisation, especially access to support and advice and increased autonomy, the value placed on the additional training provided by the NASENCo award, the position and time given to the role by their setting, the need for process knowledge and for robust evidence, and variations between caseworkers.

8.2.2 SENCo Identity

The second unique contribution to knowledge is detail about SENCo identity. Whilst there is a considerable body of knowledge about teacher identity, including the recognition that clear ideas about role contribute to effective joint working (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2007; Anning et al., 2010), there is a much smaller body of knowledge about SENCo identity. This study revealed SENCo perceptions of the attributes they consider important for joint working, of their particular responsibility for project managing EHCP applications, of what and how they contribute to EHCPs, and about how their new responsibilities and challenges have affected them personally. It therefore adds to the body of knowledge concerned with SENCo professionalisation and professionalism. Furthermore, if identities are the bridge between agency and structure (Holland et al., 1998), and if changes in identity impact on motivation, purpose, and morale (Ketelaar et al., 2012; Bukor, 2015), the knowledge of SENCo identity revealed in this study has the potential to contribute to practice developments and to influence the higher level (exo and macro) systems.

8.2.3 Macro and Micro Influences on Practice

The third original contribution is the identification of the influences on EHCP implementation at macro through to micro levels. Whilst Bronfenbrenner's understanding of bi-directionality has been critiqued as being naïve (McDowell Clark, 2016), others, such as Eteläpelto et al. (2017), suggest that a 'subject-centred sociocultural approach' (p.663), informed by knowledge of the enablers and constrictions, enables change by providing the information policy implementers need to evaluate present practice and to imagine future, alternative possibilities (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998; Priestley et al., 2012; Priestley et al., 2015). Consequently, there is potential for SENCos to exercise agency, on behalf of CYP with SEND, even when constraints exist. By revealing detail about institutional resources, organisational cultures, SENCo identity and values and beliefs, along with the key role of relationships and knowledge and skills to the quality of evidence and outcomes, the study provides evidence that could be used to improve EHCP implementation and empower SENCos.

8.3 Conceptualisation

The study took place amidst a context of competing policy agendas and pressures, and revealed both intended and unintended consequences and changes (Priestley et al., 2012). These were presented in Chapter 7, identifying the influences that SENCo participants perceived contribute to the actual, as opposed to ideal (intended) implementation of EHCPs. Micro-level influences included child-centred practice, which emerged as central to SENCo identity so cohering with previous research foregrounding the values of citizenship and social justice (Osler and Starkey, 2005; Liasidou, 2011; Liasidou and Svensson, 2014; Palikara et al., 2018). Macro-level aspects, which affect how SENCos implement EHC plans within their existing structures, and sometimes limitations, were also revealed. Subsequently, the meso-level or interactions between micro and macro level influences were considered so as to reveal potential mechanisms of change. Indeed, whilst transpersonal contexts can both constrain and enable practice, such contexts do not, of themselves, serve as the point of origin of agentic possibilities (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998).

Instead, agentic possibilities reside at the level of self, or micro-level. However, although it has been suggested that SENCos, in their role of SEND Code of Practice enactors (DfE and DoH, 2015), are mid-level policy enactors (Singh et al., 2014) caught between the hegemonic discourses of ableism and disablism (Vandenbussche and De Schauwer, 2018), SENCos cannot individually act as change agents (Van de Putte et al., 2017). This means that they must work to develop the communities that they work within, which this research suggests must involve the ethos and priorities of their settings. I therefore argue, in line with Kohli (1986), that the 'individual life-course has to be conceptualised not as behavioural outcome of macro-social organisations (or of its interactions with psychological

properties of the individual) but as a result of the subject's constructive activity in dealing with the available life course programs' (p.272). In this conceptualisation, SENCOs are part of an 'intra-active entanglement of multiple agencies' (Van de Putte et al., 2017, p.885). Therefore, whilst it is important to recognise and understand how macro-system elements such as power, politics, and resources set limits on action (Ghaye et al., 2008; Timberlake, 2018), identifying micro and meso-system influences furthers our understanding of aspects that have the potential to influence and change the systems within which SENCOs are operating.

Policy enactment therefore involves interactions between policy, practice and individuals (Ball et al., 2012). Whilst local area SEND inspections have resulted in almost 50 percent being required to produce a written statement of action (Keer, 2019), their principal focus is at the institutional level (Ofsted and CQC, 2016). Similarly, Ofsted inspections focus on organisations (Ofsted, 2019). However, every level of policy implementation contains the potential for agency, be that manifest as discretion, resistance, or empowerment. Indeed, Duberley et al. (2006) suggest that there is an under-examined, under-theorised nexus between individual and collective level analyses, and Hotho (2008) proposes that there is a dynamic relationship between social and psychological reality. Therefore, although set in a neoliberal context of increased marketisation and personal interest, where governmental imperatives encourage 'work on oneself' ... 'so as to produce [...] efficient and adaptable subject[s]' (Rabinow, 1996, p.242), it is proposed that the agency possible here is more like 'biosociality' (ibid.) in that it is entwined with identity and concerned with engagement, participation and active citizenship. Indeed, this study reveals that SENCO agency is interlinked with the identity and purpose of SENCOs in that it involves their values and beliefs, including their 'ubuntu', or humanity towards others (Whitehead and Huxtable, 2016). It is therefore primarily concerned with social justice, though it operates in, and recognises the forces of neoliberalism.

Recognition of environmental forces increases reflexivity. The identification of contributing factors enables different combinations, priorities, and approaches to be considered. Indeed, actors have the capacity to 'critically shape their responses to problematic situations' (Biesta and Tedder, 2007, p.11), and Freire (1973) considered that agents are empowered to the action that will create change and betterment when issues are problematised. Giroux (2004) describes this as the 'politics of hope' (p.125), where politics, pedagogy, values, and ethics are merged to create social agents who believe that such work is 'worth taking up' (p.131). Knowledge of identity construction is central to this, since it bridges agency and structure (Holland et al., 1998), by contributing to dialogic reflexivity (Archer, 2000, 2003, 2012; Willis et al., 2017). Indeed, Giroux (2004) explains that 'any politics of hope must tap into individual experiences while at the same time linking individual responsibility with a

progressive sense of social agency' (p.137), and these areas can be accessed by the SENCo's perceptions of their personal, professional and collective identities.

This study revealed that whilst institutional level resource issues affect the quality of evidence produced for EHCP applications, the ethos of organisations can have an ameliorating effect. This includes the priorities and understandings of organisations, which can be modified and developed by knowledge and skills, and by relationships, with all of these influences affecting EHCP outcomes. Figure 38 illustrates the implications of interactions with good knowledge and skills and good relationships for SENCo enactment of EHCPs:

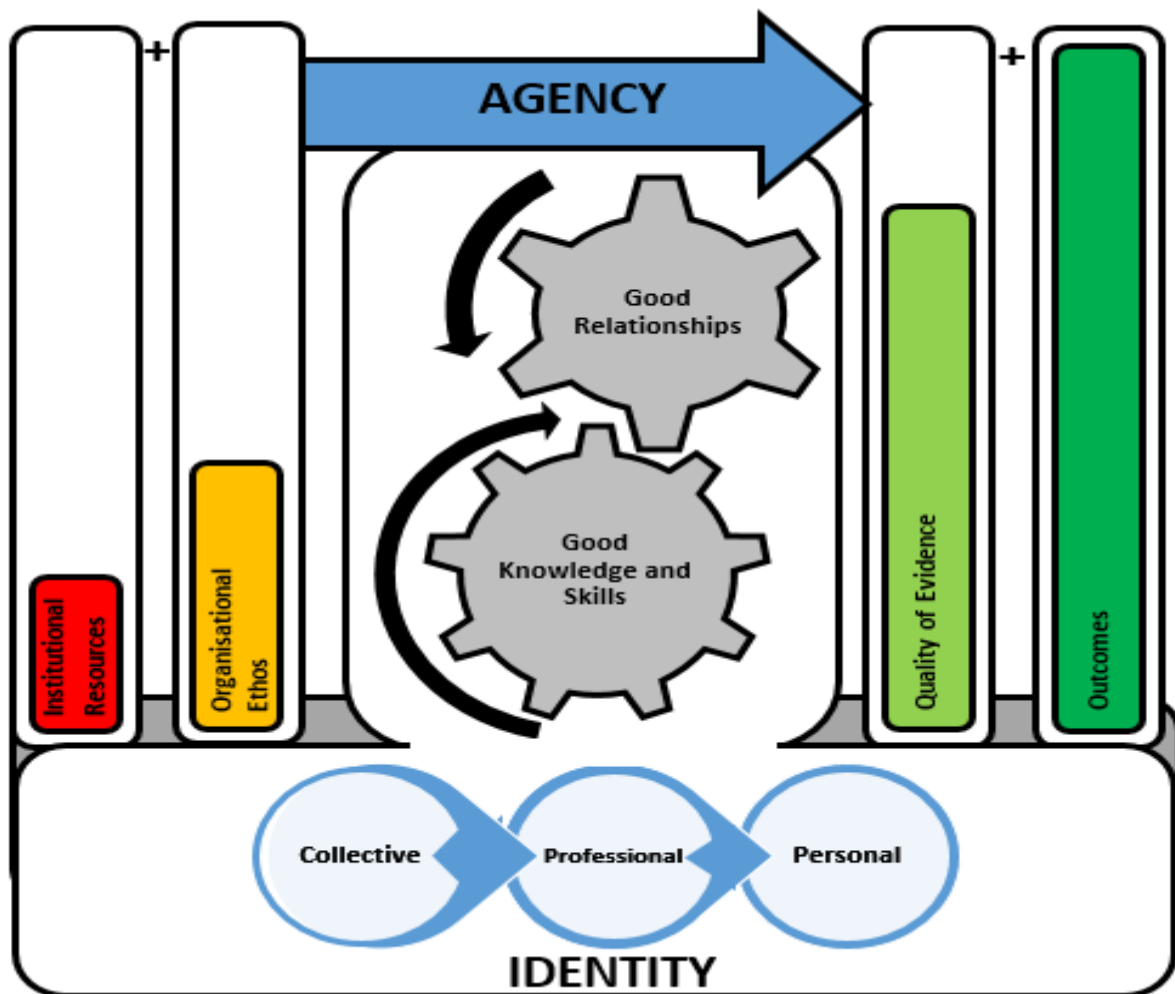


Figure 378 - Contribution of identity to EHCP implementation influences (where knowledge and skills and relationships are both good).

Figure 38 shows identity (which encompasses collective, professional and personal facets) as the base on which SENCo agency rests. Quality of evidence and outcomes of EHCPs (depicted in the two columns to the right of agency) can be both raised or lowered by the availability, or otherwise of institutional resources, and by a supportive, or otherwise, organisational ethos (both depicted in the

two columns to the left of agency). SENCos' power or agency is most active when they work with other agents to 'reshape or retain' practice (Pantic, 2015, p.769). Indeed, intersections and interpersonal interactions and relationships are key for teachers' collaboration and for acting with other agents (ibid) which means that the collective, professional and personal identity of SENCos contribute to systemic change, since it is through individuals that organisations act (Archer, 2000; Priestley et al., 2012). It is therefore proposed that knowledge and skills, including of process, of developmental norms of SEND, of individual children and of communication and liaison can raise or lower the quality of evidence and outcomes (see the cog in the centre of the diagram). These can also be raised or lowered by the presence and strength of the relationships (see the cog in the centre of the diagram) and networks SENCos hold with key groups of people, including professionals and caseworkers, setting staff, families, CYP, and with their SENCo peers and support network. Indeed, learning must involve a transformation of the practices of the whole group, and 'cannot be reduced to an analysis of what any one participant in the group does or knows' (Sawyer, 2002, p.284). However, interactions with poor knowledge and skills and poor relationships for SENCo enactment of EHCPs are also possible and would look more like Figure 39:

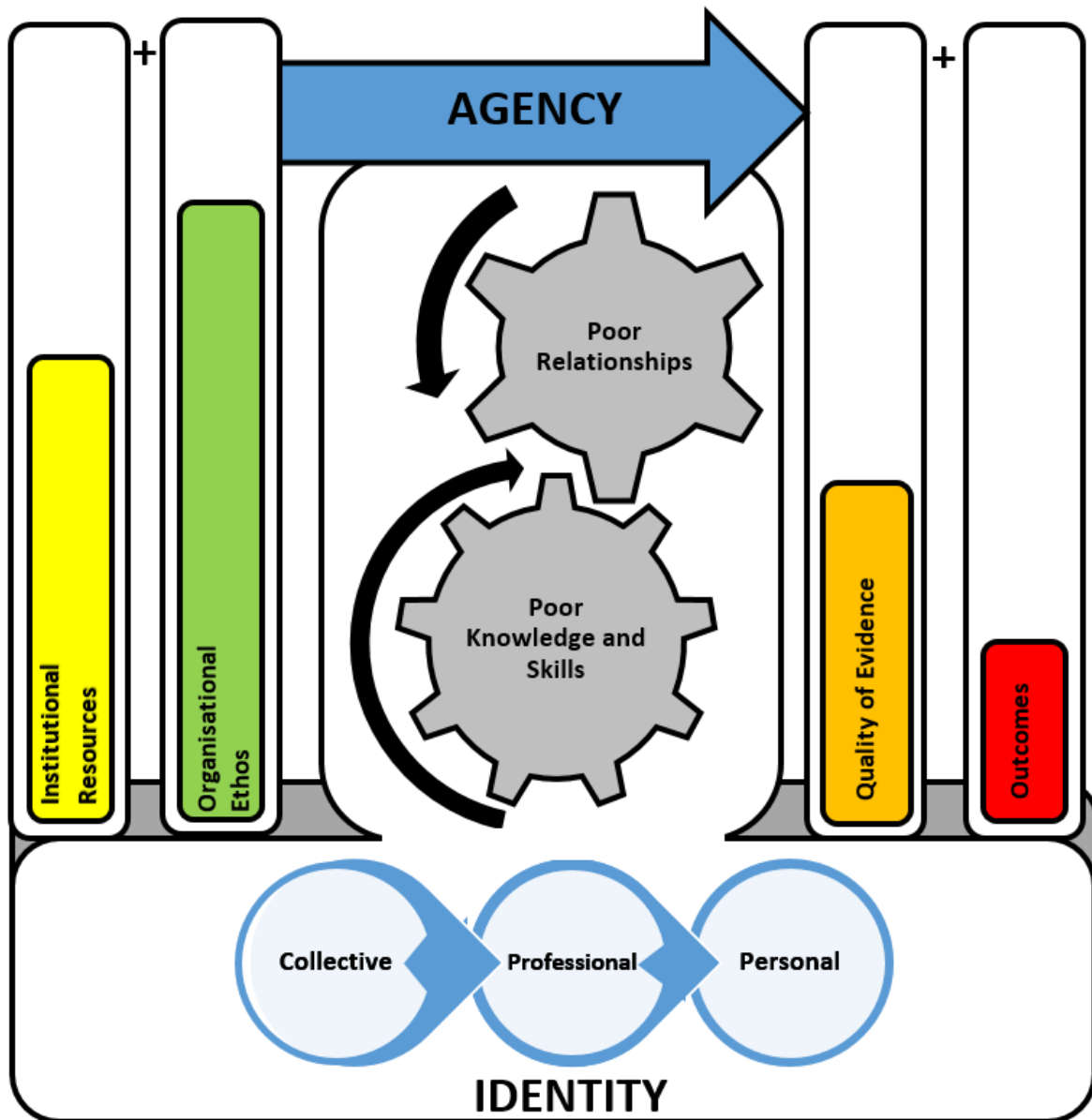


Figure 389 - Contribution of identity to EHCP implementation influences (where knowledge and skills and relationships are both poor).

Figure 39 shows better institutional resources and organisational ethos (two left-hand columns). However, in contrast to Figure 38, poor knowledge and skills and poor relationships mean that the quality of evidence and outcomes (two right-hand columns) are reduced. Different combinations of knowledge and skills are possible, for example, good relationships and poor knowledge and skills or good knowledge and skills and poor relationships. Recommendations that arise from these findings and model, which could enable the practice of SENCOs, are presented in the next section.

8.4 Recommendations and Implications

The issues present in the research problem response, study evaluation and conceptualisation are applied in this section to make recommendations for the enablement of SENCo practice.

8.4.1 Purpose

The child-centred practice and purpose of the SENCo role revealed in this study coheres with research identifying that staff involved with SEND are often driven by altruism and moral capital (Lloyd and Hallet, 2010; Phillips and Dalgarno, 2017; Fray and Gore, 2018; Frost et al., 2018). However, although participants recognised that EHCPs were their main means of securing additional resources and provision for CYP with SEND, achieving an EHCP involved relentless paperwork, interpreted by caseworkers, which meant that detail was sometimes lost or misrepresented, and time that could be directed towards child-centred activity was taken up by administrative procedures. This finding coheres with critics of the previous statutory assessment process (Lamb, 2009; Warnock et al., 2010; Norwich, 2014). Indeed, issues such as cut-off points (House of Commons Education Committee, 2019) mean EHCPs have, in fact, accentuated the dichotomy between CYP with and CYP without SEND (Warnock, 1978) rather than becoming a continuum (Lindsay, 2018), and have complicated resources issues by diverting much professional time and energy away from front-line practice. Furthermore, although it has been suggested that exclusionary possibilities can be neutralised by normalising SEND practice (Vincent, 2018), this will require adjustments to attitudes and understandings of the function of education, including to the concepts of support, employment and independence, to avoid provision that is marked by false promises and 'hidden (Hodkinson and Burch, 2017, p. 162; Robinson et al., 2018).

EHCPs are, however, incremental rather than disruptive (Christensen, 1997; Christensen et al., 2008), and a professional context that foregrounds values needs critical and ethical forms of thinking to be fostered (Allan, 2007; Goodley, 2007; Lingard and Mills, 2007; Liasidou and Svensson, 2014). This is a central challenge for SENCos because of the hiatus that exists between policy discourse and service provision (Palikara et al., 2018), and because of how SENCos are positioned, as actors, within this context (Freire, 1973; Horton and Freire, 1990; Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2010). However, it is also an opportunity that coheres with widening perspectives of inclusion (Castro et al., 2019). Indeed, it has been recognised that training and culture changes are required (House of Commons Education Committee, 2018c), with Smith and Broomhead (2019) stating that 'a whole school approach to and ethos regarding the understanding and prioritisation of inclusion, is imperative' (p.67). This requires a morally rather than economically informed response. It is suggested that the knowledge of professional and collective identity revealed in this study makes a contribution to this by enabling us

to understand something of the purpose, or perceptions of inward and outward justice (Korsgaard, 2008, 2009). SENCOs should be empowered by this knowledge, and use these findings, along with the emerging context in their advocacy of the CYP and families in their care.

8.4.2 Information and Support Resource

The need for consistent, accessible information and support for SENCOs is clear.

In early years, the Area SENCO service, though highly valued, has been reduced. The literature, and the results of this study, all show that SENCOs working in private, voluntary and independent settings (PVI) in this age-phase have different qualification and knowledge levels (DCSF, 2008; DfE and DoH, 2015; DfE and NASEN, 2018a; 2018b), along with variable experience (Smith et al., 2015) and access to further training (MacFarlane et al., 2016). Indeed, many settings are relying on experienced SENCOs who have an existing knowledge bank built up in less-austere times (McDonnell et al., 1997; Clough and Nutbrown, 2004; Cooksey and McDonald, 2011; Smith et al., 2015; Lamb and Blandford, 2017). Their status, and so regard for their contributions to multi-professional working, can also vary (Hargreaves and Hopper, 2006). These issues have significant implications for reliable early identification and interventions for children with SEND. Although it is noted that the oversight of Area SENCOs and detailed Early Support Tracking Documents (2016) are providing an important level of continuity in this context, it is also noted that the Area SENCO role is crucial in a context marked by considerable variation. It is therefore recommended that this role, which supports and strengthens the practice of SENCOs working in early education and care, should be continued and strengthened.

The primary phase is marked by different issues. Here, levels of training were more consistent (TDA, 2008, 2009; DCSF, 2009b), though not every SENCO participant had completed the NASENCO Award. Experience was also variable. However, primary SENCOs did not benefit from the oversight of Area SENCOs and found it hard to access consistent, accessible information and support. It is therefore recommended that primary SENCOs would benefit from a service similar to that provided by Area SENCO's, and that any information and advice portals need to be more accessible and 'user-friendly', with one suggestion being a central hub staffed by a rota by experienced SENCO colleagues.

8.4.3 Professional Development

The need for several types of knowledge and skill is also clear.

Whilst this coheres with the shift in focus of EHCP implementation from administration towards training and culture changes (House of Commons Education Committee, 2018c), this is complicated by the existence of different training routes, especially in early years, meaning that knowledge bases vary. Also, access to training and development is challenged by funding issues, including the cost of

courses and of releasing staff, and by the availability and accessibility of appropriate courses. Furthermore, whilst Lamb and Blandford (2017) identified the need for a more formal early years SEND training and knowledge pathway, this study revealed specific areas of knowledge and skill that are required and that many SENCOs are pragmatically addressing the challenges of training by using online sources. They were also building up and using professional and peer networks to compensate and supplement the difficulties accessing consistent information. This is interesting and in-line with adult learning theory which recognises the value of communities of learning (Lindeman, 1926, 1945; Knowles, 1970). These two approaches should be combined to ensure quality learning opportunities that are accessible and meet the needs of SENCOs are developed.

The value of critically questioning the notions that underlie our knowledge in order to change our beliefs and perspectives (Taylor, 2008; Howie and Bagnall, 2013) is recognised by transformative learning (Mezirow and Marsick, 1978), which combines instrumental and communicative learning (Habermas, 1972; 1984). The need to change the 'landscape' of beliefs and values was recognised by Griffiths and Dubsky (2012, p.164) when they evaluated SENCO training. This is because the effective application of changed meaning schemas depends on interactions within specific ecological systems (Pearson and Gathercole, 2011), where attitudinal and contextual factors significantly impact on practice (Coldwell and Simkins, 2011; Griffiths and Dubsky, 2012). Pragmatism also involves transactions between individuals and their environments (Dewey and Bentley, 1949) and considers emotion, knowledge, and ethics in order to equip learners to respond to new, uncertain or complex situations. This approach is well-suited to practice-based learning (Elkjaer, 2009; Passy et al., 2017) which is integral to Early Years Professional Practitioner training (Lloyd and Hallet, 2010a) and so is appropriate for early years SENCO training (Lamb and Blandford, 2017) and apprenticeship routes (Aubrey and Riley, 2016; Exley, 2017). Reflective learning considers experience to be important since it provides material for the knowledge building process (Kolb, 1984). It does this through 'reflection-in-action' (Schön, 1983. p.49), where practitioners reflect on their own learning and work to identify how best to improve and develop. Whilst this aligns with situated learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991), to be effective, changes to the discourses in which practices are constructed and to the social relationships which constitute practice are also required (Kemmis, 2005; Ghaye et al., 2008). This is relevant to the implementation of EHCPs. Indeed, Passy et al., (2017) identified a strength of the NASENCO training related to 'outward-facing elements' (p.94), suggesting that 'a professional enquiry approach that encourages regular reflection on the effectiveness of SEND provision in school' (p.96) is needed. Such an approach contributes to the care of self and others (Foucault, 2010) and to re-framing, which changes who we are, and so how we do things (Ballou et al., 1999; Chreim et al., 2007; Machin et al., 2011; Woolhouse, 2015).

SENCOs and their settings should therefore be learning and changing together. Furthermore, most of the knowledge and skills identified as important for the role do not need to be limited to SENCO 'experts'. Indeed, there is a need to demystify SEND assessment and pedagogy. This study demonstrates this could be accomplished through robustly held knowledge of development, of individual children and their circumstances, and by good communication and liaison skills. Such knowledge and skills should therefore be central to the practice of all setting staff, since if developmental knowledge acted as the hub, strategies could be mapped to this and knowledge of individual children's profiles and circumstances would identify which processes were needed and when. In this way, SENCOs would become overseers of learning and progress.

8.4.4 Relationships

It is also recommended that the five relationships that influence SENCO experience of EHCP implementation (see section 7.3) are recognised and strengthened since far from being just a part of implementation, these are central to person-centred, multi-professional care. Indeed, if, as the conceptual model suggests, this is a core area that SENCOs and their settings can foreground, the value of these should be given higher recognition, even in a situation in which cutbacks, staff changes, limited time and timetable demands impact on these relationships. This is because these can be used to cultivate and implement solutions locally (Engeström and Kerosuo, 2007; Engeström et al., 2014), thus contributing to communities of practice. In fact, knowledge of identities underlie Wenger's (1999) indicators of joint enterprise, mutual engagement and shared repertoires, including identity definitions and shared discourses that reflect certain perspectives on the world. This recommendation coheres with theorists who identify the need to engage with others and critically consider different options before acting (Dewey, 1922; Biesta and Burbules, 2003) since individual contributions are, or themselves, incomplete (Bakhtin, 1993). SENCOs therefore cannot act as change agents unless they also act as community builders (Moate and Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2014). Instead of being viewed as a specialist, the SENCO would become a community-builder who recognises their responsibilities whilst working with others to develop the social agency of their setting (Giroux, 2004). Indeed, Moate and Ruohotie-Lyhty (2014) suggest this should involve re-orientation, supported identity work, reflection, sharing and theories, so this aligns well with the other recommendations.

8.4.5 Summary and Implications

In summary, the practice of SENCOs in the participant group could be enabled by:

- being cognisant of the importance of purpose, including the current recognition of the need for culture changes, and using this knowledge as they train their settings;

- the availability of consistent, accessible information and support for SENCos (Area SENCos and/ or staffed information hub);
- training that equips all practitioners with robust knowledge of development, of individual children and their specific circumstances, and with communication and liaison skills;
- continuing professional development opportunities that combine accessible, online, flexible learning with peer support through communities for learning; and
- recognising the valuable contribution of the different relationships to effective implementation and the benefits of building these up.

Whilst some of these are within the control of the SENCos (purpose, knowledge, communication and liaison skills, relationships), others have implications for the systems surrounding the SENCos (culture changes, information and support, training, CPD). These recommendations therefore also have general implications for the SENCo professional community. First, as Norwich (2014) highlighted, they must recognise that provision for CYP with SEND is inter-dependent on the whole system. This must include understandings of citizenship and belonging (Kunc, 1992; Kliewer and Drake, 1998; Ostler and Starkey, 2005; Bossaert et al. 2013), egalitarian views on inclusion and diversity (Hakala, 2010; Allan, 2013; Walton, 2016), and viewing the purpose of education as encompassing these rather than being restricted to a more narrow set of educational and economic goals. Next, equity of educational opportunities for CYP with SEND has become more of an issue in the current context, where settings and manifestations of the SENCo role are marked by variations in priority, training and experience (Pearson and Ralph, 2007; MacKenzie, 2007, 2013; Hallett and Hallett, 2010, Curran et al., 2017). Such variations, and the identified underperformance of the SEND system, mean that strategic developments are needed (Layton, 2005; MacKenzie, 2007, 2013; Burton and Goodman, 2011; Tissot, 2013; Qureshi, 2015a). These include ensuring information and support is available to SENCos as they carry out their role, re-consideration of the plethora of early years training routes (DfE, 2014c) and core content of initial training courses to ensure knowledge and skills baselines are in place (McDonnell et al., 1997; Clough and Nutbrown, 2004; Cooksey and McDonald, 2011; Smith et al., 2015), and ensuring CPD packages are viable for the working professional community (*Nutbrown Review*, 2012; Lamb and Blandford, 2017; DfE, 2018b). Finally, the SENCo professional community must recognise and value the unique opportunities their work provides for relationship building and liaison, and the contribution this makes to person-centred-care (Robinson et al., 2018; Sales and Vincent, 2018). This is especially important and challenging since the contexts SENCos operate in are beset by time constraints and communication issues, which can limit effective EHCP implementation (Griggs and Bussard, 2017), person-centred approaches and team working (Scott, 2016; Adams et al.,

2017; Palikara et al., 2018). Thus, some recommendations can be acted on by individual SENCOs in their immediate settings whilst others have implications for the wider context.

8.5 Future Directions and Dissemination

This study identifies some very important areas worthy of significant consideration. Although deeper consideration of issues such as time allocations and career phase would have added further different dimensions, this was beyond the scope of this small-scale study. In line with this it is recognised that future exploration of this area could reveal additional aspects relevant for SENCO practice and potential. What is possible in the short term is dissemination through presentations and publications. Abstracts have been accepted to present at conference (at the European Conference of Educational Research (ECER) and at the European Early Childhood Education Research Association (EECERA) conference). It is also proposed to submit articles for publication to peer-reviewed journals, following submission of this thesis. It is hoped this research will impact on SENCO practice and potential in that SENCOs themselves, as well as the organisations and institutions they are involved with, can use the information about the strengths and challenges of current enactment to build and develop provision for CYP with complex SEND. Initial findings have been shared with study participants at a dissemination event, and with SENCOs attending a NASENCO course at the University of Worcester. Findings and implications for practice are incorporated in my teaching and it is hoped that discussions can take place with stakeholders so these can be considered in future service delivery and in training programs, for example:

- sharing these findings with the NASENCO course leader at the University;
- discussing the potential to develop training for SENCOs working in early years;
- strengthening components of current courses, including of developmental norms and of the importance of relationships and communication and liaison skills; and
- discussing findings with key professionals.

8.6 Evaluation

In this section, I consider the insights I have gained as a researcher and critique the study by identifying its strengths and limitations.

8.6.1 Reflections of the process

I commenced doctoral study following 23 years of NHS work and the initial stages, during which I explored my ontological, epistemological and philosophical approach to the research, involved a significant liminal stage during which I discovered new philosophies and crossed many learning thresholds (Meyer and Land, 2005; Kiley, 2009; Kiley and Wisker, 2009). Central to this was the process

of examining and defining my worldview, including interrogating my values and beliefs and exploring theory to develop my understanding and thinking. The work of Adams and Buetow, (2014) and Leshem and Trafford (2007) were of particular help during this period.

The doctoral process has not been linear for me. Sometimes I made considerable progress and gained significant insight, whilst other times were more stagnant and required 'working through'. One such period involved the data reduction and integration process, in which the 'recomposing' (Erickson, 1992, p.217) of the findings and results into a 'relational order' (Maxwell and Miller, 2008. p.468), was an evolving, iterative, and sometimes difficult process. Indeed, the study participants themselves were a source of motivation at this stage, as I wanted their stories to be told.

I value the insight, and perspectives of others and felt privileged to listen to the experiences of participants. Whilst I acknowledge completely the influence my presence had on this research (see section 4.1.3), I posit that the research is valid and trustworthy because of the quality and transparency of data collection and analysis (Wertz et al., 2011), and because of fidelity to the 'things themselves' (Morley, 2012, p.139). I argue that the use of quantitative methods along with qualitative methods ensured that 'what is there' (Crotty, 2015, p.64) was captured with strength and rigour (Denzin, 1978), and that this combination ensured the robustness of the findings and results.

8.6.2 Strengths of the study

There are three strengths to the study:

1. In preparation for the next Research Excellence Framework in 2021 (REF, 2021), the British Educational Research Council (BERA) set up a working group to provide guidance on the nature of quality in educational research (Wise *et al.*, 2018). This identified 'close-to-practice' research (Cooke, 2005) as an area of interest since it concentrates on issues identified by practitioners as relevant to their practice. Close-to-practice research involves collaboration between people whose main expertise is research, practice, or both (*ibid*) and reflects an international trend to promote better links between research and practice (Coldwell et al., 2017). As a result, BERA has identified that high quality in close-to-practice research is achieved by the robust use of theory, research design and methods 'to address clearly defined research questions'. Additionally, such research will involve 'an iterative process of research and application that includes 'reflections on practice, research, and context', 'by people whose main expertise is research, practice, or both' (all quotes, Wise *et al.*, 2018, p.34). It is argued that a strength of this research is that it achieves each of these conditions.
2. Whilst information about EHCP implementation is emerging, including from the House of Commons Education Committee (2018a; 2018c; 2019), the voice of parents (Sales and

Vincent, 2018b), consideration of wider SENCo experience and workload (Curran et al., 2017; Curran et al., 2018), and from EHCP outcomes (Castro et al., 2019), this study has uncovered specific detail. This includes SENCo perceptions of changes to the role and to their identity, of what and how they contribute to EHCP implementation, and about what contributes to effective practice. By applying a theoretical framework that considers both macro and micro level influences, and by exploring new dimensions of the research problem, new knowledge and conceptualisation have therefore been created (see Sections 8.2 and 8.3).

3. Onwuegbuzie et al, (2013) proposed that Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1982) is ideally suited to mixed-methods research, since such methodology allows examination of the same phenomenon at the same or different levels. Utilising this theory along with identity theory allowed SENCo perceptions of the micro-level influences that contribute to their role as EHCP policy implementers to be foregrounded (Singh, et al., 2014; Ball, 2015; Frost et al., 2018). Furthermore, this conceptual framework aligns well with the four-part narrative system suggested by Reighart and Loadman (1984, cited in Webster and Mertova, 2007, pp.85-86); that is, where scene, events, character and affect interweave to form the plot. It is therefore suggested that a strength of this study is its cohesive research design (Agee 2009; Leshem and Trafford 2007; Robson 2011).

8.6.3 Limitations of the study

There are five limitations to the study:

1. Recruitment of SENCo participants was one of the biggest challenges to this research, involving two months of consistent communication followed by a snowball sampling strategy. Whilst a larger sample group could have identified more detail about group priorities and sub-groups, and would have been more impartial in that additional participants would not have been involved with creating the original constructs within the grid (Zuber-Skerritt, 1991), it was decided not to actively recruit further participants. This was because obtaining a larger SENCo sample would have necessitated contacting SENCos with either limited EHCP experience (less than 3 EHCPs) or from a different County. Also, the response of management and head teachers as an alternative group was poor, so whilst these would potentially have given a different perspective, it was decided to limit the data to SENCo perceptions only, meaning that the group grid was ranked by 14 of the original SENCo participants only.
2. Another limitation was created by the high number of group grid constructs (21). These were retained to stay true to participant voice, but the high number of constructs and the small number of participants meant that many constructs were ranked somewhere in the middle,

so no clear ranking pattern emerged. A larger group of participants could have mitigated against this by allowing clear identification of the spread of rankings for more of the 21 constructs.

3. The timing of the study is also a limitation. March 2018 was the official deadline for the transferring of statements of special educational need (DfE, 1994; DfES, 2001) to EHCPs. This, along with new applications, was creating a considerable workload for SENCOs who had been identified by purposive sampling, as being involved with at least three EHCPs and who were also tasked with implementing key areas of the SEND Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015). This impacted on the collection of the group grid data, with SENCOs and their settings stating that this meant they did not have the capacity to participate in the research on either side of this deadline.
4. The reliability of coding is also recognised as a limitation. Content analysis or coding is dependent on how concept categories are determined and recognised, with the conclusions and transferability of findings resting on these categories. Despite defining, refining and discussing the codes with the coder used for inter-rater reliability checks, both inter- and intra-rater coding reliability scores show only intermediate agreement (see Table 1). This reflects the inferential and interpretive nature of coding. This was mitigated against by using mixed methods, including joint ideographic analysis and quantitative analysis of constructs to corroborate and expand content analysis codes and themes.
5. Finally, this small-scale study, conducted in one Local Authority, captured the EHCP implementation experience of SENCOs working in early childhood and primary education before the transfer deadline of March 2018. It is therefore not comprehensive, in that SENCOs working in Secondary or Further Education were not investigated, SENCO experience in the wider English context, or remaining 47 counties, were not part of the study, and further experience implementing EHCPs, accrued over time, was not collected. It may therefore be appropriate to secure funding to widen the scope of this research to investigate the research problem and findings more comprehensively.

8.7 Concluding Remarks

This study employed a mixed-methods research design to address clearly defined research questions in order to investigate changes to the role, responsibilities, working relationships and identity of the SENCO, resulting from the SEND Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015), as well as to identify the positive and negative influences on EHCP implementation. This thesis documented the process and the conclusions drawn from the investigation, which drew on SENCO participant perceptions of both

practice and context, including the strengths and weaknesses of the design, theory, and methods used. Like Kelly (1955), it takes the stand that:

'there are always some alternative constructions available to choose among in dealing with the world. No one needs to paint himself (sic) into a corner; no one needs to be completely hemmed in by circumstances; no one needs to be the victim of this biography' (p.15).

Such a construction is provided by a model which captures the key findings and illustrates the proposed solution. In conclusion, I am confident that this research contributes valuable knowledge about SENCos' perceptions of how EHCPs are being enacted, and it is both my purpose and hope that this study will further both theoretical and practical understanding of the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) role in providing effectively for children and young people with complex SEND.

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Appendix 1

Application for Ethical Approval



Application for Ethical Approval (PGR Student)

To be completed by staff and associate researchers proposing to undertake ANY research involving humans [that is research with living human beings; human beings who have died (cadavers, human remains and body parts); embryos and fetuses, human tissue, DNA and bodily fluids; data and records relating to humans; human burial sites] or animals.

Section A: Researcher and Project Details

PGR Student:	Hazel Richards
Director of Studies:	Richard Woolley
Email:	hazel.richards@worc.ac.uk
Institute/Department:	Education
Project Title:	SENCo perceptions of practice and potential: investigating Education and Health Care Plan implementation in early years and primary education
Is project externally funded or been submitted to an external funder?	No
Name of Funder:	
UW bid reference number:	

Section B: Checklist

	Yes	No
1. Does your proposed research involve the collection of data from living humans?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Does your proposed research require access to secondary data or documentary material of a sensitive or confidential nature from other organisations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3. Does your proposed research involve the use of data or documentary material which (a) is not anonymised and (b) is of a sensitive or confidential nature and (c) relates to the living or recently deceased?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4. Does your proposed research involve participants who are particularly vulnerable or unable to give informed consent?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5. Will your proposed research require the co-operation of a gatekeeper for initial access to the groups or individuals to be recruited?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6. Will financial inducements be offered to participants in your proposed research beyond reasonable expenses and/or compensation for time?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
7. Will your proposed research involve collection of data relating to sensitive topics?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Will your proposed research involve collection of security-sensitive materials?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
9. Is pain or discomfort likely to result from your proposed research?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
10. Could your proposed research induce psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences beyond the risks encountered in normal life?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
11. Will it be necessary for participants to take part in your proposed research without their knowledge and consent at the time?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
12. Does your proposed research involve deception?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
13. Will your proposed research require the gathering of information about unlawful activity?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
14. Will invasive procedures be part of your proposed research?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
15. Will your proposed research involve prolonged, high intensity or repetitive testing?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
16. Does your proposed research involve the testing or observation of animals?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
17. Does your proposed research involve the significant destruction of invertebrates?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
18. Does your proposed research involve collection of DNA, cells, tissues or other samples from humans or animals?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
19. Does your proposed research involve human remains?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
20. Does your proposed research involve human burial sites?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
21. Will the proposed data collection in part or in whole be undertaken outside the UK?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
22. Does your proposed research involve NHS patients or premises?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

23. Does your proposed research involve NHS staff?



If the answers to any of these questions change during the course of your research, you should discuss this with your supervisor immediately

Signatures

By signing below I declare that I have answered the questions above honestly and to the best of my knowledge:

PGR Student:

.....

Date:

**Hazel
Richards
10-1-18**

By signing below I declare that I am satisfied with the student's answers to these questions:

Director of Studies:

.....

Date:

**Richard
Woolley
10.1.18**

(Please note that the Lead Researcher is, where applicable, signing on behalf of all researchers involved with the research)

If you have answered NO to all questions you should now submit this form to ethics@worc.ac.uk.

If you have answered YES to one or more questions you must now complete **Section C** (below) and submit the completed form to ethics@worc.ac.uk identifying the Research Ethics Committee you wish to review your application in the subject line.

Section C: Full Application

Please tick one of the boxes below. Please consult the relevant guidance before doing so.

I wish to submit for Full Review	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wish to submit for Proportionate Review	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

<p>Details of the research Outline the context and rationale for the research, the aims and objectives of the research and the methods of data collection</p> <p>This study will examine Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator's perceptions of the implementation of Education and Health Care Plans. EHCPs, identified in the Child and Families Act (2014) and the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (2014) which replace statements of special educational need, with a focus on multi-agency working. These two documents strengthen the role of the SENCo by enshrining it in law and by increasing the need for team-work, both within and between organisations. The study will investigate what the plans mean for roles and identity from the perspective of the SENCos themselves by examining the implementation of EHCPs in order to reveal the impact, influences and implications for identity, practice and professional development. The aims and objectives of the research are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) To consider the role of educational phase, setting and training route in relation to the following aims by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • purposefully selecting SENCos to represent these (primary, maintained school, National Award for SEN Coordination (NASENCo) qualified SENCos, and early years, non-maintained nursery, Level 3 SENCos) • and by comparing and contrasting the data set both within and between these strands. 2) To explore the roles, responsibilities and relationships of SENCos in the light of the changing policy context by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • collecting their professional experience narratives and by • identifying their significant constructs. 3) To investigate the perceived organisational and individual influences on the practical implementation of the policy by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analysing this data set. 4) To identify any changes that have a perceived impact on the identity development of the SENCos by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evaluating the analysed data to discover existing complexities and patterns. <p>Data Collection Methods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial literature review to develop an understanding of the factors to be examined in the research. • Participants (8 from primary and 8 from early years settings), identified by purposive sampling, will take part in semi-structured interviews. Their stories of EHCP implementation will be accessed using critical event narrative inquiry. • A second interview with these same participants will be conducted to elicit their significant constructs using repertory grid technique. <p>xx A group grid, created from the amalgamated constructs of these participants, will be sent electronically to each participant to identify their most significant constructs (attached). This is a component of the study; stage 2, approved originally on 10-03-17 (letter attached).</p>

<p>• A researcher field diary will record process information and support reflexivity.</p> <p>• Content from both data sets will be analysed using content analysis to identify themes and relationships. This emerging structure will be verified and expanded by participants in a focus-group interview.</p> <p>There is limited research available to date (due to the comparatively recent introduction of EHC plans), so this research is justifiable on the basis of uncovering the reality of current practice as a result of recent policy and legislative change.</p> <p>By situating the research within a conceptual framework concerned with identity, agency and change, knowledge about the significant influences will emerge and existing understanding, for example of teacher professional identity and career, will extend to this specialized area</p> <p>Identifying strengths and challenges, as well as the impact of different settings and training available/required of staff, will reveal the significant influences present in the field of Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND). This could reveal implications for professional development, which is itself a focus of contemporary teacher education (Carter Report, 2015, Youth Driver Report, 2015, NASEN on-line CPD program, 2016).</p>
<p>Who are your participants/subjects? (if applicable)</p> <p>1) Pilot participants will be teaching practitioners studying for the National Award for Special Educational Needs Coordination (NASENCo) at the University of Worcester. This award is a Level 7 qualification, mandatory for SENCo to complete within 3 years of taking up a SENCo post. Participation will be voluntary.</p> <p>2) SENCos from primary state-funded schools and from early years settings will be identified by purposive sampling. Participants will be sought from a single Local Authority to ensure consistent systems are present. This LA has been chosen as accessible and IDACI (income deprivation affecting children index) scores and DfE school performance tables have been used to situate it in relation to national averages. Primary settings that have 3% of pupils with EHCPs (England average) will be identified. Early years settings will be identified within the same postcode. SENCo participants from 8 primary and 8 early years settings will be sought.</p> <p>xx3) Gatekeepers (who have already been contacted, and have already given their consent, see point 4 below) will be invited, via phone and email, to complete the Group Repertory Grid also. This is a development of the original application.</p>
<p>How do you intend to recruit your participants? (if applicable)</p> <p>This should explain the means by which participants in the research will be recruited. If any incentives and/or compensation (financial or other) is to be offered to participants, this should be clearly explained and justified.</p> <p>1) Contact the gatekeeper of the NASENCo at the University of Worcester by letter explaining the research and requesting access to SENCo practitioners/students to pilot the research tools.</p> <p>2) Provide an information sheet and obtain consent from NASENCo practitioners/students.</p> <p>3) Use the DfE schools and IDACI websites to identify suitable schools for the main data collection phase.</p>

- 4) Contact the gatekeeper in the school/setting by letter and email to explain the project and gain consent to access their setting
- 5) Follow this up with a telephone call to discuss the project, and arrange an information visit if necessary.
- 6) Contact school/setting SENCOs by letter, attaching an information sheet, requesting voluntary participation in the research.
- 7) SENCO participants to volunteer to participate, with written consent obtained prior to the initial interview. SENCO participants will be needed for three stages of the research. There will be no pressure or obligation to volunteer for these further stages of the research. Should some participants be unable to complete all the stages, replacement SENCOs will be identified using the same purposive sampling approach in order to maintain the sample size.
- 8) No financial incentive will be offered, however dissemination of the summary research findings via newsletter, following the research, will be offered.

How will you gain informed consent/assent? (if applicable)
 Where you will provide an information sheet and/or consent form, please append this. If you are undertaking a deception study or covert research please outline how you will debrief participants below

Participants will be responsible adults and all are able to give informed consent.

Consent from gatekeepers will be obtained prior to contacting research participants.

Consent will be obtained directly from participants themselves (please see attached information sheet and consent forms).

Gatekeepers will be informed of SENCO participation.

Confidentiality, anonymity, data storage and disposal (if applicable)
 Provide explanation of any measures to preserve confidentiality and anonymity of data, including specific explanation of data storage and disposal plans.

Confidentiality of participant's stories, constructs and focus group contributions will be maintained.

Research data will consist of recorded and transcribed semi-structured interviews, repertory grid interviews and focus-group interviews and the research field diary.

Participants will choose their own pseudonym so they can self-identify their own data. This will anonymize data to others. The list of pseudonyms and the participants to whom they pertain will be kept in a separate locked cabinet to the secure data storage to ensure anonymity is maintained. Only pseudonyms will be used in transcriptions, feedback and findings to maintain anonymity.

The collection, storage, use and disclosure of data will adhere to University of Worcester and the British Educational Research Association (BERA) policies and to the principles of the Data Protection Act 1998:

Principle 1 – Information must be processed fairly and lawfully – participants will be informed through the information sheet of what their data will be used for.

Principle 2 – Information collected must be processed for limited purposes – data will only be used for the purposes explained in the information sheet.

Principle 3 – Information collected must be adequate, relevant and not excessive – every effort will be made to ensure that the collection of data is effective and sufficient, by piloting the research tools and frameworks for the semi-structured interviews, repertory grids and focus groups.

Principle 4 – Information collected must be accurate and up to date – data will be collected during spring of 2017 through to autumn 2017. This will ensure the data is contemporary and relevant to the context of the research.

Principle 5 – Information must not be held for longer than is necessary - Raw data (written transcriptions) will be kept for 10 years, as per University of Worcester guidelines, in the university repository (WRAP).

Transcripts will be verified by participants and the audio files will be destroyed on completion of the PhD.

Processed data, anonymized by codes, will be kept for 10 years, initially by the researcher, then deposited in the University Repository at the end of the research, in an accessible format (PDF or rich text).

Principle 6 – Information must be processed in accordance with the individual's rights. Should participants decide to withdraw, their raw data will be destroyed. Anonymity and confidentiality will be rigorously maintained. All data will be allocated codes consisting of a letter (to indicate setting type i.e. early years or primary) followed by a number (to indicate SENCo) so names and sources will be protected.

When referring to data in the research report, a broad setting description will be given only, for example, a small rural primary school, a large urban school with a multi-national roll, a small local playgroup. These descriptions will be worked out to ensure consistency. If including any quotes from the data, the participant's identity will be protected by linking the quotes to this impersonal setting description only.

Principle 7 – Information must be kept secure –

- Anonymized data will be kept in a locked filing cabinet located in the Research School.
- Anonymization pseudonyms will be kept in a separate locked cabinet.
- Auditory files will be transferred to an encrypted memory stick and password protected passport device.
- Written transcripts will be kept on the passport device and also on the researcher's password protected University laptop

Principle 8 – Information should not be transferred outside the European Economic Area unless adequate levels of protection exist – only processed data, referred to anonymously in reports and publications, will be released in any way. Raw data will remain in the UK.

Research records (correspondence, ethics applications, research development reports, records of supervision meeting etc. will also be stored securely, in a locked filing cabinet in the Research School at the Jenny Lind Building.

This research is looking at SENCo perceptions of EHC plans and not specifically at the plans. Although it is therefore not intended to collect sensitive data as part of this research, information of a sensitive nature may be disclosed by participants. Because EHCPs are written for the most complex students, they contain detailed information about need, and their implementation necessitates close working relationships and sharing of information so information of a specific or sensitive nature (including social, economic and health information) may be revealed. The University's Safeguarding and Disclosure and Whistleblowing policies will be applied should this arise.

<p>Potential risks to participants/subjects (if applicable) Identify any risks for participants/subjects that may arise from the research and how you intend to mitigate these risks.</p>
<p>Avoidance of Harm: This research will seek to minimize the risk of harm to any participant by the consideration of the following possible factors:</p> <p>Negative Impacts - There is a possible negative impact of time taken out from role to participate in the research. Wherever possible these will be arranged for a time and place that is most convenient for the participant, in order to minimize this impact.</p> <p>Both researcher and participants will learn and change in the encounter (Pinnegar and Daynes, 2006). This will be discussed with participants at the beginning of their involvement as part of obtaining informed consent.</p> <p>The use of narrative has the potential to elicit sensitive memories which participants will not necessarily flag up as such. Information about support sources for SENCOs will therefore be provided (for example Teacher Support 24/7 phone line) prior to data collection.</p> <p>Expectations - The purpose and nature of the research will be explained to participants, including detail about the benefits expected to arise from the research (identification of strengths and challenges, increased awareness of influences and possible self-awareness).</p> <p>It will be clearly explained that individual feedback will not be provided, so participation will not result in individual benefit, rather the contribution will be to our understanding and professional development as a whole. Participant will receive a group information sheet following the completion of the research.</p> <p>Risks - There is potential for difficult and emotive issues to emerge – for example: resentment with a professional group whose resources and priorities are very different from the SENCOs; focusing on a particularly difficult case; or SENCOs realizing how stressed and stretched they are. Signposting for support will be provided at the outset (see negative impacts, above).</p> <p>Participants will have a right to withdraw at any stage, and should this arise, it will be dealt with understanding through a third party. This is detailed in the information and consent form (see attached).</p> <p>Change - Although sensitive data is not intentionally being collected, research always leaves a footprint – by discussing the implementation and exploring practice, participants will be reflecting on, and changing their perspectives and possibly their actions and</p>

feelings. This will be acknowledged at the beginning of the semi-structured interviews, repertory grid interviews and focus group interviews.

Other ethical issues

Identify any other ethical issues (not addressed in the sections above) that may arise from your research and how you intend to address them.

Staff health – it may be that participants become unable to continue with the research due to ill-health or sickness – in this eventuality the numbers of 16 (8 preschool and 8 primary SENCOs) should be sufficient to carry this. This also pertains to the considerable workload demands of participating SENCOs – it may be that some SENCOs are unable to continue with the research should the situation with their workload change, for example, due to staff shortages in their place of work.

The question: "What and whose expectations may be present?" must be considered. This will include researcher's expectations of participants and participant's expectations of the researcher. This will need to be explored in a section within the methodology chapter. Allan and Slee (2008) discuss researching the researcher to reveal perspectives, to enable addressing revealed conflicts e.g. of priority, and the likelihood of sense making dilemmas that involve questioning the status-quo – which may be either 'out there' or 'within' (professional, personal and academic).

The role the researcher undertakes within this research is crucial. The power and knowledge relationship is one factor, and Pascal and Bertram (2012) consider how to undertake the research with rather than to participants. Consideration of the researcher as an 'outsider' (not a qualified SENCO herself) but also as an 'insider' (having a high level of knowledge and experience) has revealed the researcher position to be that of an 'outsider-within' (Collins, 1986;1999). Milligan (2016) proposes that this position may change as the study progresses to more of an 'in-betweenener'. It will be necessary to interrogate researcher stance throughout the study to make this explicit. The research diary will facilitate this.

References:

Allan, J. and Slee, R. (2008) *Doing Inclusive Education Research*. Rotterdam, Sense Publishers.

Collins, P.H. (1986) Learning from the outsider within: the sociological significance of black feminist thought. *Social Problems*. 33 (6), 14–32.

Collins, P.H. (1999) Reflections on the Outsider Within. *Journal of Career Development*. 26 (1), 85–88.

Milligan, L. (2016) Insider-outsider-inbetweenener? Researcher positioning, participative methods and cross cultural educational research. *Compare: A Journal of comparative and International Education*. 46 (2), 235–250.

Pascal, C. & Bertram, T. (2012) Praxis, ethics and power: developing praxeology. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*. 20 (4), 477–492.

Published ethical guidelines to be followed

Identify the professional code(s) of practice and/or ethical guidelines relevant to the subject domain of the research.

The University of Worcester Ethics Policy. Available from <http://www.worcester.ac.uk/researchportal/735.htm> Accessed 5 January 2017.

The Data Protection Act 1998. Available from <https://www.gov.uk/data-protection/the-data-protection-act> Accessed 5 January 2017.

British Educational Research Association. Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research, 2011. Available from <https://www.bera.ac.uk/researchers-resources/publications/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2011> Accessed 5 January 2017.

The European Early Childhood Research Association Ethical Code for Early Childhood Researchers. Available from http://www.becera.org.uk/docs/EECERA_Ethical_Code.pdf Accessed 9 May 2018

Declaration of PGR Student

I have read the University Ethics Policy and any relevant codes of practice or guidelines and I have identified and addressed the ethical issues in my research honestly and to the best of my knowledge

Signature: _____

Date:

Hazel
Richards
10-01-18

Declaration of Director of Studies

I am satisfied that the student has identified and addressed the ethical issues in their research

Signature: _____

Date:

Richard
Woolley
10.1.18

Document Checklist

Please tick boxes below to identify which documents are sent with this application:

Consent Form	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Participant Information Sheet	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Data Collection Tool	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other documents (please specify): Introductory/Covering Letters (3)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Appendix 2

Research Data Management Plan (including privacy notice and record of processing activity).

RDM Plan

Data Generation

Introduction

The data collected for this project is necessary for a study which is in the public interest (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2018). These regulations state that the data controller must be able to demonstrate compliance with the data protection principles. Following their introduction, and the introduction of a new Data Protection Law, the research data management plan was updated.

1. What data will you generate?

Both raw and analysed data will be produced.

RAW: Setting information.

Interview recordings (auditory) and transcripts.

Individual repertory grids.

Researcher field diary.

Group repertory grid rankings.

(both for pilot and research participants)

ANALYSED: Critical Event Narrative Interviews:

-coding systems and charts.

-hard copy and electronic copy (NVivo)

Individual Repertory Grid Interviews:

ideographic Analysis – hard copy

principal component analysis, dendograms, cluster analysis and MouseSort

-hard copy and electronic copy

Group Repertory Grid Rankings:

means, line graphs, boxplots, highest and lowest ranked constructs

Frameworks/models/charts and graphs arising from analysis

2. How will you generate the data?

Directly from participants with myself as the researcher collecting it/conducting the interviews.

Transcription of interviews by researcher.

Field diary and pen-portraits to aid reflexivity and evaluation completed by the researcher.

Group Repertory Grids – deployment of an assistant to record and scribe whilst the researcher guides the discussion. Confidentiality form to be signed by this assistant.

Data Storage

3. How will data be stored and backed-up during the research?

In a locked filing cabinet at the University.

On both a password-protected electronic passport and encrypted memory stick.

On my research laptop (password protected).

4. How will you manage access and security?

I have the key to the two cabinets in Jenny Lind. Spare keys are also stored securely.

Access to the passport, encrypted memory stick and laptop is through password only. I am the only person that knows this password.

Data Preservation

5. What data will you keep at the end of the project and why?

Auditory data will be destroyed at the end of the PhD

All transcribed data will be stored under pseudonyms chosen by the participants. These pseudonyms and the transcribed data will be kept separately and securely at the University for 10 years, in accordance with the *Data Protection Act 2018* and U of W ethical policy.

Some written data, for example quotes, will be reproduced in the finished thesis. These will appear under pseudonyms.

Interview and repertory grid transcripts and analysis will be deposited in the University's Research repository (WRAP).

6. How will you preserve the data?

Written, hard copy.

Electronic version will be stored in PDF format where possible (or rich text) to ensure future accessibility.

Data Sharing

7. How will you share the data?

Shared via thesis and potential publications and conferences (pseudonymised, edited portions only).

Dissemination of collective, summarised research results (pseudonymised) to participants in newsletter at end of project.

8. Are there any restrictions on data sharing?

Data collected in this research will be pseudonymised using the pseudonyms chosen by participants. It therefore still is personal data. It cannot be shared, other than for the purposes detailed in the research participant information sheet.

9. What documentation and metadata will accompany the data?

Analysis of text content, which may take the form of quotes, charts and tables.

Principal component analysis, cluster analysis, MouseSort and dendograms, for individual repertory grid interviews.

Means, line-graphs, boxplots and highest and lowest ranked constructs for group repertory grid rankings.

Structural diagrams and possible frameworks/models created from the analysis results.

Ethical issues and legal compliance

10. What are the ethical and legal issues relating to storage, preservation and sharing of your research data?

The **General Data Protection Regulations** (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2018) and the **Data Protection Act 2018** were complied with as follows:

Principle 1 – Processing – this is explained in the methodology chapter of the thesis.

Principle 2 – Collection – the participant information sheet explains the reasons for this research. Consent to contact was obtained from all gatekeepers and written consent prior to data collection was obtained from all participants.

Principle 3 – Limited – Data is psuedonymised, and only the data specified in the ethics application was collected.

Principle 4 – Accurate – participants checked all transcriptions to ensure accuracy.

Principle 5 – Retention – see items 5 and 6 above. The individual’s right to withdraw is clearly stated in the participant information sheet.

Principle 6 – Secure – personal data breaches were guarded against by items 3 to 8, above.

Data Ownership

11. Who owns the data?

The University of Worcester owns the data until publication.

The researcher owns the intellectual property of publications arising from the data.

Appendix 3

Letters, Participant Information Sheets, and Consent Forms

- a) Letter to line managers, including consent form
- b) Participant Information Sheet - line managers
 - c) Letter to SENCOs - Phase One
 - d) Participant Information Sheet
 - e) Participant Consent Form
- f) Participant letter - Phase Two

Appendix 3a) Letter to line managers, including consent form



Hazel Richards
Research School
Jenny Lind Building
University of Worcester
Date: _____

Dear Head teacher/Proprietor,

Re: Investigating SENCo perceptions of EHCP implementation in early years and primary education

I am a research student, within the Institute of Education, investigating SENCo perceptions of Education and Health Care Plans, as introduced by the SEND Code of Practice 2014.

This study is researching SENCo experience and perceptions of the implementation of EHC plans. It is anticipated that findings will identify existing strengths and challenges and the impact these are having on the SENCo role. It will contribute to the emerging field of continued professional development, important as evidently informed professionals have an effect on the outcomes of children and young people.

This will require participation in two interviews in the summer term and one in the autumn term during 2017, to be arranged at a suitable time for your SENCo and a summary of results will be disseminated to you in a newsletter following the research.

Please indicate your willingness for me to contact your SENCo to invite him/her to take part in this research by completing and returning the consent form overleaf to my email address:

hazel.richards@worc.ac.uk

Thank you

Yours sincerely,

Hazel Richards
Research Student
University of Worcester
Title of Project: **“SENCo perceptions of practice and potential: investigating Education and Health Care Plan implementation in early years and primary education.”**

Please tick the boxes below:

- 1) I confirm that I have read and understood the attached letter about this study.
- 2) I understand the study will consist of two interviews in the summer term and one in the autumn term during 2017.
- 3) I am willing for the researcher to contact the SENCo in my setting, inviting him/her to take part in this research.
- 4) I understand a summary of the results will be disseminated once the research is completed.

School/Setting Name:

Head teacher/Manager Name:

Date:

Signature:

If you have any questions about this research please contact: hazel.richards@worc.ac.uk

In the occasion of a complaint, please contact the researcher in the first instance. If your complaint cannot be resolved, please contact Dr Richard Woolley, Directory of Studies at r.woolley@worc.ac.uk. If you need to take your complaint further, please contact Louise Heath (Research Support Officer and Secretary to the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Ethics Committee) at ethics@worc.ac.uk

Appendix 3b) Participant Information Sheet - line managers



Participant Information Sheet

Institute of Education

SENCo perceptions of practice and potential: investigating Education and Health Care Plan implementation in early years and primary education

You are invited to take part in stage 2 of this doctoral research. Before you consent it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what is involved.

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to investigate SENCo experience and perceptions of the implementation of Education and Health Care Plans to identify the influences (both strengths and challenges) that exist and the impact these have on the SENCo role. By considering early years and primary age ranges, where training baselines vary, the research will also contribute to the emerging field of continued professional development of SEND professionals. Giving voice to the key professionals involved will allow the reality of policy implementation to emerge which will help inform the practice and training of SEN professionals.

Stage 1 involved two separate interviews with your SENCo and SENCos from other early years and primary settings across Worcestershire. The information from all of these was analysed and used to create the grid to be used in stage 2.

Stage 2 involves the SENCo participants and their Head teachers/Managers ranking each item on the group grid to identify the importance of the revealed influences. Your SENCo has already completed this task. Collecting data from Head teachers and Managers is important as it allows a wider perspective to emerge and strengthens the rigour of the research.

Data:

All data collection will comply with the University of Worcester ethics policy and the British Education Research Association (BERA) guidelines. Data will be collected in auditory form (digital recording) and in a researcher field diary. Auditory recordings will be transcribed and verified by participants before being destroyed. Data will be identified by pseudonyms chosen by participants to ensure their anonymity, and will be stored securely within the University in accordance with the *Data Protection Act 1998*. All information will be kept confidential and will be used only for the purpose of research and no individual will be identifiable when the research data is used in publication.

Benefits of taking part:

The information obtained will be used to inform effective practice and training developments.

An opportunity to reflect and comment on SENCo responsibilities and practice.

A summary of the findings will be disseminated to you following the research in a newsletter.

Disadvantages of taking part:

Ranking the grid will take about 20 minutes and requires thoughtful consideration.

The grid must be ranked independently.

Should an increased awareness of self, practice and the context of SEN coordination prove in any way troubling and support is required, the teacher support network

(<https://my.teachersupport.info/>) and the SENCo Forum

(<http://lists.education.gov.uk/mailman/listinfo/SENCo-forum>) are suggested as.

Participation:

All views regarding the implementation of EHCPs will be respected and valued.

Participation is voluntary, with the right to withdraw at any time. Raw data will be removed from the project in the instance of withdrawal.

If you have any questions about this research please contact: hazel.richards@worc.ac.uk

In the occasion of a complaint, please contact the researcher in the first instance. If your complaint cannot be resolved, please contact Dr Richard Woolley, Directory of Studies at r.woolley@worc.ac.uk. If you need to take your complaint further, please contact Louise Heath (Research Support Officer and Secretary to the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Ethics Committee) at ethics@worc.ac.uk

Appendix 3c) Letter to SENCOs - Phase One



**HAZEL RICHARDS
RESEARCH SCHOOL
JENNY LIND BUILDING**

23rd March 2017

Dear _____,

Re: Investigating SENCo perceptions of EHCP implementation in early years and primary education

I am a research student within the Institute of Education investigating SENCo perceptions of Education and Health Care Plans, as introduced by the SEND Code of Practice 2014.

SENCo perceptions of the implementation of EHC plans will be explored in order to identify the implications the changing role has for SENCo identity and to understand the existing successes and challenges and how these contribute to SENCo practice. It is anticipated that findings will inform the continued professional development and support of SENCos.

I would like to invite you to take part in this research. Phase one will involve a short pre-interview task followed by two interviews (a semi-structured interview and a repertory grid interview) during the summer term, 2017. Each interview will last a maximum of one hour.

Phase two will involve participation in a focus group interview with SENCo colleagues to consider and contribute to the results of the analysis of phase one data during the autumn term, 2017. A summary of the findings will be disseminated to you following the research.

All responses will be treated confidentially with data collectively analysed to reveal themes that will inform the next research stages. Interviews will be arranged at a convenient place and time for yourself to minimise your time commitment as it is appreciated that your workload is considerable.

I attach an information sheet that tells you more about the project. Please email me at hazel.richards@worc.ac.uk to indicate your willingness to take part and/or for more detail.

Your support of this research project is highly valued.

Yours sincerely,

Hazel Richards
Research Student

Appendix 3d) Participant Information Sheet



Participant Information Sheet

Institute of Education

SENCo perceptions of practice and potential: investigating Education and Health Care Plan implementation in early years and primary education

You are invited to take part in this research study. Before you consent it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what is involved.

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to investigate SENCo experience and perceptions of the implementation of Education and Health Care Plans to identify the influences (both strengths and challenges) that exist and the impact these have on the SENCo role. By considering early years and primary age ranges, where training baselines vary, the research will also contribute to the emerging field of continued professional development of SEND professionals. Giving voice to the key professionals involved will allow the reality of policy implementation to emerge which will help inform the practice and training of SEN professionals.

Research Stages:

Stage 1

Two separate interviews taking a maximum of one hour each to take place in the summer term of 2017.

Interview 1 – a semi-structured interview to collect SENCo accounts of experience using critical event narrative. Narrative foregrounds the people at the centre of events and critical events allow us to investigate significant changes in understanding and practice. This interview will be preceded by a short preparatory task.

Interview 2 - a repertory grid interview to further explore SENCo understanding of the significant elements that contribute to EHCP implementation. Repertory grids explore similarities and differences in thinking around a topic and reduce researcher bias. They will be used to discover the practices and values important to effective EHCP implementation from the SENCo perspective.

Stage 2

One interview, taking a maximum of one hour, to take place in the autumn term of 2017.

Interview 3 - A focus group interview to verify and expand on the themes emerging from the first two interview data sets with SENCo participants.

Data:

All data collection will comply with the University of Worcester ethics policy and the British Education Research Association (BERA) guidelines. Data will be collected in auditory form (digital recording) and in a researcher field diary. Auditory recordings will be transcribed and verified by participants before being destroyed. Data will be identified by pseudonyms chosen by participants to ensure anonymity of participants, and will be stored securely within the University in accordance

with the *Data Protection Act 1998*. All information will be kept confidential and will be used only for the purpose of research and no individual will be identifiable when the research data is used in publication.

Benefits of taking part:

The information obtained will be used to inform effective practice and training developments.

An opportunity to reflect and comment on the emerging themes with SENCo colleagues.

A summary of the findings will be disseminated to you following the research in a newsletter.

Disadvantages of taking part:

Remembering and narrating critical incidents will involve memories, and exploring and reflecting deeply on experience of the topic area (EHCP implementation) will result in an increased awareness of self, practice and the context of SEN coordination. Should any of this prove troubling and support is required, the teacher support network (<https://my.teachersupport.info/>) and the SENCo Forum (<http://lists.education.gov.uk/mailman/listinfo/SENCo-forum>) are suggested.

Participation:

All views regarding the implementation of EHCPs will be respected and valued.

Participation is voluntary, with the right to withdraw at any time. Raw data will be removed from the project in the instance of withdrawal.

If you have any questions about this research please contact: hazel.richards@worc.ac.uk

In the occasion of a complaint, please contact the researcher in the first instance. If your complaint cannot be resolved, please contact Dr Richard Woolley, Directory of Studies at r.woolley@worc.ac.uk. If you need to take your complaint further, please contact Louise Heath (Research Support Officer and Secretary to the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Ethics Committee) at ethics@worc.ac.uk

Appendix 3e) Participant Consent Form

Participant Consent Form

SENCo perceptions of practice and potential: investigating Education and Health Care Plan implementation in early years and primary education.

I, the undersigned, confirm that (please initial boxes as appropriate):

1.	I have read and understood the information sheet about the pilot project, as provided by the information sheet dated _____.	
2.	I have had opportunity to consider the information and ask questions about the project and my participation.	
3.	I voluntarily agree to participate in the project.	
4.	I understand I can withdraw at any time without giving reasons and that I will not be penalised for withdrawing nor will I be questioned on why I have withdrawn. I can withdraw by contacting Dr Richard Woolley, Director of Studies (see email address below).	
5.	The procedures regarding confidentiality have been clearly explained to me and I have chosen a pseudonym for my data to ensure anonymity.	
6.	I understand that all the interviews will be recorded by the researcher and then transcribed.	
7.	I agree to be interviewed about my experiences of Education and Health Care Plans and about the training I have received.	
8.	I agree to take part in a repertory grid interview about my experience of Education and Health Care Plans.	
9.	I agree to take part in a focus group interview about Education and Health Care Plan Implementation and training.	
10.	I agree to respecting the confidentiality and views of other focus group interview participants.	
11.	I agree to the researcher analysing and publishing information I have supplied with due regard to confidentiality.	
12.	I, along with the Researcher, agree to sign and date this informed consent form.	

Name of Participant Signature of Participant Date

Name of Researcher Signature of Researcher Date

If you have any questions about this research please contact: hazel.richards@worc.ac.uk

In the occasion of a complaint, please contact the researcher in the first instance. If your complaint cannot be resolved, please contact Dr Richard Woolley, Directory of Studies at r.woolley@worc.ac.uk. If you need to take your complaint further, please contact Louise Heath (Research Support Officer and Secretary to the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Ethics Committee) at ethics@worc.ac.uk

Appendix 3f) Participant letter - Phase Two



Institute of Education

Hazel Richards
Research School
Jenny Lind Building
University of Worcester

Participant Information Sheet (Stage 2)

Dear ,

SENCo perceptions of practice and potential: investigating Education and Health Care Plan implementation in early years and primary education

Thank you for taking part in this research study. I would be grateful if you could complete and return the attached group repertory grid, which has been developed out of the analysis of the first repertory grids that you and the other participants completed.

To complete the grid, please allocate a number (from 1 – 21) to each item to indicate its importance to you, with 1 being the most important and 21 being the least important. Each number can only be used once, as you are ranking the items in order of their significance to you.

If you have any questions about this, or would like further guidance, please contact me on the email address below.

With kind regards

Hazel Richards
PhD Candidate
Institute of Education, University of Worcester
hazel.richards@worc.ac.uk

Appendix 4

Workline Task and Critical Event Narrative Interview Schedule



SENCo perceptions of practice and potential: investigating EHCP implementation in early years and primary education.

Preparation task for semi-structured, critical event narrative interview

This task is designed to help you prepare for our forthcoming interview. The task is divided in to two parts. Please complete both and bring with you to the first interview.

PART ONE

Please draw a line on the chart overleaf to indicate the significant events in your experience of EHCP implementation and how these events have affected **your identity as a SENCo**.

Your SENCo identity line will probably look like a series of peaks and troughs, although it may level off in places. I am interested in the peaks and troughs that indicate a noticeable change in the stability of your SENCo identity: these are the critical incidents or turning points in your SENCo professional practice and development. Above each major peak or trough that was **followed by a change in your SENCo identity**, please write a short descriptive term to identify the nature of the event, for example: appointed to senior leadership team; completed school self-evaluation of SEND; a challenging parent interview.

PART TWO

Please code the peaks and troughs, indicating whether the event was due to any of the reasons identified below:

- o **Institutional or organisational (I)**: e.g. national policy, Local Authority factors, the Local Offer, educational reforms, externally imposed funding changes;
- o **Collective Role (C)**: e.g. within setting factors such as additional roles and responsibilities in setting, team working and collegiality, support, the School Offer, setting curriculum decisions;
- o **SENCo Role (R)**: e.g. responsibility for provision mapping, staff training, multi-disciplinary liaison; parent interview; compiling SEN Information Report;
- o **Personal (P)**: e.g. family, health and relationship factors;
- o **Other (O)**.

1EHCP Implementation: SENCo Identity Line

Name of SENCo:		SENCo ID:		Date:		SMT: Yes/No																								
Year of QTs (if applicable):		Year of taking on SENCo role:		Year of achieving NASENCo (if applicable):																										
Peak: Most positive EHP implementation experiences																														
Trough: Most Challenging EHP implementation experiences																														
Month	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D						
Year	2014												2015						2016						2017					

¹ The workline is adapted from the DfES-funded study of Variations in Teachers' Work, Lives and Effectiveness (VITAE) as described in Day, C., Sammons, P., Kington, A. Stobart, G. & Gu, Q. (2006). Methodological Synergy: The VITAE Story. *Evaluation and Research in Education*. 19(2), 102-125.

SENCo perceptions of practice and potential:

Investigating EHCP implementation in early years and primary education.

Critical Event Narrative Interview Schedule:

Opening

(Establish Rapport) shake hands. My name is Hazel Richards and I am a doctoral student at the University of Worcester. First of all, I would like to thank you for taking part in this research.

(Explain Purpose) I am going to ask you some questions about your experience as a SENCo implementing EHC plans and will use the SENCo identity line you created as the preparatory task as a basis for this interview.

(Motivation) This information will be used to develop understanding of how EHCP implementation is being effected in settings, against the backdrop of the SEND CoP (2014) and any impact this is having on SENCo roles and identity.

(Timing and practicalities) The interview will take a maximum of one hour and will be recorded, to be transcribed and checked by yourself afterwards.

Talk me through your work line so I can understand your experience of EHCP implementation.

How many EHCP's have/are you involved with i) creating?

ii) delivering?

Transition Let me begin by asking you to tell me about you as a SENCo

- 1) Tell me about something that was a very important contributor to you becoming a SENCo.
- 2) Tell me something significant you have achieved as a SENCo.
- 3) Tell me something you aspire to as a SENCo.

Body Thinking specifically about your experience of EHCP implementation:

Critical Incident: now choose one of the major critical events you have identified on your line:

- 4) Please describe the event you have chosen as a critical event in your developing SENCo identity.
- 5) Explain the cause(s) of the critical incident
- 6) Did anyone else play a role in this event? (for example, senior leadership, teaching colleagues, fellow SENCos, multi-disciplinary team members, family and friends, other).
- 7) What other resources, if any, were present in this event? (e.g. policies, Local Authority, expert support, training materials, on-line resources and forums)
- 8) Describe how this critical event manifested itself, if at all:
 - a) At an institutional and/or organisational level (e.g. national policy, Local Authority factors, the Local Offer, educational reforms, externally imposed funding changes).
 - b) In relation to your collective role (e.g. within setting factors such as additional roles and responsibilities in setting, team working and collegiality, support, the School Offer, setting curriculum decisions).

- c) In relation to your SENCo role (e.g. responsibility for provision mapping, staff training, multi-disciplinary liaison; parent interview; compiling SEN Information Report).
- d) Personally (e.g. family, health and relationship factors)
- e) Other

N.B. items in brackets relate to SENCO identity line – do **NOT** use these as prompts – they are there for guidance/examples only.

- 9) How could this event have been better, if at all?
- 10) How did this impact/change/influence/develop your (professional) identity as a SENCo, if at all?

Transition It has been a pleasure finding out more about your experience as a SENCo.

- 11) Is there anything else you think would be helpful for me to know about your experience of EHCP implementation that would help me to understand it further?

Closing

(Summarise) You have shared a lot of information about this experience _____

(Maintain Rapport) I really appreciate the time you gave for this interview – I appreciate that you managed to do this even within your demanding job and tight timescales.

(Action to be taken) I will transcribe this interview and send you the script in the next two weeks for you to check and return to me. When will be the best time for you to take part in the second, repertory grid interview?

(Follow-up) Thank you once again and I look forward to seeing you on _____

Appendix 5

Initial Thematic Coding Sheet and NVivo Screenshots

Coding Sheet (**when sub-coding remember to de-code from parent node**)

Agency	achievement (sense of)	
	catalyst	
	confidence	
	disempowered	
	purpose	
	resilience	
	self-efficacy	
	self-reliance	
Aspirations		
Becoming a SENCo		
Change		
Contributing Factors	positive	
	negative	
Early Intervention		
Emotion	frustration	
	overwhelmed	
	of parent	
	of child	
	positive	
	worry/stress	
Evidence		
Financial		
Identity		
Impact of policy	provision	
	outcome	

	relationships	
	responsibilities	
	roles	
Implementation experiences	effective	
	ineffective	
Influences on EHCPs	positive factors	
	negative factors	
Knowledge and skills	NASENCo	
	received	
	sharing/giving	
	transformative	
Level	home	
	institutional	
	multi-agency	
	organisational/collective	
	Professional	relate to
		don't relate to
	personal	
Liaison and communication		
Number of EHCPs	create	
	implement	
Paperwork		
Parental permission		
Potential	future-ideal	
	future-not ideal	
	opportunities	

	present or real	
	past	
Priorities		
SalT		
Support	by SENCoS	
	for SENCoS	
	for children/young people	
	for families	
Thresholds		
Timing	of EHCP	
	SENCo time constraints	
Voice	parent	
	pupil	
Well being		
Wording		
Other	please detail	

Nodes

Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
Agency	1	1	06/04/2017 10:34	H	11/08/2017 13:50	HR
catalyst	5	5	02/06/2017 11:03	H	04/11/2017 11:19	HR
confidence	12	31	02/06/2017 11:03	H	07/11/2017 14:10	HR
disempowered	4	7	08/06/2017 15:31	H	03/11/2017 14:28	HR
purpose	7	18	02/06/2017 11:03	H	07/11/2017 14:20	HR
resilience	5	15	06/04/2017 10:34	H	03/11/2017 09:46	HR
self efficacy	12	24	06/04/2017 10:34	H	07/11/2017 10:01	HR
self reliance	3	3	06/04/2017 10:35	H	07/11/2017 09:21	HR
sense of achievement	14	38	08/06/2017 10:39	H	07/11/2017 14:03	HR
Aspirations	14	21	09/06/2017 12:07	H	07/11/2017 14:05	HR
becoming a SENCo	15	22	08/06/2017 10:50	H	07/11/2017 14:01	HR
Change	9	20	09/06/2017 12:14	H	07/11/2017 09:09	HR
Cluster Group	8	16	11/08/2017 15:16	HR	07/11/2017 14:02	HR
Early intervention	8	28	09/06/2017 11:59	H	07/11/2017 13:40	HR
Ease of getting EHCP	4	8	03/11/2017 08:28	HR	07/11/2017 10:02	HR
Emotion	0	0	12/04/2017 13:44	H	25/07/2017 09:05	H
disheartened	2	5	14/09/2017 09:48	HR	03/11/2017 14:14	HR
frustration	9	22	10/05/2017 08:58	H	07/11/2017 14:08	HR
of child	5	6	02/06/2017 11:04	H	07/11/2017 13:48	HR
of parent	8	19	02/06/2017 11:03	H	07/11/2017 14:06	HR
overwhelmed	6	8	10/05/2017 09:00	H	03/11/2017 14:09	HR
positive	4	6	02/06/2017 11:03	H	04/11/2017 11:24	HR
worry or stress	8	19	02/06/2017 11:04	H	07/11/2017 13:53	HR
Evidence	14	72	09/06/2017 08:24	H	07/11/2017 14:08	HR
Experience	9	26	11/08/2017 13:41	HR	07/11/2017 14:11	HR
Financial	12	42	02/06/2017 13:17	H	07/11/2017 14:13	HR
holistic	2	10	03/11/2017 12:40	HR	03/11/2017 14:42	HR
Identity (Question 10)	14	21	09/06/2017 09:13	H	07/11/2017 13:45	HR
Impact of Policy	0	0	06/04/2017 10:27	H	01/06/2017 15:28	H
outcomes	8	20	02/06/2017 11:06	H	07/11/2017 14:00	HR
provision	13	59	06/04/2017 10:28	H	07/11/2017 14:14	HR
relationships	6	11	06/04/2017 10:28	H	07/11/2017 14:11	HR

Name	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
relationships	6	11 06/04/2017 10:28	H	07/11/2017 14:11	HR
responsibilities	11	31 06/04/2017 10:27	H	07/11/2017 14:20	HR
roles	12	37 06/04/2017 10:27	H	07/11/2017 14:08	HR
Implementation experiences	1	1 08/06/2017 16:30	H	04/11/2017 11:54	HR
effective	9	26 08/06/2017 16:31	H	07/11/2017 14:18	HR
ineffective	11	37 08/06/2017 16:31	H	07/11/2017 14:18	HR
Individual Knowledge	1	1 11/08/2017 14:12	HR	11/08/2017 16:35	HR
of child	8	24 11/08/2017 16:34	HR	07/11/2017 14:21	HR
Joint placement	2	6 03/11/2017 12:35	HR	07/11/2017 14:09	HR
knowledge and skills	3	19 14/09/2017 10:12	HR	07/11/2017 09:21	HR
Kudos	5	13 11/08/2017 13:59	HR	07/11/2017 10:49	HR
Level	0	0 08/06/2017 10:39	H	08/06/2017 16:44	H
home	7	10 08/06/2017 15:17	H	07/11/2017 10:37	HR
institutional	12	45 08/06/2017 10:40	H	07/11/2017 13:39	HR
multi-agency	13	47 08/06/2017 10:40	H	07/11/2017 14:10	HR
organisational, setting, collective	12	61 08/06/2017 10:41	H	07/11/2017 14:21	HR
personal	8	14 08/06/2017 10:41	H	07/11/2017 13:40	HR
professional	10	14 08/06/2017 10:41	H	07/11/2017 13:39	HR
liaison and communication	11	35 09/06/2017 08:44	H	07/11/2017 14:17	HR
Number of EHCPs	1	1 10/05/2017 07:53	H	14/09/2017 09:51	HR
create	14	20 08/06/2017 10:43	H	07/11/2017 13:59	HR
implement	7	7 08/06/2017 10:44	H	07/11/2017 10:44	HR
paperwork	13	61 08/06/2017 16:22	H	07/11/2017 14:21	HR
Parental permission	6	17 09/06/2017 12:00	H	07/11/2017 13:43	HR
Potential	0	0 06/04/2017 10:33	H	01/06/2017 15:28	H
future - ideal	9	16 06/04/2017 11:22	H	07/11/2017 13:49	HR
future - not ideal	3	3 06/04/2017 11:22	H	03/11/2017 13:01	HR
of child	2	3 11/08/2017 14:04	HR	11/08/2017 15:28	HR
opportunities	1	1 09/06/2017 12:12	H	03/11/2017 08:38	HR
past	2	3 06/04/2017 11:21	H	03/11/2017 08:52	HR

Name	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
pressure	2	04/11/2017 11:52	HR	07/11/2017 13:50	HR
Priorities	3	02/06/2017 11:05	H	03/11/2017 09:58	HR
resources	7	14/09/2017 10:28	HR	07/11/2017 14:12	HR
SoLT	9	09/06/2017 08:51	H	07/11/2017 14:04	HR
SEND	1	11/08/2017 14:51	HR	11/08/2017 14:51	HR
Support	2	08/06/2017 11:04	H	03/11/2017 13:06	HR
by SENCo	10	08/06/2017 11:05	H	07/11/2017 13:53	HR
for families	13	08/06/2017 15:10	H	07/11/2017 14:17	HR
for SENCo	13	08/06/2017 11:11	H	07/11/2017 13:58	HR
for students	7	08/06/2017 11:14	H	07/11/2017 14:16	HR
Talking to parents	6	03/11/2017 12:26	HR	07/11/2017 14:02	HR
Team	9	11/08/2017 12:00	HR	07/11/2017 14:21	HR
thresholds	7	09/06/2017 08:38	H	07/11/2017 14:15	HR
time constraints	5	14/09/2017 10:27	HR	07/11/2017 13:50	HR
timing	7	01/06/2017 12:51	H	07/11/2017 10:47	HR
Age	4	14/09/2017 10:08	HR	07/11/2017 13:41	HR
of EHCP	8	02/06/2017 13:19	H	07/11/2017 14:17	HR
Training	7	11/08/2017 12:28	HR	07/11/2017 09:32	HR
Level	1	07/11/2017 09:24	HR	07/11/2017 09:24	HR
NASENCo	4	11/08/2017 14:29	HR	11/08/2017 16:21	HR
Need for	4	03/11/2017 14:15	HR	07/11/2017 13:49	HR
Received	10	11/08/2017 14:29	HR	07/11/2017 14:03	HR
Sharing and or giving	8	11/08/2017 14:29	HR	07/11/2017 09:09	HR
Transformative	1	11/08/2017 14:29	HR	03/11/2017 14:02	HR
Voice	0	09/06/2017 08:49	H	09/06/2017 08:49	H
parent	8	09/06/2017 08:49	H	07/11/2017 09:40	HR
pupil	2	09/06/2017 08:49	H	03/11/2017 14:29	HR
well being	3	09/06/2017 09:03	H	14/09/2017 09:30	HR
wording	4	08/06/2017 16:20	H	07/11/2017 10:23	HR
Workload	11	11/08/2017 13:04	HR	07/11/2017 14:08	HR

Appendix 6

Elements sheet

<p>(1) Myself as a SENCo now.</p>	<p>(2) A <u>professional</u> who has been helpful with EHCP implementation: __ _____</p>	<p>(3) A <u>professional</u> who has not been helpful with EHCP implementation: _____</p>	<p>(4) A kind of <u>SENCo</u> that I would not like to be.</p>	<p>(5) The SENCo I would like to be.</p>
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Describe your current setting in one or two sentences:

Appendix 7

Blank and Completed Repertory Grid Interview Sheet

SENCO perceptions of practice and potential: Investigating EHCP implementation in early years and primary education

SENCO ID:	Thinking about EHCP implementation, what is the central thing that this pair of identities have in common:				Date:
Emergent Pole	Thinking about EHCP implementation, what is a central thing that this pair have in common?				Implicit Pole
	Myself as a SENCO now.	A professional who has been helpful with EHCP implementation:	A professional who has not been helpful with EHCP implementation:	The kind of SENCO that I would not like to be.	The SENCO I would like to be.
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
Effective					Ineffective

Reference: This repertory grid is adapted from the instrument developed as part of the ESRC-funded study of Effective Classroom Practice as described in:

Kington, A., Reed, N. & Sammons, P. (2014). Teachers' Constructs of Effective Classroom Practice: Variations across a career, *Research Papers in Education*, 29 (5), pp. 534-556.

explanatory

SENCO perceptions of practice and potential: Investigating EHCP Implementation in early years and primary education

SENCO ID: [redacted] Date: 22/5/17

Thinking about EHCP Implementation, what is the central thing that this pair of identities have in common:

Emergent Pole	Myself as a SENCO now.	A professional who has been helpful with EHCP implementation:	A professional who has not been helpful with EHCP implementation:	The kind of SENCO that I would not like to be.	The SENCO I would like to be.	Implicit Pole
1 Attention to detail	1	1	5	4	1	3 Too specific. Doesn't take in to account the child in the variety of settings
2 Both contribute - they are determining + informing the provision for the future (of the child)	1	1	2	5	1	4 Fulfills practical no oppose to meeting the child's needs - box ticking.
3 Carry out informed perspectives to meet statutory guidelines	1	1	5	3	1	3 Quality of provision is poor so incorrect provision + targets identified.
4 Both aim to identify needs, set targets + support progress	1	2	3	5	1	4 They would not set accurate targets - they might target them to fit school miss it out for convenience
5 Narrow, very specific. Not taking in to account the whole child eg. correct stresses	5	5	5	5	5	1 Take child into account on in almost daily basis and accordingly to how we treat the provision! Reasonable, adaptable, flexible
6 Accommodate all opinions to form a child-centred approach	1	1	2	5	1	4 Would disregard great + professional opinion because they know best so the child is with them in school.
7 Trying to enhance + develop skills outside normal range of learning	1	2	1	5	1	4 "Thinking" "I am here to teach a restricted curriculum, my stream, I don't do sense or anything outside the box"
8 Have an overview of needs over a variety of settings/substance	1	1	5	3	1	3 Very specific to role. Does not have an overview of child's needs over a variety of settings
9 Little to work with a range of professionals + people to meet their children's needs	1	1	1	5	1	4 Would not be interested in other people's ideas would deliver rather than understand how + why
10 Have to monitor provision	1	1	5	3	1	3 Only considers their little bit. Her idea of success is progress to "live" have model that the USP look as oppose to seeing how it is functionally being applied
Effective	2	3	4	5	1	Ineffective

Reference: This repetitive grid is adapted from the instrument developed as part of the ESRC-funded study of Effective Classroom Practice as described in:

Kingdon, A., Reed, N. & Sammons, P. (2014). Teachers' Constructs of Effective Classroom Practice: Variations across a career. Research Papers in Education, 29 (5), pp. 534-556.

In terms of specialized knowledge they are good @ what they do as. Have worked children self-esteem through narrative. A bit defensive - linked to confidence no recently justified. see email for clarification of numbers

Appendix 8

Principal Component Analysis and Participant Data Produced by GridSuite

EY-1

EY-2

EY-3

EY-4

EY-5

EY-6

EY-7

EY-8

PY-1

PY-2

PY-3

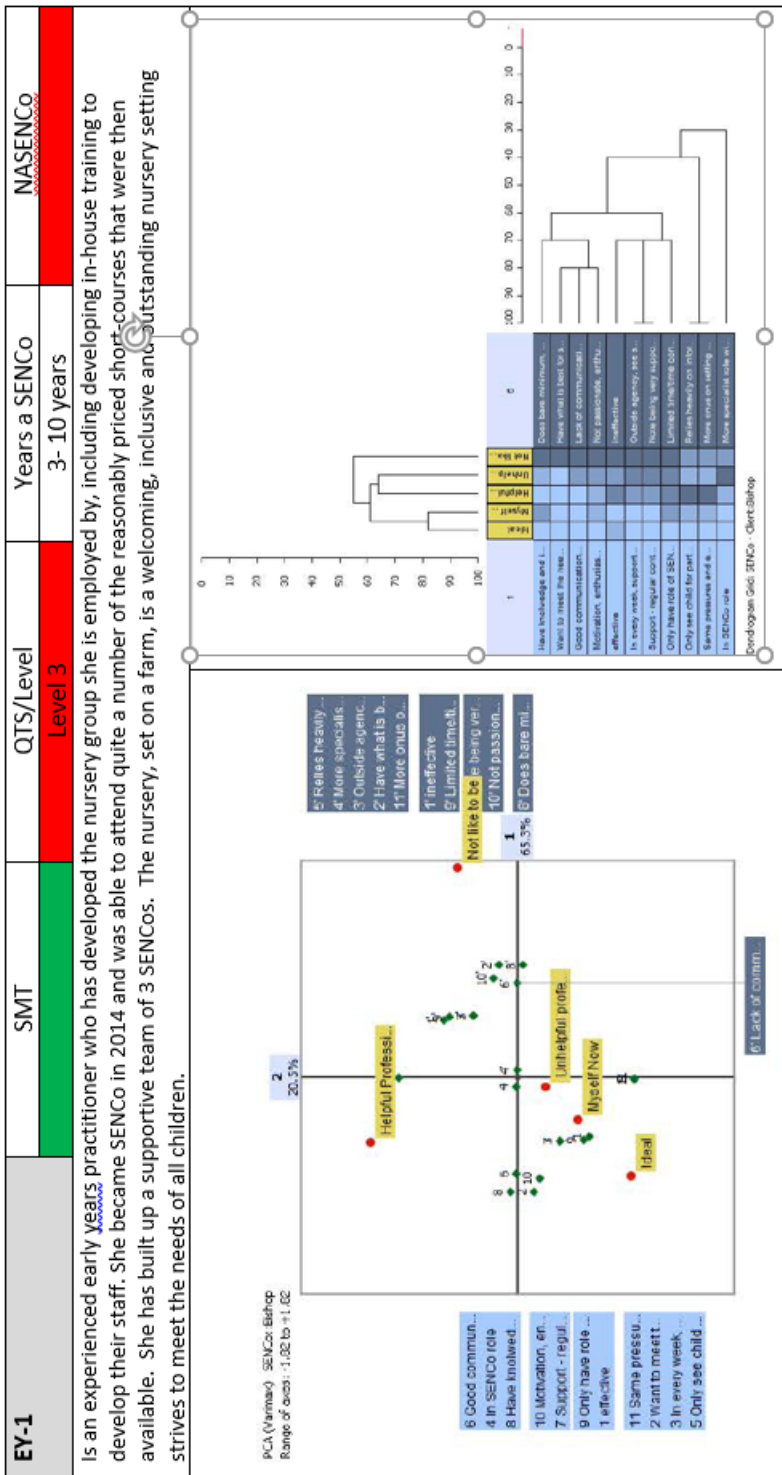
PY-4

PY-5

PY-6

PY-7

EY-1



Significant Constructs (Principal Component Analysis):

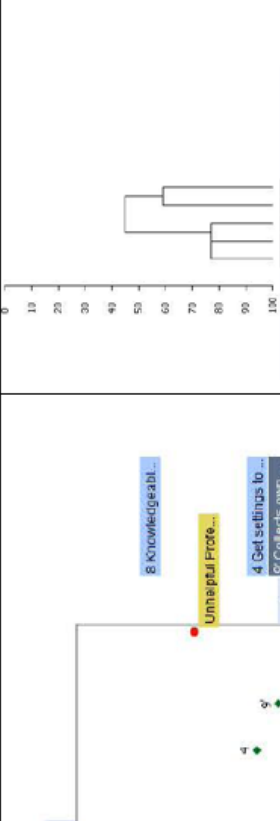
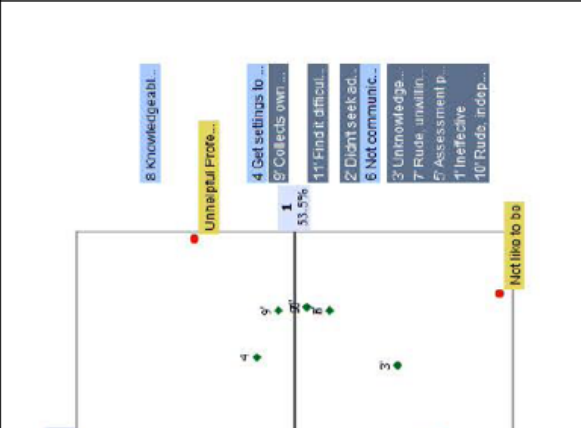
70	Regular contact, understanding, empathy, support and being able to concentrate on this role. In every week to support staff with being able to concentrate on this role -effective with regular contact and in every week - Motivation, enthusiasm and passion for it with regular contact -Good communication with regular contact Have knowledge and involvement outside nursery with motivation and enthusiasm and a passion for it and good communication and want to meet the needs of the child	80	-In every week with regular contact -Good communication with motivation, enthusiasm and a passion for it -want to meet the needs of the child with good communication	90	- same pressures and expectations with only see the child for part of the day
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EY-2	SMT	QTS/Level ECPP 2011	Years a SENCo <3 years	NASENCo
<p>Very experienced Early Years practitioner who has previously worked in private schools. Did her early years practitioner training then her top-up to make this a degree in 2011. Found the experience life-changing, enabling her to see connections and the overview of the child, family, interventions etc. This setting is a private day nursery caring for children aged 3 months to 5 years, open all year round, set in a small village to the south of a large city. Whilst she enjoys the challenge of the SENCo role (which she took on in 2016), and is part of the Senior Management Team, she is very glad of support and advice from the other two SENCos in the group, and admits that she finds the paperwork hard to get on top of.</p>				
<p>PCA (Network) SENCo:Debra Range of axes: -1.5 to +1.5</p>		<p>Bar chart showing scores for 15 constructs. The x-axis ranges from 0 to 100. The y-axis lists the constructs.</p>		
<p>Significant Constructs (Principal Component Analysis):</p>				
70	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -support, care, help all the time with professionals there to support children and families -effective with support, care, help all the time -commitment to care and support of children and families with support, care, help all the time -have best interests of child in mind with committed to supporting families 	80	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -committed to paperwork with specifically educated professional, higher level training -commitment to the role rather than the paperwork with have best interests of child in mind 	100
70	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -support, care, help all the time with professionals there to support children and families -effective with support, care, help all the time -commitment to care and support of children and families with support, care, help all the time -have best interests of child in mind with committed to supporting families 	90	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - professionals there to support children and family with SENCo role 	100

EY-3

EY-3	SMT	QTS/Level	Years a SENCo	NASENCo
<p>EY-3 is a very experienced Early Years Practitioner who has been a SENCo for over 5 years. Her attention to detail is meticulous and she is part of the Senior Management Team. She has done some advanced-level practitioner training. The nursery is set in a village and has over 100 children (from 3 months to 4 years) on role, housed in five rooms. There is also a busy before and after school club taking children up to 9 years, run at the school next to the nursery.</p>				
<p>PCA (Varimax) SEM Cor: Edwards. Range of cases: -1.66 to +1.66</p>				
<p>Significant Constructs (Principal Component Analysis):</p>				
70	<p>-professional working relationships (support, understanding, knowledge) with effective</p> <p>-outcomes for children come first with effective</p> <p>-keep up to date with effective</p> <p>-only see child for a very short time with work for County Council and snap-shot view</p>	80	<p>-outcomes for children come first with working to achieve same targets for child and working to achieve same targets for child</p> <p>-keep up to date with changes in legislation and awareness of what support is around</p> <p>-understanding an EHCP and how it works with outcomes for children come first and keep up to date with changes in legislation and awareness of what support is available</p> <p>-work for County Council with snap-shot view, come in and out a variety of settings, different case-loads</p>	

EY-4

EY-4	SMT	QTS/Level	Years a SENCo	NASENCo
	32 years	10 + years		
<p>Part-time area SENCo since 2015 (the roles were reduced two years ago so a fewer number now job share) covering a distinct area of the County. She previously worked in X so had valuable transferrable experience. Role is to support setting SENCos and parents with children with the most complex and significant needs in their pre-school year and as they transfer to Reception. Has found getting to know the changes challenging, having to train SENCos in material that she herself could not know adequately about due to the timescales and evolving nature of the local response.</p>				
<p>PCA (Varimax) SENCo: Flower Range of axes: -1.2 to +1.5</p> 				
<p>Significant Constructs (PCA):</p>				
70	-ability to holistically assess a situation and make a decision with effective	-knowledge of their subject with ability to holistically assess	80	-knowledgeable about holistic development of children with effective -collates evidence form others with communicative and really supportive
70	-ability to holistically assess with knowledge of their own domain/subject	-professional, respectful with communicative, a good listener, seeks others views and really supportive and helpful	90	-Supportive, diplomatic, empathetic with communicative and supportive -collates evidence from others with professional and supportive
100	-really supportive and helpful/liased, communicated, sought my views) with	communicative, a good listener.	100	-supportive, diplomatic, empathetic with professional

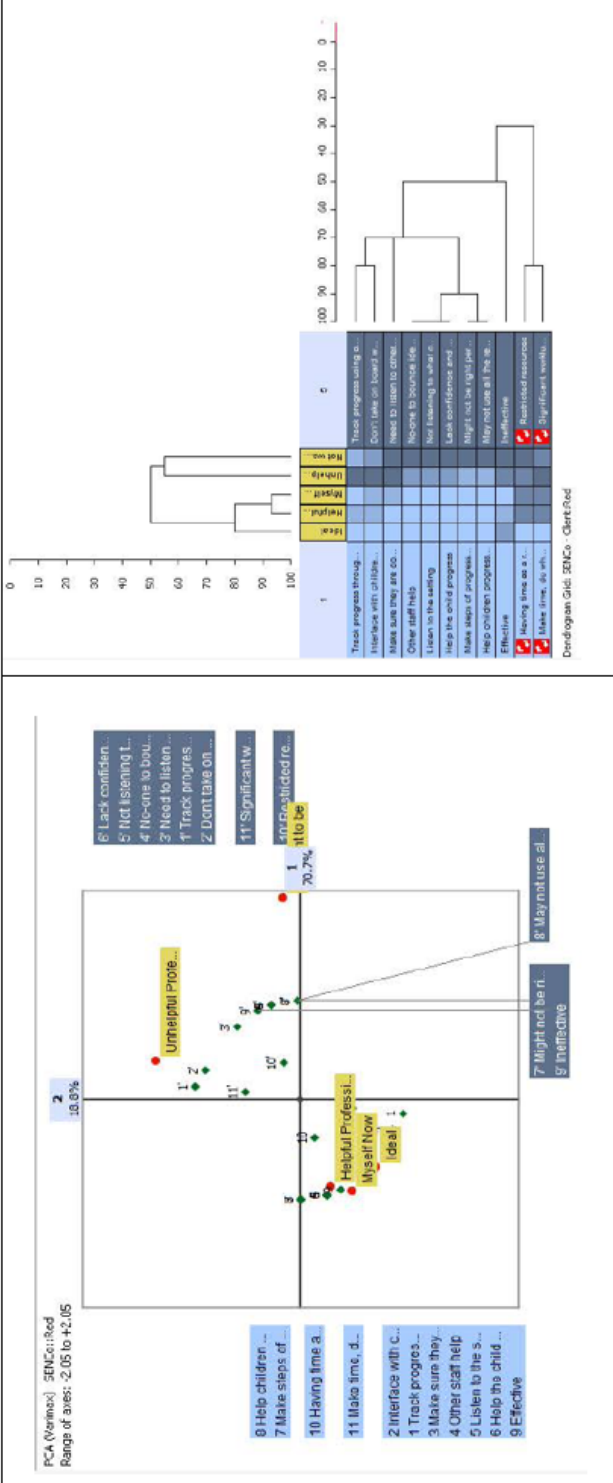
EY-5

EY-5	SMT	QTS/Level 40 years	Years a SENCo 20 + years	NASENCo			
<p>Worked for many years in a special school, including in the nursery assessment unit where multi-professional working and assessments were routine. She has extensive knowledge and experience which is used as a valuable resource as well as being recognised as such by other professionals. She co-owns a private day care nursery set in an area of high deprivation. There are 45 places with 83 children attending, aged 6 months to 4 years, at the time of assessment. There is a baby room, toddler room and pre-school room. The ethos relies on the importance of the key-person role and children and parents being happy. As wide a range of purposeful play opportunities as possible is offered, with practitioners supporting children and encouraging their enquiry.</p>			<p>PCA (Varimax) - SENCo:Henry Range of axes: -1.72 to 1.72</p> <p>7 Knowledge an... 0 Lots of exper... 4 Need to work c... 2 Able to spend... 1 LESS GOOD KNO... 3 Paperwork mu... 5 Want to be alw... 11 Hands on ex... 9 Knowledge of... 8 Specialist kno... 10 Effective 11 Different pro... 5 Don't have ha... 2 Paperwork is... 1 Knowledge of... 7 Experience of... 6 Wouldn't nee... 0 Knowledge of... 10 Ineffective</p>	<p>Significant Constructs (PCA):</p>	<p>70</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -specialist knowledge of this age group with knowledge of child development and expectations -knowledge and experience with specialist knowledge of this age group -Need to work closely with the children with specialist knowledge of this age group -want to be always familiar with the children with knowledge and experience -Paperwork must be done with need to work closely with the children -hands on experience with need to work closely with children -able to spend more time over a period of time with hands on experience -Effective – with able to spend more time over a period of time. 	<p>80</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Lots of experience with specialist knowledge and experience -Need to work closely with this age-group with knowledge and experience -want to be always familiar with the children with lots of experience -paperwork must be done with want to be always familiar with the children. -hands on experience with want to be always familiar 	<p>90</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Lots of experience with knowledge and experience -need to work closely with this age-group with lots of experience -want to be always familiar with the children with need to work closely with them

EY-6

EY-6	SMT	QTS/Level Level 3	Years a SENCO 3- 10 years	NASENCO	
<p>EY-6 has been a SENCO in an Early Years nursery since 2011 and has a bank of experience and contacts to use. She is on the Senior Management Team and has regular contact with certain professionals who regularly visit this setting, in a more deprived area of a City. There is a high percentage of children requiring further support, such as Speech and Language Therapy or Paediatricians. The nursery takes 45 children at a time across two rooms and is set in the community it serves.</p>					
<p>PCA (Venn) SENCO-SMT Range of areas: -2.18 to +2.18</p>		<p>PCA (Venn) SENCO-QTS/Level Range of areas: -2.18 to +2.18</p>			
<p>Significant Constructs (PCA):</p>					
70	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -different understanding of what is best for child with interested in wellbeing/whole package -paperwork is up to date with care about child at that point and have a view to the future -determination to get everything you need with paperwork is up to date -understand what they are doing and how they are going to get there with paperwork is up to date -knowledge in their area of expertise with determination and understand what they are doing Deeper knowledge with determination and understand what they are doing 	80	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -care about child at that point and have vision of future with interested in wellbeing/whole package -goal of getting EHC with paperwork is up to date -understand what they are doing with determination to get everything you need -see needs of child with goal of getting EHC -knowledge in their area with see needs of child/development -Deeper knowledge with see needs of child 	90	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Different understanding of what is best for child with care about child at that point and have a vision of their future - goal of getting EHC with determination to get everything you need -understand what they are doing with goal of getting EHC - see needs of child/development with determination -see needs of child with understand what needs to be done
100	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Deeper knowledge with knowledge in their area of expertise 				

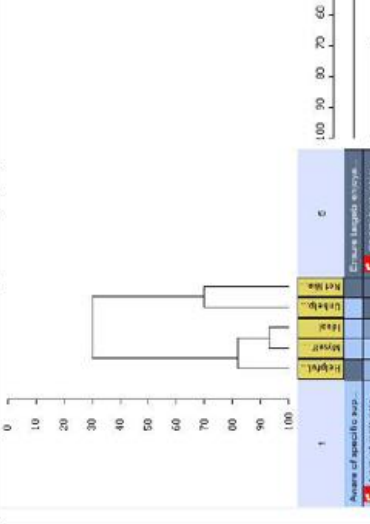
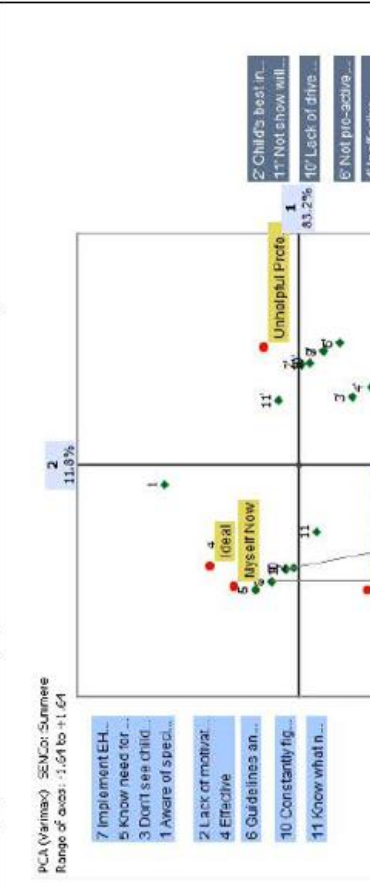
A new SENCo who took on the role of SENCo two and a half years ago and who does not have a role in the Senior Management Team. Whilst she has attended some short training courses and can access support, EY-7 can feel a bit isolated and in the need of a little more support and guidance with regard to some of the more complex issues the SENCo role necessitates. She works in a small pre-school that is housed in the same grounds (though functions independently from) the local primary school. There is a small team of professional early-years practitioners who all want the children to go to school happy and confident.



Significant Constructs (PCA):

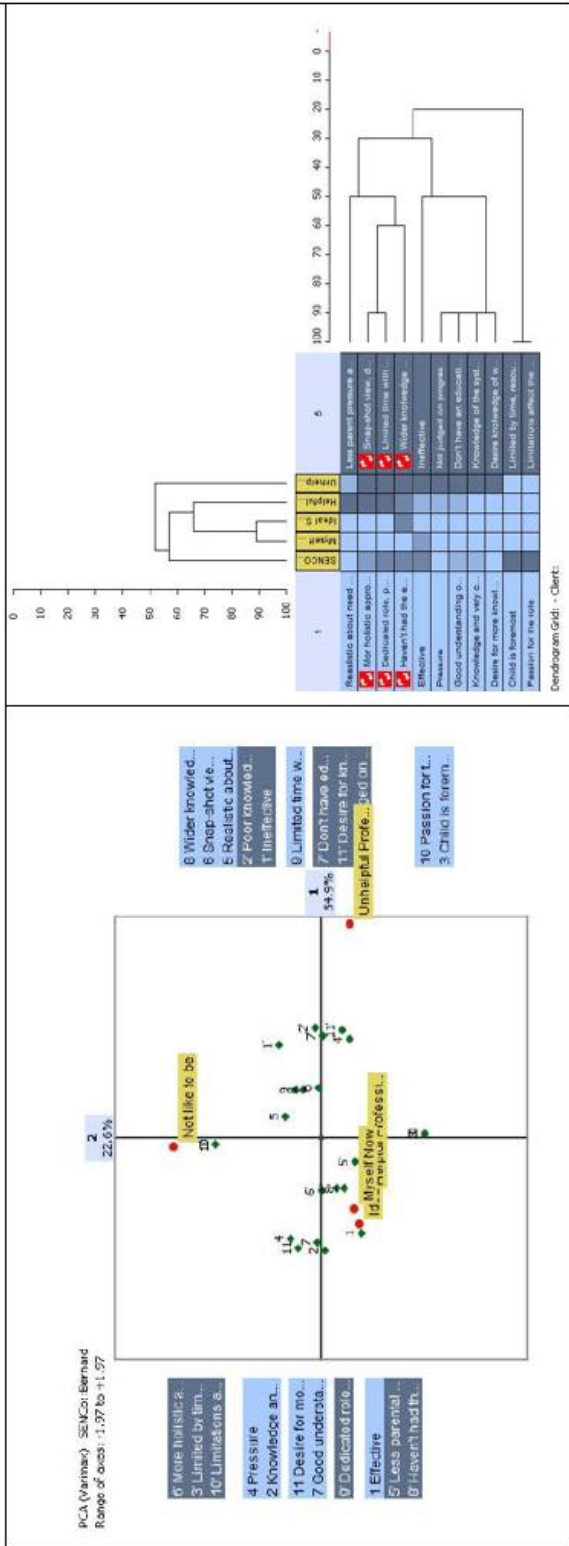
70	-making sure SENCo is doing the best thing with interface with children -other staff help with making sure they are doing the best thing -listen to the setting with making sure they are doing the best thing -help children progress as far as possible with making sure they are doing the right thing	80	-Make time, do whatever you can with having time as a resource	90	Make steps of progress appropriate with other staff and help and listen to the setting and help the children progress -help child progress with other staff to help and listen to the setting and	100	Listen to the setting with help children progress and listen to the setting with other staff to help and Help children progress as far as they can with make steps of progress appropriate to child
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EY-8

EY-8	SMT	QTS/Level	Years a SENCo	NASENCo
<p>Is an energetic, experienced early year practitioner who has a bank of experience and knowledge to draw on/build on. She is committed to person-centred care and the nursery has built a reputation amongst professionals in the town and area where it is situated for it's excellent support of children with additional needs. The nursery itself is fun and welcoming. An enjoyable but challenging environment for children to develop and learn in is created, and there is a strong belief in learning through play and inclusion.</p>				
<p>PCA (Varimax) - SENCo: Summers Range of axes: -1.64 to +1.64</p> 				
<p>Significant Constructs (Principal Component Analysis):</p>				
70	-ensure targets are enjoyable with know levels and personalise	-ensure children are happy and fulfilling with effective levels	-want child to have best start with know levels	-constantly fighting for children with know levels -know what needs to be done with ensure children are happy
80	-Effective with ensure targets are enjoyable	-want child to have best start with child's best interests and collate correct info and ensure targets are enjoyable	-constantly fighting for children with ensure targets are enjoyable and child's best interests and guidelines and legislation	-know what needs to be done with constantly fighting
90	Ensure children are happy and fulfilling with child's best interests and collate correct info and same	-want child to have best start with ensure children are happy and fulfilling		
100				-Collate correct info with child's best interests at heart -guidelines and legislation the same with child's best interests and collating correct information -constantly fighting with want child to have best start

PY-1	SMT	QTS/Level	Years a SENCo	NASENCo
		15 years	3- 10 years	2009

Began career as a TA, then did degree and graduate teacher route in special schools. Transferred to this setting to manage above-average number of pupils with SEND. Also high number of pupils entitled to PP and above-average number of looked-after children. Nurture groups a strong feature in school. PY-1 was Deputy Head Teacher but is now Head Teacher (commencing Sept. 2017).



Significant Constructs (Principal Component Analysis):

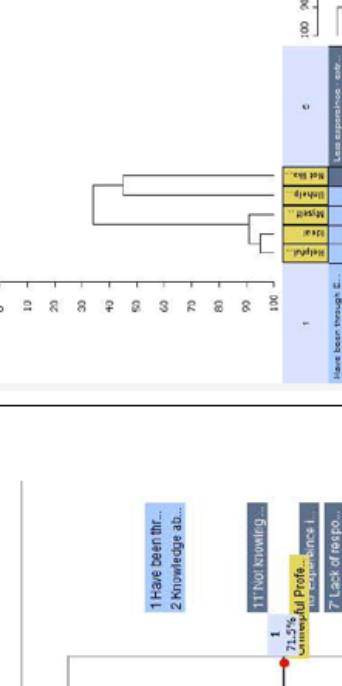
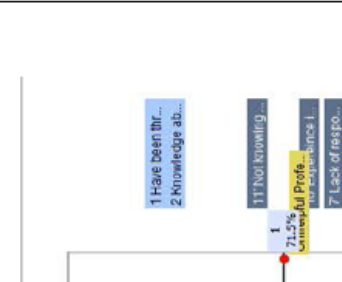
80	Knowledge and very clear understanding with pressure -desire for more knowledge with good understanding of options available (education)	90	-Dedicated role with more holistic approach -Good understanding with pressure -knowledge and very clear understanding of options available -desire for more knowledge with pressure and good understanding of options available	100	Passion for the role with child is foremost
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PY-2

PY-2	SMT	QTS/Level	Years a SENCO	NASENCO
		20 Years	< 3 years	2017
<p>Deputy Head of large Primary school in an area of social deprivation. No class-teaching load. High percentage of PP/disadvantaged children. 48% are on Speech and Language register, 19% on SEND register, 18% on vulnerable learners register. White-working class area. Dynamic, focussed practitioner working in an academy trust. Using tracking to plan and scrutinize provision for efficacy.</p>				
		<p>PCA (Varimax) SENCO:Jan Range of axes: -1.89 to +1.89</p> <p>Dendrogram Grid: SENCO - Client:Jan</p>		
<p>Significant Constructs (PCA):</p>				
70	80	90	100	
<p>-want to provide the very best for pupils with really good understanding</p> <p>-want to achieve the very best for children with really good understanding</p> <p>- put extra things in e.g. transition support with effective and good knowledge and wanting to provide and achieve very best for children</p>	<p>Effective with go beyond what is expected to get the best provision</p> <p>-Can turn to for support with application with go beyond what is expected and effective</p> <p>-want to provide the very best for pupils with can turn to for support with application</p> <p>-want to achieve the very best for children with can turn to for support</p>	<p>Have knowledge and experience to know best with a home-work balance</p> <p>-really good understanding of SEND with go beyond what is expected and effective</p> <p>-can turn to for support with really good understanding of SEND</p>	<p>Want to provide the very best support with good knowledge of implementing EHCPs</p> <p>-want to achieve the very best for children with good knowledge of implementing EHCPs and wanting to provide the best for pupils</p>	

PY-3	SMT	QTS/Level 20 years	Years a SENCo 10+ years	NASENCo
<p>Took on SENCo role 2006. Has class-teaching responsibility and co-ordinates the SENCo role, in addition to an assistant and the Head Teacher leading this up (Head Teacher is going to attend NASENCo course 2017-2018). Previously entirely managed role but chose to reduce hours to part-time due to family commitments. The setting is a Primary and Nursery with approx. 280 pupils. High number of FSM and PP. SEN support children approx. 25% of roll. Higher number of GRT children. 3 EHC and several other applications in process.</p>				
<p>PCA (Varimax) SENCo: Louise Range of axes: -1.62 to 4.162</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6' Requirements... 7' Ineffective 11' Not teaching 9' Application m... 11' Working with 8' Unrealistic ex... 5' Not accessibl... 4' SENCo assign... 2' Job specialisat... 3' Present you wil... 10' Correct supp... 		<p>Dendrogram Grid: SENCo - Client: Louise</p>		
<p>Significant Constructs (PCA):</p>				
70	<p>Answer queries as quickly as possible with common goal of making an effective EHCP application</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -know what is expected/required with good communication -effective with know what is expected/required -able to give the same information with good communication and effective -correct support for child and school available with ensure evidence is there and supports application 			80
70	<p>Ensure evidence is there and supports application with able to give the same information</p>			90
<p>Common goal of making an effective EHCP with child central to everything</p>				

PY-4	SMT	QTS/Level	Years a SENCO	NASENCo
<p>Took on SENCO role in 2003, working first in two Main City Boroughs before transferring to this LA in 2014. No class-teaching load. Very experienced, though with different models of provision. Primary school set in a multi-ethnic area with a high level of EAL pupils. Ethos is inclusive – “we try our best to provide personalised learning provision and care”. Generally teachers are flexible and open to suggestion and change.</p>	<p>35 years</p>	<p>20 + years</p>		
<p>PCA (Varimax) SENCO:11:11 Range of axes: -1.62 to +1.62</p>				
<p>Significant Constructs (PCA):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Flexible, open to... 2 Just in it for the... 3 Part of job to k... 4 Rude as anxio... 5 Overly concern... 6 Pass the buck... 7 Take responsi... 8 Flexible for the... 9 Patient, Work... 10 Knowledge ab... 11 Deal with cha... 12 Historical over... 13 Gets involved... 14 Don't have d... 15 Fed up with co... 16 Ineffective 17 Ultimate deci... 18 Less involved... 19 New to it, often... 20 Victims of syst... 21 Part of job to k... 22 Rude as anxio... 23 Overly concern... 24 Pass the buck... 25 Missed 26 Helpful Process... 27 Not like to be 28 Effective 				
70	<p>Rude as anxious and not secure with process - it's part of the job to keep up to date</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -just in it for the money with it's part of the job to keep up to date -overly concerned with systems with rude as anxious and not secure -pass the buck with overly concerned with systems -new to it, often not from education with overly concerned with systems -(in?) ineffective with new to it/often not from education 	80	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -just in it for the money with rude as anxious and not secure -overly concerned with systems with just in it for the money -new to it, often not from education with pass the buck -less involved, objective with new to it. Often not from education. -i(n?) ineffective with less involved, objective 	

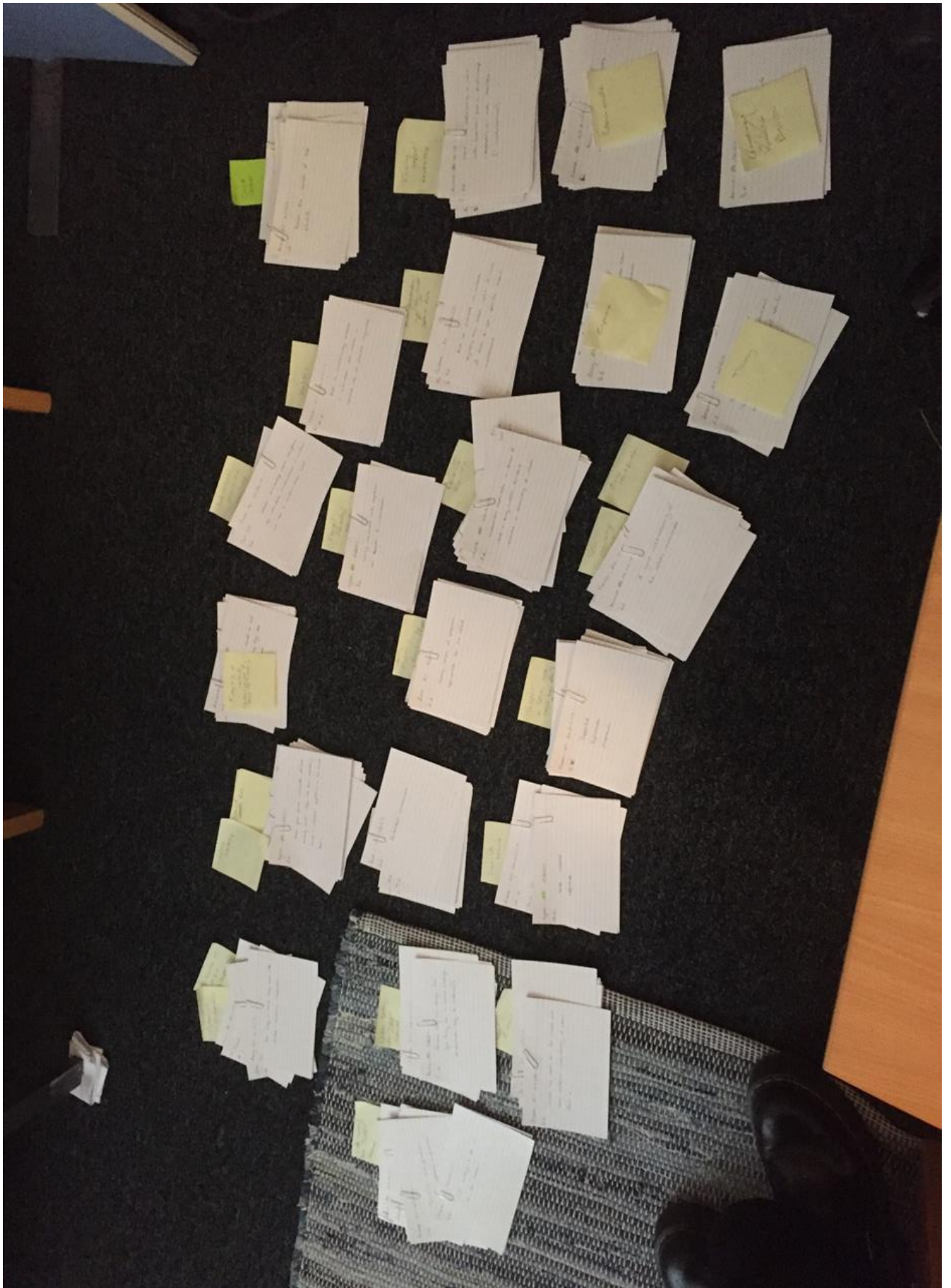
PY-5	SMT	QTS/Level 11 years	Years a SENCo < 3 years	NASENCo 2017	
<p>Dynamic practitioner with vision and organisation. Setting is a rural, medium-sized primary school with a two-form entry and attached nursery. SEN percentages on the register = 6 per year group, roll of 450 with 3 children on EHCP/statements.</p>					
<p>PCA (Name): SENCo:Mary Range of avers: -1.98 to +1.98</p>  <p> 9 Managing conf... 8 Effective 6 Usually contac... 4 Eagerness to f... 3 Get parental fr... 5 Willing to shar... 7 Persevere, kee... 10 Experience of... 11 Statutory obl... 2 Not willing to f... 1 Less experien... </p>		 <p> 1 Have been thr... 2 Knowledge ab... 11 Not knowl... 7 Lack of respo... 5 Doesn't share... 3 Don't take par... 4 Carry on as al... 6 Not available... 8 Ineffective 9 Just one job r... 10 Experience s... 11 Not knowl... </p> <p> Have been through c... Knowledge about pro... Use parental view... Eagerness to find sol... Willing to share exper... Usually contactab... Persevere, keep tryi... Effective Managing conflicti... Experience s with par... Statutory obligatio... </p> <p>Don't know what I should do - Client: Mary</p>			
<p>Significant Constructs (PCA):</p>					
70	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Managing conflict with statutory obligations -Experience of SEND with statutory obligations -perseverance with statutory obligations -eagerness to find out more with perseverance and usually contactable -knowledge about process with eagerness to find out more and get parental view -effective with contactable and willing to share and getting parental view 	80	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experience of SEND with managing conflict and experience of SEND -usually contactable with experience of SEND and perseverance -willingness to share with perseverance and usually contactable -get parental view with usually contactable and willingness to share -knowledge about process with get parental view Have been through the EHCP process with eagerness to find out more 	90	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eagerness to find out more with willingness to share -get parental view with eagerness to find out more -have been through the process with knowledge about process

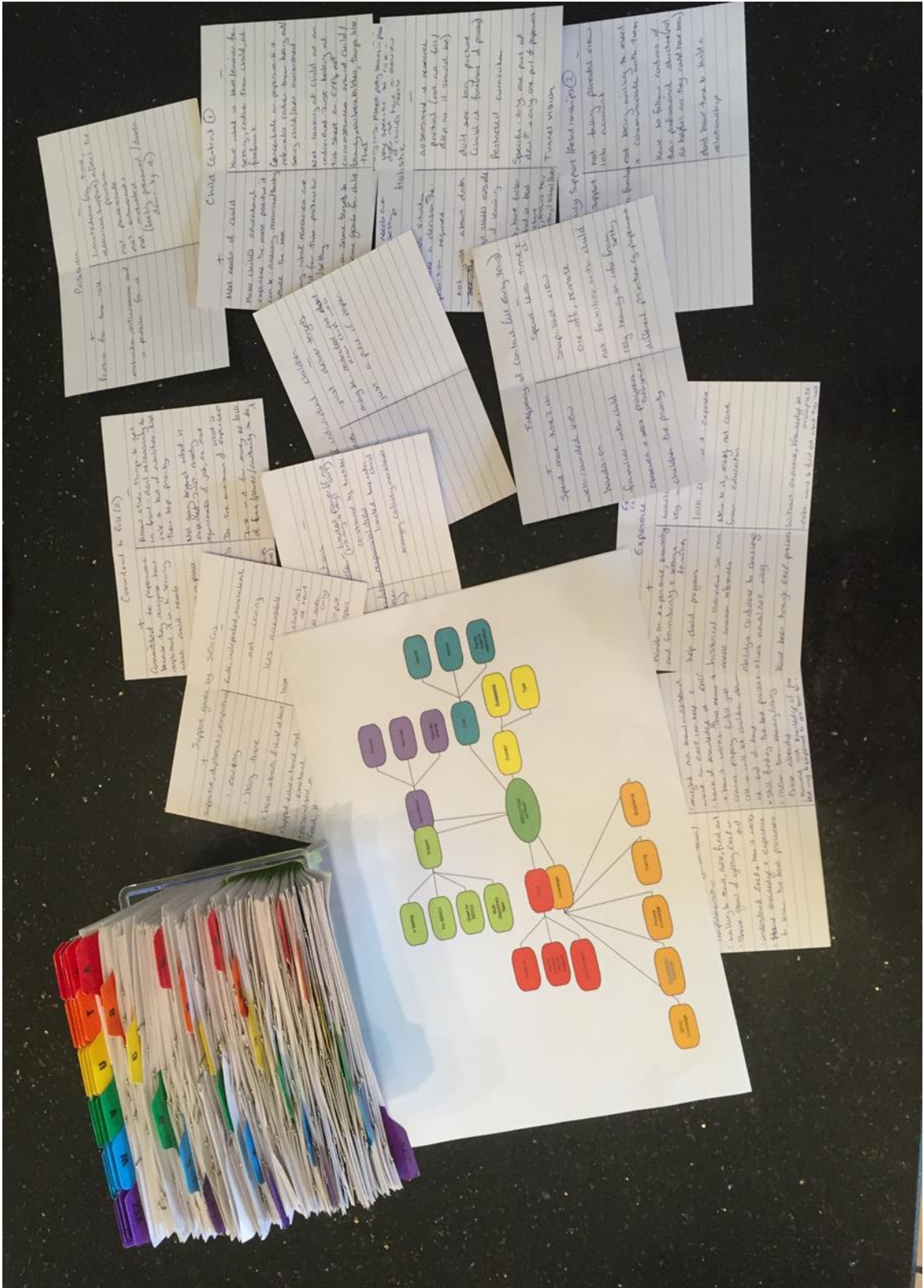
PY-6	SMT	QTS/Level 21 years	Years a SENCO < 3 years	NASENCO	
<p>Joint safeguarding officer with many year of classroom experience. Large Primary set in an area of social-deprivation with a high level of safe-guarding and wellbeing issues. No class-teaching load. A wonderful setting for children to feel safe and supported to make the most of their ability and reach their potential. A school that has a vision to always think what more it can do for this child and creatively use the budget to buy in professionals to support staff in achieving this. Recognises that support for staff in this environment is also essential.</p>					
<p>PCA (Varimax) SENCO: Penny Range of axes: -1.89 to +1.89</p>		<p>Dendrogram Grid: SENCO - Client Penny</p>			
<p>Significant Constructs (PCA):</p>					
70	<p>Personal knowledge of child and same commitments, obligations etc. -can look holistically at the process with knowledge of application process -has confidence identify others' points of view with effective and personal knowledge of child Make child's educational experience the most positive with knowledge of application process Confident to draw on wide range of sources with confidence to identify and challenge these also Know order that things need done in with having confidence to challenge other's views Believe they are doing the best thing with confidence to draw on wide range of sources</p>	80	<p>Knowledge of application process and same commitments, obligations, tasks to complete Effective and personal knowledge of child -can look holistically at the process with personal knowledge of the child and effective Make child's educational experience the most positive with personal knowledge of child and effective and holistic Confidence to draw on wide range of sources with making child's education the most positive Know order things need done in with confidence to draw on wide range of sources</p>	90	<p>Personal knowledge of child and knowledge of application process -confidence to identify/challenge other's points of view with looking holistically Make child's educational experience the most positive with having confidence to challenge other's views Believe they are doing the best thing with best interests of child at heart</p>

PY-7	SMT	QTS/Level	Years a SENCo	NASENCo
<p>Middle school setting (years 5,6,7). Approx. 200 children on roll. 32% on SEN register, approx. 15 EHCPs/statements, 11 of these in mainstream, 4 in Base. Experienced practitioner with established links with professionals and County.</p>				
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 48%;"> <p>PCA (Yainiao) SENCo: Poppy Range of users: 2.06 to 712.06</p> <p>5 Identify needs, ... 4 Churn out infor... 3 Both contribute 2 Attention to det... 1 Effective 10 Like to work... 9 Have overview... 8 Enhance/level... 11 Have to ment...</p> </div> <div style="width: 48%;"> <p>1 10 9 8</p> </div> </div>				
<p>Significant Constructs (PCA):</p>				
70	Identify needs, set targets with effective	Likes to work with a range of people and identify needs, set targets	80	Contribute – determining and informing provision with identifying needs, set targets
70	Likes to work with a range of people and identify needs, set targets	Contribute – determining and informing provision with identifying needs, set targets	80	Contribute – determining and informing provision with identifying needs, set targets
70	Likes to work with a range of people and identify needs, set targets	Contribute – determining and informing provision with identifying needs, set targets	80	Contribute – determining and informing provision with identifying needs, set targets
70	Likes to work with a range of people and identify needs, set targets	Contribute – determining and informing provision with identifying needs, set targets	80	Contribute – determining and informing provision with identifying needs, set targets
70	Likes to work with a range of people and identify needs, set targets	Contribute – determining and informing provision with identifying needs, set targets	80	Contribute – determining and informing provision with identifying needs, set targets
70	Likes to work with a range of people and identify needs, set targets	Contribute – determining and informing provision with identifying needs, set targets	80	Contribute – determining and informing provision with identifying needs, set targets
70	Likes to work with a range of people and identify needs, set targets	Contribute – determining and informing provision with identifying needs, set targets	80	Contribute – determining and informing provision with identifying needs, set targets
70	Likes to work with a range of people and identify needs, set targets	Contribute – determining and informing provision with identifying needs, set targets	80	Contribute – determining and informing provision with identifying needs, set targets
70	Likes to work with a range of people and identify needs, set targets	Contribute – determining and informing provision with identifying needs, set targets	80	Contribute – determining and informing provision with identifying needs, set targets
70	Likes to work with a range of people and identify needs, set targets	Contribute – determining and informing provision with identifying needs, set targets	80	Contribute – determining and informing provision with identifying needs, set targets
70	Likes to work with a range of people and identify needs, set targets	Contribute – determining and informing provision with identifying needs, set targets	80	Contribute – determining and informing provision with identifying needs, set targets
70	Likes to work with a range of people and identify needs, set targets	Contribute – determining and informing provision with identifying needs, set targets	80	Contribute – determining and informing provision with identifying needs, set targets
70	Likes to work with a range of people and identify needs, set targets	Contribute – determining and informing provision with identifying needs, set targets	80	Contribute – determining and informing provision with identifying needs, set targets

Appendix 9

Photographs of Ideographic Analysis





Appendix 10

Completed Group Repertory Grid

Group Repertory Grid

SENCo perceptions of practice and potential: Investigating EHCP implementation in early years and primary education

SENCo ID:	PY-5	Date:	5/1/18
Thinking about EHCP implementation, please rank the items in the left hand column by their importance to your practice: Definition and/or example			
Rank (1-21)	Item to be ranked		
1	Having knowledge of each individual child	<i>Individual, sometimes personal knowledge of each child, for example, of its history, family and interests.</i>	
5	Spending time with children	<i>Allows SENCo to get to know child personally and gain a well-rounded view (rather than just a snap shot, or knowledge of child just informed by written descriptions).</i>	
11	Having dedicated time for the SENCo role	<i>So can focus on the job and have some flexibility (rather than managing conflicting workloads, with the time available being restricted and sometimes 'eaten-into' by other demands).</i>	
19	SENcos giving caring support	<i>The educational and emotional needs of children and families are both considered. Support is accessible, caring and empathic.</i>	
21	Setting provides physical resources to support SENCo work	<i>Time, resources and other staff that take on board/listen to the SENCos advice are available and help share the workload and burden.</i>	
12	Advice and information support for SENCos	<i>Professionals within and without setting provide information and advice. These personnel are accessible and approachable.</i>	
6	Professional team is informed and respectful	<i>Members of the wider team respect and welcomes other views. They are considerate of the child, family and setting realities.</i>	
9	Collating robust, appropriate evidence	<i>Evidence is current, valued, timely and collated efficiently. Paperwork is well informed so can secure the best provision.</i>	
2	Children make appropriate progress	<i>Tracked with efficient and appropriate systems (e.g. early support tracking, Tapestry). Realistic targets and steps identified. Personalised.</i>	
8	Good communication	<i>Communication is respectful and open with a willingness to listen and share experience and information. This includes being available and prompt to reply.</i>	
20	Having a good work-life balance	<i>Time-management is effective and able to be objective and able to leave work at work (physically and mentally).</i>	
17	Having a realistic workload	<i>The workload is manageable with time and resources available. This allows time for training, liaison, support, and contact with children and families.</i>	
13	Training	<i>SENCos and staff are suitably trained. Training is available and accessible (time and finances are obtainable), developing the potential and effectiveness of SENCos.</i>	
3	Having good SEND and developmental knowledge	<i>SEND and developmental knowledge is secure and extensive, including knowledge about the child holistically, and support strategies and options available.</i>	
18	Being committed to the role	<i>Demonstrated by perseverance and the drive to ensure paperwork is well informed so can secure/deliver what the child needs. 'Extras' such as transition support and extended curriculum are identified and delivered.</i>	
7	Having good relationships with families and providing family support	<i>These are established and built up, with family and parental views being respected and accommodated.</i>	
10	Having a holistic view	<i>Assessment/understanding of the whole situation (not just a part) is available. This informs decisions about provision and any needs to enhance skills outside the normal range of learning.</i>	
4	The child is central to the whole process	<i>Needs are met in an individualised, positive, flexible way so that the outcome is the best it can be. (Understanding of the individual child and the circumstances around them is the priority rather than what is best for the setting).</i>	
14	Having passion for the role	<i>Being motivated and enthusiastic and 'going the extra mile'.</i>	
15	Having a good knowledge of process	<i>Up-to-date, proficient knowledge of the process, including what information needs to go in and effective ways of gathering and recording this. Has a good understanding of the system, the requirements and the best processes to make an effective EHCP application to secure the best provision for the child.</i>	
16	Having experience of SEND and the EHCP process	<i>Experience of working with pupils with SEND and applying for and/or implementing EHCP applications. May have a historical overview which allows common references to be made. These give the ability and confidence to challenge others/task why/draw on a pool of resources and knowledge.</i>	
Please use this section to add any additional comments that you would to:			

Appendix 11

Amalgamated Results

Amalgamated Results

Descriptive Results: **Workline**; Critical Event Narrative Interview; Ideographic analysis (Repertory Grid Interview);

Numerical Results: **Cluster Analysis (Repertory Grid Interview)**; **Principal Component Analysis (Repertory Grid Interview)**;
Group Repertory Grid Ranking.

RQ1

	Institutional	Organisational	Individual
ROLE Both		Ethos/values/beliefs Child Central Workload	'Huge', 'frustrating', 'overwhelming' Mediating- cascading(guiding) Seeking clarification for the role at performance management (P-3) 'juggling' P-6 Motivation, enthusiasm, passion and commitment to the role (CA 60%) Role-identity salience
	Inclusion Adviser/Area SENCo	Status	Able to spend time with children – allows monitoring (CA 70%)
EY		Shared visions and practice (CA 60%)	
P		Dedicated time for role (CA 60%) SLT	
RESPONSIBILITY Both	Processes (CA 60%) Communication (CA 60%) Accessible Support (CA 70%) Consistent Information (CA 70%)	Good process knowledge about application procedure (CA 80%) 'Pulling things together'(P- 6) Inputting levels/targets. Following IEPs School Pupil Online Tracker – baseline, starting date, desirable outcome/progress <u>Evidence-tracking</u>	Making a child's education experience the most positive it can be Ensure children are happy and fulfilling as much as they can Using time with child efficiently Training and supporting others Identification of SEND Accountability(shared)

		<p>Good SEND/developmental knowledge</p> <p>SEND manifestations and approaches (CA 80%)</p> <p>Training</p> <p>Building a team</p> <p>Making things accessible for all staff/teachers</p> <p>Sharing responsibilities</p> <p>Staff delivering</p> <p>Child Central</p> <p>Help child progress</p> <p>Secure provision</p>	<p>Personal knowledge of child</p>
		<p>Good developmental/SEND knowledge</p>	<p>Introducing idea of SEND</p> <p>Obtaining parental permission</p> <p>Holistic knowledge and assessment (CA 70%)</p> <p>Up-to-date knowledge of changes/available support (CA 70%)</p>
		<p>Provision for SEND (academisation)</p>	<p>Securing parental view (CA 70%)</p>
<p>RELATIONSHIP Both</p> <p>EY</p> <p>P</p>	<p>With professionals. With caseworkers (better when some relationship and knowledge present)</p>	<p>Good relationships with professionals; setting staff; parents and families; and child</p> <p>Staff working together, e.g. on behaviour management (EY-6)</p> <p>Professional working relationships (CA 70%)</p> <p>Other staff available to support (60%)</p>	<p>Impact on child and on family relations and functioning (P-7)</p>

RQ2

Institutional

Positive Influences	Both Phases	Early Years	Primary
Communication and Liaison	Listen to setting and value what they are saying	Listen to setting	Usually contactable/available Quick to reply to emails and questions (CA 70%)
Evidence		Early Support Tracking documents	
Knowledge and training	On-line sources of information	Skills Network Open University	NASEN
Process Knowledge			
Support	Obtained from professionals, advice and information support is available for SENCo	Area SENCo, Cluster group	Gives consistent information (CA 70%) Need reliable source to turn to for support with application, who is able to give answers as quickly as possible

Negative Influences	Both Phases	Early Years	Primary
Communication and Liaison	Difficulty accessing professionals Institutions/professions Not listening to what others are saying		
Evidence	Accessing and waiting for professionals		12-month targets removed from EHCPs
Knowledge and training		Less available due to cutbacks Reliance on existing knowledge	Caseworkers are often new to this work and may not come from education so no common references or experience
Process Knowledge	Electronic forms and information not user-friendly Information and advice at introduction of SEND Code		

	was incomplete and difficult to access		
Support	Privatisation of LA support services	Area SENCo's changed settings and have reduced time	Changes in caseworkers Difficult access to advice from County.

Organisational Level

Positive Influences	Both Phases	Early Years	Primary
Communication and Liaison	<p>Good relationships with other professionals</p> <p>Networking. Sharing information</p> <p>Professional team is informed and respectful</p> <p>Usually contactable/available and quick to respond (CA 70%)</p>	<p>Setting is listened to. Institutions listen to the settings</p>	<p>Links with other professionals (better in academies)</p> <p>Willingness to share experience and information (CA 70%)</p>
Contact	<p>Personal knowledge of child and family</p>	<p>Able to spend with children-builds up knowledge and relationship and enables monitoring (CA 70%)</p>	<p>Getting parental views (CA 70%)</p>
Evidence	<p>Needs to be individually tailored</p> <p>Wording important</p> <p>Collection needs to be routine</p> <p>Correct information needed to support children as well as to support and application</p> <p>Ensure evidence is there and that it supports application</p> <p>Reports received quickly so information and advice is current and can be implemented</p>	<p>Tracking systems such as Tapestry used for every child</p>	<p>Systematic collection of evidence makes process easier</p> <p>Helps staff understand what they are doing and how they are going to get there</p> <p>In-class files and systems such as School Pupil Online Tracker used for every child</p>
Holistic		<p>Knowledgeable about holistic development</p>	<p>Shared vision, practice and values (CA 60%)</p>

		Able to holistically assess a situation and decide what provision is required Holistic knowledge and assessment (CA 70%).	
Knowledge and Training	Good knowledge of their own area of expertise/domain/subject.	Sharing/delivering knowledge to others in setting	NASEN. Impact of setting ethos and support Perception/interpretation of SEND.
Outcomes	Implementing advice to help children make appropriate progress Identify needs, set targets and support progress (CA 70%) Take child into account – personalise and provide adaptable, flexible support (CA 60%)	Child’s needs are foremost (CA 70%) Work with others to achieve same targets for children.	Secure funding through EHCP. Secure specialist provision/placement Using SPOTTER – establish baseline, starting date, progress wanted.
Process Knowledge	Correct information is collected to support children	Keep up to date with changes in legislation	
Support	Supporting staff Delegate workload Team ethos Having a good work-life balance	Dedicated time so can focus (CA 60%) Other staff available to support work (CA 60%).	From HT/SLT Academies report greater autonomy Dedicated time for role Managing workload – roles can complement each other Setting provides physical resources.

Negative Influences	Both Phases	Early Years	Primary
Communication and Liaison	Chasing reports Not accessible Not listening to what others are saying Lack of communication (referring to a specialist setting who did not let nursery know so	Professionals waiting until child starts school.	Timetable demands Rude Not taking in to account the parent’s views, not being willing to meet and communicate with them;

	adaptations targets could be implemented there too);		
Contact	Snap-shot view/knowledge only	Lack of time to support children Not being very supportive/not being there/not wanting to help	
Evidence	Having to chase up reports Snap-shot view may be incomplete/skewed		
Holistic		Assessment may be partial, not thorough	
Knowledge and Training	Affected by changes in staff Impact of cutbacks May be unknowledgeable about SEND and where to seek information Impact on setting ethos and support.	Perception/interpretation of SEND	Availability. Affordability
Process Knowledge		May not understand how and EHCP can help	Having to consider funding Having to access emergency funding
Support	Cutbacks/funding cuts Depends on attitude/ethos/priorities and resources	Time constraints Support and professional staff not being very supportive/not being there/not wanting to help	SENCo asking the question is one of many – they are not the central/highest priority of organisation they are seeking help from

Individual Level

Positive Influences	Both Phases	Early Years	Primary
Confidence	Has confidence to question other's points of view/ see it is a part of the bigger picture		

Communication and Liaison	<p>Good communication. Good relationships with families</p> <p>Getting parents on board.</p>	<p>Working with parents in denial</p> <p>Good working relationships with professionals (CA 70%).</p>	<p>Need to be approachable</p>
Contact	<p>Personal knowledge of child and family.</p> <p>Working to build up relationship</p> <p>Pop in to support staff regularly</p> <p>Spending time with children</p>	<p>Regular contact (CA 70%)</p> <p>Hands-on experience.</p>	<p>Personal knowledge of children (and their history) (CA 80%)</p> <p>Get involved, conscientious and caring</p>
Evidence	<p>Correct information must be collected to inform/support children</p> <p>Collate robust, appropriate evidence.</p>	<p>Having to find out information – being proactive</p>	<p>Ensure evidence is there and it supports the application</p> <p>Robust evidence</p>
Holistic	<p>Having a holistic view</p> <p>Knowledge of each individual child</p> <p>Takes child into account (and family/(history)so provision is tweaked/personalised/adaptable</p> <p>Wellbeing of child</p>	<p>Holistic knowledge and assessment (CA 70%)</p>	<p>Look holistically at process (CA 80%)</p>
Knowledge and Training	<p>Training</p> <p>Good SEND and developmental knowledge</p> <p>Experience of SEND and EHCP process</p> <p>Really good understanding of SEND that can be used to support/help (CA 80%)</p> <p>Delivering training. Learning terminology</p> <p>Everyday knowledge of child</p>	<p>Good knowledge of child development</p> <p>Knowledge of child development – expectations at different stages</p>	<p>Achieving NASENCo</p> <p>Eager to keep finding out more, keeps learning (CA 60%)</p> <p>Historical overview so can make common references</p>
Outcomes	<p>Children make appropriate progress</p> <p>Ensure children are happy and fulfilling as much as they can</p> <p>Share same goal in sense of getting EHCP in the end</p> <p>Identify needs, set targets, support progress</p> <p>Sense of achievement.</p>	<p>Understand what they are doing and how they are going to get there</p> <p>Help child progress</p>	<p>Make child's educational experience the most positive it can be (CA 80%)</p>

Passion and Commitment	<p>Linked to 'having a realistic workload</p> <p>Passion for the role</p> <p>Committed to the role</p> <p>Child is central to the whole process</p> <p>Conscientious, caring, can create sleepless nights (CA 80%)</p> <p>They care – understanding, empathy, support</p>	P, C, enthusiasm and motivation (CA 60%)	<p>Child central to whole process (CA 60%)</p> <p>Goes beyond what is expected (CA 80%).</p>
Process Knowledge	<p>Good knowledge of the process (P – non-NASEN)</p> <p>Knows what is expected so can manage/modify to make whole process easier in future</p> <p>Knowledge of application process itself (all CA 80%)</p>	Up-to-date knowledge of changes/what support is around (CA 70%)	<p>Good understanding of options available (CA 60%)</p> <p>Finding the best processes (CA 60%)</p> <p>Very clear knowledge and understanding of current procedures/the system</p>
Support	<p>Know need for children to be entering education with the correct support</p> <p>They are understanding, empathic, supportive</p> <p>SEND team</p> <p>Only have SENCO role so can focus on it</p> <p>Professionals there to support children and families</p> <p>SENCOs give caring support.</p> <p>Having a good work-life balance</p>	<p>SENCO cluster group</p> <p>Supportive, caring, helpful (CA 60%)</p> <p>Pro-active, ensure support is being set out</p>	<p>From SENCOs in other settings</p> <p>NASENCO, peers, HT/SLT Teacher alliance.</p>

Negative Influences	Both Phases	Early Years	Primary
Confidence	<p>Impact on home-life</p> <p>Work-life balance</p> <p>Negative experience with some professionals</p>	<p>Lack of confidence, experience</p> <p>Status</p>	
Communication and Liaison	Skills and knowledge of and for this (new, language)	Not listening to what others are saying	Timetable constraints

Contact		Limited time with children	Less involved, objective
Evidence	Volume of paperwork Workload		Application may be more ruthless, less honest – may be about financial benefit to school Delivered without any explanation, reassurance, access to support
Holistic		Don't see child's own interests – just deliver impersonal targets	
Knowledge and Training	Don't know everything Funding Without knowledge can't do the best Availability Affordability Unknowledgeable about SEND and where to seek information	Lacks depth and breadth of many aspects of SEND (and child dev.) May not have knowledge/experience of working with children that builds this.	
Outcomes	EHCP rejected		
Passion and Commitment	Impact of workload Can be intense, emotionally draining	Different priorities Spend more time on the paperwork Might not understand/care what they need to do – due to perception/interpretation of what they see	
Process Knowledge		May not understand what an EHCP can help child with Knowledge of systems is poor and the information they are receiving is bad.	
Support		Cuts – e.g. SENCo conference	

Personal Level

(Negative and Positive) Influences at personal level	Both Phases	Early Years	Primary
Confidence	<u>Sense of achievement</u> Frustration Impact on home-life Caught between Personally affected by individual cases Disgust at previous settings' ethos		
Passion and Commitment	Workload <u>Having a good work-life balance</u>		

RQ3

Participant	Years a SENCo	Qualification level	Part of SLT	Real-Ideal Salience (percent)	Real and helpful professional (percent)	Ideal and helpful professional (percent)
EY-1	3-10	3	Y	82%	61%	57%
EY-2	<3	6	Y	70%	66%	73%
EY-3	3-10	5	Y	73%	50%	55%
EY-4	10+	6	Y	77%	77%	68%
EY-5	20+	6	Y	74%	68%	89%
EY-6	3-10	3	Y	80%	77%	89%
EY-7	<3	3	N	75%	95%	80%
EY-8	3-10	3	N	93%	82%	80%
P-1	3-10	7	Y	89%	59%	66%
P-2	<3	7	Y	64%	66%	89%
P-3	3-10	6	N	75%	64%	66%
P-4	20+	6	N	68%	68%	55%

P-5	<3	7	Y	86%	86%	95%
P-6	<3	6	Y	84%	80%	73%
P-7	10+	7	Y	98%	93%	91%

Phase	Participant	RGI Item 9 – SENCo I am now (real) with SENCo I would like to be (ideal)
Early Years	EY-1	Motivation, enthusiasm and a passion for it. (passion and commitment)
	EY-2	Committed to children. (passion and commitment)
	EY-3	Outcomes for children come first. (outcomes)
	EY-4	Supportive, diplomatic, empathic (support, communication and liaison)
	EY-5	Hands-on experience (contact)
	EY-6	Deeper knowledge about everything (knowledge and training)
	EY-7	Help children progress as far as they can so confident and happy (outcomes, holistic)
	EY-8	Ensure children are happy and fulfilled. (outcomes, holistic)
Primary	P-1	Passion for the role. (passion and commitment)
	P-2	Want to achieve best for children – very best understanding of implementation. (knowledge and understanding, outcomes, process knowledge)
	P-3	Child central to everything (outcomes, holistic)
	P-4	Caring (support)
	P-5	Eagerness to keep learning and developing. (knowledge and understanding, confidence)
	P-6	Making educational experience the most positive it can be. (outcomes, holistic, confidence)
	P-7	Like to work with range of professionals to best meet child's needs (communication and liaison, holistic, evidence).

Table 18 - Two constructs most closely related to 'effective', as revealed by Principal Component Analysis

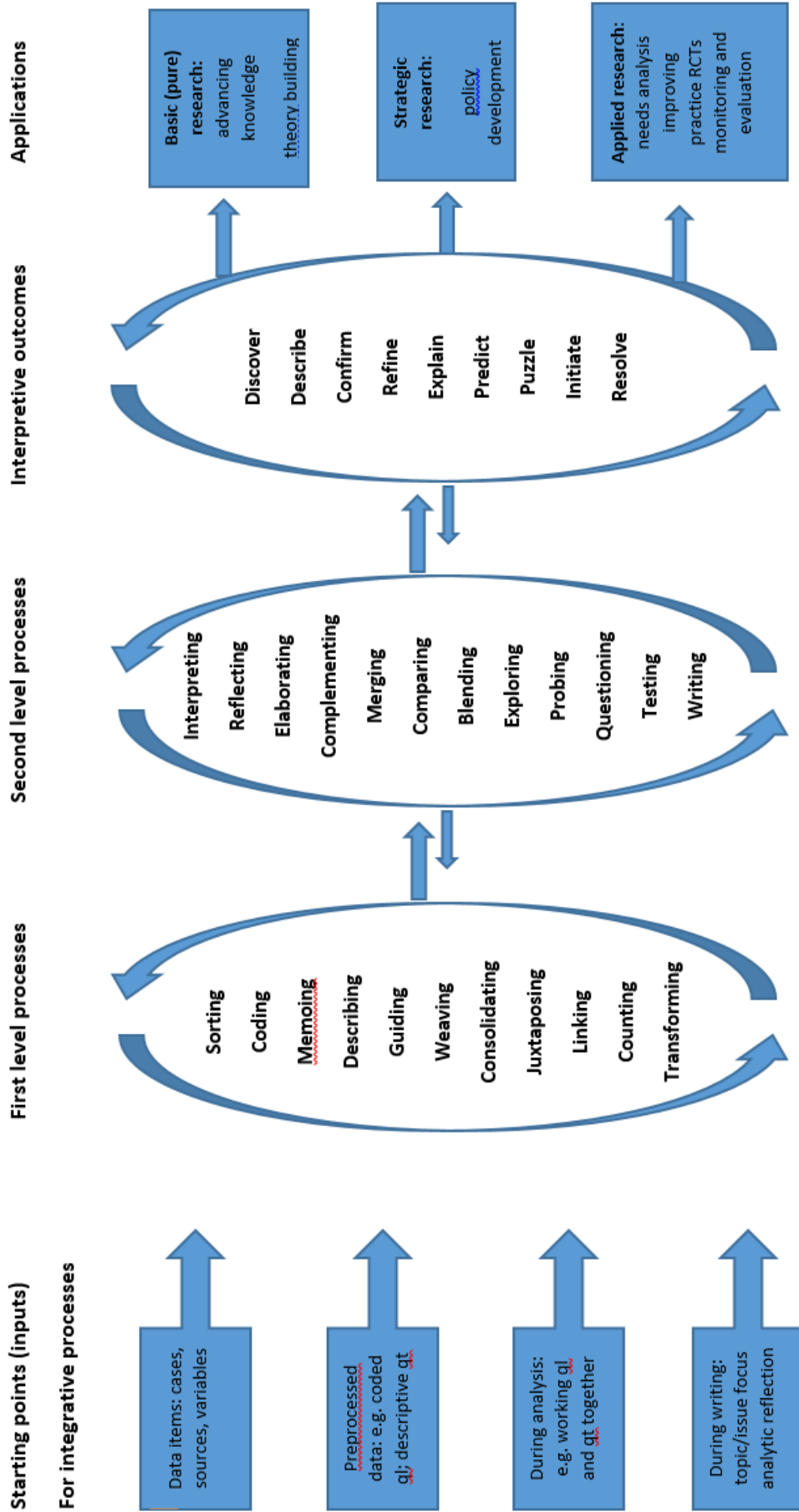
Participant	Constructs closest to 'Effective'	Constructs closest to 'Ineffective'
EY-1	'Only have role of SENCo so can focus on it'	'Time constraints and limited time'
	'They care, regular contact, understanding, empathy, support'	'Not being very supportive, not being there, not wanting to help'
EY-2	'Support, care help all the time'	'Lack of support for the children'
	'Professionals who are there to support children and families'	'Have to follow the confines of their professional structure'
EY-3	'Working to achieve same targets for the child'	'Not looking at child as an individual'
	'Keep up to date with changes in legislation'	('Having time and finding the information out – being proactive')
EY-4	'Ability to holistically assess a situation and decide what provision is required'	'Assessment partial, not thorough'
	'Knowledgeable about holistic development of children'	'Lacks the depth and breadth of many aspects of SEND (and child development)'
EY-5	'Knowledge of child development and expectations at different stages'	'May not have that knowledge – may not have same experience of working closely with children that builds this'
	'Hands-on experience'	'Different priorities – spend more time on paperwork'
EY-6	'Understand what they are doing and how they are going to get there'	'Might not understand/care what they need to do – because of how they perceive children with SEND and their interpretation of what they need'
	'Share the same goal in sense of getting an EHCP in the end'	'May not understand what an EHCP can help the child with'
EY-7	'Listen to the setting'	'Not listening to what others are saying'
	'Help the child progress'	Lack of confidence and experience'
EY-8	'Ensure children are happy and fulfilling as much as they can'	'Don't' see children's own interests – when they receive targets and reports they just deliver them'
	'Know need for these children to be entering education with the right support'	('Make sure the support is being set out – pro-active in this process')
P-1	'Very clear knowledge and understanding of current procedures, or the system'	'Knowledge of the systems is poor and the information they are receiving is bad'
	'Dedicated role, part of SLT, autonomy'	'Limited time with the children'
P-2	'Really good understanding of SEND that can be used to support and help'	'Without the knowledge, can't do the very best'
	'Can turn to for support with an application'	'Need to be approachable'
P-3	'Able to give answers as quickly as possible'	'SENCo asking the question is one of many – they are not the central/highest priority'
	'Ensure evidence is there and supports the application'	'Application may be more ruthless, less honest – may be about financial benefit to school (child as oppose to setting should be central)'
P-4	'Gets involved – conscientious, caring'	'Less involved, objective'
	'Historical overview so can make common references'	'New to it, may not come from education so no common references, experience'
P-5	'Managing workload (roles can complement each other)'	'Just one job role, that is their focus''
	'Experience of SEND'	'Experience is not in schools, not dealing with the children, parents and families (their experience is with paper, numbers and data)'
P-6	'Personal knowledge of child, family, history'	'Sometimes it is just a piece of paper – they don't know the child'
	'Has confidence to say – okay, this is your point of view – can you consider the other needs of the child and how these impact on the bigger picture'	'Tunnel vision – only see things from their little part of the process'
P-7	'Holistic view – takes child into account so provision is tweaked, personalised, adaptable'	'Narrow, very specific view – does not take into account the whole child, e.g. current stresses'
	Identify needs, set targets, support progress	Targets may not be accurate – may be tweaked to fit school rather than child, with detail missed out'

Constantly fighting for the children, ensuring latest reports are in so targets are up-to-date and followed (so children benefit and flourish to max.);
Determination to get everything that is needed;
Child's best interests are at heart – they have the drive to ensure this;
Having the time and finding the information out. Sometimes you have to go and find it – it's not easy to find, and knowing where to find it.

Identity	Personal	Professional	Collective
WL and CENI (esp. Q10)	<p>Helped communication skills.</p> <p>More 'confident', 'feisty', 'gritty', 'determined' 'like a dog with a bone now' (P-7)</p> <p>Affirmed passion</p> <p>Illness of relative</p>	<p>Helped me make informed decisions.</p> <p>Helped me be more proactive – need to push for information and for things to happen 'fighting the corner' (P-3)</p> <p>Made me want to understand more...look for answers'</p> <p>'Has changed my practice in the classroom just from having more knowledge and being more aware of inclusion and the like' (P-5)</p>	<p>My knowledge is recognised.</p> <p>Increased status</p> <p>'Changed teacher's view of me'</p> <p>People think I know everything and I don't, 'people think I've got lots of knowledge, which is great'(P-7)</p>
	<p>Hard not to take personally</p> <p>Doubt self</p>	<p>Felt vulnerable</p> <p>'more on my shoulders' (EY-1)</p> <p>Deal with children day in, day out, and parents ...but not the telephone calls and dealing with professionals' (P-6)</p> <p>'It's just a different mindset' (P-6)</p>	

Appendix 12

Analytic Logic Model, (Bazely, 2018)



Appendix 13

Positive and Negative Influences - Workline Data

Level	Positive		Negative	
	Early-years	Primary-years	Early-years	Primary-years
<i>Institutional</i>	Help from Area SENCo	NASEN training	Introduction of SEND Code – unsure of process. Area SENCo left. Training and support less available (funding) Reliance on existing knowledge bank (which will deplete with staff-turnover)	Incomplete information when first introduced. Changes in caseworkers (number, knowledge, familiarity with setting). 12-month targets removed. LA support services taken over by private company Access to advice from County Electronic forms and information not user-friendly
<i>Organisational</i>	Supporting staff Good relationships with other professionals Support through SENCo cluster-groups Tracking documents	Links with professionals (enhanced in Academies) Securing funding through EHCP Support from SENCos in other settings Securing specialist provision or placement Developing systematic collection of evidence	Chasing reports Accessing professionals Professionals waiting till child moves to school	Having to consider funding Accessing emergency funding Changes in staff
<i>Professional</i>	Delivering training Receiving training	Getting parents on board Achieving NASENCo	Working with parents in denial Learning terminology	Volume of paperwork Workload EHCP application rejected Frustration
<i>Personal</i>	Sense of achievement		Illness of relative Personally affected by individual cases Disgust at previous setting ethos/conflict with morals leading to change of job.	Impact on home-life Negative experience with some professionals

Appendix 14

Impact on SENCo Identity – Critical Event Narrative Interview Data

	Negative	Positive
Personal	<i>'Hard not to take it personally'</i> (EY-7)	<i>'More feisty'</i> (EY-8) <i>'Helped my communication skills'</i> (PY-1) <i>'More headstrong and a bit more confident in actually standing my ground'</i> (PY-3)
Professional	<i>'Felt a little bit vulnerable'</i> (EY-4) <i>'Doubt myself'</i> (EY-6)	<i>'Made me want to understand more ... look for answers'</i> (EY-2) <i>'Affirmed my passion'</i> (EY-3) <i>'Now I probably am a bit more confident with it'</i> (EY-7) <i>'More gritty, demanding on what I want from people, made me more confident to say what I feel. Made me a bit more forceful because I want the answers'</i> (PY-1) <i>'Helped me professionally to make informed decisions'</i> (PY-2) <i>'Having to be quite firm and stand my ground on some issues'</i> (PY-3) <i>'A different mind-set'</i> (PY-6)
Collective	<i>'More on my shoulders'</i> (PY-1)	<i>'More proactive – get the ball rolling a bit more'</i> (EY-1) <i>'People think I've got lots of knowledge, which is great and I like that people think that I have.'</i> (EY-6) <i>'Changed how teachers view me.'</i> (PY-5)

Appendix 15

Participant ranking of elements

Phase	Participant	Element (Identity)				
		Myself as a SENCO now	Helpful Professional	Unhelpful Professional	The SENCo I would not like to be	Ideal SENCo
<i>Early-years</i>	EY-1	/	X	O	X	/
	EY-2	/	O	X	X	/
	EY-3	O	/	X	X	/
	EY-4	O	X	/	X	/
	EY-5	/	O	X	X	/
	EY-6	X	/	O	X	/
	EY-7	/	/	X	X	O
	EY-8	/)	X	X	/
<i>Primary</i>	PY-1	O	/	X	X	/
	PY-2	O	/	X	X	/
	PY-3	/	O	X	X	/
	PY-4	/	/	X	X	O
	PY-5	O	/	X	X	/
	PY-6	O	/	X	X	/
	PY-7	/	O	X	X	/

O= neutral (3), / = 1 or 2 (more effective), X = 4 or 5 (less effective).²⁵

This shows that all participants ranked the SENCo they would not like to be as ineffective. Most participants (N=12) also ranked the unhelpful professional as ineffective, or gave a neutral response (N=2). An exception to this was EY-4, who had identified an educational psychologist as her unhelpful professional. She recognised that whilst this educational psychologist had been ineffective in helping with the EHCP process, they had been helpful with other issues. This meant that EY-4 had mixed feelings about this element, which is reflected in her ranking (of 2 on her grid, indicated by the slash (/) on the table above.

This table also shows that most participants (N= 13) ranked the ideal SENCo as effective. The remaining two (EY-7 and PY-4) ranked the ideal SENCo as neutral. All participants (N= 15) ranked themselves as either effective or neutral. Interestingly, two participants (EY-1 and EY-4) ranked their helpful professional as ineffective. Ranking is a relative process in which each ranking can only be used once. These ‘helpful’ professionals (an Area SENCo, EY-1, ranking-4 and the Physical Disability Outreach Team, EY-4, ranking-4) are therefore only ‘less’ effective than the others they are being ranked against (in these instances, educational psychology and a specialist nursery setting). No sub-groups emerged from this small sample because although groups of two to five participants gave the same rankings, there was no clear link to education phase, leadership position or training.

²⁵Ranking reveals the relative positions of elements and enables analysis of a single grid, or several grids with the same elements (Jankowicz 2004). Rankings of 1 or 2 identify the elements regarded as being closer to perceptions of ‘effective’, a ranking of 3 is neutral, and rankings of 4 or 5 regard identify these elements as being furthest away from ‘effective’, (see section 4.8.1, *Description*, for more detail of this process).

Appendix 16

Cluster Analysis (CA), Links between Constructs

- a) Early Years
- b) Primary phase

Cluster Analysis – links between constructs, **early years**

Participant	70%	80%	90%	100%
EY-1	Regular contact with effective and dedicated time (only have SENCo role)	Meet needs of child as best as can with good communication and motivation, enthusiasm and passion		Support – in every week, regular contact See child only for part of day with same pressures/paperwork requirements
EY-2	'the job' with support, care and help children and families with effective – and commitment to children and families	Specifically educated with committed to paperwork as understand it's importance Committed to the care and support of children with have best interests of child at heart	Doing the SENCo role and professionals there to support children and families = 'the job'	
EY-3	'amount of contact' with work with children everyday Support and knowledge facilitate good outcomes with knowledge of current practice with effective	Hands on, see child every day with work in private sector = 'amount of contact' Understand an EHCP and how it works with keep up to date = knowledge of current practice Holistic with effective		Good professional working relationships (support, knowledge and understanding) with outcomes for the children the priority = support and knowledge facilitate good outcomes
EY-4	Holistic and effective with knowledge of their own domain/subject		effective liaison with collates evidence knowledgeable about holistic development of children with ability to holistically assess = holistic	Communicative, good listener, respects others views with really supportive and helpful. Professional, respectful with supportive, diplomatic, empathic. = effective liaison
EY-5	All of these -> with specialist knowledge, knowledge of child development and amount of time to spend with children Knowledge and agency	Knowledge of specific setting and age-group with personal knowledge of child and paperwork informed by knowledge of child and trying things out Wellbeing, care about child, different understanding of what is best for child	Lots of experience/knowledge/familiarity with this setting with knowledge and experience of this age-group = knowledge of specific setting and age-group Determination, see needs of child, understand what they need, goal of getting EHCP	Need to work closely with children with want to always be familiar with children = personal knowledge of child Deeper knowledge about everything with knowledge in their area of expertise
EY-6	Progress, time, face-to-face contact with making sure they are doing the best thing. Effective/personalised with child's best interests at heart	Track progress with interface with children Having time with children with make time Well- informed, appropriate support with know what needs to be done Effective with ensure things are personalised/enjoyable	Progress	Make appropriate steps of progress with help child progress Other staff help with listen to the setting and help the child progress Know need for children to enter education with correct support with use guidelines and legislation Implement EHCP (targets set and child's levels understood) with collate correct information Want children to have best start with constantly fighting = well informed appropriate supported

Cluster Analysis - links between constructs, **primary-phase**

Participant	70%	80%	90%	100%
P-1			More holistic approach with dedicated role = time for this Pressure with good understanding of available options with good process/system knowledge with desire for more knowledge	Child is foremost with passion for the role
P-2	Support, knowledge of best processes, going beyond what is expected with put extra things in place	Support resource with very best processes with go beyond what is expected	Source of support with really good understanding with effective = support resource Home-work balance with having knowledge and experience of best systems	Want to achieve best for child with want to provide very best for all pupils with knowledge and experience they have of best processes = very best processes
P-3	Evidence with good communication, know what is expected/needed, effective, and correct support available and can be accessed. Shared goal with answers queries on time/provides answers	Able to give same information with ensure evidence is there and it supports application = evidence	Child central with common goal of effective EHCP application = shared goal	
P-4	Remote, rude with a job rather than a vocation	Rude to others as not completely secure with ineffective and remote Pass the buck with new to it with remote	Ineffective with less involved, objective = remote Just in it for the money (or lack of power/authority to do it) with overly concerned with systems as oppose to individuals	
P-5	All of these -> with meeting statutory obligations	Shared information and experience with contactable, perseverance, and experience of SEND	Process knowledge with experience of EHCP process Get parental view with eagerness to find out more/keep learning with willing to share experience and information = shared information and experience	Effective with keeping on top of conflicting work-loads
P-6		Holistic, best interests of child and family with same commitments, effective, making child's educational experience the best it can be, confidence to draw on wide range of sources, know order of procedure	Knowledge of application process with personal knowledge of child and family. Best interests of child at heart with believe they are doing the right thing for child	Holistic view with confidence to challenge/point out wider picture
P-7		Multi-professional with identify needs, carefully informed targets	Viewpoints with enhance/develop range of skills in children and work with range of people to best meet needs Monitoring procedures with attention to detail and holistic view	Accommodate all opinions with both contribute/inform future provision = viewpoints Overview of child with informed paperwork and need to monitor progress – monitoring procedures

Appendix 17

Group Repertory Grid, Mean, Median and Mode

	MEAN	Standard Deviation	MEDIAN	MODE	RANGE
Knowledge of each child	4.36		3	1,2	1 – 14 (14)
Spending time with children	9.07		8.5	3,5	3 – 19 (16)
Having dedicated time for the SENCo role	11.5		12	12	2 – 19 (17)
SENCOs give caring support	12.29		12		4 – 21 (17)
Setting provides physical resources to support SENCo work	15.86		15	12	9 – 21 (12)
Advice and information support for SENCOs	11.71		12	9	3 – 19 (16)
Professional team is informed and respectful	11.35		12	4, 13	6 – 17 (11)
Collating robust, appropriate evidence	8.29		8.5		2 – 17 (15)
Children make appropriate progress	10.07		8.5	8	2 – 21 (19)
Good communication	8.43		8		1 – 16 (15)
Having a good work-life balance	19.71		20	20, 21	17 – 21 (4)
Having a realistic workload	18		18	20	11 – 20 (9)
Training	14.29		16	16	2 – 21 (19)
Having good SEND and developmental knowledge	8.23		6	3	2 – 18 (16)
Being committed to the role	10.85		11.5		1 – 18 (17)
Having good relationships with families and providing family support	6.07		7	7	2 – 11 (9)
Having a holistic view	11.14		14		5 – 20 (15)
The child is central to the whole process	3.79		4	1	1 – 13 (12)
Having passion for the role	12		14	17	2 – 20 (18)
Having a good knowledge of the process	10.21		11		1 – 16 (15)
Having experience of SEND and the EHCP process	12.07		12		1 – 21 (21)

Appendix 18

Ten Themes revealed by Cluster Analysis of Constructs (=>70%)

	70%	80%	90%	100%
EY-1	Amount and type of contact	Effective liaison. Good communication. Passion		Amount and type of contact
EY-2	Commitment to and support for children and families	Specifically educated. Understand importance of paperwork. Outcomes for children the priority	Commitment to and support for children and families	
EY-3	Amount and type of contact. Knowledge of current practice and processes, and provision.	Amount and type of contact (hands on). Time.		Outcomes for children the priority. Good professional working relationships (support, knowledge and understanding)
EY-4	Knowledge of own domain	Holistic	Effective liaison	Effective liaison (communicative, good listener, respects other views, diplomatic, empathic)
EY-5	Amount and type of contact		Knowledge of setting and age-group	Close work builds knowledge of child
EY-6	Perseverance	Wellbeing of child	Understand and provide for child's needs	Knowledge – SEND, development, areas of expertise.
EY-7	Amount and type of contact	Robust evidence		Progress – identified, tracked, appropriate steps
EY-8	Personalised			Understand and provide for child's needs. Well-informed
P-1			Holistic. Time. Knowledge of current practice processes and provision.	Passion Outcomes for children the priority
P-2	Going beyond what is expected. Knowledge of current practice and processes, and provision.	Support for SENCo		Do best for child Workload management.
P-3	Good communication Support for SENCo.	Robust evidence	Outcomes for children the priority	
P-4	Poor communication skills. Job rather than vocation	Not secure. Passes on responsibility.	Concerned with systems rather than people. Amount and type of contact. Lack of power/authority.	
P-5	Meet statutory obligations	Perseverance. Support for SENCo	Knowledge – SEND, development, areas of expertise.	Workload management
P-6		Holistic. Wellbeing of child	Knowledge of current practice and processes, and provision. Outcomes for children the priority	Holistic Confidence to challenge (based on knowledge)
P-7		Good liaison. Personalised.	Going beyond what is expected Progress – identified, tracked, appropriate steps	Good professional working relationships (support, knowledge and understanding)

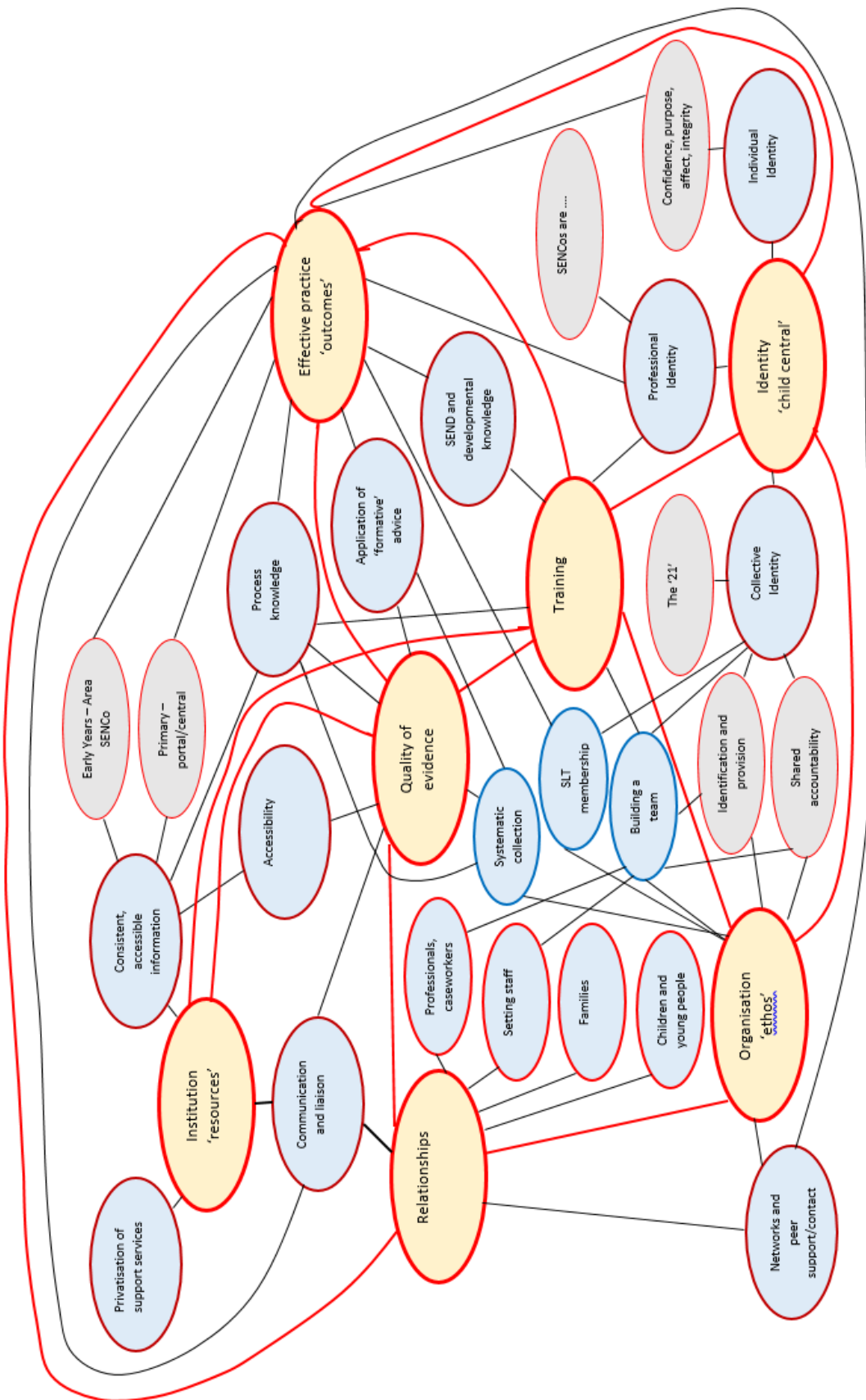
Communication and Liaison, Confidence, Contact, Evidence, Holistic Support, Knowledge and training, Outcomes, Passion and Commitment, Process Knowledge, Support

Appendix 19

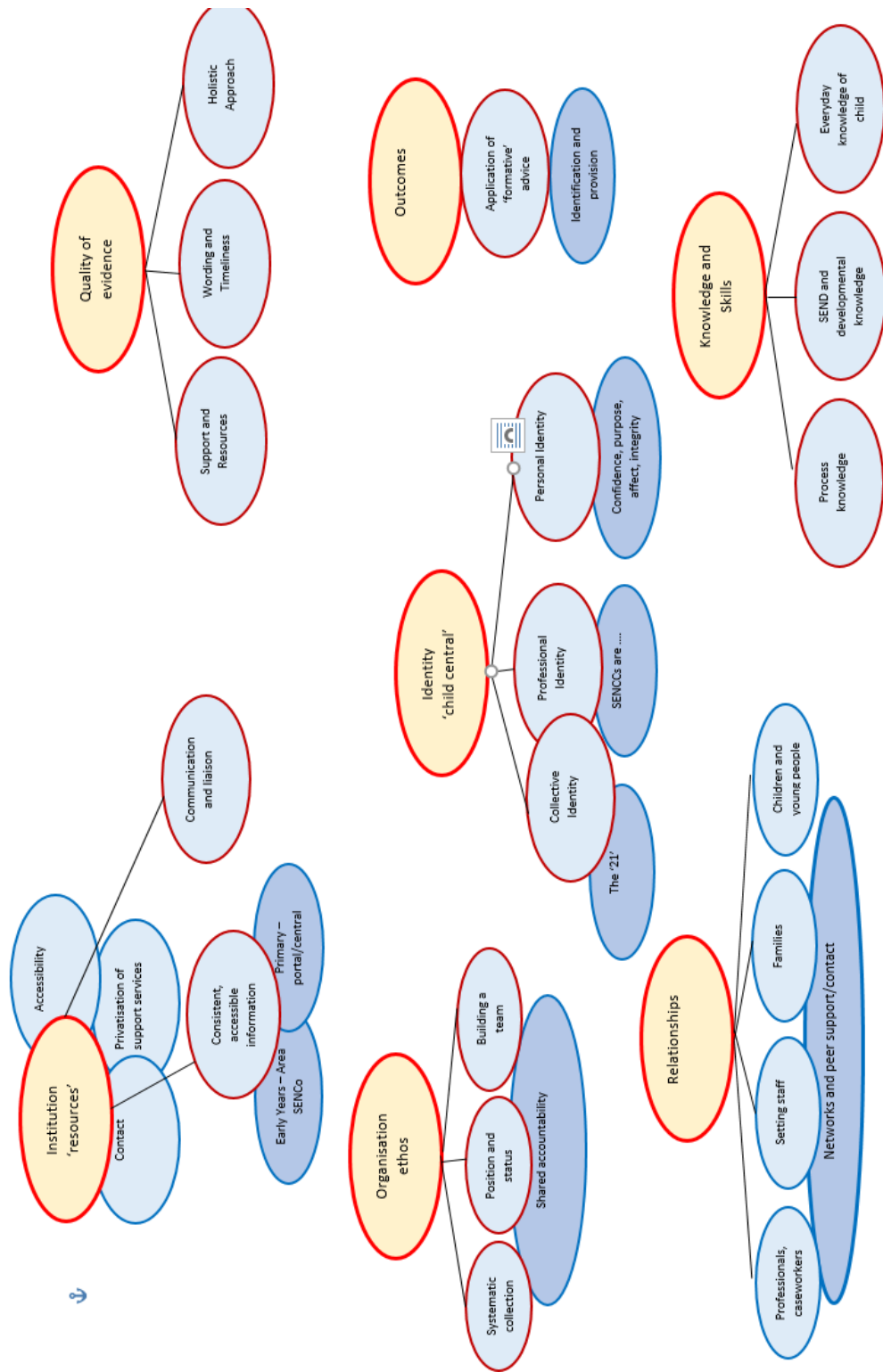
Network Maps

- a) Early version
- b) Final version

a) Early Version



b) Final Version



Appendix 20

Participant Vignettes Related to Themes

Section 7.1 Identity

Vignette 1, collective identity

PY-1 was a very experienced teacher who also the safeguarding officer and deputy head teacher. Whilst she considered that the implementation of EHCPs had placed *'more on my shoulders'*, the identity changes she described all related to collaboration. These included alterations to her communication skills, becoming *'more, gritty'*, being *'quite demanding in what I want from people'*, making her *'more confident to say this is what I feel, or this is what I know is right'* and making her *'a bit more forceful because I want the answers'*. PY-1 also described *'the lack of support from County'* as *'really appalling'*, including *'the lack of knowledge, the changing procedures, changing of viewpoints - the inability to communicate it very well'*. This contrasted with collaboration within her setting, where *'The Head is very good at saying - that's not my area of expertise, that's yours – tell me why, prove to me, and if I could prove it, it would happen'* so her *'opinion was valued'*. PY-1 also identified the value of *'networking, networking - communication with other people'* and of being part of a working party where *'we could all bring our experiences to it, we could all bring our own frustrations to it, and then we looked for answers as a group as opposed to individuals'*.

Vignette 2, professional identity

EY-2 was an experienced practitioner who had completed her early year's practitioner training, then topped this up to a degree. She described this as life-changing, since her increased knowledge enabled her to see connections and have a better overview of the child, family and interventions. Whilst EY-2 enjoyed the challenge of the SENCo role (which she took on in 2016), and was part of the SLT in her setting, she found the paperwork *'hard to get on top of'*, and valued her role with children and families above the administrative tasks. Significantly, EY-2 had the lowest early years SENCos role-identity salience score (70%) and after the data collection period, she left her SENCo position to complete her PGCE, going on to become a qualified teacher in a small private school.

Vignette 3, personal identity

EY-3 was an experienced Early Years Practitioner who had been a SENCo for over 5 years, and who was part of the Senior Leadership Team. Her attention to detail was meticulous and she had completed advanced-level practitioner training. She had one relative who had Down's syndrome and another who had Asperger's Syndrome and stated *'So obviously... I know what it's like... the flip side'*. She described the commitment and research she undertook to secure a child with a rare, complex syndrome a place in a special school, and how rewarding securing this place had felt. She contrasted this with a period of negative experience (when working with a challenging child whose parents were

in denial at the same time as dealing with the illness of a close relative). She described this as having *'a lot on my plate so that was really, really challenging'*. This situation improved and although *'it was still challenging'* it was also *'rewarding because we were actually seeing progress'*. She then described being persuaded by a *'very good friend of mine [who] was SENCo advisor for the County Council'* to write a training programme because she *'helped me to see that I was actually capable of doing it because I didn't think I was'*. EY-3 then described delivering the training to over 100 people which was *'a personal achievement for myself'*.

Section 7.2 Knowledge and Skills

Vignette 4, process knowledge

PY-2, a deputy head of a large primary school with 19 percent of pupils on the SEND register, linked good knowledge of the process of implementing EHCPs with her desire to provide children with the very best support. For her, being effective was connected to achieving the very best for children. This involved *'going beyond what is expected'* to secure the best provision. As a recently appointed SENCo who had just completed the NASENCo award, she recognised that a good knowledge of the system and of what steps should be taken when would allow her to plan for, and develop routine, embedded systems of evidence collection. She also recognised that good knowledge of the process and system could be used to inform a setting's resources and provision, for instance, when and how best to use their educational psychologist allocation for maximum efficacy.

Vignette 5, good developmental and SEND knowledge

EY-4, as an Area SENCo, particularly identified this issue. She described some practitioners who did not consider any developmental stage before a child's chronological age. This meant that children's needs may not be identified, or that evidence presented to the Preschool Forum may need to be double-checked or corrected. She described this situation as *'scary'*, which at its extreme could mean that a child entered school without the support they need. The Early Support documentation has helped this situation. However, EY-4 felt that because training for early-years staff often did not have enough focus on ages and stages of development, settings were not always equipped to make accurate observations and judgements about a child's actual level of functioning.

Vignette 6, everyday/personal knowledge of the child and their circumstances

EY-5 qualified as a teacher over 40 years ago and had worked for many years in a special-school, including, in the nursery assessment unit where multi-professional working and assessments were routine. She had extensive knowledge and experience which is used as a valuable resource as well as being recognised as such by other professionals. She co-owned her setting, which was a private day

care nursery set in an area of high deprivation where the ethos '*relies*' on the importance of the key-person role and on children and parents being happy. EY-5's highest priorities (as revealed by Principal Component Analysis) were knowledge and experience, being able to work closely with the children, and '*always*' being '*familiar*' with the children, by which she meant knowing of and about their individual needs and circumstances. EY-5 also valued '*hands on experience*' and '*being able to spend more time over a period of time*' with individual children, since this allowed keyworkers to build up relationships with children and their family, and to try out different activities. This also allowed her to observe and assess a child's needs, suggest ways forward, support keyworkers, and to identify the need for and seek additional support and intervention, when required. Furthermore, although EY-5 had considerable experience, she valued the advice and oversight provided by Area SENCos, who were working with EHCPs on a regular basis, and who supported and reassured her about the evidence she submitted to the Pre-School Forum.

Section 7.3 Relationships

Vignette 7, relationships with professionals and caseworkers

As an experienced practitioner with established links with professionals and with County support services, PY-7 highlighted how relationships contribute to EHCPs. As part of her work in a specialist unit attached to a mainstream middle school, PY-7 had experience of many statements and of 15 EHCPs which had involved working with a range of people and valuing each person's contribution to determining and informing provision. This required her to consider all opinions to support a child-centred approach. She valued paperwork that showed attention to detail, with the contributions of others being used to identify needs, set targets and support progress. Having an overview of child over different settings and/or times was also important to her, as was enhancing and developing skills outside of the normal curriculum. PY-7 experienced close working relationships with a small core of peers, professionals and caseworkers. However, her setting was recently assigned a newly qualified Speech and Language Therapist and a range of recently appointed caseworkers. These staff had no history and limited knowledge of the setting and she felt their paperwork was less detailed. This had impacted on the detail and personalisation of the EHCPs subsequently produced.

Section 7.4 Institutional Issues

Vignette 8, access to consistent information and advice

PY-5 identified with this theme. As an organised and busy deputy head teacher who had been a SENCo for just one year, she was very aware of the need to meet statutory obligations. However, finding answers was '*nearly impossible*' and required considerable perseverance and time. Whilst applying for

an EHCP was accepted as *'a time consuming, fact finding, paper finding exercise'*, she identified that being approachable, contactable and willing to share knowledge about the process and SEND provision are important contributors to effective EHCP practice.

Vignette 9, communication and liaison

PY-6 had many years of classroom experience in a primary set in an area of social-deprivation. She described herself as having a *'very good relationship with parents'*, who *'trust us [the school]'*. However, as a recently appointed SENCo she identified *'the telephone calls and dealing with professionals'* that are part of the role as a new and *'anxiety provoking'* experience. This was because of not being *'quite sure what you're asking or what the answer's going to be'*. It was also because she needed to adapt her mind-set to recognise that *'this role is office-based and paper-based'* and so accepting that the significant amount of communication and liaison required meant that *'you weren't not working as hard as other people, it was just different work'*. She described this as being a big challenge initially, which included re-evaluating how she used her time because she *'felt guilty being on the telephone during the school day. Because when I was a teacher, if you had to make 'phone calls you did it before 8:45, between 12:00 and 1:00, or at 3:00'*.

Section 7.5 Organisational Ethos Issues

Vignette 10, position and status

Although PY-3 had more than ten years' experience in the SENCo role, she had not completed the NASENCo training and was not part of the SLT. Whilst she was supported her SENCo work (the Head teacher was the named, figurehead SENCo and an assistant was deployed to chase up assessments and reports), she experienced limitations in her role because she was not on the SLT. This included not being party to discussions about how her academy spent their money, difficulties implementing change and being unable to contribute to professional conversations. Indeed she described not being on the SLT as the biggest barrier for her, whilst at the same time recognising that her choice to work part-time (due to personal reasons) may have restricted her opportunities in terms of leadership responsibilities and official training, both of which would officially *'validate'* her experience and knowledge.

Vignette 11, building a team

As an experienced practitioner who worked on the senior leadership team of a nursery group, EY-1 had developed in-house training for all staff and had built up a team of three SENCos, who operated in individual nursery settings but who regularly supported one another. One of these was very experienced and developed the training, and another had completed her early-childhood professional

practitioner training and guided junior staff, but struggled with the paperwork. EY-1 therefore worked together with these to develop the group's systems and training, and to support and develop staff. She also recognised the need for the knowledge and involvement of professionals working outside the nursery, including from shared, specialised placements, and she felt that this was all facilitated by the resources, ethos and approach of this nursery group.

Vignette 12, systematic collection of evidence

EY-6 was determined to *'get everything needed'*. Seeing the needs of the child, having up-to-date paperwork, understanding what the process involves and having the goal of securing an EHCP are all part of this. In the past this had involved writing *'massive reports'* that were *'hard work'*. Whilst these required evidence, as do EHCP applications, the systems she had developed since meant that now she just needed to photocopy out of the file or *'get that plan out'*. Consequently, she could just submit the notes she wrote up routinely, concluding that what she was providing was correct since the EHCP application she had made in this manner had been successful.

Section 7.6 Quality of Evidence

Vignette 13, support and resources

PY-3's comments illustrate the importance and impact of resources and support. She stated that *'support for the child... that is probably underpinned by the correct support for the school as well, it cascades, it's like a hierarchy, at the top you've got the child but then that's underpinned by the correct staffing in school and the access to resources and then that then falls onto county funding levels and then it just all feeds into the next one'*. She was very aware of the constraints support and resources placed on the role, stating *'actually you can't do that [be the ideal SENCo] unless you have got the right support in place in terms of training, access to specialist agencies and stuff... so this is almost like the SENCo that I'd like to be has an idealistic view of what it would be but the reality is the kind of SENCo I would not like to be because you are bound by the constraints'*.

EY-7 corroborates this view. As a new SENCo she sometimes felt isolated and in need of support and guidance with regard to some of the more complex issues that the SENCo role involved. Whilst she wanted to ensure that she was *'doing the best/right thing'*, the privatisation of support services and funding cuts meant that she hadn't *'got anyone to ask'*, although in the past she felt she could *'could phone up somebody'*. Notably she identified that SENCos needed to *'make time, do whatever you can with having time as a resource'*, but also commented on the impact time constraints had on her ability to *'do more things with it [the role]'*.

Vignette 14, wording and timeliness

PY-7 had over ten years' experience working in a specialised base within a middle school. 32 percent of the children on roll were on the SEND register, with 11 children in mainstream, and four base children having either statements or EHCPs. She had established links with professionals and County-based staff. She valued EHCP paperwork not just as a means to securing resources, but also because informed paperwork, with attention to detail enabled her to identify suitable targets and this informed the provision needed to support the progress of each individual child. However, the EHCPs produced had varied from being *'two or three pages long, not a lot of detail'* to being really valuable documents. She had also experienced variation between caseworkers, describing one who was *'able to draft an agreed document... whilst with the parents'* and others who *'take few notes'* so *'memory gets their interpretation as opposed to their factual intake of the meeting'*, which resulted in plans lacking in personal detail. PY-7 also felt that some caseworkers *'don't value the parents, they don't value what the school is saying'*, and questioned if there was actually much *'difference between them [EHCPs] and the old statements'*.

Vignette 15, holistic approach

As an experienced early year practitioner and SENCo who has a bank of experience and knowledge to build on, EY-8 was committed to person-centred care and the nursery she works in has built a reputation amongst professionals in the town and area where it is situated for excellent support of children with additional needs. Nursery settings have often known the child and their family since the baby room, which enable relationships to form and gives opportunities to see progress over time. This contrasts with specialist assessment centres, who may be involved with the child and family for around six weeks, and with visiting professionals. EY-8 knows that giving the children the best start involves collating information and *'knowing levels'*, but recognises that also support needs to be personalised and enjoyable for the children. Her detailed, individual knowledge of each child facilitates her approach, which holds *'the child's best interests at heart'*.

Section 7.7 Outcomes

Vignette 16, outcomes

PY-1 was a Deputy Head and SENCo in a setting with an above-average number of pupils with SEND, a high number of pupils entitled to Pupil Premium and an above-average number of looked-after children. Principal Component Analysis revealed a 100 percent match between having *'passion for the role'* and *'the child is foremost'*. She valued a holistic approach which nurtured the children (her setting had nurture groups and a therapy dog), and perceived that wellbeing lies beneath learning and contributes to progress and outcomes. Her setting closely monitored interventions to ensure the children were progressing and meeting their targets. The setting used data to ascertain which

interventions were working, and to identify children that were '*not moving*' despite receiving lots of additional support. By examining the wellbeing of these children, they identified an underlying need for emotional support and development, so introduced the THRIVE programme across the setting, and consequently improved the progress of some of these children.

Appendix 21

What? and How? Table

What	How (enablers)	Theme (see Figure 22)
Collating robust, appropriate evidence.	Having a passion for the role	Commitment and Purpose
Children make appropriate progress	Being committed to the role	
	The child is central to the whole process	
	Spending time with children	Contact
	Having good relationships with families and providing support for families	
Having knowledge of each individual child	Having a holistic view	Knowledge and skills
Training – receive and give	Having experience of SEND and the EHCP process	
	Having good knowledge of the process	
	Good communication	
	Having good SEND and developmental knowledge	
	Setting provides physical resources to support SENCo work	Resources and Support
	Having dedicated time for the SENCo role	
	Having a realistic workload	
	Having a good work-life balance	
SENCoS give caring support	Professional team is informed and respectful	
	Advice and information support for SENCoS	

