



The implications of training for Special Educational Needs Coordinators; an exploration of self – efficacy, organisational commitment and perceptions of the SENCO role.

Part 1: Literature Review

Part 2: Empirical Study

Part 3: Reflective Account

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Summary

This thesis consists of three parts. The first part is a literature review exploring and critically analysing research relating to the roles and responsibilities of special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs); as well as SENCOs organisational commitment and self – efficacy.

The second part is an empirical study exploring SENCO constructions of SENCO roles and responsibilities, perceptions of organisational commitment and self – efficacy. Two groups of participants are used to explore these concepts. One, a Training Group made up of participants recruited from England including a sample of SENCOs who had completed the NASENCO programme. The second group was a Non – Training Group made up of participants from Wales including a sample of SENCOs who had not completed the NASENCO award. It was possible to make tentative comparisons of the perceptions of roles and responsibilities, self – efficacy and organisational commitment between the two groups.

The third section is a reflective summary. This is a critical account of the processes, decisions and directions the researcher chose in order to complete this thesis. This section explores the contribution to knowledge this research has provided, and also provides a critical account of the research practitioner.

Declarations and Statements

Declaration

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed:

Date:

Statement one

This thesis is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of DEdPsy.

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Statement two

This thesis is the result of my own independent work/investigation, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by explicit references.

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Dedication and Acknowledgements

In Loving Memory Of

Eira Jayne Smith

06/02/1958 – 15/11/2012

&

Avril Davies

03/08/1934 – 21/04/2014

I would firstly like to dedicate this piece of work to my mother. A courageous, caring, strong, charismatic and loving woman who was admired and adored by everyone she met. She sadly lost her battle with cancer in the first year of my studies for my doctorate and her memory has motivated and inspired me to keep going through what has been a difficult three years.

Secondly I would like to pay special acknowledgement to my grandmother. Another one of the best women I have ever known and loved. Safe to say I inherited my mum's intelligence and my nanna's quirky ways both of which have contributed to the person I am today.

I would like to especially thank my sister for her unrelenting support and encouragement along with all of my family and friends. These are the most special people in my life and I extend my heartfelt gratitude and love to them.

I would like to acknowledge my course mates who played a key role in supporting me through the rollercoaster ride the past three years became. I would also like to thank all of the tutors who supported me with my thesis and the participants for giving up their time to make this research possible.

List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
BPS	British Psychological Society
DfE	Department for Education
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
EP	Educational Psychologist
EPS	Educational Psychology Service
LA	Local Authority
LEA	Local Education Authority
NASEN	National Association for Special Educational Needs
NASENCO	National Award for Special Educational Needs Coordinators
NHS	National Health Service
NUT	National Union for Teachers
OC	Organisational Commitment
OCB	Organisational Citizenship Behaviour
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
TA	Thematic Analysis
TTA	Teacher Training Agency

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Part 1: Literature Review

1. Introduction

This literature review will include a critical review of work relating to Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs). The purpose of this literature review will be to focus on SENCOs within the school environment. The researcher will explore the impact that training may have on SENCOs' perceptions of their feeling of self – efficacy and organisational commitment. In order to consider the subjects that warrant analysis the key psychological constructs emerging from the literature are critically presented in turn. Firstly, self – efficacy is defined and current issues regarding this issue are considered. Teacher – efficacy is a concept that is specifically presented. Organisational Commitment and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour are subsequently defined and evidence is critically presented. This is followed by a consideration of Special Educational Needs Coordinators, their roles and responsibilities and the National Award in Special Educational Coordination. The literature review then presents the study that follows the literature review.

1.1. Searches Used

The rationale to investigate SENCO roles, self – efficacy and organisational commitment emerged from previous research that was identified during a preliminary search for common themes within the literature. This is described in the following section. The researcher took a systematic approach to exploring literature within the area of study, identifying papers of interest, noting down points of interest and collating this information to create viable areas to research that were further narrowed at a later stage.

The researcher used a range of resources in order to explore the areas of study included in the literature review. The predominant sources were Psych Info, ERIC and the Cardiff University Library, Article Search. Other sources of information were Google Scholar, Education Abstracts, legislation, guidance and textbooks relating to the main areas addressed within this literature review. These data bases and resources provided the research and literature that was used in this review. Search terms used were “SENCOs”, “SENCO roles and responsibilities”, “self – efficacy”, “self – efficacy and teachers”, “organisational commitment”, “Organisational Citizenship Behaviour”, “teacher

commitment”, “SENCO training”, “NASENCo” . Different variations and combinations of these search terms were also used in order to target all of the literature available.

Not all search results were deemed relevant. Results that were in a foreign language and were not translated, research that only addressed these search terms tentatively or not within contexts deemed sufficiently appropriate to education were not included. Additional search terms including ‘educational psychology’, ‘EP’ and ‘education’ were added during the latter stages of the literature search.

Literature included in the review consisted of all peer reviewed articles and published books considered as relevant and applicable (Appendix 1). Unlike some other research, this paper included theses and unpublished material. This is due to research regarding the NASENCo being in its infancy and therefore research in this area not necessarily having the exposure or time for published material to be readily available. Therefore relevant unpublished research and materials were accepted and critically reviewed in order to compile an up – to – date reflection of current progress in the field. Research papers from other countries were included as well as research from other disciplines. This adds breadth to the search although caution will need to be taken when considering the generalisability of these papers. No time constraints were placed on the publication year of research included. It could be argued that older papers are dated. However, the researcher suggests that many of the concepts discussed remain unchanged or developed over time and remain applicable rather than redundant. Searches were conducted in phases between September 2013 and December 2014 and again from July 2015 to November 2015.

1.2. Structure of the Literature Review

The literature review is structured into five subsections. The first section considers the psychological concept of self – efficacy. This construct has been described as “beliefs in one’s capabilities to organise and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments” (Bandura, 1997, p. 2). Research shows that self – efficacy can be investigated in specific domains. In this case, the domain of teacher self – efficacy will be explored due to the relevance this has to SENCOs. Relevant research will be identified, discussed and critically considered.

The next section will consider organisational commitment. Organisational commitment has been defined as “affective attachment to the goals and values of an organisation, to one’s role in relation

to goals and values, and to the organisation for its own sake, apart from instrumental worth” (Buchanan, 1974, p. 533). Organisational Citizenship Behaviour is also explored as it is closely associated with organisational commitment and is described as a behaviour that would be expected as a result of the individual being committed to the organisation. It is also important to consider this concept in relation to teachers and their commitment to school as an organisation. This domain specific concept is teacher commitment.

Although there are universal definitions of, and guidance for, the role of the SENCO, roles can vary considerably between SENCOs (Lewis, Neill & Campbell, 1996; Derrington, 1997). The SENCO role has changed due to developments in legislation and this will be presented in order to provide the context of the changing circumstances which SENCOs work within. The literature review explores research which identifies the discrepancies in roles and responsibilities. The variations in perceptions and day – to – day operations of the SENCO will be considered in this section of the literature review.

The impact of training will be considered in the following subsection. Consideration of the outcomes it can have for perceptions of self – efficacy and organisational commitment will be presented. The significance of considering the impact of training is due to a change in legislation in 2009 that made training for SENCOs mandatory in England. This training, the National Award in Special Educational Needs Coordination (NASENCO) will be presented and explored.

The literature review will conclude by providing an overview into the study that will be conducted and will present the research areas that aim to be explored during the following section.

1.3. Theoretical significance and relevance to psychology

In line with Special Educational Needs Coordinators roles and responsibilities the SENCO is often the person who is the primary contact the Educational Psychologist has with the school. EPs have a close working relationship with SENCOs (Matthews, 2002). Matthew’s conducted research that was based on the relationship EPs build with the school SENCO. It was reported that SENCOs appreciate regular meetings with their link EP and that work is carefully co – ordinated between the two parties. The current research aims to investigate the perspectives of SENCOs roles and responsibilities, self – efficacy and organisational commitment. An exploration of the effects training has on both these practical and affective constructs will be considered from the viewpoint of the SENCO. This direct

link between the EP and SENCO relationship in connection with the research area concerning SENCOs may have implications for psychology and educational psychology practice.

The EP plays a supporting role towards the SENCO. Wagner (2000) describes how the relationship and dialogue between SENCO and EP is highly valued. This provides possible relevance to both educational psychology as well as the role of the educational psychologist. It is suggested here that the EP and the SENCO need to build and maintain good working relationships. In order to work well together, the EP may require an understanding of the SENCO's perception of his/ her role and training needs. Matthews (2002) suggests that in order to facilitate the optimum level of change for children the SENCO needed to understand the change issue as well as the child. The EP could help to facilitate this understanding through the EP's and SENCO's close working relationship.

Farouk (1999) reinforced the view that there is a collaborative role between EPs and SENCOs. SENCO knowledge of the functions of external agencies is imperative to the smooth running of the SENCO role. In an earlier article, Gale (1991) described, "How to Deliver the Goods" (p. 72), arguing that educational psychologists should play an instrumental part in training within schools and should share their expertise in instruction, counselling, non – directive therapy and social skills. This is a viewpoint which highlights the involvement and potential support EPs may provide in the field of training with regards to SENCOs. The current research will aim to consider the perceptions of the impact that training may have on psychological constructs as well as how SENCOs construct their role. The results from this study may be useful for supporting EPs while considering SENCOs' training needs and the consequences of SENCOs accessing training opportunities.

The theoretical constructs considered here are self – efficacy (Bandura, 1986, 1997) and organisational commitment (Drucker, 1968; Northcraft & Neale, 1996). These constructs can be considered within education through the exploration of the concepts, teacher efficacy (Dembo & Gibson, 1985; Newman et al., 1989) and teacher commitment (Mowday, Steers & Porter, 1979; Firestone & Pennell, 1993). Both constructs have plentiful examples of research in support of the psychological aspects as well as the potential outcomes of both. To the researcher's knowledge as identified through the literature search, these constructs have been researched in areas such as the impact of teacher's sense of efficacy on outcomes for pupils and teachers (Caprara et al., 2006). Teacher commitment has been explored for example, as a predictor of continued employment and performance (Day, 2008). No research has been found that directly links these concepts with SENCOs despite reports of higher levels of stress found in staff who are trained to work with children

with SEN (Jennett, Harris & Mesibov, 2003). This contributes significantly to the rationale for carrying out research regarding these areas, due to the novel element identified.

1.4. Rationale

An information sheet provided by the SENCO Charter (The Effective Role of the SENCO, Information Sheet 1) suggests that there are many qualities needed in order to be an effective SENCO some of these include self – confidence, enthusiasm and commitment. Self – confidence and enthusiasm may be indicative of feelings of self – efficacy. In addition, enthusiasm and commitment may be indicative of characteristics associated with organisational commitment. The possible relationship between these concepts supports the current research investigating self – efficacy and organisational commitment and the SENCO. The following literature review considers evidence that demonstrates the impact of self – efficacy and organisational commitment.

It is argued here that self – efficacy and organisational commitment are not directly the same constructs as self – confidence, enthusiasm and commitment. For example, self – efficacy is defined as being a task specific belief whereas self – confidence is a more generalizable feeling (Bandura, 1997). However, there are similarities between the constructs, for example both are concerned with feelings related to motivation (Ross & Bruce, 2007). Therefore these commonalities result in them having relevance and being applicable to the current research.

In the context of legislation the NASENCO is a relatively recent qualification that all SENCOs in England need to complete within the first three years of practice (The Education, Special Educational Needs Coordinators, Regulations 2009). Due to this legislation being introduced in 2009, research into the outcomes of the National Award is limited. This results in the research topic presenting as novel and providing scope for a worthwhile contribution to the field that is relatively unexplored.

2. Literature Review

This literature review includes sub – sections that are related to the title of the research; ‘The implications of training for Special Educational Needs Coordinators; an exploration of self – efficacy, organisational commitment and perceptions of the SENCO role’. All areas addressed are viewed as relevant and applicable to the research conducted due to an initial literature search and are required in order to gain an understanding of psychological constructs explored and the theoretical stand

point adopted. The review will also include literature regarding SENCOs, the SENCO role, the impact training has on professionals as well as the impact of the National Award. These areas are explored in order to understand the context in which the research is based. Training and the National Award will be explored in order to consider the relevance they have to SENCOs and whether there are any outcomes or implications for SENCOs.

The main focus of this research is the Special Educational Needs Coordinator or SENCO. The SENCO is the member of staff in a school who is responsible for meeting and managing the needs of pupils who have additional needs (Morewood, 2011). In particular, this research is concerned with investigating the perceived impact training has on SENCOs feelings of self – efficacy and organisational commitment. These psychological concepts (self – efficacy and organisational commitment) will be considered in the first instance followed by consideration of the SENCO role and legislative changes that have impacted on the role. Existing literature reviewing the impact of training will be critically appraised and there will be consideration of the introduction of the National Award in England in 2009. The emergent research areas for the current research will be presented at the end of this section.

2.1. Self – efficacy

Self – efficacy is a central component of Bandura's (1986, 1997) social cognitive theory. There are many variations of the definition of self – efficacy. It is mainly described as a person's self – belief of their capabilities to perform a given task. Self – efficacy is task specific (Bandura, 1997; Hoy, 2004) and has been identified as a key element of theories of motivation. It is a psychological construct that has received a lot of interest and has been widely researched over the past three decades. It has been reported that self – efficacy is important because unless people believe they can produce outcomes there is little incentive to pursue ambitions and continue despite difficulties (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Borgogni & Steca, 2003).

Self – efficacy is often considered in specific domains. Teacher self – efficacy is a specific type of self – efficacy relating to the teacher as an agent of student achievement (Ross & Bruce, 2007). Although Caprara, Barbaranelli, Borgogni and Steca (2003) suggest that self – efficacy beliefs in themselves may not be sufficient in isolation in order to achieve success and satisfaction. They suggest that achievement also depends on people's ability to operate with others within social systems.

Teacher self – efficacy will be considered in the following sections. In order to understand the purpose of considering self – efficacy it will be important to consider the outcomes and impact that high and/ or low levels of self – efficacy can have on professionals.

2.1.1. Teacher Self – Efficacy

Historically it has been suggested that attempts at ensuring teaching standards and improving the quality of teaching have been made through the curriculum and direct instruction (Raudenbush, Rowan & Cheong, 1992). The rationale for considering teacher self – efficacy here is as a result of suggestions made by Bidwell (1965) and Brophy and Everston (1976) that effective teaching requires efficacious performance under a variety of changeable circumstances. This research specifically considers Special Educational Needs Coordinators and is concerned with exploring their feelings of self – efficacy. Consequently, teacher self – efficacy and the research regarding the outcomes and impact of self – efficacy for teachers is an area explored in this section. Firstly, teacher self – efficacy is introduced and defined.

In the context of school, teacher self – efficacy has been defined as “the extent to which teachers believe they can affect school learning.” (Dembo & Gibson, 1985, p. 173). For the purposes of this research the definition as provided by Bandura, a pioneer in the field, will be used. Bandura (1986) defined self – efficacy as “a judgement of one’s capability to accomplish a given level of performance.” (Bandura, 1986, p. 391). Self – efficacy is different from self – esteem and self – confidence as it is task and performance specific. It is important to note that this review will use the terms teacher efficacy, teacher sense of efficacy and self – efficacy of teachers interchangeably with the meaning relating to teacher self – efficacy within the education system.

2.1.2. Teacher Self – Efficacy: Outcomes

The key issues concerning teacher self – efficacy are the outcomes for teachers. It is possible that self – efficacy beliefs can impact on teachers’ work life as well as the students they teach, this will be

critically reviewed in the following section. There is evidence to suggest that higher feelings of self – efficacy are related to a number of positive outcomes for both teachers and their student, this research will be critically considered in this section. It has been demonstrated that teachers with higher self – efficacy tend to be more committed to teaching (Coladarci, 1992) and teacher efficacy consistently predicts functional teacher behaviours and valued student outcomes (Ross & Bruce, 2007).

Caprara, Barbaranelli, Steca and Malone (2006) investigated self – efficacy as a determinant of job satisfaction for teachers and students’ academic achievements. It was found that perceived self – efficacy had a positive effect on the ability to effectively handle various tasks, obligations, and challenges related to the teacher’s role. In addition, it was found that there was an impact on students’ academic achievement at the school level. This study provides evidence for the impact of self – efficacy at the teacher level as well as for their students and further the implications for the school as a whole. The study conducted by Caprara, Barbaranelli, Steca and Malone (2006) collected data from more than 2,000 participants which is a broad data set to analyse. However, as a study in isolation it is important to be mindful that the data was based on self – reports and was conducted in Italy providing results from a subjective perspective that are not specific to the British context.

Allinder (1994) was able to echo the positive outcomes for teachers if higher levels of self – efficacy were detected. It was found that teachers with a strong sense of efficacy exhibit high levels of organisation, planning and enthusiasm for teaching. However, it has been argued that teacher efficacy is a subjective perception and not an objective measure of teacher success or effectiveness (Ross & Bruce, 2007). This will need due consideration whilst interpreting and reporting the results of the current research.

Research focusing on teachers has been carried out. Ross (1994) proposes that the positive results found for increased self – efficacy demonstrate that feelings of efficacy provide teachers with the confidence to take the risk of learning difficult professional procedures and to persist with them through the initial difficult stages of implementation. Ross suggests that teacher self – efficacy can be a protective factor and can help teachers with facing challenges and increases their motivation to cope with difficulties. Ross reported increases in teachers use of knowledge contributed to teacher’s sense of efficacy. However, it was also found that increases in self – efficacy on a personal level were

offset by increases in a rise of social comparison among the teachers which may account for the rising standards observed. This study concerned teachers specifically and re – test measures over an eight month period were completed. Some qualitative data was collected, however, the main source of data was quantitative collected from a series of questionnaires. It could be criticised that these may provide a rigid measure of self – efficacy and do not allow for more in – depth analysis.

Another positive outcome of better self – efficacy was reported by Almog and Shechtman (2007). Research examining the relationship between teacher’s self – efficacy, democratic beliefs and the way teachers deal with behavioural problems in the classrooms of inclusive schools. It was found that teachers with positive teacher efficacy would deal with incidents such as social rejection, shyness, low achievement and passive – aggressive behaviour using a helpful response style. Almog and Shechtman recognise that other studies using a self – reporting method of data collection have yielded similar results. However, a strength for this study is that it considers actual behaviour displayed by teachers in the classroom. It should be noted that there may be some cross – cultural differences between this research and the current research as this study was conducted in Israel.

Holzberger, Philipp and Kunter (2014) conducted a study using participants who were mathematics teachers. Although the results may not be generalizable to all teachers and SENCOs, it does concern schools and teachers directly and is relevant to consider within the literature. The study investigated two constructs considered to measure teacher’s motivation, these were self - efficacy and intrinsic needs. It was found that teachers who perceived themselves as having higher self - efficacy also perceived their school as having the ability to meet their intrinsic needs. It was also reported that the higher the teachers' self - efficacy the better the teachers’ use of instructional behaviours. Holzberger, Philipp and Kunter suggest that there are further variables within the school environment that may have an impact upon the relationship between teachers’ personal characteristics and outcomes. The researchers suggest that these could be examined in order to understand the impact they may have on the results. However, the longitudinal method of research (over two years) provides results accumulated over time which is a positive aspect of this study.

In addition to the positive outcomes for teachers with high self – efficacy another key issue explored within the literature are the negative outcomes for those with low self – efficacy. Saricam and Sakiz (2014) found a correlation between burnout in teachers who worked in special educational needs

institutions and levels of self – efficacy. It was found that self – efficacy was an important factor for emotional involvement, sense of accomplishment and engagement. This study was specifically concerned with participants actively working with organisations providing special education therefore providing relevant results for the context of investigating self – efficacy for SENCOs, which will be explored in the following research. However, this research was conducted in Turkey. It could be argued that there may be cross – cultural differences between the education system in Turkey compared to the systems in Wales/ England.

2.1.3. Teacher Self – Efficacy and SEN

Research has demonstrated that working with children with SEN can result in higher rates of burn out (Saricam and Sakiz, 2014). Jennett, Harris and Mesibov (2003) reported teachers who had trained to work with children with specific impairments reported higher levels of exhaustion and stress in comparison to teachers who had qualified in other areas. Cole (1998) described that teachers reported that children who display behaviour difficulties as a result of SEN can present difficulties related to inclusion. In addition it has been reported that teachers with higher self – efficacy used more helpful strategies to manage different behavioural problems (Almog and Shechtman, 2007). This provides a rationale for exploring the relationship between teacher self – efficacy and special educational needs and special educational needs coordinators. However, other factors have been found to impact upon teacher’s wellbeing and success within the field of special education. For example, Mittler (1990) recognised the importance of team work within the teaching profession and stress within schools has been attributed to the school environments (Friedman & Faber, 1992).

However, in respect of self – efficacy, Ashton, Webb and Doda (1983) reported that teachers with lower efficacy beliefs tend to concentrate their efforts on higher achieving students rather than lower achieving students who may be viewed as potential sources of disruption. Although this research is dated, the results have been replicated more recently for example by Almog and Shechtman (2007). Almog and Schechtman found a positive correlation between self – efficacy beliefs and the use of helpful strategies regarding behaviour. A mixed methods design was used as well as a sample of thirty three participants. This sample size seems sufficient however, the research was conducted in Israel and therefor there may be some culture specific results emerging. This may

demonstrate the consistency in the results obtained over time and the longevity of interest in the concept within the field of education.

Ross and Bruce (2007) suggest that accountability and focus on results means that schools should focus on positive teacher efficacy as it raises outcomes for children. Ross and Bruce found that self – efficacy had improved on three of the measures for a group of teachers who had completed a professional development programme in comparison to a group that had not completed the same programme. Although this demonstrated an improvement in efficacy beliefs in three areas there was only a significant result in one area, classroom management.

It is suggested here, for the reasons presented, that SENCOs would benefit from positive self – efficacy. The relevance of this to the current research is due to the SENCO being directly responsible for children with SEN. The impact of improved self – efficacy is demonstrated on the individual level (teacher and student), group (class room) and whole school level.

2.1.4. Self – efficacy and Organisations

Feelings of self – efficacy can be attributed to teacher’s feelings about their environment. For example, Morre and Esselman (1992) found stronger efficacy beliefs among teachers who perceived a positive school atmosphere. Lee, Dedick and Smith (1991) found that a sense of community in a school was a predictor of efficacy and Rosenholtz (1989) reported that positive feedback, collaboration with other teachers and parent involvement with school wide behaviour coordination were associated with teacher efficacy. Although this evidence is somewhat dated, this historical evidence has been replicated over time.

Cheminais (2005) suggest that the SENCO role has developed to be a lead position within the school. Bolman and Deal, (1991) suggest that the organisational context that managers work within will influence what the manager can do. Early work by Bandura (1986) suggests that self – efficacy influences how individuals choose to approach and explore situations and those with low self – efficacy will avoid situations if they believe the situation exceeds their ability. In addition, those who

have more confidence in their abilities are more persistent and committed in their effort and experience less stress when faced with difficult challenges. This early work exploring self – efficacy provides the first suggestions being made about this psychological perspective. Evidence for these assumptions have been replicated over time. Therefore it is significant to consider the origins of the concept.

Paglis and Green (2002) suggest that self – efficacy is therefore crucial for leaders and managers within organisations. Paglis and Green conducted research investigating, in part, the relationship between leadership self – efficacy and positive outcomes such as more leadership attempts in comparison to self – doubting managers. The results showed that self – efficacy increased positive attempts at leadership.

It is important to understand schools as organisations as well as SENCOs perceived place within these systems in order to consider, in this research, whether there may be an impact upon SENCOs' perceived commitment to the organisation they work within.

In summary, self – efficacy is an area that has received interest over an extended period of time. Teacher – efficacy is a domain specific efficacy for teachers within the school environment. A number of positive outcomes of teacher – efficacy have been found. Although there are other variables that effect teacher success there is evidence to suggest that the psychological construct, self – efficacy contributes to this. This section identifies the link between working within the field of Special Education Needs and the relevance of this concept and its importance to teachers and Special Education is evident. Self – efficacy also plays a role when considering the success of systems and organisations. Organisational commitment will be critically considered in the following section.

2.2. Organisational Commitment: Considering Systems

Bronfenbrenner (1979) developed the Ecological Systems Theory. Neal and Neal (2013) describe how this system has been widely developed in order to understand individuals in context. Neal and Neal describe how Bronfenbrenner's system consists of circles that nest each concentric system. They also assert that relationships are not able to be conceptualised using this graphical representation, instead needing more obscure representations of networks of relationships.

In the context of schools it is important to consider the relationship between different systems. It may be worthwhile to consider the SENCOs' position in the system. Pearson and Gathercole (2011) provide a useful illustration of this model as it applies to the context of the SENCO working with vulnerable pupils (Pearson & Gathercole, 2011, Figure 2, p. 35).

From research, (Tissot, 2013), it is possible to see that some SENCOs adopt a leadership role within the managerial structure of the school. This research is explored in more detail later in this review. Somech and Bogler (2002) found that teacher participation in managerial decisions was a predictor of how committed teachers felt to their organisation. Interestingly, Somech and Bogler note that inclusion in technical decision making did not predict organisational commitment. It is possible to speculate here that involvement at the managerial level was important for perception of commitment. It is important to be mindful that this research, like much of the research in this field is based on self – report. The current research will explore the constructions of the role of the SENCO as well as SENCO's perceived commitment to the school as an organisation.

2.2.1. Organisational Commitment

In a document introducing the national standards for SENCOs (Introduction to the National Standards for Special Educational Needs Coordinators, 1997) the Teacher Training Agency suggests that the SENCO role is difficult and complex and can only be effective within a school system which values and supports them. It is possible to consider the school as an organisation comprising of a variety of systems (Pearson & Gathercole, 2011). It has been demonstrated that there are positive outcomes for organisations as well as employees if employees have a strong sense of commitment (Day, 2008; Henkin & Holliman, 2009). Henkin and Holliman (2009) found positive outcomes such as better teaching performance and stability of the workforce. However, there was only tentative evidence for other factors such as activities beyond the classroom as an indicator of organisational commitment. Therefore consideration of these effects for schools and teachers seems important. The benefits that could be realised as a result of teachers having a strong sense of organisational commitment could benefit, not only the teachers but the school and student also.

An organisation comprises groups of people who work together in different ways to meet a shared goal (Jones, 1993). It is possible to consider schools as organisations that are made up of different systems. Systems have been described by Jones (1993) as factors that interact over time.

Organisational commitment has been defined as ‘an effective response to the whole organisation and the degree of attachment or loyalty employees feel towards the organisation.’ (Guleryuz, Guney, Aydin, & Asan, 2008, p. 1626).

2.2.2. Organisational Commitment: Outcomes

It has been suggested by Northcraft and Neale (1996) that organisational commitment is influenced by three factors: firstly, personal factors, for example, age, disposition, internal or external control attributions; secondly, organisational factors, for example, job design, leadership style of the organisation’s supervisors and thirdly, non – organisational factors, for example, availability of alternative employment. According to Northcraft and Neale these factors have a subsequent effect on the employee’s overall organisational commitment. The researcher is interested in investigating SENCOs’ perception of their perceived position within the school systems as well as their constructions of their commitment to the school as an organisation. This is due to suggestions that the SENCO’s position within the school is changing (Mackenzie, 2007). Mackenzie suggests that since the introduction of The Code of Practice (1994) there have been different interpretations of the SENCO role. It is important to note that Mackenzie recognises that it is difficult to generalise results due to this variability in the role of the SENCO.

It has been found that high organisational commitment is associated with lower turnover and lower employee absence (Day, 2008), however, Guest (1991) found no clear link to organisational commitment and performance outcomes. Tella, Ayeni and Popoola (2007) make the distinction between motivation and organisational commitment describing that organisational commitment is a broader concept and tends to withstand short term aspects of job satisfaction. It is suggested by Tella, Ayeni and Popoola that it is possible to be dissatisfied with a certain feature of a job whilst continuing to retain commitment to the organisation as a whole. Tella, Ayeni and Popoola reported that a correlation was found between work motivation, job satisfaction and organisational commitment. However, the correlation found between motivation and organisational commitment was a negative one with job satisfaction having a positive impact upon organisational commitment. Tella, Ayeni and Popoola suggest that this could be due to the sample not having jobs that are not reflective of this relationship.

Guleryuz, Guney, Aydin and Asan (2008) investigated the effect job satisfaction had on emotional intelligence and organisational commitment. It was found that there was a mediating relationship

between job satisfaction and organisational commitment as well as emotional intelligence. It is important to note that this study was regarding nurses and is not directly transferable to the current, educational context. However, it makes clear contributions to work related to the concept of organisational commitment and emphasises the implication that other factors (job satisfaction and emotional intelligence) can have on this construct. The researcher suggests that these factors may have relevance to the school environment and SENCOs.

Through exploration of the key issues emerging from the literature there is evidence to suggest that empowerment can contribute to teacher commitment to the school as an organisation. Wu and Short (1996) found that teacher empowerment was related to job commitment and job satisfaction. Jafri (2010) describes how commitment can influence innovative behaviour and Armstrong (1999) suggests that in order to create commitment, communication, education, training programmes, and initiatives to increase involvement and ownership are important.

The converse of these positive and nurturing aspects of organisations are the negative implications due to a lack of organisational commitment. This is evidenced by McNeese – Smith (2001) who found a number of negative outcomes of poor employee organisational commitment. It was found that work conflicting with personal needs, a lack of learning, overload and stress as well as poor relationships with co-workers were all consequences of reduced organisational commitment.

Organ, Podsakoff and MacKenzie, (2006) describe how the concept of commitment overlaps with organisational citizenship behaviours. They suggest that the evidence demonstrates that there are many positive organisational benefits if an employee is engaging in organisational citizenship behaviours. These are often consistent with, and associated with organisational commitment and for these reasons are explored in the following section.

2.2.3. Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB)

Katz (1964) was the first researcher to provide work on OCB and the concept has been the subject of further research since then. Examples of OCBs include; volunteering to assist co-workers with their work, helping to orient new members, talking favourably about the organisation to outsiders and attending non – mandatory activities that help the organisation as a whole (Lee & Allen, 2002).

Therefore OCBs are voluntary behaviours carried out by the employee that help the organisation they work for as a whole. These behaviours are not directly rewarded and sit outside the employee's official role (Lee & Allen, 2002).

Xerri and Brunetto (2013) investigated organisational commitment, organisational citizenship behaviour and innovative behaviour in the work place. Through employing social exchange theory it was found that affective commitment led to more innovative behaviour. It was also found that OCBs with an individual focus led to innovative behaviour. This study was concerning nurses and so it could be argued that this is not applicable to the school environment. However, it is a study that contributes to the understanding and implications of organisational commitment and OCB and therefore is worthwhile to consider. In this context, Chang (2005) identifies that commitment in the nursing environment is an important requirement. It is suggested here that commitment is also important to the teaching profession, especially for SENCOs due to the difficulties and complexities the role presents.

The positive outcomes of OCB were a key rationale for considering this concept within the literature review. Dalal (2005) reported that employees with positive job attitudes are more likely to display organisational citizenship behaviours, rewarding the organisation through participating over, and above what is expected from them. LePine, Erez and Johnson (2002) found that job satisfaction and organisational commitment were both strongly associated with organisational citizenship behaviours. Bowling, Wang and Li (2012) researched the relationship between core self – evaluations, job attitudes and organisational citizenship behaviours. Measures were used in order to consider core self – evaluations, job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour as well as organisational commitment. It was found that job satisfaction and organisational commitment were positively related to organisational citizenship behaviours. It was also found that core self – evaluations were positively correlated with organisational commitment behaviours. This study recruited participants from a range of industries for example information technology, catering services, banking and travel. Although this study was not specifically related to schools it does have particular relevance to the current study as it includes the measure of core self – evaluations. This is an example of the literature that has investigated both the concept of organisational commitment and self – efficacy.

It has been suggested that OCBs can be beneficial on an individual as well as an organisational level (Rotundo & Sackett, 2002; Podsakoff, Whiting, Podsakoff & Blume, 2009). Podsakoff et al. (2009)

posed that demonstrations of OCBs over time created a positive perception of the employee exhibiting those behaviours. This demonstrates how OCBs can have benefits on a broader scale, on an organisational as well as an individual level. Therefore these may be behaviours that are beneficial for employees in other contexts, like schools.

In summary, it has been identified that teachers are a part of a larger system, namely, the school. The school is a large system that is made up of smaller systems working together. It is suggested in this section that a contributor to the success of a system such as a school could, in part, be due to teachers' sense of organisational commitment. Evidence presented in this section suggests that there are positive outcomes for employees who feel committed to the organisation that they work for. The behaviours that are associated with people who are displaying commitment to the organisation that they work for are Organisational Citizenship Behaviours. The outcomes of displaying these behaviours were also critically considered.

2.2.4. Teacher Commitment

Firestone and Pennell (1993) describe that some of the commonalities between definitions of teacher commitment are, the psychological bonds and individual identification with the organisation that takes on a special importance. Teacher commitment is a domain specific type of organisation commitment (Firestone & Rosenblum, 1988). Although this literature is now dated these definitions continued to be used in contemporary work (Henkin & Holliman, 2009).

Teacher commitment has been divided into two forms (Firestone & Pennel, 1993). The first is professional commitment (commitment to teaching as a profession) and the second is organisational commitment (commitment to the school). Firestone and Pennel (1993) provide a review of literature relating to teacher commitment, working conditions and differential incentive policies. The article provides a framework which is used to measure the impact of policies. A comprehensive overview of important work is provided, however, it is suggested here that conclusions are drawn based upon previous research and not on real – time, current work. The current research is considering the second form of teacher commitment to the organisation. This is due to the current research considering training opportunities available to SENCOs. Training opportunities provided by the school may have implications for SENCOs' perceptions of commitment to the school as an organisation. Also, the current investigation considers SENCOs specifically and therefore measuring

commitment to the teaching profession may not be applicable to commitment to the SENCO role. Mowday, Steers and Porter (1979) suggest that there are many different definitions of commitment and refers to teacher organisational commitment as an individual's approval of the organisation's goals and values, motivation to exert effort for the organisation, and as a desire to remain a part of the organisation. Although this is a dated perspective by now this definition remains applicable to other research considered in this section. It is important to note that the definition of the construct, teacher commitment, has received criticism for being too broad (Balfour & Wechsler, 1996).

An area of interest within the literature is the outcomes of teacher commitment (as follows). Teacher commitment has been reported to be a predictor of better teaching performance and lower teacher turnover (Day, 2008). Henkin and Holliman (2009) investigated teachers' level of organisational commitment in relation to perceived organisational conflict, support for innovation and teacher participation in activities beyond the classroom. It was found that organisational conflict had a negative effect on organisational commitment and that support for innovation and teacher participation were correlated with higher levels of organisational commitment. Henkin and Holliman emphasise how this association is particularly pertinent for the teaching profession due to the highly specialised role carried out and the consequent dependence managers have on a stable work – force. This study was carried out in America and it could be argued that school systems differ to those in the UK.

Other factors that are present in the literature include school environment being associated with organisational commitment (Collie, Shapka & Perry, 2011). Darling – Hammond (1997) reported that occupational factors like financial reasons and working conditions are reasons for leaving the teaching profession. However, Farber (1984) suggests that teachers who leave the profession are doing so due to pursuing a new career that provides greater meaning and fulfillment in their lives. These perspectives are somewhat dated by now and so it is possible that reasons for commitment to schools is different today.

Another factor that emerged from the literature that is relevant to consider for the current research includes the suggestion that organisational commitment is due to teacher commitment being a predictor of work performance (Day, Elliot & Kington, 2005). Kushman (1992) found that teacher's

organisational commitment was associated with pupils' reading and language arts achievement. This provides an illustration of the benefits that teacher commitment to the organisation can have on an individual pupil level.

2.2.5. Teacher Commitment and Teacher Efficacy

The following section considers some of the research that has considered both teacher commitment and teacher efficacy together, providing a rationale for exploring both of these constructs in the following research. Somech and Drach – Zahavy (2000) found that self – efficacy is related to OCB in relation to the team and the organisation the individual is a part of. Fresko, Kfir and Nasser (1997) found that teacher commitment and job satisfaction were closely related. However, only an indirect relationship was found between professional self – image, abilities, gender, job advancement and pupil's class level, and job commitment. Therefore this study only partly replicated previous research and failed to demonstrate the relationship between job commitment and self – image as anticipated.

Mackenzie's research in 2012 aimed to further develop the research presented by Day et al (2007) regarding factors that determine resilience in the teaching profession. Mackenzie used a narrative approach using life story work and semi – structured interviews in order to collect a rich source of qualitative data. Although this method is widely used in literature regarding the teaching profession it continues to be criticised for lacking the validity and reliability of other approaches. Mackenzie specifically recruited participants who were SENCOs or former SENCOs still working in education. 19 teachers who had been in the profession for more than 15 years were recruited by placing adverts in SEN magazines and writing letters to SENCOs. This opportunity sample provided a broad sample from across the country although it could be criticised that respondents were volunteers and therefore may be highly motivated to work in SEN. This may have impacted upon the participant's willingness and motivations for participating with this research.

Mackenzie (2012) found that factors contributing to maintenance in motivation included the intellectual challenge of the job and academic interests. Personal factors like holidays and salary were also contributory factors. The participants in the study showed no decrease in motivation or commitment over time. Those working for more than 20 years showed no indication of losing their

dedication to the profession and maintained a strong sense of commitment to the school. It is suggested here that the motivated participants within this study may have a better sense of teacher efficacy. This is suggested because factors such as being motivated and enjoying the challenges of the job are indicative of teacher efficacy which is previously noted as 'the teacher's perception that his or her teaching is worth the effort, that it leads to the success of students and is personally satisfying.' (Newmann, Fred, Robert, Rutter & Smith, 1989, p. 230).

Uniquely, this research identified a particular commitment from the SENCOs for working with children with SEN and participants identified that they wanted to continue doing so in the future. It could be argued that this opportunity sample may have impacted upon the results obtained. This study demonstrated that SENCOs had a commitment to wider school change and saw themselves as taking a leadership role as well as working with SEN. Although, it is noted that some participants felt that lack of other opportunity and salary had resulted in commitment to the school. Mackenzie notes the importance of this considering the SENCO's role in school is widening.

In summary, the literature considered here identifies that teacher commitment is a well - researched area within the field. An important and interesting link emerged that teacher commitment and self – efficacy are related and have been researched within the same context. The current study is concerned with the addition of a novel element into these research areas. The researcher will explore self – efficacy and organisational commitment of SENCOs in schools.

2.3. Special Educational Needs Coordinators

In order to provide an understanding of the impact that legislation has had on both SEN and SENCOs the legislative background will firstly be discussed within this section. The roles and responsibilities of the SENCO will then be considered. Research demonstrates that the SENCO role is interpreted in many different ways (Layton, 2005). The role can vary between schools which can result in different responsibilities, different time allowances to complete the role as well as different tasks that are expected of the SENCO (Derrington, 1997; Crowther, Dyson & Millward, 2001). The current landscape for SENCOs will then be presented through exploring the current changes to legislation

which have had implications for SENCOs employed in England who, since 2009, have needed to complete the National Award in order to be employed in the role.

2.3.1. The SENCO: Background

The 1981 Education Act was a significant development in provision for special education. The distinction between different special educational needs, a staged approach and separate specialist provision were developed. The 1981 Education Act was concerned with a more interactive concept of special educational need and recognised the impact on schooling as well as other systems. The Act gave parents a more significant role in the education of their child for the first time. However, this was based on primarily a deficit model of need. The legalisation resulted in an introduction of 'statements of special educational needs'. This was a legal document in which the child's needs were identified and provisions needed to meet those needs were introduced. The introduction of statements, identification of need for more resources and specialist placements, placed growing pressures on Local Education Authority's budgets. There was also a change in the relationship between mainstream and segregated provision.

The Education Reform Act 1988 bared changes in legislation for curriculum and school management bringing special educational needs into assessment, curriculum and a budgetary framework (Bowe, Ball & Gold, 1992). Undoubtedly, the changes in legislation had implications for teacher training courses. This highlighted the need for special educational needs training for both teachers and SEN staff, thus enhancing the roles for special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) in both mainstream and special education provision.

The agreement to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Salamanca statement in 1994 was a significant commitment to the moral, social and political aspects of disability and inclusion. In 1994 the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs (*DfEE*) placed an obligation on schools to appoint a teacher as SENCO. It describes the role and responsibilities of a SENCO and developed the role of Ofsted for inspecting SEN in both mainstream and specialist provision. This was the policy document that created the role of the SENCO in England and Wales and is the basis of further legislation and policy in this area.

Following the Code of Practice in 1994 the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act was introduced in 2001. This further reinforces a commitment to the inclusion of children with SEN and

increased the parental rights to appeal to LA decisions made for individual children. Amendments to the law at this time now mean that local authorities are required to consider placing children with SEN in mainstream schools. This is the case for all children with SEN, the only exceptions would be if a mainstream school was incompatible with an efficient education based on the needs of the child, parental wishes, efficient use of resources, if the placement would not be inappropriately disruptive of others' education and if there is not a significant health and safety issue that could not be overcome with efficient use of resources.

2001 was also the year which saw a revision of the Code of Practice. The Code of Practice of the Assessment of Special Educational Needs (DfE, 1994) was separated into two codes, one developed for Wales (2002) and one for England (2001). Both outlined changes to implementation and assessment of SEN. It explicitly explained the role of the SENCO's as well as other professionals' roles with regards to SEN. An emphasis was placed on the SENCO's position within the management team as well as the SENCOs role with regards to policy development in addition to coordinating provision for pupils with SEN.

In 2004 outlines of the government's planning for SEN for the next ten years was outlined in the document *Removing Barriers to Achievement: The Government's SEN Strategy* (DfSE, 2004). In 2005 the Disability Discrimination Act placed the same legislative duty on public bodies with regards to disability equality as it does on gender and race equality.

The legislation directly addressing SENCOs and their level of qualification was published in 2009 and will be explored in more detail in the following section. Since this legislation there have been further changes which will inevitably impact on the role of the SENCO, namely the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice, 2015. This is based on the Children and Families Act 2014 and aims to play a vital role in underpinning major reform in England. There are also changes on the horizon for Wales. The White Paper, *Legislative proposals for additional learning needs*, was issued in May 2014 and the responses have since been collected, resulting changes are therefore expected. As a result of these changes to legislation Cole (2005) explains that the 'the role of the SENCO lies at the crossroads of these competing policies,' (Cole, 2005, p. 297).

2.3.2. SENCO Roles and Responsibilities

Legislation has played an instrumental role in shaping, identifying and regulating the roles and responsibilities of the Special Educational Needs Coordinator. The SENCO holds responsibilities within schools relating to children with additional needs. In 1997 the DfEE published a document

based on three research projects, divided into three sections, aimed at providing guidance for the SENCO (The SENCO Guide, 1997). The Code of Practice also outlines the role of the SENCO. However, although the role is guided by legislation there are many interpretations of this guidance. Derrington (1997) reported that there were continuing differing interpretations of the SENCO role.

The SEN Code of Practice requires SENCOs to be a qualified teacher: Governing bodies of maintained mainstream schools and the proprietors of mainstream academy schools (including free schools) must ensure that there is a qualified teacher designated as SENCO for the school (CoP, 6.84, 2014). In 1997, the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) published national standards providing guidance on training and development for SENCOs. The TTA standards state that:

“SENCOs will be skilled teachers in their own subject or phase. The skills and attributes which follow are essential, but not exclusive, to the SENCO’s role. The head teacher should ensure that the SENCO has access to specific training related to the development of these necessary skills.” (TTA, 1997, Section 4, p. 5).

According to the Code of Practice and other guidance SENCO’s are responsible for the day – to – day provision for pupils with SEN in the school. Some of the key roles include:

- Liaising and working with other teachers and teaching assistants.
- A responsibility to contribute to in – service training for other staff on issues around SEN.
- Liaising with parents of pupils with SEN.
- Liaising with external agencies.

The TTA has divided SENCO roles and responsibilities into four key areas. These are:

- Strategic direction and development of SEN provision in the school.
- Teaching and Learning.
- Leading and Managing Staff.
- Efficient and effective deployment of staff and resources

(TTA, 1998, p. 1)

Despite legislation and guidance there continue to be inconsistencies within the SENCO role. In an article by Layton (2005) results from Layton and Robertson’s 2004 study are discussed and demonstrate considerable variations in the patterns of SENCO’s work load. It was found that SENCOs felt that colleagues saw them as responsible for a wide range of roles, not least as ‘fire fighters’ (Layton, 2005, p. 55) reacting in order to minimise the challenges created by pupils and special

educational needs. It is important to note that the research by Layton and Robertson was small scale and was not published work. However, the study was conducted in the West Midlands in England and participants were recruited from five large local authorities providing contextually useful results for the current literature review.

Kearns (2005) carried out a study investigating the variation of roles that SENCOs undertook. Five different roles were identified, including: SENCO as arbiter, rescuer, auditor, collaborator and less frequently, expert. This study demonstrates the diverse perception and interpretations of the role. Szwed (2007) points out that this provides difficulties for generalising the role, especially within and between primary and secondary education as well as between local authorities. Although an article by the NUT reports that 'an extraordinarily wide range of duties is associated with the post of SENCO, irrespective of whether the post holder works in a primary or secondary school.' (NUT, 2005, p. 1).

Through researching the literature in this area it is possible to identify that many aspects of the SENCO role can vary between schools and individuals. For example, Crowther, Dyson and Millward (2001) investigated the time allocated to SENCOs in order to be able to fulfil their role. It was found that available time actually decreased between 1997 and 2001 despite an increase in the number of pupils on the special education needs register. In 1996, Lewis, Neill and Campbell conducted research into the SENCO role. The study considered SENCOs in both England and Wales. Responses were collected from more than 2,000 schools and the results demonstrated many variations in SENCO roles. It was demonstrated that, some SENCOs also held additional responsibilities for example head or deputy head teacher roles or head of subject responsibilities. Some SENCOs were part time employees whilst others were full – time, and of these, some teachers had teaching responsibilities. The large scale of this research makes the results more generalizable, however the self – report method of data collection places constraints on this. In relation to this research consistencies in findings can be found in Derrington's (1997) work. Derrington (1997) conducted small scale research but also found significant variations in the SENCO role. Differences were identified between time – table commitments as well as the occurrence of additional management roles like deputy headship.

The key issue of differing and widening SENCO roles that was evident in the literature was also researched by Cowne in 2005. Cowne (2005) conducted a longitudinal study investigating SENCO roles and an evaluation of a SENCO training programme. Cowne reported that the SENCOs have a

wide variety of roles that were currently expanding. These included work with pupils, parents, teachers, teaching assistants and outside agencies. This research reflected findings from previous studies (Lewis, Neill & Campbell, 1996; Derrington, 1997) reporting that there were time constraints impacting on the SENCO role as well as a feeling of lack of support. However, it was reported that the SENCOs who do receive adequate support, feel that they are effective. This study benefits from its collection of data over an extended period of time (three years). However, it could be criticised that the data collected was mainly based upon self – report responses. Questionnaires were administered, it could be argued that this may not provide the richness of data that other methods may provide. Although focus groups were also held and did contribute to the overall findings.

A recent change in legislation in England in 2009 has resulted in mandatory training for SENCOs. Exploring SENCO constructions of their roles and responsibilities may provide a valuable insight into the impact that different legislation and training has had. Exploring the perceptions of English SENCOs as well as another group of SENCOs where the training is not mandatory (in this case Wales) may provide worthwhile indications of the outcomes of the training.

2.3.3. The SENCO In Context: English Legislation

Recently there have been two new sets of regulations that have impacted SENCOs directly. Namely, The Education (Special Educational Needs Coordinators) (England) Regulations 2008 and The Education (Special Educational Needs Coordinators) (England, Amendment) Regulations 2009. This legislation outlined mandatory training for SENCOs in England as well as the responsibilities of school governing bodies. Only SENCOs new to the role from or after September 2008 have to undertake the training and they are given three years to complete the training from the time they are appointed. Although the legislation is some years into force, the literature search (described in Appendix 1) indicates that there is limited research into the training and outcomes as a result of the training is limited.

2.3.4. The SENCO In Context: Welsh Legislation

England and Wales have had separate SEN legislation as a result of their separate Codes of Practice. The Codes of practice in England and Wales were established as a result of the legislation introduced in 1994 to enable educational settings to implement the statutory framework. The Special

Educational Needs Code of Practice (2002) is the current guidance used to support pupils with SEN in Wales. The Welsh Government has taken an increasingly different route from the Department for Skills and Education (DfSE) in England.

In 2006 in Wales, the consultation document Inclusion and Pupil Support was issued. This document highlighted further developments in regards to the definition of SEN and the introduction of the term Additional Learning Needs (ALN). This term is a significant extension of the term special educational needs as it incorporates additional groups of learners who might be vulnerable or underachieving in education as well as those with SEN. Therefore the role of the SENCO is developing and is now considered as the Additional Learning Needs Coordinator (ALNCO) in Wales. However, there is no current definition of this new role at local or national level despite the White Paper (2014) encouraging the use of the term. The potential implications of this may result in a lack of knowledge regarding roles and responsibilities of the SENCO or confusion regarding differences and similarities of the use of the old and new terms. It is argued here that this lack of clarification regarding the ALNCO role may have far reaching implications for children, parents, and other school staff.

In summary it is possible to identify that legislation in both England and Wales has impacted directly on the roles, responsibilities and training requirements of the SENCO due to changing guidelines, definitions and scope of the role. One of the most recent differences between English and Welsh legislation is the introduction of mandatory training for SENCOs in England. This is not the case for Welsh SENCOs. The relevance of this has influenced the current research. The legislation in England came into force in 2009.

2.4. Training Opportunities

Historically, Elliot, Witt, Galvin and Peterson (1984) reported that the reason for use of restrictive as opposed to helpful approaches in teaching was due to lack of knowledge, experience, skills, time and resources. This evidence suggests that training for teachers may improve the use of helpful approaches to teaching. These outcomes may be deemed outdated by now although training opportunities for staff have had positive outcomes for both the employee and the employer (Cowne, 2005; Tella, Ayeni & Popoola, 2007). This will be explored in the following section. New legislation requires English SENCOs to complete a formal qualification, the National Award in Special Educational Needs Coordination. This is a comprehensive course that contributes to a Masters level

qualification. In Wales there are usually authority run courses that SENCOs have access to. However, any specific, in depth training, over time regarding the SENCO role specifically, to the same level as the English award would not be compulsory and would depend on the individual SENCO to access these opportunities.

Brown and Doveston (2014) report that 'there has been little analysis of CPD and its impact on the practice of SENCOs in English schools' (p. 496). To the knowledge of the researcher, in light of the current literature review, this is also the case for Welsh SENCOs. This is an area that the current study may contribute to.

2.4.1. The SENCO and Training Opportunities

The roles and responsibilities of the SENCO have been considered as well as the psychological constructs self – efficacy and organisational commitment. The rationale for presenting these is related to the impact that training may have on both SENCOs' perceived levels of self – efficacy and commitment towards the school they work in.

Cowne (2005) conducted research regarding SENCO roles and training by collecting data from questionnaires over a three year period as well as interviews with LEAs about the support their SENCOs receive. The findings suggested that management support is important to enable SENCOs to be successful at their role. It was also reported that taking part in training enhanced confidence, skills and knowledge. This research supported previous findings (Lewis, Neil & Campbell, 1996; Derrington, 1997).

Tella, Ayeni and Popoola (2007) suggest that staff training is an imperative part of staff motivation. However, Seymour and Arnott (1994) investigated the perceptions that middle managers in schools had of their learning opportunities. The overall responses collected from this study were mainly negative. The school managers were reporting that their training needs were met in a haphazard way and that initiative and decision making were discouraged. Rather, it seemed that schools as organisations were viewed as places where individuals have to conform and stick to rules. Seymour and Arnott collected responses from teachers using a questionnaire. This quantitative measure may be limited in the richness of information that can be provided through this method. Seymour and Arnott comment that in – depth interviews would be a positive way to develop this research.

Seymour and Arnott (1994) suggest that middle managers in school would benefit from clear role definitions and agreed job specification. It was identified that planned and managed learning, and training development for middle managers was needed. These findings are consistent with the system in place in England which ensures that SENCOs receive training within the first three years of employment within their role. This also emphasises the importance of clearly defined roles and responsibilities for SENCOs. It is possible that mandatory training could provide consistency between schools.

Fenstermacher and Berliner (1983) describe that the most important aspect of training is 'the provision of activities designed to advance the knowledge, skills, and understanding of teachers in ways that lead to change in their thinking and classroom behaviour,' (p. 4). Guskey (1986) reports that staff development has always been required of teachers as a part of certificate renewal and contractual obligations and is also an enhancement role of teacher effectiveness. Smylie (1988) also describes that staff development can have an enhancement function through presenting effective training that encourages staff development. These examples are dated by now but there is no reason to believe that there are any changes or that there would be any differences observed in contemporary work.

Despite the positive outcomes explored, Jackson and Eady (2012) question whether teaching is a profession requiring post graduate study. In addition, Brown and Doveston (2014) report that although SENCOs are expected to adopt a leadership role there is frequently a shortage in professional development opportunities offered to SENCOs to develop these skills.

2.4.2. Teacher Self – Efficacy and Training Opportunities

Labone (2004) reported that less is known about the source of self – efficacy in comparison to the measures of self – efficacy. Bandura (1986, 1997) suggests four sources: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion and physiological arousal. Bandura (1997) suggests that one of the most important sources of self – efficacy is mastery experiences. This is when belief in one's ability is reinforced through demonstrating that one is competent. It will be interesting to explore

the possible sources of self – efficacy for SENCOs in the following research and to consider whether one source may be training opportunities.

Woolfolk Hoy and Spero (2005) suggest that teacher efficacy is formed during training and in early employment. In accordance with this, Mulholland and Wallace, (2001) suggested that experiences during teacher training and the induction year of training are two factors that can influence a teacher's self – efficacy. However, few longitudinal studies exist to track efficacy over a number of years. It is believed that teacher self – efficacy is mostly influenced in the first years of training and influences the long – term development of teacher efficacy. Tschannen – Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2007) compared self – efficacy beliefs of 255 novice teachers in comparison to experienced teachers. It was found that novice teachers had lower self – efficacy beliefs. However, it was suggested that one explanation for this effect may be that career teachers have time to improve their sense of efficacy and if they cannot achieve this may have been teachers who have chosen to leave the profession. This research reinforces the view that teachers gain a sense of efficacy in the early years of training and employment. Therefore this provides support for the NASENCO to be completed within the first three years of starting the SENCO role, during the period of self – efficacy development.

A significant study in relation to this research was conducted by Ross and Bruce (2007). Ross and Bruce (2007) investigated the impact a professional development programme had on teachers' feelings of self – efficacy. It was found that the teachers who engaged with the programme had improved in three of the four measures of self – efficacy. However, there was only a statistically significant difference between the programme group and the control group for one of the measures, classroom management. Previous research has shown that higher gains in self – efficacy are shown amongst the teachers who strictly implement the practices learnt from the programme (Ross, 1994). This research provides mixed evidence for the impact of training programmes on teacher's performance and feelings of self – efficacy.

Evidence that supports that training programmes improve feelings of self – efficacy is provided by Fritz, Miller – Heyl, Kreutzer, and MacPhee (1995). One group of participants (teachers) in this investigation engaged with a professional development programme and a control group who did not receive the training was used in order to compare the outcomes. It was found that teachers' self –

efficacy improved after the training and the same improvements were not found in the control group. It is noteworthy to recognise that this was a professional development programme aimed at improving the teaching of mathematics and so may not be generalisable to a range of different types of training opportunities.

Studies such as Fritz and Miller – Heyl (1995) and Tschannen – Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2007) have found that programmes which aim to enhance teacher efficacy are effective. However, Ohmart (1992) reported that these effects are questionable as they have been found to dissipate once the training has ended. It is noteworthy to consider that Ohmart's 1992 study precedes the other research, therefore the newer research may be more reflective of newer training programmes and the implications of these.

2.4.3. Teacher Commitment and Training Opportunities

There is little research available that considers the impact that learning opportunities have on teacher commitment, although the research that does exist shows some promising results, this is considered in the following section. The results in this section may be considered as dated but there is little contemporary literature to consider. This presents a novel area to research in the current day.

Rosenholtz (1989) reported that learning opportunities were one of the few variables that were a direct indicator of teacher commitment. Similarly, Louis (1991) also found that acquiring new skills and knowledge was predictive of teachers' commitment to their schools and Rutter and Jacobson (1986) found that staff development nurtured commitment to the school. Although the latter result was mediated by other factors that appeared to be more salient for example, collaboration and input with decision making.

It has been suggested that learning opportunities enhance commitment to the school as an organisation by expanding teachers' knowledge (Firestone and Pennell, 1993). Additional knowledge and skills can increase teachers' sense of competence and increase effectiveness in the classroom.

Firestone and Pennell also suggest that learning opportunities are a vital ingredient for teacher commitment as it reduces the uncertainty of teaching. The researcher asserts here that this evidence is particularly salient to the current research as previous research (Derrington, 1997) demonstrates that uncertainty within the role of SENCO is widespread.

Maeroff (1988) and Lichtenstein, McLaughlin and Knudsen, (1991) both provide research that supports the conclusion that teachers become more committed to their work when they have opportunities to increase their perceptions of competence and effective teaching skills. However, it has been reported that in – service training opportunities can be poorly coordinated, infrequent, and rarely designed to meet the needs of the teacher’s experience (Johnson, 1990).

In summary, the literature suggests that training opportunities are important for teachers. Evidence presented within this section suggests that training opportunities have positive outcomes for teacher’s sense of self – efficacy and for teacher’s perceived commitment to their organisation. The training recently developed specifically for SENCOs is the NASENCO which will be critically considered in the following section.

2.5. The NASENCO

The National Award in Special Educational Needs Coordination is available both to English and Welsh SENCOs. However due to the award being a compulsory requirement for SENCOs working in England it is mainly offered by private companies in England. It is a one year course that is designed to enhance SENCO’s knowledge and skills in order to enable them to maximise their impact upon learners. Accredited courses are offered which can contribute to Masters level qualifications. The course can be delivered in a number of ways; many are distance courses and require the learner to be independent with the organiser’s support. Others offer workshops, online learning, mentor support and the option of residential learning opportunities. The course typically has assessed elements and is a work – based, flexible learning programme. Learning outcomes are based on the outcomes identified by the government (National Award for SEN Coordinators learning outcomes, 2014). These include, professional knowledge and understanding, leading and coordinating provision and personal and professional qualities. Although research into the National Award and its outcomes is in its infancy, there are some key pieces of research that have been carried out.

Brown and Doveston (2014) identify that a difficulty with the NASENCO as well as measuring the outcomes of the course is that evidencing the competencies required to complete the course is difficult. Brown and Doveston note that SENCOs are required to evidence 55 competencies over the period of a year and considering that in order to achieve Qualified Teaching Status 42 competencies are required to be evidenced over a 3-4 year period, it seems like a high number of skills to learn within the time – frame permitted. It is argued here that this comparison made by Brown and Doveston is unfair as the courses are not directly comparable. For example, newly qualified teachers gain the qualification following experience from working within the field. Whereas, SENCOs in England have to be qualified teachers in order to be appointed as SENCO, therefore are starting from a standpoint where they already have a number of years of experience in the field and a number of expected competencies. However, it would be possible to argue that SENCOs are starting a more specialised role which they may have little experience of, equally making them a novice at the outset.

2.5.1. Training: The Story So Far

It is significant to consider in this section the research into the NASENCO that has been conducted to date. Literature regarding the National Award is somewhat in its infancy due to the award only becoming a compulsory requirement in recent years.

One study conducted by Pearson and Gathercole (2011) was commissioned by the National Association for Special Educational Needs (NASEN). The method of data gathering for this study was completed through email contact and telephone interviews with SENCOs, their line manager and another nominated adult. Thematic Analysis was used to analyse the results. The aim was to explore the transformations related to the National Award in Special Education Needs Coordination (NASENCO). This research considered the perspectives of various stake holders: SENCOs, line managers, other school based colleagues as well as Local Authority personnel. The research investigated the influence of course content and found a positive impact in many areas. For example, in broadening perspectives, rigour of approach, engagement with research and increased reflection. However, the researcher suggests that it is important to consider as mentioned, that this research was commissioned by NASEN in order to investigate the qualification. It may be worthwhile to be mindful of researcher bias in the light of this information. Some of the key findings to date identify the outcomes of the National Award for the SENCO, SENCO's colleagues as well as whole school outcomes (Pearson & Gathercole, 2011; Griffith & Dubsky, 2012).

There were affective outcomes reported by Pearson and Gathercole (2011), including increased confidence and feelings of empowerment and benefits such as the opportunity to network with other SENCOs as well as having contact with and support from other agencies. It was reported that completion of the course had positive outcomes for the SENCO in relation to the whole school. These included an enhanced profile of special educational needs (SEN) and the SENCO role within the school, further development of a whole school approach to SEN, enhanced SENCO ability to identify areas for development and a more proactive approach to the role and evaluation processes. These are encouraging findings, however, SENCOs also identified areas of concern. These included, a concern regarding how to make up time that was missed due to being out of school, a feeling that completing the course impacted on family/ personal life and that meeting other SENCOs although in many respects was positive, it provided the opportunity to compare time allocated to different SENCOs to carry out their role and some SENCOs found their situation less favourable than others. The data for this research was collected by reviewing guidance and research, through email correspondence with the course providers and via telephone interviews with the SENCOs, their line managers and another nominated adult. This data seems to have provided worthwhile results. However, it may be criticised here that data collection by these methods (email correspondence and telephone interviews) may not necessarily allow for full interpretation of meaning in the same way that holding an interview in person may.

Pearson and Mitchell (2013) built on previous research by utilising a sample of SENCOs to investigate recruitment, induction and retention of SENCOs as well as responses to the National Award and views about future development of the role of the SENCO. It was reported that 73 percent of SENCOs who had undertaken the training had found it increased their knowledge of the legislative context of the role, increased confidence and motivation. However, 11 percent of the SENCOs who had completed the training found it stressful and too academic. This research was conducted by collecting data from a survey that was sent to participants electronically. This quantitative method could be criticised for providing a reductionist perspective which may limit the results. However, the participants in this study were believed to be representative of a broad area and from a range of schools and teaching staff. This is beneficial as the results may be more generalizable for these reasons. However, it is argued here that the source of this information is not robust with assumptions of the participant's locations being based on single words on email addresses and/ or contextual information within their responses to the survey. It is important to add that this is not a

published or peer review article and therefore further caution should be taken when considering these results.

Griffiths and Dubsky (2012) also investigated the NASENCO. A semi – structured interview was used with SENCOs, head teachers and SENCO’s colleagues in order to investigate the impact the NASENCO had on SENCOs’ professional development as well as the impact upon schools. This qualitative method met the needs of the research. However, this method has been criticised for not providing the rigour that other methods can offer. The sample size used for this research was small (six SENCOs and their head teachers and one other colleague). The sample was recruited from one Local Authority in England. Although this study is particularly relevant to the current investigation, these factors restrict the generalisability of the results.

It was reported by Griffiths and Dubsky (2012) in this study that there were many benefits of the NASENCO. For example, stimulating teaching sessions, a good quality of tutor support and networking opportunities. Positive impacts were reported for SENCO’s learning and personal development including an increase in personal and professional confidence which was also noted by the head teachers and colleagues. It was also reported that two participants felt more relaxed, more knowledgeable and understanding. It is possible to identify that the positive outcomes observed in Griffiths and Dubsky’s study are consistent with the positive impact that increased self – efficacy can have on individuals (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Steca and Malone, 2006). In this case an increase in confidence, feeling relaxed, and, knowledge and understanding.

Practical implications for SENCO actions and outcomes were also reported by Griffiths and Dubsky. These included a more collaborative approach within the schools, improvements in tracking systems and changes in school culture for example a greater feeling of team work. It is possible to draw a comparison between these positive, whole school/ systemic benefits of the national award and the psychological concept explored earlier in this chapter, organisational commitment. It is suggested here that perceptions of having a greater feeling of team work and a more collaborative approach within the team are associated with commitment to the organisation. A link was also drawn between the NASENCO and SENCOs being perceived as leaders rather than managers which SENCOs reported was an important difference in order to influence change in their schools. However, one participant felt that senior management support was tokenistic and real commitment was limited.

The majority of the participants in this study felt that the NASENCO should be available and compulsory for new SENCOs. However, it was suggested in the paper that providers may consider delivering the course over a two year period due to the reported difficulties caused by time constraints. It was reported that all participants expressed difficulties with coping with the work load and many of these describing a negative impact on their home lives, this is consistent with the findings presented by Pearson and Gathercole (2011). It is important to note that the authors of this research had involvement with designing and delivery of the NASENCO which raises concerns regarding the possible impact that researcher bias may have on the outcomes of the interpretive data yielded from the study.

In summary, the literature suggests that there are largely beneficial outcomes for teachers completing training, specifically the NASENCO. This study aims to add to the body of research within this field through considering whether training has any impact upon perceptions of self – efficacy or organisational commitment. The following section considers the evidence critically explored and the research questions for the empirical study will be noted.

2.5.2. Current Conclusions and Future Directions

This section considers the current landscape for the NASENCO and the current findings within the research. It is important to consider the future directions for the research due to the following thesis research article exploring the possible outcomes of training opportunities for SENCOs.

A recent study by Brown and Doveston (2014) evaluated the perceived impact of the NASENCO. The Training and Development Agency framework was used in order to evaluate the programme. Quantitative and qualitative data was collected via a survey sent to SENCOs who had completed the NASENCO. This study was relatively small scale and so makes generalising the results difficult. However, a representative sample was collected from eight different local authorities throughout England.

Brown and Doveston (2014) found that prior to completing the NASENCO the majority of the participants had completed non – accredited, local authority run courses, mainly associated with their induction to the SENCO role. Brown and Doveston note that this may be problematic to assessing the outcomes of the course as they suggested that due to lack of evidence of post graduate study SENCOs may not have the level of skills needed in order to complete the course to the standard expected.

This study (Brown & Doveston, 2014) found that, despite receiving the same training, time allocation for the SENCO role varied and was dependant on individual contexts. It was found that more than half of the SENCOs held more than three additional responsibilities on top of their SENCO role. Interestingly, the results of the study show that at least half of the participants did view themselves as a part of the Senior Leadership Team (N=37). However, despite consistent training there remained 18 participants who did not feel they were at the senior level within the school. Although, it was reported that there were positive outcomes for developing SENCOs credibility within the school. There was an increase in SENCOs' understanding of managing provision, analysing data, considering the use of resources as well as an increase in their understanding of how children learn and how to overcome barriers to learning.

Further exploration of the results published by Pearson and Mitchell (2013) regarding the NASENCO are carried out by Pearson, Mitchell and Rapti (2015). The focus of this work was SENCOs' insights into future directions of the role in light of the changing policy context in England. Thematic analysis was carried out on data from a survey completed in 2012. The results suggest that there is uncertainty about concrete aspects of future policy. It is asserted here that some caution should be taken when considering these results due to Pearson and Mitchell's work being unpublished and not being a peer reviewed article. It is suggested here that the results offer important insight and the data collection method (survey) may have allowed for a far reaching participant pool which may increase the generalisability of the results.

Pearson, Mitchell and Rapti (2015) reported that there was some consistency in views regarding certain aspects of the role and trends within the organisational context. The participants' outlook was for a collective responsibility taken for the achievement of pupils with SEN. SENCOs saw themselves as taking a leadership role within the organisation providing training and coaching as

well as advising colleagues. Some of the results from this study could be deemed subjective. It is suggested that benefits such as a larger emphasis being placed on monitoring pupils may not lead to better outcomes, rather add to the load of administrative tasks the role requires. It was also predicted that parental involvement would also increase over the next one to five years.

Although this study identifies possible directions for the SENCO role in the future, Pearson, Mitchell and Rapti (2015) are unable to address whether these predictions are based on input from the NASENCO or other training opportunities. It is suggested that 41% of the sample showed a bias towards the identification of future leadership responsibilities.

Tissot (2013) focussed on investigating whether SENCOs have a leadership role within schools and the possible implications of this. It was found that SENCOs who had significant experience (between five and fourteen years) were more likely to be a part of the leadership team, whereas this was less likely for newer teachers and teachers with more experience (more than twenty years). There were mixed findings regarding the implications of this. It was reported that some SENCOs felt that it was powerful in order to get work done and for strategic goals. However, it was also reported that a leadership role was something they did not want to be associated with or as a role that they were given in theory but not in practice. Tissot describes that the leadership role is more than simply a place in a hierarchy and has implications for budgetary control. However, not all SENCOs reported having a leadership role even though they had aspirations for this.

The participants recruited for this study by Tissot (2013) were new SENCOs who were asked to express their views concerning the training undertaken during the period when the training had first become compulsory. Tissot collected participant views using a quantitative measure in the first instance. It could be argued that this may not be the most appropriate method of data collection for the type of information required. However, semi – structured interviews were also conducted at a later stage in the research although this was only completed with 10 of the original 146 respondents. All of the participants were recruited from the NASENCO course run in the University of Reading. This sample is relevant to the current study although it is not necessarily representative of broader SENCO's views from across the country.

There is research provided over time which suggests that there are discrepancies within the SENCO role (Lewis, Neill & Campbell, 1996; Derrington, 1997). This research wishes to add to this literature in light of the legislation that makes the NASENCO mandatory in England. This research will explore whether there are any perceived outcomes of the NASENCO training programme. This will be done by recruiting a group of participants from England who have completed the training. A group will also be recruited from Wales where there is no such mandatory training programme in place. It has been suggested that SENCOs pick up many of their skills through experiential learning. Pearson, Scott and Sugden (2011) identify that it is difficult to tease apart the impact of training rather than the effects that learning the SENCO role whilst practicing may be having.

Due to the investment and resources committed to the implementation and running of the National Award, Brown and Doveston (2014) suggest that it is important to evaluate and explore the impact the National Award is having. The current research will be exploring the potential impact that training has on SENCOs. It will aim to explore the SENCOs perceptions of self – efficacy and organisational commitment.

2.6. Summary

From investigating the literature for both self – efficacy and organisational commitment it has been found that both concepts have significant relevance to teachers, schools and education.

The psychological concept self – efficacy is well researched and there is a body of literature to evidence this concept in practice (Bandura, 1997; Hoy, 2004). This concept has been directly associated with the teaching profession and teacher – efficacy is also a widely researched concept. It has been suggested that there are many benefits of increasing the level of self – belief that a given task can be completed (Allinder, 1994; Almog & Schechtman, 2007).

Organisational commitment is also a psychological concept that has received interest as an area of research over the years. The positive outcomes of increased teacher – commitment are encouraging and desirable for both the individual as well as the school as an organisation (Wu & Short, 1996; Sy, Tram & O'hara, 2006). These benefits contribute to the rationale for the current research. Evidence suggests that increasing feelings of self – efficacy and organisational commitment are mutually

beneficial for staff and employers within the work place. Therefore exploring SENCOs' views of their perceptions of these concepts could contribute to the fields of education and educational psychology.

Research presented within the literature review describes the impact that training opportunities can have. Due to the areas of self – efficacy and organisational commitment receiving previous interest there is a basis for exploring these concepts in relation to training opportunities. This also remains novel as, in light of the literature search, there is no current research exploring this combination of constructs specifically in relation to the SENCO role.

2.6.1. The Present Study

The current study was initially considered due to the legislative changes regarding SEN which had significant training implications for the SENCO. Therefore there will be two groups of participants recruited in order to represent a 'Training Group' (English) and a 'Non – Training Group' (Welsh). This will allow the researcher to collect data from participants who have completed in depth training, over time (England; NASENCO) as well as a group of participants who have not completed compulsory training (Wales; no legislation enforcing compulsory training).

The study will explore SENCOs' perceptions of their feelings of self – efficacy and organisational commitment in both groups. SENCOs' constructions of their roles and responsibilities will also be investigated. Additional factors such as time allocation and perceived position within the school will be considered.

This research will employ a qualitative method in order to gather rich sources of data. This will enable the researcher to collect views in an open way to encourage a detailed exploration of SENCO views.

2.6.2. Research Areas

This investigation will consider broad research areas. This may allow the participants to provide fuller responses. As Mackenzie (2012) notes, a qualitative method can mean that the emerging themes are based around the questions asked. However, the semi – structured interview will aim to allow for the respondents to provide open, self – directed answers. The current research will attempt to explore responses to the following research questions:

Research Question 1: How do SENCOs who have received mandatory training construct their roles and responsibilities? (Training Group, English: NASENCO).

Research Question 1: How do SENCOs who have not received mandatory training construct their roles and responsibilities? (Non – Training Group, Welsh).

Research Question 2: How efficacious do SENCOs who have received mandatory training feel? (Training Group, English: NASENCO).

Research Question 2: How efficacious do SENCOs who have not received mandatory training feel? (Non – Training Group, Welsh).

Research Question 3: How committed do SENCOs feel towards their organisation when they have received mandatory training? (Training Group, English: NASENCO).

Research Question 3: How committed do SENCOs feel towards their organisation when they have not received mandatory training? (Non – Training Group, Welsh).



The implications of training for Special Educational Needs Coordinators; an exploration of self – efficacy, organisational commitment and perceptions of the SENCO role.

Section 2: Empirical Study

Abstract

The aim of the current investigation has been to explore Special Educational Needs coordinators' (SENCOs) constructions of self- efficacy and organisational commitment. The researcher was also interested in gaining SENCO perspectives regarding their roles and responsibilities. Due to new legislation being introduced in England in 2009, SENCOs in England have to complete mandatory training within the first three years of being in post. The same legislation does not currently apply to Welsh SENCOs. For these reasons two groups of participants were recruited to complete this research. One group consisting of participants from England who had completed mandatory training (Training Group) and a second group consisting of participants from Wales who had not completed the training programme (Non – Training Group). A semi – structured interview was constructed and face – to – face interviews were completed with six participants recruited in each group (N:12 in total). Thematic Analysis was completed on each data set. Variations in the perception of the SENCO role were found. Analysis of the data suggests that within the Non – Training Group, time to allocate to complete the SENCO role was seen to be restricted and inconsistent. Time allocated to the Non - Training Group was significantly less than the Training Group and was also less formally planned with SENCOs requesting time on an 'as and when' needed basis. The SENCOs having a Leadership Role emerged as a theme for both groups, the emphasis of this role for the Training Group was more focussed on managing staff and monitoring and reviewing SEN, whereas the Non – Training Group tended to focus on more organising and coordinating tasks. Both groups reported an increase in self – efficacy over time. The Training Group participants were seen to report an increase in their confidence due to training reassuring and reaffirming their knowledge. Analysis suggested that the Non – Training Group seemed to mainly attribute self – efficacy to increases in abilities and skills accumulated over time. Within the Training Group, results suggested that an organisational investment in developing the SENCOs such as providing time to complete their role or the training programme nurtured perceptions of commitment. Within the Non – Training Group it was reported that loyalty and pride were often due to simply being associated with and a member of the school in general. Participants in both groups reported that they would go 'over and above' for their schools. Limitations of this research are considered and thought is given to future directions within this research area.

3.1. Introduction

The aim of this study was to explore the perceptions of SENCO's feelings of self – efficacy and organisational commitment. Due to past research the presented study was also concerned with exploring SENCO's constructions of the SENCO role. The research aimed to explore whether training was perceived to have any impact on these factors. For that reason two research groups were used; one representing a group that had received in depth training over time (English) and one group who had not engaged with the same programme (Welsh).

3.1.1. Self – Efficacy

The theorist most frequently associated with the concept self – efficacy is Bandura. This concept is central to Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory. Teacher efficacy is a domain specific form of efficacy within the context of education. It is described as the affective feelings of being committed to a school and the willingness to commit additional time and effort to the school to meet joint goals (Dembo & Gibso, 1985).

Teacher efficacy has been found to have a positive effect on teacher's management of various tasks, obligations and challenges (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Steca & Malone, 2006), organisation, planning and enthusiasm for teaching (Allinder, 1994) as well as dealing with incidents with a more helpful response style (Almog & Shechtman, 2007). However, it has been argued that teacher efficacy is a subjective perception and not an objective measure of teacher success or effectiveness (Ross & Bruce, 2007). This concept is considered here due to previous research identifying the benefits that self – efficacy can have for professionals.

Fritz, Miller – Heyl, Kreutzer, and MacPhee (1995) reported that teacher efficacy can be improved as a result of training opportunities. Ross and Bruce (2007) and Tschannen – Moran et al (1998) have echoed this result although Ohmart (1992) reported that this effect can diminish over time.

3.1.2. Organisational Commitment (OC)

OC has been described as the degree of attachment that an employee feels towards the organisation as a whole (Guleryuz, Guney, Aydin, & Asan, 2008). Northcraft and Neale (1996) suggest that three factors, personal, organisational and non – organisational factors, can have an effect on commitment.

OC has been associated with positive outcomes for individuals as well as organisations, in relation to lower turnover and lower employee absence (Day 2008). Armstrong (1999) suggests that in order to create commitment factors such as communication, education, training programmes, and initiatives to increase involvement and ownership are important.

OC has been researched specifically within the education setting. The concept that has been investigated in this context is teacher commitment. Teacher commitment has been described as a teacher's desire to remain a part of the school, with a willingness to exert effort for the school and the teacher's identification with shared goals and values (Mowday , Steers, & Porter, 1979). Teacher commitment has been associated with better student outcomes (Kushman, 1992), better outcomes for teachers, for example, better participation and innovation (Henkin & Holliman, 2009) as well as organisational benefits like better teaching performance and lower teacher turnover (Day, 2008).

It has been reported that learning opportunities (Rosenholtz, 1989), acquiring new skills and knowledge (Louis, 1991; Firestone & Pennell, 1993), an increase in perception of competence (Maeroff, 1988; Lichtenstein et al., 1991) and staff development (Rutter & Jacobson, 1986) are all predictive of enhancing teacher commitment. The difficulty with considering this in the context of in – house school based training is that Johnson (1990) suggests that these types of opportunities can be poorly coordinated, infrequent and do not meet teacher's needs. This contributes to formalised, external training such as the NASENCO being an alternative to in – house school training.

3.1.3. Legislation

Over nearly the past century and a half legislation regarding education has been introduced, adapted and updated. Although there is a long history of legislation relating to education dating back to 1870, one of the most important developments for SEN legislation was not developed until 1981 Education Act (DfE).

Over the years, and importantly for this research, there were implications emerging for teachers and SEN staff. It was not until the introduction of the 1994 Code of Practice that an obligation was imposed on schools to appoint a SENCO. This was developed further in the 2001 Code of Practice for England and 2002 Code of Practice for Wales. The SENCO role was made explicit including guidelines regarding the SENCO's role with regards to policy, provision and management.

In England, legislation was published in 2008 setting out specific requirements for the qualifications and training needed in order to fulfil the role of SENCO. The Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice 2015, largely influenced by the Children and Families Act 2014 is set to be the basis of educational reform in SEN in England. Legislation in Wales is also due to change. Consultations have been completed and the White Paper titled Legislative proposals for additional learning needs has been issued and responses collected.

Research suggests that although there is legislation and guidance for what the SENCO role should entail there are many different interpretations of this (Derrington, 1997) providing a mixed picture for SENCOs trying to define their role within schools. This will be one area of research in the current study.

3.1.4. SENCOs Roles and Responsibilities

The Code of Practice 2001 (England) and 2002 (Wales) sets out suggested roles and responsibilities for SENCOs. However Layton (2005) describes how these roles continue to vary significantly despite this guidance.

Kearns (2005) identified five different roles that SENCOs would be identified by. These included arbiter, rescuer, auditor, collaborator and expert. Szwed (2007) also comments that there are problems with generalising the SENCO role. One aim of the current study is to investigate whether

there are consistent views of the SENCO role between SENCOs in England and Wales. In light of the research presented evidencing the inconsistencies that have previously been found, this is seen as a relevant area to research.

Differences have been found between SENCOs regarding time – table commitments and the occurrence of additional roles (Derrington, 1997) and time allocation, other responsibilities like head or deputy headship and subject responsibilities (Crowther, Dyson & Millward, 2001). In addition, Cowne (2005) suggests that the SENCO role is currently spreading to include more work with pupils, parents, teachers, teaching assistants and outside agencies. This will be an area of research within the current study.

3.1.5. SENCO Training

Cowne (2005) investigated the SENCO role and also carried out an evaluation of an accredited outreach training programme and reported outcomes including increased confidence, skills and knowledge. This research was carried out in a context relevant to the current research; in London. However, the method of data collection was self – report questionnaires therefore limiting the generalisability of these results. However this research does add to the suggestion that introducing mandatory training for SENCOs could be beneficial.

The legislation in England has introduced the National Award in Special Educational Needs Coordination (NASENCO). At the outset this training was funded by the government, however, now the funding for the NASENCO is the responsibility of the school. The learning outcomes of this course are based on the document “The National Award for SEN Coordinators Learning Outcomes” published in 2014. It is an accredited course that can contribute to a Masters level qualification.

Pearson and Gathercole (2011) conducted one of the few studies measuring the effects of the NASENCO. The benefits of the training included increased confidence, feelings of empowerment, support from other agencies and networking opportunities. Whole school benefits included an enhanced profile of SEN and the SENCO role within the school. Concerns were also reported regarding having to make up time lost due to being out of school, a feeling that completing the course had an impact on personal life and that meeting other SENCOs although in many respects was a positive, it provided the opportunity to compare situations and some SENCOs found their

situation less favourable than others. It is important to be mindful that this work was commissioned by NASEN which may have implications for creating bias within the results of this study.

Pearson and Mitchell (2013) have also researched the outcomes of the NASENCO and reported an increase in SENCO knowledge of the legislative context of the role, increased confidence and motivation. However, a small percentage of the SENCOs who had completed the training reported that they found it stressful and too academic.

Griffiths and Dubsky (2012) used semi – structured interviews with SENCOs, head teachers and SENCOs' colleagues in order to investigate the impact the NASENCO had on SENCOs' professional development as well as the impact upon schools. Griffiths and Dubsky found that there were many reported benefits of the NASENCO. For example, stimulating teaching sessions, a good quality of tutor support and networking opportunities. Positive impacts were reported for SENCO's learning and personal development including an increase in personal and professional confidence which was also noted by the head teachers and colleagues. It was also reported that two participants felt more relaxed, more knowledgeable and understanding. These increases in confidence and other positive outcomes are indicative of an increase in self – efficacy.

Practical implications for SENCO actions and outcomes were also reported by Griffiths and Dubsky. These included a more collaborative approach within the schools, improvements in tracking systems and changes in school culture, for example, a greater feeling of team work. It is possible to draw a comparison between these positive, whole school/ systemic benefits of the national award and the psychological concept, organisation commitment, explored earlier in this chapter.

3.2. Empirical Study

3.2.1. Research Aim

The aim of this research was to explore SENCO's feelings of self – efficacy and organisational commitment. The research also aimed to investigate SENCOS' constructions of their roles and responsibilities. The research aimed to tentatively consider whether training is perceived to impact these factors. For that reason two research groups were used; one representing a group that had received in depth training over time (English) and one group that had not engaged with the same programme (Welsh).

3.2.2. Research Areas

The aim was to explore primarily self – efficacy, organisational commitment and SENCO constructions of their roles and responsibilities. These perceptions were explored for two separate groups of participants. The research questions considered were:

Research Question 1: How do SENCOS who have received mandatory training construct their roles and responsibilities? (Training Group, English: NASENCO).

Research Question 1: How do SENCOS who have not received mandatory training construct their roles and responsibilities? (Non – Training Group, Welsh).

Research Question 2: How efficacious do SENCOS who have received mandatory training feel? (Training Group, English: NASENCO).

Research Question 2: How efficacious do SENCOs who have not received mandatory training feel? (Non – Training Group, Welsh).

Research Question 3: How committed do SENCOs feel towards their organisation when they have received mandatory training? (Training Group, English: NASENCO).

Research Question 3: How committed do SENCOs feel towards their organisation when they have not received mandatory training? (Non – Training Group, Welsh).

3.2.3. Ontology, Epistemology and Research Paradigm

The aim of this study was to elicit perceptions of psychological constructs and SENCO perspectives of their roles and responsibilities. It was considered necessary to employ a qualitative research paradigm in order to allow the researcher to gather in depth data which would allow for exploration of SENCO perceptions. A qualitative design was seen as being able to provide a rich source of material in order to meet the objectives of the research (Burr 2003).

In order to consider the participants' perspectives it was seen as appropriate to adopt a constructivist view point. Constructivist research holds that reality is constructed rather than it being an externally singular entity (Hansen, 2004). This perspective would allow the researcher to collect data and then interpret the meaning of this data in line with participant constructions. It is important to the current study that this epistemological position acknowledges that constructions are based on social processes and interactions (Burr, 2003).

Blaikie (2007) suggests that ontological assumptions are used to guide research and the methods adopted. The ontological perspective adopted for this research was a relativist perspective. Relativism allows for the interpretation of data in line with a constructivist epistemological perspective as it relates to knowledge that comes from an 'evolved perspective or point of view' (Raskin, 2008, p.13). This is consistent with the aim of the present study to elicit SENCO perspectives.

3.2.4. Participants

Two research groups were recruited for this study. The first research group consisted of a Non – Training Group. This was a group recruited from Wales, where the National Award is not a compulsory requirement. Inclusion criteria required the participant to be the acting SENCO who had not completed the National Award. The second research group recruited consisted of a Training Group. The participants in this group were recruited from England where the National Award is compulsory for new SENCOs to complete within a fixed time frame from when they are appointed. The inclusion criteria for this group required participants to be the acting SENCO who had completed the National Award. There was no discrimination made between recruiting from Primary or Secondary schools. However, the whole sample was recruited from Primary school by chance N:6 in each research group. No age range, gender or level of experience was specified during the recruitment process. The final sample analysed consisted of six participants in the Non - Training Group (Welsh) and six participants in the Training Group (English). A purposive sample was recruited by requesting names of schools which employed SENCOs that met the criteria from the Educational Psychology Services within the selected Local Authorities in England and Wales.

Within the Training Group all participants were SENCOs in Primary Schools within urban localities. Within the Non – Training Group all participants were from Primary Schools although half of the schools considered that they were from urban localities (N:3) and half were within rural areas (N:3).

The population of the schools within the Training Group ranged from between 290 pupils to 445 pupils. The estimated percentage of special educational needs within the primary schools was between 11% and 25%. The population of the schools within the Non – Training Group ranged from between 118 pupils and 430 pupils. The estimated percentage of special educational needs within the schools was between 8% and 30%. There was also one case whereby the school had a Special Teaching Facility (STF). The SENCO of this school was also one of the teachers on the STF. However, the pupil numbers from the STF were not counted in the demographic results due to it being the only school of its kind in the data set.

The SENCOs recruited for this research were all qualified teachers. The teachers had been qualified from between 8 and 17 years within the Training Group and between 6 and 21 years within the Non – Training Group. The participants had been SENCOs for between 1 and 7 years within the Training Group and between 2 and 8 years within the Non – Training Group. There were a number of SENCOs who had been in post for 2 years within the Non – Training Group (N:6) whereas there was more variation in the longevity of the time the SENCOs had been in post within the Training Group.

3.2.5. Method

This research was carried out in two stages. The first stage was to recruit and collect data for the Non – Training Group (Welsh). The second stage was recruitment and data collection for the Training Group (English). The researcher followed the same steps for both stages. This procedure was completed in eight steps as follows:

1. The researcher wrote to two LAs in order to request their permission to conduct research with SENCOs within the authority (Welsh Group: Appendix 2, English Group Appendix 2a).
2. Following agreement from the LA that the research could go ahead the researcher requested names of schools that had SENCOs who met the criteria required. The researcher obtained these names from EPs who worked for the LA's EPS.
3. The researcher wrote to the head teachers of the schools identified requesting their permission to contact the school SENCO (Welsh Group: Appendix 3, English Group: Appendix 3a).
4. Once the head teachers had agreed, the researcher contacted the SENCO via a telephone call or email. The researcher made plans to visit the school at a time convenient for the SENCO.
5. The researcher visited the schools, met with the SENCO and completed a face – to – face interview with the participant (Welsh Group: Appendix 5, English Group: Appendix 5a).
6. The researcher debriefed the participant (Appendix 6).
7. The researcher transcribed the recorded interviews (example transcription: Appendix 7), these were then deleted in line with data protection and ethical considerations.
8. The researcher completed Thematic Analysis on the qualitative data collected (example of this process: Appendix 8).

3.2.6. Materials

Interviews were developed for this research. One for the Training Group (English), and one for the Non – Training Group (Welsh). Both interviews started with the same closed questions which were designed to collect factual, demographic information regarding the participants in each group. These questions were followed by open questions designed to allow the participant to provide open, in depth responses. A number of prompts were developed in order to allow the researcher to encourage further exploration of matters arising that could be expanded upon or explored further.

3.2.7. Ethical Considerations

In order to ensure informed consent was provided, all participants were asked to read a consent form. This form included information regarding the study (aim and procedure), confidentiality and anonymity of data issues. Participants were made aware that the interview would be recorded, transcribed and then deleted. Participants were given the opportunity to ask questions and were required to confirm that they understood the information provided and agreed to participate.

Participants were not required to reveal any personal or identifiable information. No details relating to names, places, schools, and so on, were requested or recorded. Therefore the potential for data to be identified was minimised and the recording were as confidential and unidentifiable as possible. The recorded data was deleted after it had been transcribed. Participants were made aware that once the interview had been recorded they could no longer withdraw from the study. The research proposal for this study was submitted to Cardiff University Ethics Committee and approval was gained to carry out the research.

3.2.8. Data Analysis

The data was analysed using thematic analysis (TA). This process was carried out in accordance with the six stage process outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) detailed in Appendix 7. An example of this can be found in Appendix 8.

The data was analysed by group, the Training Group (English) and the Non – Training Group (Welsh). This was possible due to Braun and Clarke (2006) suggesting that TA is a flexible method allowing the researcher to determine prevalence of data in order for themes to emerge in a number of different ways. This is in accordance with the repetition of ideas becoming representative of importance and reflecting the constructs of the participants.

The researcher requested an objective party also to carry out this process. A colleague of the researcher who had previously completed the Doctorate in Educational Psychology and was an employed and fully qualified Educational Psychologist volunteered to complete this process also. The EP had experience of completing TA and was familiar with the process. Once complete the researcher and the EP volunteer compared and reviewed the results in a collaborative manner. There were only minor differences found between the two parties. For example, the term used to label an overall theme. These were resolved through discussion and broad themes could be grouped within common themes. This process ensures the influence of researcher bias was reduced, increasing the trustworthiness of the results. It also strengthens the validity of the objectivity of the TA results.

The data was transcribed by the researcher. At this stage the researcher was able to become familiar with the data and begin initial note taking. The coding process occurred in relation to each of the outlined research areas, including SENCO roles and responsibilities, self – efficacy and organisational commitment. Following this there was a search for initial themes. These were determined from codes that had been applied within the data of at least two participants in each data set. The next stage was to revise and group these in order to develop final subthemes which contributed to the final thematic map, example thematic maps can be found in Appendix 9.

3.3. Results

The results section firstly presents the basic demographic data collected from both groups. The qualitative data was analysed as two separate sets. This was due to the importance of identifying emerging themes in each group. This would allow for analysis of the Training and Non – Training Groups separately and to draw tentative comparisons and similarities between the two groups.

3.3.1. Results: Training Group

Thematic Analysis was completed on the data set. Research codes were created for each of the research areas. The three research areas including SENCO roles and responsibilities, self – efficacy and organisational commitment were analysed. One additional theme emerged during analysis namely ‘Learning’. The research areas and additional themes are represented in the table below. The subthemes for each research area and the additional theme are listed.

SENCO Roles and Responsibilities	Self – Efficacy	Organisational Commitment	Learning
Administrative Responsibilities	Confidence	School support	Training
Leadership Role	Self – belief	Sense of belonging	Experiential and Collaborative Learning
Working with others			

Table 1: A table to show the subthemes that emerged from data following TA for the Research Areas and the Additional Theme found.

Research Area 1: SENCO Roles and Responsibilities

The first theme that was explored within the data was based on exploration of SENCO roles and responsibilities. An example of the Thematic Maps of the stages of analysis of this theme can be found in Appendix 8.

Subtheme 1: Administrative Duties

A prevalent theme that emerged regarding the roles and responsibilities of SENCOs was Administrative Duties. All participants reported that they have duties in many areas within the subtheme category. There were many different forms of paperwork type responsibilities that were reportedly required as a part of the SENCO role. These included completing referrals, reports and applications *'I'm always doing paperwork. Things like referrals and reports often need to be completed.'* (Participant 2, Section 26). Participants also frequently reported attending meetings and annual reviews as a part of their administrative duties related to their SENCO responsibilities. *'Um I hold all of the meetings regarding SEN so annual reviews, meetings with other services, meetings with parents.'* (Participant 4, Section 26)

Subtheme 2: Leadership Role

The theme 'Leadership Role' was prevalent in all of the data. There was one participant who felt that her position was between teaching and management (Participant 1) although the SENCO role was still perceived as a leadership role. It was commented that *'...I'm not on the SLT but I work alongside sort of the middle managers in the school.'* With further prompts used *'Um I see the role of SENCO as that (managerial).'* (Participant 1, sections 20 &22).

Participants consistently expressed a key construction of the SENCO role as *having 'an overview of all the SEN in the school so I manage the SEN register and monitor that'* (Participant 5, Section 24). Many responsibilities including managing SEN and *'coordinating SEN'* duties (Participant 2, Section 26) were identified. Four of the six participants described that their role is to *'monitor and review SEN'* (Participant 6, Section22). In addition to managing these duties the leadership role subtheme includes management of other staff. For example, one SENCO's reported *'I line manage our phase TA's'* (Participant 1, Section 26).

Four of the six participants reported that knowledge of the budget was a significant part of their role and that this part of their role related specifically to the senior element of the SENCO role as a whole, *'I think it's useful to know things like what he budget looks like to see what the scope is for*

additional support for the pupil's if there's a cost implication...' (Participant 6, Section 24). Budgetary knowledge was included as a part of the 'Leadership' subtheme due to this featuring as a role associated with the Senior Leadership Team. This was consistently seen as different and additional to teaching responsibilities and the data suggests that this falls within the management responsibilities associated with the SENCO role.

The subtheme that emerged regarding the leadership role was that as a part of that role SENCOs work closely with the senior leadership team. Attending meetings and being an advocate for SEN within that forum, *'There are more whole school things that, things like information being fed in from the authority for example if they impact SEN, and sometimes, even if they're, if it's more general there may still be an impact on SEN...'* (Participant 3, Section 20).

SENCOs often reported that their role entailed feeding back, training and presenting on topics to the rest of the staff group or to the senior leadership team. This was perceived as a part of their role as a part of the senior leadership team, *'Sometimes I may be asked to present something to staff if something around SEN has come up.'* (Participant 2, Section 26).

Subtheme 3: Working with others

Four of the six participants reported providing general support to school staff, *'Staff will come to me if they've got any concerns and we'll work together to see how we can best support the pupils.'* (Participant 3, Section 26). This was extended further in all cases whereby the SENCO would adopt an advisory role to others. Additional roles included carrying out interventions and observations in the classroom. These were all analysed as areas of support provided by the SENCO; *'or if I do have some space I might do a classroom observation or work with an individual teacher if something specific has come up'* (Participant 4, Section 26).

Within the theme 'working with others', working and liaising with other services as well as families was identified; *'Liaising with professionals who come in to school would be one of the broader aspects of the role but also in terms of doing Team Around the Child and Team Around the Family, I do end up with quite specifics working with families'* (Participant 1, Section 26).

Research Area 2: Self – Efficacy

Two subthemes were identified for the second research area, self - efficacy. Subthemes were representative of the contributing factors to feelings of self – efficacy as constructed by the participants.

Subtheme 1: Confidence

There were three participants who reported that completing the National Award had helped with self- efficacy due to increased knowledge; *'...I would say the course has helped too because it's recapped some things that I knew, offered some new ideas and learning about some issues in a bit more depth I think does help me answer some questions or approach some situations with confidence.'* (Participant 5, Section 36). The participant reports an increase in self – belief and confidence although it is not reported that the programme in isolation increased self – efficacy. From analysis of the responses, consolidating learning and adding to knowledge were indicative of increased confidence, *'I think having all of that background knowledge makes you feel like you know what you're doing and what your role entails and what it means within the school.'* (Participant 6, Section 34).

There were two participants who reported that positive feedback from other SENCOs whilst completing the course increased their feelings of self – efficacy. *'I felt that my ideas were valued and other SENCOs said that there were a couple of things, ways that I was working that they thought was good and the might try. I think that positive feedback gave me confidence.'* (Participant 5, Section 34). Reports relating to support from the school include; *'the fact that the school backed me to do it (National Award).'* (Participant 1, Section 44) had increased the participants confidence which is a key component of self – efficacy beliefs.

Subtheme 2: Self belief

The training was raised by four of the six participants as providing reassurance and reaffirming knowledge. This sense of self - belief meant that the SENCOs perceived that they could support others and that they had the skills and knowledge necessary to complete their role. The training

seemed to raise their sense of self efficacy; 'It reaffirmed some of the things I was already doing and I was able to bring new information back to school.' (Participant 4, Section 34). Specific attention was drawn to the national award, *'I think knowing that you've got that masters level qualification reassures you, you know that you've worked hard for it, it makes me feel like I've put in the time and effort to achieving that and learnt a lot from it.'* (Participant 6, Section 36).

A sense of importance within the team and senior leadership team was indicative of increased characteristics of self – efficacy (confidence and efficiency), *'Being a part of the senior leadership team has helped my confidence and I think a lot of the knowledge that I use to be an effective member of that team comes from the national award.'* (Participant 3, Section 36).

Research Area 3: Organisational Commitment

Two subthemes emerged from the data for the third research area, organisational commitment. There were many reported indications of factors related to organisational commitment that were reportedly from both training and experiential learning opportunities.

Subtheme 1: School support

The subtheme 'School support' was particularly prevalent occurring throughout the data set. The school's investment in SENCOs from many perspectives was a clear and consistent indication of commitment felt towards the schools the SENCOs were working in; *'The school do partly fund my training and also, not just the monetary side of it the fact that they felt confident enough to give me the role.'* (Participant 1, Section 42). Investment of time, money and belief in the SENCOs abilities nurtured the SENCOs feelings of organisational commitment, *'She's (head teacher) been willing to allocate funding and cover the time off that I've needed so that I can attend the university days and I count myself lucky that she did give me some extra time towards me essay deadlines, which she didn't have to do.'* (Participant 2, Section 38).

From the literature it is possible to identify that going 'over and above' (meaning that staff do more than expected from their role) in order to benefit the organisation is indicative of organisational commitment. Analysis of the results suggest that support from school is also indicative of SENCOs'

perception of commitment to the school. SENCOs reported completing additional tasks, not perceived as being within their role, *'I sat with one parent to support her with a secondary application the other day because it's something she didn't feel she could do on her own. So something that's probably quite far removed from SEN but in the course of working with various families I end up doing those sort of more specific things.'* (Participant 1, Section 28). Examples of staying late were other indications considered to be doing more for the school than was formally within their SENCO roles.

Subtheme 2: Sense of belonging

Half of the participants reported that commitment was associated with feeling that they are part of the team or the school, *'...I think it's a lot to do with the way we work as a team.'* (Participant 2, Section 40). *'I do feel loyal towards the school. I think it has a lot to offer its pupils and they have a good team of staff here.'* (Participant 3, Section 42).

It was found that service and belonging to the school over time was a reason provided for feelings and/ or behaviours associated with organisational commitment, *'I think they're just feelings (loyalty) that have strengthened over time'*. (Participant 5, Section 42) and *'...I feel like I've settled more into the senior team so I do feel more belonging in the role as I go along.'* (Participant 3, Section 46).

Additional Theme: Learning

The semi – structured interview included open questions regarding the impact of both training and experiential training opportunities. These questions stimulated a response in all of the participants and learning emerged as a theme based on the participant responses.

Subtheme 1: Training

Four of the six participants reported that the national award had given them a broader understanding of the basics of the role. The training was described as being a good grounding to learn from. In addition, specific reports of the timing of the training were noteworthy, *'...I think it's*

appropriate that SENCOs should do it within the first few years because it really does set you up with lots of things you need to know moving forward.' (Participant 6, Section 32). In addition to the timing of the course due to newness of the role, participants reported that the timing was important due to legislative changes, *'It was easier to have a lot of the information about the legislative changes from the teaching sessions on the course'*. (Participant 4, Section 28).

SENCOs reported that there were positive implications for the whole school as a result of completing the national award. Three participants reported that they would feed information from the course back to school. Five participants reported that they felt that the training programme had increased the status of SEN within the school, *'...not only for the personal progression and qualification I think it's been a good thing for the school and how SEN is prioritised in the school'*. (Participant 6, Section 46).

Subtheme 2: Experiential and Collaborative Learning

As well as training, SENCOs reported that experiential learning opportunities were worthwhile for learning about the SENCO role.

There were a variety of approaches to learning used by the course for the SENCOs. Across the data these were reported as essays, portfolios, teaching days and research activities. There were mixed responses regarding SENCO's feelings about whether these were the best learning methods for them. However a consistently valued method was collaboration with other SENCOs as a part of the national award, *'I think one of the greatest things that comes of it is getting that time away from school with other SENCOs to talk and things...'*. (Participant 1, Section 30).

Five of the six participants reported that they had been practising as the school SENCO for at least a year before starting the national award. Therefore, the majority had to rely on learning from experience at in the first instance. Some had been SENCOs for many years before attending the training course, *'I learnt a lot about being the SENCO by just getting on and doing the role so I would say that experiences are really important in knowing how to carry out the day – to – day running of the job.'* (Participant 6, Section34).

Shadowing was one way of learning from others that was raised in the data on two occasions. In addition asking the previous SENCO for support or another member of the senior leadership team were common ways of learning from others, *'I learnt about the role in the first place mainly from my head. Then over the years I've moulded it to how I wanted it to be.'* (Participant 4, Section 28).

3.3.3. Results: Non – Training Group

Research codes were created for each of the research areas. Subthemes and themes were then created in accordance with the process of Thematic Analysis. The research areas and one additional theme that emerged from analysis are represented in the table below. The subthemes for each research area and the additional theme are listed below.

SENCO Roles and Responsibilities	Self – Efficacy	Organisational Commitment	Training
Administrative responsibilities	Confidence	School support	Training needs
Leadership role	Self – belief	Sense of belonging	Experiential and Collaborative Learning
Working with others			

Table 1: A table to show the subthemes that emerged from data following TA for the Research Areas and the Additional Theme found.

Research Area 1: SENCO Roles and Responsibilities

There were three subthemes that emerged from the data for this research area.

Subtheme 1: Administrative Responsibilities

There were many duties raised within the data that were included as a part of the administrative duties perceived to be a part of the SENCO's role, *'So we may start thinking about referring on to another service, depending on the difficulty. I would do all of the paperwork for that and send it off.'* (Participant 6, Section 24). Other responsibilities included writing referrals, IEP's, monitoring children with SEN and these duties appeared across all of the data.

Subtheme 2: Leadership Role

There were many management tasks identified as a part of the SENCO role. These included liaising with other services as well as parents and families, *'... I will set up meetings, plan things with parents, and then it will either be myself or the pupil's teacher who is involved with the school visit from the agency...'* (Participant 5, Section 28). From the data reports that SENCOs felt that a part of their role within the senior leadership team was to be a voice and a representative for SEN, *'I would say that I'm that voice for SEN in those meetings so it's important that I'm there to feed in on all of those needs and issues that come up.'* (Participant 3, Section 26).

Working with the senior leadership team was a prevalent theme occurring for four of the six participants within the group. Work with the senior leadership team included meetings and discussions, knowledge about staffing and advising on training issues, *'I know different types of information, more strategic information from the local authority and we collaborate more about that type of stuff whereas I would say that I wouldn't really be part of some of those meetings, or discussions if I wasn't the SENCO.'* (Participant 5, Section 24).

Subtheme 3: Working with others

A prevalent theme which occurred four times within the data set was providing support to others. This was mainly described as supporting teachers with any issues arising regarding SEN, *'... maybe we'll work together to think about some targets and maybe they (pupil) would need to be in an extra group and so I would discuss that with the teacher...'* (Participant 6, Section 24). The subtheme of working with staff was frequently associated with providing support to address behavioural difficulties within the Non – Training group. This was observed within four out of the six pieces of

data, *'... if anything like a behaviour problem or anything like that I make sure the paperwork is filled in properly and that every child gets equal opportunities and fair play really.'* (Participant 3, Section 24).

Research Area 2: Self – Efficacy

There were two subthemes which emerged from the data relating to the research area, self – efficacy. These consisted of participants reported confidence and aspects of self – belief that were usually acquired over time.

Subtheme 1: Confidence

Building confidence over time and increasing a sense of self – efficacy was a prevalent subtheme. It occurred in five of the data sets and was often associated with learning experiences, *'I think my confidence with parents has just improved over time. I'm familiar with all of the parents now and they'll come to me with any questions and I'm happy to work with them.'* (Participant 4, Section 36).

Confidence to resolve difficulties was a subtheme that occurred three times within the data. This confidence is indicative of self – efficacy type beliefs, *'I'm more confident now if a parent comes to ask me a question or if I am in a challenging situation.... I have more experience and knowledge to draw on to deal confidently with those situations.'* (Participant 3, Section 38).

Subtheme 2: Self belief

One subtheme that emerged in all of the interviews was self – belief. SENCOs reported that their skills to advise others and ability to deal with difficult situation was related to feelings of confidence, *'I feel more confident dealing with parents now because I feel like I'll have an idea as to how to answer their questions or I know what services can help...'*. (Participant 2, Section 38).

Research Area 3: Organisational Commitment

For the third research area two subthemes were identified. These include subthemes emerging relating to organisational commitment due to school support and sense of belonging. An indication of organisational commitment that was observed within the data relating to going 'over and above' for their schools was indicative of organisational commitment.

Subtheme 1: School Support

Half of the participants reported that their schools demonstrating support towards them increased their feelings of organisational commitment towards the school. An investment in the participants was indicative of feelings of commitment, *'It is supportive to you because it means that you're better skilled then so giving you that extra time does make you like, yea more commitment.'*

(Participant 3, Section 40).

Subtheme 2: Sense of belonging

Like the Training Group SENCOs reported feeling committed to their schools based on how long they had been working in their respective schools, *'I think there's something about how long you're with a school that encourages commitment because you get comfortable..... I am committed to my team.....as SENCO of course I feel like I want to my best for the school.'* (Participant 4, Section 40).

From the literature it is possible to identify that doing more than necessary for you role is an indication of commitment towards the organisation. This appears to be expressed by participant 6 when it is commented, *'I do enjoy sort of additional things like after school or events and things.'* (Participant 6, Section 42).

Additional Theme: Learning

Participants were asked about their learning opportunities. This area emerged as a theme and two subsequent subthemes also emerged from the data.

Subtheme 1: Training needs

Although participants were not directly asked as a part of the semi – structured interview whether they felt that they would benefit from further training, this narrative was apparent in four pieces of data, *'I think training would help me in my role because I am faced with a lot of questions that I'm unsure about and I have to go and find out.'* (Participant 1, Section 30).

A common subtheme was that SENCOs were attending courses on specific SEN areas. There was one reported training course that the Local Authority offered that related directly to the role of the SENCO. Other than this SENCOs sought their own training in specific areas over time, *'I don't think it's really contributed much to me learning the role of the SENCO, rather, information about specific difficulties. Well that's the type of training I've accessed.'* (Participant 6, Section 32).

Despite SENCOs identifying that they would benefit from training opportunities, when participants were directly asked if they would consider completing the NASENCO four of the six participants reported that they would not be willing to do so. Reasons varied and a number of barriers were perceived, namely, time constraints and work load difficulties, *'... if it was something that I needed to do in my own time then that would be a problem because I just think that if that was the case I would just be too stressed then I think.'* (Participant 2, Section 50).

Subtheme 2: Experiential Learning

The final subtheme identified was Experiential Learning. Frequent reports about learning through doing and learning from others were provided in the participants responses.

SENCOs reported learning from their colleagues including head teachers, teaching staff and the SENCOs before them. There was one report of learning from shadowing experiences (Participant 4); *'I think I was pretty open to asking for help or I would talk things through with the staff and we would work out together what would be helpful...'* (Participant 5, Section 30). SENCOs also reported adding to skills based on experiences and over time those ways of working becoming a part of their role; *'So over the years you build a bank of experiences to draw on.'* (Participant 6, Section 28).

A prevalent theme within the data was learning from attending SENCO cluster meetings. All of the participants reported benefiting from attending these meetings and experiencing them as learning opportunities. To share and gain ideas and information, '*... Especially going to cluster meetings has really helped. You know meeting other SENCOs and learning what they do and so yea that's been a really big help.*' (Participant 2, Section 32).

3.4. Discussion

This section includes a discussion of the results of the investigation. The limitations of this research are discussed as well as suggestions for future directions. This section ends with a consideration of practical implications for educational psychology and conclusions drawn from the study. The research areas in this section relate to the research questions.

Research Area 1: Training Group

The following section will consider the results for the first research question. How do SENCOs who have received mandatory training construct their roles and responsibilities? (Training Group, English: NASENCO).

Time allocation between the two groups is one interesting area to consider from this data. Findings indicate that the Training Group had a more fixed and regular time allocation for the SENCO role. Whereas the Non – Training Group had participants with no fixed time allocation. These results are consistent with Layton's (2005) findings, who reported variations in the SENCO role. Crowther, Dyson and Millward (2001) found that time allocated to SENCOs was in fact decreasing, results from the study indicate that time was a factor within the Non – Training Group.

Research demonstrates that the SENCO role is interpreted in many different ways (Layton, 2005). The role can vary between schools which can result in different responsibilities, different time allowances to complete the role as well as different tasks that are expected of the SENCO (Derrington, 1997; Crowther, Dyson & Millward, 2001). The results from this study are consistent with these previous findings. However, there were a number of duties that participants consistently constructed as a part of their role. The three main SENCO roles and responsibilities reported were; Administrative Duties, Leadership Role and Working with others. These roles and responsibilities are

broadly in line with the roles provided by the Training and Development Agency framework showing consistency between SENCOs' perceptions and the training they have received, although this is not possible to directly relate to training, it is an encouraging picture that there are consistencies in these results.

Giffiths and Dubsky (2012) reported that there was a link between the NASENCO and SENCOs being perceived as leaders and that SENCOs reported that this was important in order to influence change in their schools. The Training Group in the current study also reported perceiving the SENCO role as a leadership role. This is in line with Brown and Doveston (2014) who found that the majority of the participants did view themselves as a part of the senior leadership team. Working with the senior leadership team and having knowledge regarding the budget were two aspects that emerged as being important parts of their role as leaders. Another subtheme that emerged was more in line with a managerial position and involved managing others. This concerned timetabling staff and coordinating teaching assistants. In addition, developing other staff included passing on training or feedback. The subtheme that SENCOs perceived themselves as having a managerial position was also evident within Research Area 1 which investigated SENCO roles and responsibilities.

Research Area 1: Non – Training Group

The following section will consider the results for the first research question for the non –training group. How do SENCOs who have not received mandatory training construct their roles and responsibilities? (Non – Training Group, Welsh).

Although management emerged as a theme within the data, the focus was regarding coordinating and organising duties. Whereas within the Training Group there was a greater focus on managing staff as well as monitoring and reviewing roles. The Training Group demonstrated a greater focus on working with others including other teams and families. This was apparent in the Non – Training Group also although to a lesser degree. One theme that emerged that was not consistent with the Training Group was that working with pupils with behaviour difficulties or supporting staff with these difficulties was prevalent within the participants within the Non – Training Group.

The Non – Training Group also identified that leadership was a part of their role and analysis indicates that they perceived the role as being at the level of leadership. In this group, participants

reported seeing themselves as advocates for SEN within the school and within the senior leadership team. This group also reported that working with the senior leadership team was a part of their role although there was less evidence of managerial type responsibilities, for example, relating to managing staff.

Research Area 2: Training Group

The following section will consider the results for research question two. How efficacious do SENCOs who have received mandatory training feel? (Training Group, English: NASENCO).

The participants reported greater confidence due to increased knowledge. This was partly attributed to training opportunities although not in isolation. Griffiths and Dubsky (2012) also reported positive impacts of training including an increase in personal and professional confidence. It was also reported that two participants felt more relaxed, more knowledgeable and understanding. These increases in confidence and other positive outcomes are seen to be indicative of an increase in self – efficacy.

The current study found that participants reported an increase in their sense of belief due to training reassuring and reaffirming their knowledge. This is consistent with previous research identifying that training opportunities can increase perceptions of self – efficacy. In addition, results from this study suggest that other people demonstrating confidence and investment in SENCOs seemed to impact directly on SENCOs' self – efficacy beliefs. This appears to be a novel outcome. Self – efficacy beliefs were also related to a sense of importance within the team. An increase in status of the role increased confidence in the SENCOs' ability to perform certain tasks, not least to be an active member of the senior leadership team.

Research Area 2: Non – Training Group

The following section considers the results for the second research question for the non – training group. How efficacious do SENCOs who have not received mandatory training feel? (Non – Training Group, Welsh).

The Non – Training group also reported an increase in self – belief over time. However, this was mainly attributed to increases in abilities and skills accumulated over time. An increase in confidence over time was based largely on SENCOs' familiarity with the role and dealing with situations as they occurred, mainly based on experiential learning experiences. SENCOs' confidence to resolve difficulties was indicative of self – efficacy beliefs. Increased knowledge and experiences were directly linked with confidence in these situations.

Overall, a tentative comparison between the two groups suggests that perceptions of self – efficacy within the Training Group were mainly attributable to training opportunities. Whereas increases in self – efficacy over time in the Non –Training Group were attributable to learning experiences. However, both groups reported increases in self – efficacy over time and it would be difficult to determine whether one way of learning new skills and knowledge was better than the other.

Research Area 3: Training Group

This section considers the results for the third research question. How committed do SENCOs feel towards their organisation when they have received mandatory training? (Training Group, English: NASENCO).

This research found that SENCOs felt a greater sense of organisational commitment due to the investment from their employers, as a result of competing training. The analysis of the data suggests that SENCOs felt committed because school had demonstrated commitment to them through funding, covering time and having belief in the SENCOs that they had the ability to complete the training. Griffiths and Dubsky (2012) found that the national award increased perceptions of team work and a more collaborative approach within the team. This research found that SENCOs within the Training Group demonstrated a sense of belonging within their schools and teams and would often go 'over and above' for their schools.

However, it was also found that SENCOs also attributed organisational commitment to longevity of service to the school. Analysis of the Non – Training group indicated that loyalty and pride were often due to simply being a part of and being associated with the school in general.

Research Area 3: Non – Training Group

The following section considers the results for the third research question for the non – training group. How committed do SENCOs feel towards their organisation when they have not received mandatory training? (Non – Training Group, Welsh).

The Non – Training Group also reported that support from school encourages their commitment to the organisation. It was also reported that investment in up – skilling the SENCOs or providing time to complete their role or local authority run training nurtured perceptions of commitment. It was found that this group would also go ‘over and above’ for their school and that longevity of service to the school seemed to be related to SENCO perceptions of organisational commitment.

A tentative comparison of the Non – Training group reveals many similarities regarding the commitment felt towards school. Including longevity of service and perceived support/ investment. Participants in both groups reported that they would go ‘over and above’ for their schools. One observed difference was that the Training Group reported a sense of belonging within the school and within their teams.

Additional Theme: Learning (Training Group)

Griffiths and Dubsky (2012) found that there were many reported benefits of training. For example, stimulating teaching sessions, a good quality of tutor support and networking opportunities. Positive impacts were reported for SENCO’s learning and personal development. Similar results were obtained from the current study. Analysis of the results within the current study revealed that SENCOs reported gaining a broader understanding of the SENCO role. SENCOs also reported that completing the training had a wider impact of the perception of SEN within the school. Another

subtheme that emerged from the current data identified the range of teaching methods used on the course. There was a mixture of feedback regarding these teaching methods. There were drawbacks to the training course reported and these emerged as a theme across the data. Drawbacks included time constraints, distance to travel and commitment needed to complete the course. One participant queried how applicable completing masters level work was to the day – to – day role of the SENCO. The participant later recognised that the role includes formal writing responsibilities and suggested that the masters level writing was a useful skill for this role. Similarly to research presented by Griffiths and Dubsky (2012) the overall reports found in this study regarding the training suggest that this was a positive experience and all of the SENCOs would recommend the course to others.

It has been suggested that SENCOs pick up many of their skills through experiential learning. Pearson, Scott and Sugden (2011) identify that it is difficult to tease apart the impact of training from the effects of learning the SENCO role while doing the job. The Training Group in this study reported that they acquired new skills whilst working and doing the role. It was noted that although training gave SENCOs a good grounding and basic knowledge, that overall, many skills came from actually doing the job. SENCOs also reported that they would learn from others and found shadowing experiences particularly beneficial for learning the SENCO role.

Additional Theme: Learning (Non - Training Group)

The participants in the Non – Training Group had completed Local Authority based training courses. These were reported to be after school sessions, half or full day courses. The biggest commitment of ongoing training that the participants consistently reported was an introductory course which required attendance for one day a week for six weeks. The majority of the participants in this study felt that they would benefit from more training. However, another subtheme that emerged was that SENCOs would not be prepared to complete the national award. Many barriers to completing the award were reported, namely, time, money and the prospect of added stress. Therefore although participants reported that they need further training the results of analysis would suggest that participants may want more of the training they are currently offered rather than the national award per se.

The Non – Training Group reported that the most significant way of learning about their role was from others. This included other services, colleagues and past SENCOs. It was also reported that the SENCOs would learn their role over time and by gaining experiences as they progressed. The final experience that SENCOs felt they learnt from was to attend SENCO cluster meetings. It was reported that sharing ideas, meeting other SENCOs, as well as other networking opportunities, were some of the best ways to learn about the role.

Overall both groups identified that learning from others was an important way of learning the roles and responsibilities of the SENCO. Learning from experiences, over time also came through in both data sets. Interestingly, the Training Group in this study valued the mentoring and it was noted by a number of participants within the data that sharing experiences with other SENCOs was one of the best teachings methods employed by the training course.

3.4.1. Conclusion

In conclusion, the results of this research are seen to be in line with previous research conducted by Layton (2005) who reported variations in the SENCO role. Participants in Layton’s study provided variations on patterns of workload concerning areas including, administrative work, liaison with external agencies, providing training for colleagues, working with other teachers, managing teaching assistants, working with pupils, making resources and liaising with the SEN governor. In this research, variations in the perception of the role were also found. This will be explored in this section.

Results suggest that time allocation and time constraints to complete the SENCO role were factors within the Non – Training Group. These results can be seen in relation to research by Crowther, Dyson and Millward (2001) who found that time allocated to SENCOs was in fact decreasing. Time allocated for the Non – Training Group was less than for the Training Group. Furthermore it was less formally planned with SENCOs requesting time to commit to their role on an ‘as and when’ needed basis. The participants within the Training Group indicated that they had a time allocation that was much greater and was often pre – determined and regular.

There were common perceived roles and responsibilities between the Training and the Non – Training group. However, the focus of these roles and responsibilities varied. Although ‘Leadership Role’ emerged as a theme for both groups, the emphasis of this role for the Training group was more focussed on managing staff and monitoring and reviewing SEN. Whereas the Non – Training group tended to focus on more organising and coordinating tasks.

In both groups, an increase in self – efficacy was reported over time. In the Training group participants reported an increase in their confidence due to knowledge. The current study found that participants reported an increase in their sense of belief in their ability to complete their role due to training reassuring and reaffirming their knowledge. The Non – Training group also reported an increase in self – belief over time. However, this was mainly attributed to increases in abilities and skills accumulated over time. This was based largely on SENCOs’ familiarity with the role and dealing with situations as they occurred, mainly based on experiential learning experiences.

Within the Training group an investment in up – skilling the SENCOs or providing time to complete their role or training nurtured perceptions of commitment. Within the Non – Training Group it was reported that loyalty and pride were often due to simply being a part of and being associated with the school over time. Participants in both groups reported that they would go ‘over and above’ for their schools. One observed difference was that the Training Group reported a sense of belonging within the school and within their teams.

Participants in the Training group would all recommend that SENCOs complete the National Award and the majority of the participants in the Non – Training group felt that they would benefit from more training. However, it was reported that SENCOs in the Non – Training group would not be prepared to complete the national award. Many different barriers to completing the award were reported, namely, time, money and the prospect of added stress. Overall both groups indicated that learning from others was an important way of learning the roles and responsibilities of the SENCO. This was not solely attributed to training by any of the participants. Both groups valued the experience of mentoring and sharing experiences with other SENCOs.

The findings from this research are consistent with research by Tissot (2013) who found that SENCOs who had more experience were more likely to be a part of the leadership team. However, in the current research participants reported perceiving being a part of the leadership team as positive whereas Tissot's findings were not always consistent with this. Tissot reported that some SENCOs felt being a part of the leadership team was powerful in order to get work done and for strategic goals. However, it was also reported that a leadership role was something they did not want to be associated with or as a role that they were given in theory but not in practice. Consistent with Cowne (2005) this research also found that the SENCOs had a wide variety of roles, including work with pupils, parents, teachers, teaching assistants and outside agencies.

The findings from the current research are consistent with research by Seymour and Arnott (1994) who suggested that middle managers in school would benefit from clear role definitions and agreed job specification. SENCOs from the Training Group reported positive aspects of understanding the SENCO role.

The current study is able to demonstrate that both training and experiential learning opportunities enhanced SENCO self – efficacy across the two groups of participants This is in - keeping with studies such as those by Fritz and Miller – Heyl (1995), Ross and Bruce (2007) and Tschannen – Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2007) who have found that programmes which aim to enhance teacher efficacy are effective.

It was possible to support the findings reported by Rosenholtz (1989), Louis (1991) and Rutter and Jacobson (1986) that learning opportunities, acquiring new skills and staff development nurture commitment to the school. This was also found for the Training Group within the current study. However, a novel finding was that in the Non – Training Group participants reported feeling committed to the school based only on them being a part of the school and felt that they belonged to it.

The results from this research suggest that learning opportunities enhanced feelings of self – efficacy and consequently organisational commitment within the Training Group. This is consistent with

research conducted by Firestone and Pennell (1993) who suggested that learning opportunities are an important ingredient for teacher commitment as it reduces the uncertainty of teaching.

3.4.2. Limitations

This research is somewhat limited due to the small sample size. Future research may wish to investigate similar research areas with a larger sample in order to investigate whether the same results are found. Although during analysis it was found that the data had reached saturation, a larger sample may have yielded more in – depth results. However, previous research has used a similar sample size (Brown & Doveston, 2014). Braun and Clarke (2006) have also noted the strengths of the use of in – depth analysis that can be completed on the data collected from this type of qualitatively designed research.

The method of thematic analysis has been open to criticism for being subjective and interpretive. This research has attempted to provide transparency in order for the reader to draw their own conclusions. Methodological limitations include the use of a qualitative measure that was not standardised. It is important to note that due to the interpretive nature of TA this method may be influenced by researcher bias. It has been argued that quantitative measures are more scientific and can provide more rigour and reliability. However, a qualitative method is seen as a more appropriate approach for exploring the research areas and allowed for an appropriate means of data collection to meet these research needs.

The participants were recruited from two different LA's in England and Wales in order to offer contextual information to strengthen its local relevance and local application. It is possible to identify that the recruitment of SENCOs specifically, may provide constraints for generalising the results regarding self – efficacy and organisational commitment. This research may be limited to being applied within the educational context, to SENCOs within schools only. It could be argued that the SENCO role is a leadership position and therefore there may be an expectation that the participants have increased self – efficacy and commitment to their organisations in order to adopt these roles. However, it is suggested here that this research aims to be specific in nature and consider SENCOs in particular. In addition the comparison of two groups (Training and Non –

Training) allows for consideration of the possible influences of training upon these psychological constructs for those working within the SENCO role.

The questions included in the semi – structured interview were carefully constructed in order to allow the researcher to collect the data required for analysis and in order to allow the researcher to make tentative conclusion regarding both the Training and the Non – Training groups. Although it could be argued that this could be leading the participants, careful consideration was also given to the questions used. These were informed by previously used, quantitative measures (Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale, Tschannen – Moran & Woolfolk Hoy; 2001 & Organisation Commitment Questionnaire, Mowday et al.; 1979). These helped to provide a focus for the questions of the semi – structured interview.

3.4.3. Further Research

Further research may wish to consider any one of the areas/ constructs identified here more thoroughly and in more depth. Future research may consider one of the research areas in more depth for example SENCO roles and responsibilities, SENCO perceptions of self – efficacy or SENCO perceptions of organisational commitment. The current research investigates SENCO perceptions and this is related to training. There would be possibilities to investigate perceptions of other members of staff within the school system related to training and/ or training needs. There is currently limited research comparing English and Welsh SENCOs, therefore future directions may include making further comparisons between the two groups. For example future research could consider different psychological constructs or differences in other policies or procedures.

3.4.4. Practical implications for educational psychology

Educational Psychologists may have a supporting, guiding, or even training role to play with the SENCOs they work with. An awareness of how SENCOs constructs their role and the training they may have accessed may have implications for the way the EP works with the SENCO. In addition, an awareness of SENCOs' self – efficacy beliefs and feelings of organisational commitment may have an impact on how EPs work both on a personal and professional level as well as their performance on a whole school level. This information may guide the way EPs chose to practice, it may influence the

working relationship between SNECOs and the EPs and it may mean that EPs have a greater understanding of perceived individual roles and the part this plays within systems and organisations.



The implications of training for Special Educational Needs Coordinators; an exploration of self – efficacy, organisational commitment and perceptions of the SENCO role.

Section 3: Major Reflective Account

4.1. Major Reflective Account

The reflective chapter will explore the contribution this research has made to the field of psychology, education and educational psychology. It will reflect on the process of conducting the research and will consider areas within literature review and empirical paper. It will include consideration of the reflexive nature adopted by the research practitioner in the context of reflecting critically on the research completed. Due to the reflective nature of these sections it will be written in the first person and will include some colloquialisms in the spirit of the nature of the writing, for ease of expression and flow of reading.

4.1.1. Background

This research was completed as a requirement of the Doctorate in Educational Psychology programme as run from Cardiff University. I was a member of the cohort recruited for the course run between 2012 and 2015. Although, this thesis was amended and extended over a further academic year following advice as an outcome of the Viva examination completed in 2015. This research initially centred around legislation and the SENCO role as the main focus. A link between the NASENCO training course and self – efficacy and organisational commitment were attempted to be drawn. However, during the Viva the links drawn were felt to be too weak and methodology used insufficient to draw the conclusions asserted within the original paper. The focus of the paper was changed in order to have a greater emphasis on the psychological constructs explored within the research.

The focus of this revised research was the psychological aspect of the research, namely, the constructs self – efficacy and organisational commitment. Using these as the main areas of research and relating them to the SENCO role and training opportunities allowed for the piece of work to be developed further. The revised research employed a qualitative method. Semi – structured interviews were used in order to explore SENCOs' constructs of self – efficacy, organisational commitment and perceptions of the SENCO role. Two groups of participants were recruited for this study. There were six participants in the Training Group (English) and six participants in the Non – Training Group (Welsh). These groups were recruited in order to allow the researcher to draw tentative comparisons between the two groups regarding outcomes of the training opportunities

they had been subject to. Thematic analysis of the data collected revealed similarities and differences between the two groups in relation to the themes that emerged.

4.1.2. Approach to knowledge

It is important to be mindful that whilst constructing, conducting and completing research the researcher's personal and professional experiences of the research will have implications for the way it is carried out. I was approaching research from the view point of being a trainee educational psychologist on a professional doctorate course. Lee, Brennan and Green (2009) suggest that this approach to knowledge, both practical and research based, supports the development of knowledge in different contexts both with university and in a range of professional contexts. Lee and Bound (2003) suggest that this type of programme forges the understanding between academic and practitioner researcher identities. An understanding of being both a researcher and a practitioner and the interplay between these roles was important for me whilst constructing a research idea. In addition to being motivated to produce research of a good standard, I also wanted the research to have meaningful, practical implications and applications. This will be discussed throughout the reflective section.

As an aspiring EP, in accordance with the British Psychological Society (BPS) I aim to support the development of children and young people. As applied psychologists the link between research and practice is at the core of the way EPs work in order to facilitate change. This transparency between psychology and the problem situation is what Cameron (2006) suggests is the distinctive role of the EP. A clear understanding of my own perception of the role of the EP, the EP as a researcher and my role as a trainee EP was important in order to gain perspective on how extending knowledge in the field could impact upon these roles in order to promote change.

4.1.3. Initial Motivations and Development of a Research Area

As a trainee educational psychologist past experiences nurtured an interest in many areas of psychology. I have enjoyed taking an eclectic approach to psychology, keeping an open mind and adopting a range of ideas, concepts, theories and methods. As I begin as a practitioner I feel this is

successful as it allows me to be flexible and adaptable, using the approaches that I find most useful and applicable to the different range of challenges I face. However, as a researcher this presented a difficulty for deciding what research to undertake and which perspectives to adopt in order to guide and direct my research. It has been suggested that conducting research due to interest in a certain field is a good way of being motivated to complete the work to the best of the researcher's ability (Lowe, 2007). Lowe also suggested that personal experience was also a valid reason to conduct research in a certain area. Therefore this provided a starting point; to consider issues and experiences that I had been faced with during the first and second years of practice that would motivate me to research those areas.

At the outset of constructing the basis of my research idea I considered experiences from before the outset of the training programme as well as my experiences from the first period of learning on the course. One consistent theme was emerging while I considered and refined a research area for the thesis.

The initial motivations for a research area were influenced by my background and past experiences. Prior to beginning the DEdPsy course I worked for a charity supporting adults with mental health difficulties. Following this I worked for the Youth Offending Service. I worked with a cross section of young people and their families. I worked within a range of systems as well as with a range of professionals. This variety and mixture of collaborative working had nurtured a wide range of skills as well as interests for me as a practitioner. On reflection I feel that my past experiences influenced my choice of researching the areas of commitment and self – efficacy as they are constructs that may have impacted upon myself.

4.1.4 Relevance to Educational Psychology

I had been intrigued in all three years of study by the working relationships that EPs build in every aspect of their work on a daily basis with individuals, groups and at an organisational level. Ashton and Roberts (2006) reported that EPs value their unique relationships with school more highly than any other work they do. Specifically, both EPs and SENCOs valued the relationship built by the EP. However, it was also found that SENCOs valued work like individual child assessments which would make a systemic approach to practice more difficult. Early work by Roger (1957) had suggested that the quality of the relationship between the professional and the client was an important factor in

promoting change. Based on my experience of practicing as an EP as well as the literature explored throughout the process of completing the thesis I would argue that this remains unchanged over time. From personal experience, the better the relationship between the EP and SENCO the better positive changes were able to be adopted or worked on.

It was at this point that the process of supervision became an important function within the conception of my research idea. On reflection, as an adult learner it was important to re – connect with the experience of seeking support and guidance. It is from this avenue that it was possible to begin refining my research area and I began to consider legislation with regards to the SENCO. Bash (2003) suggests that although adult learners aim to be self – directed but assistance for confronting academic issues is needed. Through supervision both with my peers on the programme as well as my research supervisor it was possible to refine my broad interest in EP relationships to one key relationship. The EP relationship with the school SENCO emerged as a key area for me to focus on. Indeed, investigating SENCOs has very clear links with education. It was important to ensure that psychological theory and practice were also a central part of the research in order to ensure the criteria needed in order to fulfil the requirements of the thesis were met. Therefore further development of the research area was considered through further research.

Consideration of my future career was also a motivator when designing the research area. Since becoming a trainee the prospect of, once qualified, having a full case load of schools and managing these was something that I had been considering. Qualified EPs that I had been working with over the duration of my training had advised me to think about my approach to schools and SENCOs once qualified. I was encouraged to consider how I might work with them and how I might forge a positive and lasting relationship with people and establishments that I may be working with over time. These prompts to consider the relationships I would need to build and maintain encouraged me further to commit to conducting research regarding SENCOs in particular.

Developing this idea further meant researching what was applicable and current for SENCOs and their practice. Ashton and Roberts (2006) provided an interesting insight into what SENCOs and EPs valued about the EP role as well as the unique contribution the EP could offer. The results from this research demonstrated that SENCOs valued a far more traditional role for the EP whereas EPs saw themselves as offering a range of services. This insight into the SENCO's construction of value of the EP role was applicable to the current research as I wished to consider SENCO's perceptions of their

roles and responsibilities. These results were also relevant to me as a practitioner as I started to consider ways of working with schools and SENCOs.

An important consideration was to include insight regarding SENCOs' constructions. In this case self – efficacy and organisational commitment emerged from the literature researched. These also had the potential to be insightful and worthwhile areas for knowledge to apply to practice which was paramount for me as a researcher to maintain motivation and momentum for research activities.

4.1.5. Contribution to knowledge

Leyden (1999) suggests that EPs are successful at working with teachers and the school as a whole. This made for an interesting starting point from which to consider schools as organisations. Pellegrini (2009) also suggests that EPs apply systemic theories to practice. I felt that as research is demonstrating that EPs are beginning to work in a more systemic way (Ashton & Roberts, 2006) that consideration of the school as a system, and in this case an organisation may be applicable to education as well as psychology. The psychological construct of organisational commitment has received plentiful research attention in the past. From further research it emerged that OC has been applied specifically to the school setting.

Whilst researching organisational commitment, I also had in mind that I wanted to investigate another affective measure in order to add to the unique contribution to knowledge that this research may provide. I felt that this would add value to the research as it would consider two different constructs that are concerned with different aspects of psychology. This could add a further dimension to the results. It was through research that the concept of self – efficacy as a research area became a viable option. This is because there were a number of studies that considered OC and other constructs like confidence, self – esteem and feelings of empowerment. Although these are not directly comparable I felt that these examples gave grounds for considering self – efficacy in the context of this research. Due to past research it was felt that self – efficacy was an area that warranted exploration. This concept, like OC can be considered in the context of education. This domain specific self- efficacy is teacher efficacy and has also received research attention. Although it was possible to gather research regarding teacher efficacy it was not possible to find any research that directly measured the teacher efficacy of SENCOs specifically and so this research was seen to be a worthwhile contribution to knowledge.

Training emerged as a research area due to the recent changes in legislation that requires SENCOs to complete mandatory training. It is important for educational psychologists to be well informed regarding legislation. Leyden (1999) suggests that policies determine practice however Leyden reports that EPs do not feed in to policies and procedures unless perhaps there are financial or political reasons to do so. This research is being conducted at a time when major legislative changes have been introduced in England and when equally as significant changes are on the horizon for Wales. Therefore it is possible that this research could contribute to informing practice in education and educational psychology. An insight into how legislation in England has been successful or areas where there has been less impact may be important examples to learn from and to inform policy in Wales. The aspects of political, economic and financial climates of the two countries are bound to differ, however, Kauppi (1998) describes how it is apparent that some LEAs have allocated resources to “routinized” practice rather than providing a feedback system from which organisations are able to learn and develop from.

MacKay and Boyle (1994) found that head teachers felt that EPs could play a valuable role in policy development although this outcome was not replicated in Ashton and Roberts’ (2009) work. Humphrey and Lewis (2008) suggest that knowledge and understanding can empower individuals to change. England has taken a clear lead on reforming education, before Wales, if studies could contribute to the evaluation of the impact of this it could be beneficial for both England and Wales. This is beyond the scope of my thesis, however this research is able to contribute to knowledge in this research area.

This research was seen to benefit from a shift in focus following the Viva during the third year of study. The core areas of research remained although the motivations became directed at this point. This presented me with a challenge. Through this learning process, which was at times uncomfortable it was important for me to understand and accept other perspectives. This research had developed personally and organically. However, accepting amendments from others was an important development in the research. This was an adjustment that needed time to make sense of.

4.1.6. Research Practitioner Competencies

Savickas (2014) has proposed a 'career construction theory', this is based on career patterns in the modern day being more flexible and changeable. This theory suggests that individuals have self – regulatory resources that facilitate problem solving and the need to achieve good person – environment fit over the course of their career. On reflection, as a trainee EP at the outset of hopefully a long career in the field I felt that during this process different competencies were important to employ or develop. Whilst providing a critique of the research practitioner I felt that exploration of some of these competencies that became useful or apparent during the process would be worthwhile. In the first instance it was felt that a creative thinking style was useful for me as a research practitioner. Steiner (1965) suggests that in order to be creative it is important for the individual to be inherently interested in the subject and motivated to find the solution to a problem. In order to provide a novel contribution to knowledge creativity was important. Smeltz and Cross (1984) suggest that creativity is a vital part of the innovation process. As a researcher I feel that I was creative mainly during the stage of developing the research idea. I aimed to consider a number of ideas initially and then narrow these ideas down to specific research areas to research. I was open – minded in order to adopt the best way of working and in order to allow me to use the most efficient method of data collection and analysis.

Following the conception of the idea and using creativity and innovative skills, practical skills like timing, planning and organisation were key competencies that were needed in order to juggle all of the demands of conducting research and working as a trainee EP employing the practical aspects of the EP role on a daily basis. Balancing these requirements was difficult and managing both did present difficulties that I have certainly learnt from. The ways I attempted to manage these challenges was by setting myself personal deadlines, to complete small sections of work at a time, taking a little but often approach. I was lucky to have considerate supervisors supporting me in my fieldwork placements. Although there were often times whereby balancing responsibilities and a commitments were difficult I also feel that developing competencies as a practitioner were useful for my research task. I developed relationships with SENCOs, conducting INSET training, I developed an excellent understanding of legislation in my role as a trainee EP and these crossovers were both useful and insightful. The skills that I was developing with SENCOs included building rapport, using the consultation method of service delivery and I was beginning to develop my ability to elicit the

information I required for ongoing pieces of work within schools. These skills were very useful when I was due to interview SENCOs for research purposes. Conducting training contributed to my confidence for presenting information, approaching new people as well as organisation and preparation skills. All of these skills were transferable to the research process. I needed to contact schools, approach SENCOs, prepare all of my material and be organised in order to make good use of my time which was paramount.

4.1.7. Research Design

On reflection, when this research was first submitted the design of the research was motivated by changes to legislation and the impact this had on Special Educational Needs Coordinators. The Viva helped me to refocus the attention of the research. The researcher had sought to use tried and tested quantitative measures previously. However, on reflection the quantitative results were superfluous to the needs of the research. Therefore a solely qualitative method was designed in order to meet the needs of the research.

A qualitative design would allow me to capture the participant's constructions and perceptions without leading the SENCOs but providing the opportunity to elaborate and contribute fully to the interview. This was in – keeping with the explorative nature of the research. It allowed for all of the research areas to be addressed as fully as possible and met the overall needs of the research.

Following the Viva advice was sought specifically from university staff specialising in research. On reflection this was a very useful process as there were a number of drafts of the semi – structured interview created before a final version was agreed upon. This was valuable in order to help ensure that the material used met the demands of the research. It was helpful for myself also in order to feel supported and guided in order to have the best materials possible. This support was able to give myself, as the researcher, more confidence in the qualitative measure that was used. Having the knowledge that the interview that I used had been proofed and verified by other professionals added to my confidence and self –assurance during the process of analysing and writing up the results.

4.1.8. Ontology and Epistemology

When I began to consider what ontological and epistemological viewpoints would be adopted for the research, a starting point was to establish an understanding of what my personal view of what reality was. This could then guide and tailor the direction of the research. Mertens (2009) argues that the influences upon the researcher's constructions, approaches and examination of the results will impact upon the contribution that the knowledge can make to the research literature. Henwood (1996) suggests that considering different paradigms and perspectives leads the researcher to consider methodology and what would best suited to the researchers view point.

On a personal level I feel that I would describe myself as coming from a social constructionist perspective. Constructionist research holds that reality is constructed rather than it being an externally singular entity (Hansen, 2004). In my day to day practice I use the consultation model of service delivery most frequently. As a trainee, all of my university based work was based on the Constructionist Model of Informed Reasoned Action (COMOIRA) (Gameson, Rhydderch, Ellis, & Carroll, 2003; 2005).

Generally as a professional I would adopt a pragmatic paradigm, which allows the adoption of both a positivist and a constructionist perspective. The positivist positions claims that results from research provide absolute validation, certainty or the complete generalisation of any finding. Although I feel able to adopt these principles as a professional I recognised that this was not a stance that I would feel comfortable adopting for the research that I wanted to conduct. The positivist perspective suggests that theoretical terms and concepts are logical and are based on observable data. This approach has been criticised by Salmon (1994) who suggests this has largely been discredited in philosophy. However, Salmon does note that positivism continues to be prevalent in psychology. Creswell (2008) describes that this perspective is based on the objectivity of the research process. Therefore this perspective often adopts a quantitative design. Although I am able to recognise the strength and merits of robust research this positive perspective does not allow for the variables that impact upon results that are out of the control of the researcher but impact upon the outcomes of research. Considering my personal and professional viewpoint was a first step to establishing the most appropriate position to adopt for the research.

The following step in the process of deciding which epistemological and ontological perspective to adopt was to consider the research. A social constructionist approach was adopted based on the demands of the research. This approach assumes that reality is socially constructed and that knowledge is constructed in relation to historical, social and contextual factors (Robson, 2002). It acknowledges that an individual possesses unique interpretations or constructs, rather than there being one single “truth” or “reality”. In addition when considered in light of the first part of the process it was conducive with my personal and professional perspectives. Adopting this approach would also allow the researcher to collect data and then interpret the meaning of this data in line with participant constructions.

Blaikie (2007) suggests that ontological assumptions are used to guide research and the methods adopted. The ontological perspective adopted for this research was a relativist perspective. Relativism allows for the interpretation of data in line with a social constructionist epistemological perspective as it relates to knowledge that comes from an ‘evolved perspective or point of view’ (Raskin, 2008, p.13). I felt that this is what was needed for my research.

It was possible to consider other perspectives, for example, critical realism. However, this was unsuccessful. This is because critical realism asserts that an entity can exist independently of our knowledge of it (Fleetwood, 2004). In addition, critical realists believe that reality is observable (empirical) as well as unobservable (Kempster & Parry, 2011). Although this perspective is not reductionist and therefore may have a place within the research I felt that it was important to understand the participant’s perspectives. I felt that this research did not seek to prove or disprove, rather striving to explore. This was important due to the researcher wishing to complete analysis based on only responses provided.

Through considering other perspectives, it was clear that this research required the exploration of concepts based on learning and knowledge and peoples own constructions and perceptions. This resulted in confidence when adopting a qualitative design.

4.1.9. Method

Silverman (1993) suggests that the researcher must select appropriate methods and techniques in order to find the best way of exploring the topic being studied. Although Willig (2001) suggests that there are no right or wrong methodologies. However, it is important that the method allowed me to collect the data that I needed in order to analyse constructions and perceptions of SENCOs. With this in mind a qualitative method allowed me to gather a rich source of data to subsequently allow appropriate data analysis. One difficulty this research presents is the snap shot style data that was collected. A longitudinal study may have been beneficial in order to consider perceptions over time. Another constraint due to the small scale of this thesis is the sample size. Therefore it is important to acknowledge that the claims that can be made from this research are more limited than research that would have included a larger sample.

4.1.10. Data Collection

Reflecting on this process as a research practitioner was an interesting and insightful experience. Conducting face – to – face interviews meant that it was important at the outset of each interview to spend time building rapport. I feel that I was able to use many of my skills as a practitioner psychologist in order to nurture this relationship. For example, interviewing techniques developed as a part of my role as an EP were very useful. I feel that building rapport was important in order to enable the participant to be relaxed under the interview conditions and therefore allow for free and honest information being shared during the interview process. I was flexible regarding when and where I would conduct the interviews in order to ensure that participants were not inconvenienced and in the hope that participants would feel at ease during the interviews.

On reflection, difficulties arose concerning school issues like finding an appropriate room and time constraints. It was important for me to consider practical arrangements for conducting the research, especially within the school environment. I had experienced similar difficulties as a trainee EP and therefore was well equipped to encourage SENCOs to make provisions for rooms and teaching cover which all participants were willing and happy to do. SENCOs were able to commit to completing the interview and thankfully all participants were cooperative and welcoming towards me.

4.1.11. Analysis

In terms of contribution to knowledge, the choice of data analysis was an important factor contributing to the results obtained and presented in this research. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was selected in order to analyse the data. However, as I reconstructed my method and materials this did emerge as an appropriate method to implement. Boyatzis (1998) has suggested that this is the most appropriate method of analysis for qualitative data which seeks to uncover meaning through interpretation. In addition Boyatzis also suggests that thematic analysis allows the researcher to begin analysis while the data is being collected. This was particularly important to myself because I collected data over a period of time. I was able to familiarise myself with the data as I transcribed the interviews which I was able to do as I completed the interviews over different intervals of time.

On reflection, I experienced some difficulties with recruiting participants which I thought would delay the data analysis process. This was not the case however, this in fact seemed to be helpful, especially for the process of analysing the qualitative data. Recordings were transcribed as they became available which meant that the researcher was not faced with a large amount of transcription to do at any one time. It was possible for the researcher to become familiar with the data, continue with coding and the identification of themes in accordance with the TA process. However, without the whole data set it was not possible to gain a full overview or to complete this process for the whole group. Therefore there did come a stage where the data set as a whole was required for the TA process.

This method of data analysis was used in other literature that has been incorporated in the literature review of the thesis. This contributes to the consistency and coherence of using the same method in order to tentatively draw comparisons between research and research design.

In order to become familiar with the data TA was carried out by hand. This suited my individual learning style. However, this presented some difficulties when adding this work to the Appendices of the thesis. Hand written work was transferred to tables in order to present the process in an

accessible way. On reflection this was time consuming and utilising a computer based software programme may have assisted with this and saved time in the longer term. In future research activities I would consider this more carefully and weigh up the benefits of investing the time in acquiring and learning to use software programmes and the time this could save.

4.1.12. Materials

Willig (2001) states that semi – structured interviews are a popular method of qualitative data collection. This allows the researcher to study prescribed topics (Robson, 2002) but also enough freedom to elaborate on answers appropriate for thematic analysis. For this research I had designed a semi – structured interview that was tailored to meet the requirements of my research and collect data that explored my research areas. This consisted of broad open - ended questions and prompts were included in order to support the researcher to be able to get the participants (or subjects) to extend the answers provided. The prompts that were aimed at exploring self – efficacy were designed through considering questionnaire the ‘Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale’ (Tschannen – Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). It was reported that this measure was becoming a well - used measure of teacher self – efficacy (Ross & Bruce, 2007). Designing the prompts used for the organisational commitment research area were developed using the ‘Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ)’ by Mowday et al. (1979). Mathieu and Zajac (1990) comment that it is a popular tool for measuring OC. I felt that these questionnaires could provide a valid guide to eliciting responses directly related to the research areas.

These questionnaires were used because they have been used in previous research in order to research these constructs and so could be useful to ensure that the prompts were exploring informed areas of these constructs. On reflection, I feel that this worked well. These prompts were useful for providing consistency between the interviews and were used during each interview in order to support the researcher. The consideration of using these questionnaires was supported and encouraged during the supervision I received regarding research design and the construction of my semi – structured interview schedule. As the research developed it was beneficial to talk to others regarding its progress. This helped the research develop appropriately and encouraged myself as the researcher to remain focused.

4.1.13. Ethical Considerations

On reflection I feel that I was able to approach the thesis with an awareness of ethical issues due to experiences from previous employment in a range of contexts working with children and young people as well as vulnerable adults. This has been within a practical context and since embarking on the Doctorate in Educational Psychology programme I have experienced ethical considerations from a different perspective. In the first year of studies I submitted an academic assignment regarding ethical issues in the field of educational psychology. I have completed safeguarding training and child protection training whilst I was a student on the programme. However, there are different types of ethical considerations to be made as a research practitioner. On reflection I feel that I had a good grounding theoretically and practically regarding ethical issues and this needed to be applied effectively in order to compile an effective ethics proposal for the purposes of this research.

One ethical implication that I needed to consider was the method of collecting data. I had decided to record the data. Pearson and Gathercole (2013) had also recorded interviews as a method of collecting data and my research was consistent with this. I had a personal reservation about the recording of the data due to suspecting that some participants may not like to be recorded. However, this did not seem to be the case and concerns about recording data did not seem to be founded, ethically or practically. I feel that I may have underestimated the technological age that we live in and peoples preparedness and acceptance of using technology for speed and convenience. No concerns or objections to this method were raised. All other methods of ensuring ethical guidelines were met were completed. For example, ensuring informed consent was provided was gained by creating a consent form. Other practical documents were created and can be found in the Appendix of this thesis.

4.1.14. Participants

I was aware that one of the sampling challenges may include the recruitment of participants. This did prove to be very difficult. This was the case both for the initial submission of the thesis and the second. On reflection it was apparent that on both occasions I experienced the same difficulties. This was discussed during supervision sessions although it would need to be overcome in order to conduct the research. I had been training and working in Wales for the past four years which

enabled me to recruit participants for the Non – Training group (Welsh) more easily. I learnt that having a presence in these EPS meant that EPs would offer names of school that may be willing to engage with the research. EPs would often show interest and ask more about my research.

Initially, the English authorities I approached would take a long time to respond to requests for involvement. In the context of my whole study it seemed that this may have been the main barrier to overcome and although it may be difficult, was not impossible. At that stage the potential benefits of the research outweighed these recruitment concerns. This was the case for initial data collection and was even more difficult the second time I needed to collect data. I had to start this process again however on this occasion I did not have any additional time for studying and so I was taking annual leave or working during evenings and weekends. I was travelling to England on numerous occasions to collect data. This was extremely time consuming. This highlighted the difficulties that real – world research may present. From reflecting on the constraints experienced during this process it is clear that conducting research as a practitioner would present similar difficulties.

The sample was recruited from specific LAs due to convenience. On reflection, participants from across Wales or England as a whole would be ideal rather than mainly localised areas. The sample, by chance, happened to be all female. This was not a part of the inclusion criteria but may be a reflection of that the majority of SENCOs are female. I did not specifically seek this data however, past research (Sarcim & Sakiz, 2014) has sought information like age and gender. Another apparent difference between the participants was the varying size and structure of schools the SENCOs were working in. For my research it was not possible to allow for all of these variables, however in more specific or larger scale work some of these factors could be taken into consideration.

4.1.15. Future Directions

I feel that there are two main possible directions for future research. I feel that each of the psychological constructs, self – efficacy and organisational commitment, warrants more in depth investigation in their own right in the context of the current study. Two separate pieces of research focussing directly on one concept or the other may provide more specific and focussed outcomes.

I also feel that the section regarding roles and responsibilities may have the scope to be extended and investigated as a larger, single, in depth piece of work. This would provide the opportunity for a more wide spread piece of research in order to allow for differences in local areas. It may be able to take account of such factors as SENCO's years of experience as teachers, types of training opportunities, comparison between in – house LA training and the NASENCO and so on. Due to research in this area, especially from a Welsh perspective (other research on the NASENCO has been commissioned in England) is in its infancy there is a lot of scope for developing and diversifying this research.

4.1.16. Conclusion

Overall I am able to reflect on both the process of completing research as well as myself as a research practitioner. At the end of a long journey it is possible to reflect back to a point when my aspiration was to produce a meaningful piece of research with practical applications and implications.

Practically the findings from the study can be applied by informing SENCOs as well as EPs of the benefits of training. In addition it is important to note that experiential learning opportunities have been reported to be a vital component for increasing feelings of self – efficacy. Findings suggest that commitment to schools was supported by investing in the SENCOs to complete training. Also, a sense of belonging was key to commitment to the school as an organisation. These findings can be utilised in a positive way to support SENCOs which potentially would have a consequent impact on students, SENCO's colleagues as well as schools on a systemic level. I feel that I am able to reflect and feel on a personal level that these findings are meaningful due to the implications of this.

The results of the research I have conducted are able to support previous findings as identified in the literature review. This research contributes to Educational Psychology by reflecting previous findings and informing the EP of what is successful for nurturing self – efficacy and organisational commitment for SENCOs. Training as well as experiential learning opportunities were described as worthwhile for SENCOs due to the way they could contribute to increasing the SENCOs' skills levels and consequently their confidence in their role. It is possible that this research contributes to EPs'

knowledge of nurturing self – efficacy and commitment for the SENCOs they work with. This may be a significant tool for the working relationship between the EP and the SENCO.

In conclusion I am pleased that I completed this research to the best of my ability within my level of competency when I first submitted my thesis. The experience of handing in another version of my thesis was a long and time consuming process especially while I was working full time and experiencing different personal life changes. There continue to be additional adaptations and ways of extending this work in the future and there is scope to develop the research areas further. Overall, I feel this research can contribute to knowledge in the field and may provide a point from which other researchers could develop ideas further.

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Appendix 1

Inclusion/ exclusion criteria for literature

<u>Inclusion Criteria</u>	<u>Exclusion Criteria</u>
Peer reviewed papers as well as unpublished work in order to ensure breadth and initial findings within the field.	Articles that did not directly relate to one of the key search terms.
Written/ translated to English.	Not written/ translated to English.
No date constraint to ensure all relevant work for the subject area are included. Although historical texts are considered with some caution.	Work that does not relate directly to the search terms and subject areas included.
Work focussing on qualified teachers, SENCO's and other qualified professions.	Work focussing on the PGCE and unqualified personnel.
Search terms: SENCOs (Special Educational Needs Coordinators), SENCO Training, Self – Efficacy, Teacher Self – Efficacy, Organisational Commitment, Schools as Organisation, Organisational Citizenship Behaviour.	Searches resulting in terms highlighting: Teacher Training in isolation, Special Needs, Coordinating, Self – Confidence, Organisation, Organisation in business.
Legislation and policy documents.	

Number of all articles/ papers/ books that were discarded: 69

Number of articles/ papers/ books that were used: 162

(Please see Reference list)

Example of paper included:

Pearson, S., Mitchell, M., & Rapti, M. (2015). ' I will be "fighting" even more for pupils with SEN': SENCOs role predictions in the changing English policy context. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, 15:1, 48 – 56.

Reasons Why:

- Aims were clearly described
- Clear sample identified, considered relevant to the current research
- Data collection method described

- Analysis
- Qualitative design relevant to the study
- Relevance in relation to the thesis title

Examples of papers excluded:

Golder G, Norwich B & Bayliss P (2005) Preparing teachers to teach pupils with special educational needs in more inclusive schools: evaluating a PGCE development. *British Journal of Special Education* 32:2 92 – 99.

Denzine G, Cooney J & McKenzie R (2005) Confirmatory factor analysis of the Teacher Efficacy Scale for prospective teachers. *British Journal of Educational Psychology* 75, 689 – 708.

General Reasons Why:

- Aims of the study unclear/ irrelevant
- Low/ no relevance to the thesis title
- There was a wealth of research concerning training new teachers and those considering entering the profession, although originally these papers were considered they were later rejected in order to focus on more specific areas within the literature review. (N: 13 papers rejected).
- Papers including the psychological constructs explored within the literature review but with a focus that was too broad or based on a different area within the field. The psychological constructs making up a minimal part of the research.

Appendix 2

Gatekeeper Letter 1 – Local Authority Request Letter Wales

Dear Principal Educational Psychologist,

I am a postgraduate student currently undertaking the Doctorate in Educational Psychology programme at Cardiff University. As a part of this course I am required to complete a thesis. I have decided to conduct research involving Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) in schools.

The aim of the study is to explore SENCOs perceptions of their roles and responsibilities. I also aim to explore SENCOs perceptions of self – efficacy and organisational commitment.

In order to carry out my research I will require SENCOs to complete a semi – structured interview with myself. I aim to arrange with schools and SENCOs the most appropriate and convenient time for me to attend their schools in order to complete the semi – structured interview in person.

I have gained full ethical approval from Cardiff University School of Psychology’s Ethics Committee in order to carry out this research.

I would be very grateful if the authority could agree to allow me to approach Head Teachers in schools to request their permission for me to involve their SENCO in the research.

Dr [REDACTED] at the School of Psychology, Cardiff University is supervising this research. Many thanks in advance for your consideration of this project. Please let me know if you require further information.

Regards,

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Appendix 2a

Gatekeeper Letter 1 – Local Authority Request Letter England

Dear Principal Educational Psychologist,

I am a postgraduate student currently undertaking the Doctorate in Educational Psychology programme at Cardiff University. As a part of this course I am required to complete a thesis. I have decided to conduct research involving Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs).

The aim of the study is to explore SENCOs perceptions of their roles and responsibilities. I also aim to explore SENCOs perceptions of self – efficacy and organisational commitment.

In order to carry out my research I will require SENCOs to complete a semi – structured interview with myself. I aim to arrange with schools and SENCOs the most appropriate and convenient time for me to attend their schools in order to complete the semi – structured interview in person.

I would be very grateful if the authority could agree to allow me to approach Head Teachers in schools to request their permission for me to involve their SENCOs in the research.

Dr [REDACTED] at the School of Psychology, Cardiff University is supervising this research. Many thanks in advance for your consideration of this project. Please let me know if you require further information.

Regards,

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Appendix 3

Gatekeeper Letter 3 – Head Teacher Letter Wales

Dear (Name),

I am a postgraduate student currently undertaking the Doctorate in Educational Psychology programme at Cardiff University. As a part of this course I am required to complete a thesis. I have decided to conduct research involving Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs).

The aim of the study is to explore SENCOs perceptions of their roles and responsibilities. I also aim to explore SENCOs perceptions of self – efficacy and organisational commitment.

I am aiming to recruit SENCOs who have been in post beginning after 2009. Your school has been identified as having employed a SENCO within this time frame. Therefore I am writing to enquire whether you would be happy for me to contact your SENCO to see if he/ she would be willing to participate with the research on a voluntary basis.

In order to carry out my research I will require SENCOs to complete a semi – structured interview with myself. I aim to arrange with schools and SENCOs the most appropriate and convenient time for me to attend their schools in order to complete the semi – structured interview in person.

Dr [REDACTED] at the School of Psychology, Cardiff University is supervising this research. Many thanks in advance for your consideration of this project. Please let me know if you require further information.

Regards,

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Appendix 3a

Gatekeeper Letter 2 – Head Teacher Letter England

Dear (Name),

I am a postgraduate student currently undertaking the Doctorate in Educational Psychology programme at Cardiff University. As a part of the course I am required to complete a thesis. I have decided to conduct research involving Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs).

The aim of the study is to explore SENCOs perceptions of their roles and responsibilities. I also aim to explore SENCOs perceptions of self – efficacy and organisational commitment.

In order to complete this research I am hoping to complete a semi – structured interview with SENCOs. I was wondering if you would be willing for me to approach the SENCO in your school in order to request his/ her participation. I will then arrange a time that is convenient with the SENCO to meet with them in person to complete the interview.

Dr [REDACTED] at the School of Psychology, Cardiff University is supervising this research. Many thanks in advance for your consideration of this project. Please let me know if you require further information.

Regards,

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Appendix 4

Consent Form

I am a postgraduate student currently undertaking the Doctorate in Educational Psychology programme at Cardiff University. As a part of the course I am required to complete a thesis. I have decided to conduct research involving Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs).

The aim of the study is to explore SENCOs perceptions of their roles and responsibilities. I also aim to explore SENCOs perceptions of self – efficacy and organisational commitment.

I have gained permission from the Headteacher who has kindly agreed that I may approach you to ask if you would be willing to participate in the research. However, your participation is entirely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any time.

You are being requested to take part in a semi – structured interview in regards to your role as the Special Educational Needs Coordinator of your school.

The information that is collected will be completely anonymous and it will not be possible to identify any individual information. You will not be asked to provide any personal information. No personal or identifiable information will be recorded or stored. The interviews will be recorded and deleted after they have been transcribed. Your interview will then become a part of a set of data. It will not be possible to withdraw after this time.

After the interview you will be provided with a debriefing form. It will contain a brief description of the research and contact details in case of any further questions or enquiries you wish to make.

Appendix 5

Semi – Structured Interview Wales

1. Is your school in an urban or rural area?
2. Do you work in a primary or a secondary school?
3. What is the population of your school?
4. Of this population how many children have additional needs?
5. How long have you been a qualified teacher?
6. How long have you been a SENCO in your current school?
7. What is the time allocation for your role as SENCO?
8. Do you have any other school responsibilities other than that of SENCO?
9. What training and qualifications relevant to your role have you completed?
10. If you considered the school as a system or an organisation where do you feel you as the SENCO would be? *For example, at the level of teaching staff, management, leadership?* Do you feel this is a good position? *If so/ if not, why?*

Open questions to elicit information regarding SE, OC, roles and responsibilities:

1. What are your roles and responsibilities as SENCO?

Prompts: Could you tell me about broader school roles/ more specific roles/ strategic roles?

How did you learn about what your roles and responsibilities are?

Prompt: What has been the most useful way of learning about your roles and responsibilities to date?

Prompt: Do you feel that training opportunities or learning 'on the job' or learning from colleagues or learning in any other way has been most beneficial to you?

2. How has training supported you in your role as SENCO?

Prompt: Have there been any other benefits? Have there been any drawbacks?

Prompt: Has training ever been a hindrance to your role as SENCO, broader school or personal life? Prompt: In what way? Could you describe the reasons why/ how?

3. Do you have more confidence or increased belief in your ability to complete the role?

Prompts: Have other learning experiences been more valuable?

Prompt: Do you feel more competent as a result of the training/ other learning experiences?

Prompt: Have any training opportunities enabled you to support pupils, teachers and other school staff in your role as SENCO?

Prompt: Do you feel you have better skills to support teachers in order to enable them to use assessments/ implement strategies/ control disruptive behaviour/ motivate students?

Do you feel that you can support teachers to assist families in helping their children do well in school?

4. Have training opportunities encouraged you to feel more committed to the school?

Prompt: Do you feel there is anything that encourages your commitment to the school?

Do training opportunities encourage you to feel more loyalty or pride towards the school?

Prompt: Do you feel you carry out any additional roles, over and above that expected of you in your role?

Prompts: Why do you believe you do/ do not carry out these additional tasks? Do you feel that training encourages you to put in more effort, beyond that normally expected in order to help the school?

Additional Clarifying Questions:

- Can you expand on this?
- Can you tell me anything else?
- Can you give me any examples?

Appendix 5a

Semi – Structured Interview England

1. Is your school in an urban or rural area?
2. Do you work in a primary or a secondary school?
3. What is the population of your school?
4. Of this population how many children have additional needs?
5. How long have you been a qualified teacher?
6. How long have you been a SENCO in your current school?
7. What is the time allocation for your role as SENCO?
8. Do you have any other school responsibilities other than that of SENCO?
9. What training and qualifications relevant to your role have you completed?
10. If you considered the school as a system or an organisation where do you feel you as the SENCO would be? *For example, at the level of teaching staff, management, leadership? Do you feel this is a good position? If so/ if not, why?*

Open questions to elicit information regarding SE, OC, roles and responsibilities and training:

1. What are your roles and responsibilities as SENCO?

Prompts: Could you tell me about broader school roles/ more specific roles/ strategic roles?

How did you learn about what your roles and responsibilities are?

Prompt: What has been the most useful way of learning about your roles and responsibilities to date?

Prompt: Do you feel that training opportunities or learning 'on the job' or learning from colleagues or learning in any other way has been most beneficial to you?

2. How has training supported you in your role as SENCO?

Prompt: Have there been any other benefits? Have there been any drawbacks?

Prompt: Has training ever been a hindrance to your role as SENCO, broader school or personal life?

Prompt: In what way? Could you describe the reasons why/ how?

3. Do you have more confidence or increased belief in your ability to complete the role?

Prompt: What do you feel has contributed to this increase/ no change/ decrease? Do you feel more competent as a result of the training?

Prompt: How well has training enabled you to support pupils, teachers and other school staff in your role as SENCO?

Prompt: Do you feel you have better skills to support teachers in order to enable them to use assessments/ implement strategies/ control disruptive behaviour/ motivate students? Do you feel that you can support teachers to assist families in helping their children do well in school?

4. Do you feel that training has encouraged you to feel more committed to the school?

Prompt: Since the training do you feel more loyalty or pride towards the school?

Prompt: Since completing training do you feel you carry out any additional roles over and above that expected of you in your role?

Prompts: Do you feel that since the training you put in more effort, beyond that normally expected in order to help the school?

Additional Clarifying Questions:

- Can you expand on this?
- Can you tell me anything else?
- Can you give me any examples?

Appendix 6

Debriefing Form

Thank you very much for your engagement with the semi – structured interview. Your time and opinions are valued and have been a worthwhile contribution to this piece of research.

The aim of this research is to compare English and Welsh SENCOs in light of the legislation introduced in England in 2009. It aims to compare SENCOs perceived skills and knowledge, knowledge of schools as organisations and feelings of self – efficacy.

My research aims to find out whether the introduction of the National Award for Special Educational Needs in England will have been of benefit to SENCOs, schools and Education Psychology Services and therefore would also serve to benefit the Welsh system where the legislation is not in place.

The data you have provided is anonymous and therefore it is not possible to identify any personal information from the data the researcher has.

If you have any further queries or concerns please feel free to contact myself (Claire Smith) or my research supervisor (name) using the following contact information:

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Appendix 7

Example: Transcript

English Group: Participant 1

1	Is your school in an urban or rural area?
2	It's urban.
3	Do you work in a primary or a secondary school?
4	This is a primary.
5	What is the population of your school?
6	We've normally got about 420 pupils on role.
7	And of this population how many children have additional needs?
8	We currently, it runs at about 12 per cent of children on the SEN register and we currently have 12 children with statements for Education Health Care Plans.
9	How long have you been a qualified teacher?
10	Oh goodness, I have been a teacher for um 8 years.
11	And how long have you been a SENCO for?
12	Since September of this year I took on the SENCO role I had been shadowing the previous SENCO for the year previous to that.
13	What is the time allocation for your role as SENCO?
14	I do it as my entire role, other than music coordinator that doesn't take too much time. And I work for three days a week.
15	And I was going to ask if you have any other school responsibilities other than that of SENCO?
16	Just music coordinator, I've got no teaching responsibilities any more.
17	What training and qualifications relevant to your role have you completed?
18	Uh so I've done the National Award. I have done smaller local courses, um around, I did a four day course on dyslexia. I've done all of the courses the council recommend in terms of things like Record Process, Person Centred Planning, so I've completed them as and when they come up I do tend to try to do as I am at the start of my SENCO role. So I do all of those as they come up.
19	And the last of these short questions is if you considered the school as a system or an organisation where do you feel you as the SENCO would be? For example, at the level of teaching staff, management, leadership?

20	Ok so I report in to the deputy head so we have a structure where we have the head teacher, deputy head teacher and currently the rest of the SLT is made up of phase leaders. Our school is divided in to three phases so they make up the senior leadership team of the school. I'm not a part of the Senior Leadership team but I do work alongside the phase leaders who manage most of the TA's in the school and it's them I liaise with in terms of the interventions they're offering in their phase so I'm not on the SLT but I work alongside sort of the middle managers in the school.
21	So would you still see it as a managerial position?
22	Um I see the role of SENCO as that. Because of how new I am to the role, I know my predecessor was SENCO but she was also assistant head so we've previously had a situation where the SENCO has been part of the senior leadership team. Because I'm new to the role I understand why I'm not. But I do still see it as senior and within that level in the school.
23	And do you think that's a good level, a good thing to be at a senior level?
24	I think so. I think it's really important especially as there are so many budget implications, I think for SEN. I think it's really important to have that voice within the senior leadership team.
25	These are some more open questions, so anything that comes up let me know. So the first question is, what are your roles and responsibilities as SENCO? So maybe a bit about, your broader school role and something about bore specific aspects or strategic aspect....
26	Ok, so broadly I manage our SEN register so I do all of the Annual Reviews for children with statements or Education Health Care Plans and do their, any additional applications for additional funding. I work with, I line manage our phase TAs. So we have a main TA in each phase who looks after the other TA's, I manage those to make sure that we have appropriate interventions in place for children on the SEN register....I'm not safeguarding lead but I have, because the roles overlap so much, I do quite a lot with safeguarding and behaviour as well I put behaviour plans in place for all of the children in the school. So broadly it's the management of the SEN register and the associated roles. Liaising with the professionals who come in to school would be one of the broader aspect of the role but also in terms of doing team around the child and team around the family, I do end up with quite specifics working with families. I sat with one parent to support her with a secondary application the other day because it's something she didn't feel she could do on her own. So something that's probably quite removed from SEN but in the course of working with various families I end up doing those sort of more specific things.
27	So you've completed the NASENCO Award. I was wondering, so far, what has been the most useful way to learn about being SENCO?

28	<p>Um well I do think it's like learning to drive in that you learn a lot of the mechanics with the driving instructor but you don't really learn how to drive until you're in the car on your own so I think, I've learnt so much since starting the role I feel in terms of processes and local processes I've learnt and awful lot just by doing the job. Because obviously doing the national award, I did it at Bath Spa and there were people from lots of different councils there so in terms of learning the processes locally you can't cover that on a course like that. So yea, in terms of the specific of the role definitely on the job but in terms of getting a broader understanding of the requirements of the role and about types of need and that type of thing it was extremely useful, I was in the fortunate position to be able to do the qualification before I actually took on the responsibility of the role and I found great benefit in that. So I think it's a combination of the two and being able to look at it reflectively from a more theoretical point of view and then being able to apply that practically in the job.</p>
29	<p>How has the training that you done been supportive to you? Are there any specific things you benefited from....?</p>
30	<p>I think one of the greatest things that comes of it is getting that time away from school with other SENCOs to talk and things and the way the course is structured we did have about six days in university but even though they were sort of lecture based the course director very much did it so that there was plenty of time for discussion and reflection with other SENCOs. So I think that was extremely useful to reflect on practice and hear other people's suggestions and how other people do things and particularly part of the course was, a requirement of the course was to produce a personal development portfolio and we got in to mentor groups to do that and we had to collect evidence. It was really useful to get together in mentoring sessions and share the types of evidence we were using and it was an opportunity to reflect so really good practise.</p>
31	<p>And were there any drawbacks? Was there anything about doing it that was a hindrance?</p>
32	<p>Well obviously the management of doing your job and managing a qualification at masters level is quite a challenge. And sometimes when you're having to read so many documents and articles and write in a masters style sometimes you wonder what, you know the benefit to your actual day to day job is there, but actually I think it is because you have to do a lot of formal writing as SENCO so I think actually having to do that in an essay doe help. But yes, management and that work balance and study for a qualification can be a slight draw back. In terms of what's actually taught on the course, it was all of benefit I don't feel that there was anything we covered that I didn't think I would ever use or wouldn't be relevant to my job.</p>
33	<p>Ok, thanks, so do you feel that you have more confidence or increased belief in your ability to</p>

	do your role now that you've done the training?
34	Definitely it gave me a really grounding in understanding special needs. I think I'm really fortunate to have done it when all the changes in legislation were happening. Because ordinarily I'm assuming as SENCO you'd be left to do that yourself and find out about it yourself and being on the course it really went into it all in a lot of detail so I really felt that I was able to come back and share that information with my colleagues. It helped to demonstrate that I did have a good understanding and able to deliver the role of the SENCO because I was able to pass all of that information on in ways that were needed to my colleagues. Especially when taking over from, becoming SENCO following on from somebody who had been SENCO for 15 years I think I needed to be able to convey that confidence to my colleagues, being new to the role. I definitely gave me a good grounding and a good understanding that I could feel confident in but also my colleagues could feel confident that I did know what I was doing.
35	So do you think it's mainly the training that has helped with your confidence or did that come in with you actually doing the role?
36	Both I've said many times to my colleagues, doing the first of everything and knowing I've done everything once. Knowing I've done an annual review, knowing I've done an application for additional funding, I've done a TAC doing all of those things once definitely gives me the confidence. Having the opportunity to do the qualification and to shadow my predecessor helped me start the year with a certain level of confidence but obviously that's building as I gain experience.
37	So would you say that they were on equal grounding?
38	Yes yea, I don't think I would be able to be effective in my role if I didn't have one or the other and I feel I need both of them. I can't imagine starting the role without having some of the experience that I had previously and I know some people do it. I don't know how.
39	Yea it's a big role.
40	Yea my interest in being a SENCO grew from classroom experience of working with children with special needs and you do gain some experience and understanding because you do your part, you attend an annual review, you make sure you act on the advice of the professionals that come in. But actually starting the role you realise that there's so much more to it than what you see as a classroom teacher. So, I think experience as a classroom teacher is invaluable I think but it's such a small part, you only see such a small part of it.
41	Yea. So do you feel that the training you've completed encourages you to feel more committed to the school?
42	Umm, yes, yes I think so. The school do partly fund my training and also, not just the monetary

	side of it the fact that they felt confident enough to give me the role. Obviously I do feel a commitment to the school because of that.
43	So, since the training have you felt any more loyalty towards the school or sense of belonging maybe to the school, as you've had the opportunity to train?
44	Um yea as I said, because they have given me the role, I think it's more really to do with the fact they gave the opportunity to take on the role and I feel I want to see myself do a good job for the school. I suppose I've always felt quite loyal to this school. So um yea it does instil that in you, the fact that the school backed me to do it.
45	So now that you've done your training do you feel that you do anything over and above that of the role and what might be expected from the role?
46	Yea I find that I get quite involved in safeguarding and I have done, I think that was recognised that the role do overlap so much. My predecessor was safeguarding lead as well as SENCO so I have gone on with my training for safeguarding. Um so yes a lot overlaps with safeguarding. I know behaviour is an area of special needs but when we've had significant behaviour issues in class I've gone in to support which probably isn't strictly a SENCO role but again I've had a lot to do with behaviour as well so all aspects tie in to the SENCO role but I think it's very difficult to put very strict boundaries around the role of the SENCO as it overlaps so much. Especially in work with families as well we try to work very closely with our families here. We have a nurture team and sort it's of seen as my role as in the nurture team, but kind of not. I think they have to go hand in hand to support the kind of families we have here.
47	So you seem to have taken on a broad role. So as far as you as a SENCO and your sense of identity with that role... would you say you have a sense of belonging within the school?
48	Yea I think it's developing. I think with any changes, and any changes with staff it's a role which has to (develop). So yea I think already there are elements of the role I didn't really realise would be me but actually it makes sense that they are. Certain things that where the line of SENCO and Phase Leader can really overlap and I think probably we need to work that out so yea I think I'm getting there, I think it's evolving really. And things like my working hours and thing like that, it was very much, see how it goes with the hours that I'm working and the role that I take on so I know that that was always intended to be reviewed at some point.
49	And were there any drawbacks to completing the training?
50	I think that one thing that came to light through my training was how differently schools respond to the role of SEN because there was such a broad range of people there. There were some teachers that were full time in the classroom and they covered their SEN role as a coordinator role really so they were having to do their work after school and during PPA time.

	<p>And there were other teachers like me where it was their complete role and I know that's partly due to maybe differences in need in school there were some people there from very small village schools with maybe not that need there and someone who would need more time. And also the course was secondary and primary together so it was a really broad spectrum and I know when I looked around for a course that I could do to gain the qualification it was mostly based in universities and it was quite spread out and I do wonder whether that if it is something that is a requirement for people to have would it be a benefit for local authorities to invest in their own way of obtaining the qualification. Um because whilst it was great to be able to share your experiences with other people, sometimes your experiences were so different it was difficult to relate to them. Um like I said I then needed to make sure I then went on all of the borough courses so that I knew the borough way of doing things and the paperwork they use. But if it's something that is required I wonder whether actually whether having local authorities managing their own qualification in some way would be a way of people being able to obtain it easily and more quickly and schools could get on board with it more. Obviously that would have a cost but that's the only thing I would pick up on. It was a really good course but it was definitely, you know, a useful process and my personal development file, I've referred to it already so it is a really useful working document.</p>
51	<p>So explained a little about my research before starting. Would you recommend the training do you think it would be beneficial for others to complete?</p>
52	<p>Yea, I think it's really good to have the training especially in light of the new code of practice which gives a lot of responsibility to the role of the SENCO. And in terms of, I think it is largely, recognisable with SENCOs in a managerial role because there's so much about quality first teaching and making your teachers understand their part in the process that I think it's really important to have a SENCO that can disseminate that information and give teachers the resources they need. So if it is more the managerial role I think having, and that's a change for a lot of people, recognising that it requires a qualification to be a SENCO actually helps in promoting the role in school and actually seeing SENCOs as somebody is a person within the school who has the knowledge that can be disseminated to teachers rather than somebody that just picks up things for teachers which I think previously a lot of the time SEN has been seen as, the child has been seen as the responsibility of the SENCO rather than the class teachers. I think there is great benefit in having that recognition in term of the qualification to give the right focus to the role.</p>
53	<p>So does that recognition give you more confidence then?</p>

54	Yea I think so because it gives me more confidence and reassurance with asserting myself. I know I've studied for it and I've learnt a lot through doing it and so I definitely feel that that helps. I'm sure though that there are a lot of SENCOs who did the course that I did who need to do it because I know it's only if you become SENCO since 2009 but there were a lot of SENCOs on my course who actually had opted to do it and their schools wanted them to do it even though they didn't technically need to and I think it was for that reason, to really promote the role of SENCO.
55	Ok, that's great. Thank you very much for taking part in my research. It's been lovely talking with you.

Appendix 8

Method used for Thematic Analysis

Method of analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The researcher's thematic analysis was based on the six phases listed below.

1. Familiarising yourself with the data
2. Generating initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Producing the report

Appendix 9

Example Thematic Analysis

Thematic Analysis: 1. Familiarising yourself with the data 2. Generating initial codes

English Group: Participant 1

1	Is your school in an urban or rural area?
2	It's urban.
3	Do you work in a primary or a secondary school?
4	This is a primary.
5	What is the population of your school?
6	We've normally got about 420 pupils on role.
7	And of this population how many children have additional needs?
8	We currently, it runs at about 12 per cent of children on the SEN register and we currently have 12 children with statements for Education Health Care Plans.
9	How long have you been a qualified teacher?
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19	And the last of these short questions is if you considered the school as a system or an organisation where do you feel you as the SENCO would be? For example, at the level of teaching staff, management, leadership?
20	Ok so I report in to the deputy head so we have a structure where we have the head teacher, deputy head teacher and currently the rest of the SLT is made up of phase leaders. Our school is divided in to three phases so they make up the senior leadership team of the school. I'm not a part of the Senior Leadership team but I do work alongside the phase leaders who manage...

Comment [U1]: Management Roles:
Budget
Having a voice

most of the TA's in the school and it's them I liaise with in terms of the interventions they're offering in their phase so I'm not on the SLT but I work alongside sort of the middle managers in the school.

21 So would you still see it as a managerial position?

22 Um I see the role of SENCO as that. Because of how new I am to the role, I know my predecessor was SENCO but she was also assistant head so we've previously had a situation where the SENCO has been part of the senior leadership team. Because I'm new to the role I understand why I'm not. But I do still see it as senior and within that level in the school.

23 And do you think that's a good level, a good thing to be at a senior level?

24 I think so. I think it's really important especially as there are so many budget implications, I think for SEN. I think it's really important to have that voice within the senior leadership team.

25 These are some more open questions, so anything that comes up let me know. So the first question is, what are your roles and responsibilities as SENCO? So maybe a bit about, your broader school role and something about more specific aspects or strategic aspect...

26 Ok, so broadly I manage our SEN register so I do all of the Annual Reviews for children with statements or Education Health Care Plans and do their, any additional applications for additional funding. I work with, I line manage our phase TAs. So we have a main TA in each phase who looks after the other TA's, I manage those to make sure that we have appropriate

Comment [U2]: Management of SEN

Comment [U3]: Paper work

Comment [U4]: People/ staff management

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27 So you've completed the NASENCO Award. I was wondering, so far, what has been the most useful way to learn about being SENCO?

28 Um well I do think it's like learning to drive in that you learn a lot of the mechanics with the driving instructor but you don't really learn how to drive until you're in the car on your own so I think, I've learnt so much since starting the role I feel in terms of processes and local processes I've learnt an awful lot just by doing the job. Because obviously doing the national award, I did

Comment [U4]: People/ staff management

Comment [U5]: Safe guarding role

Comment [U6]: Working with others/ professionals

Comment [U7]: Working with families

Comment [U8]: Pre - learning: Basics/ grounding

Comment [U9]: 'on the job' learning/ experiences

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it at Bath Spa and there were people from lots of different councils there so in terms of learning the processes locally you can't cover that on a course like that. So yea, in terms of the specific of the role definitely on the job but in terms of getting a broader understanding of the requirements of the role and about types of need and that type of thing it was extremely useful, I was in the fortunate position to be able to do the qualification before I actually took on the responsibility of the role and I found great benefit in that. So I think it's a combination of the two and being able to look at it reflectively from a more theoretical point of view and then being able to apply that practically in the job.

29 How has the training that you done been supportive to you? Are there any specific things you benefited from....?

30 I think one of the greatest things that comes of it is getting that time away from school with other SENCOs to talk and things and the way the course is structured we did have about six days in university but even though they were sort of lecture based the course director very much did it so that there was plenty of time for discussion and reflection with other SENCOs. So I think that was extremely useful to reflect on practice and hear other people's suggestions and how other people do things and particularly part of the course was, a requirement of the course was to produce a personal development portfolio and we got in to mentor groups to do that and we had to collect evidence. It was really useful to get together in mentoring sessions and

Comment [U10]: Importance of both training and experiences

Comment [U11]: Time with other SENCOs: sharing

Comment [U12]: Importance of reflection

Comment [U13]: Mentoring/ learning from others

and we had to collect evidence. It was really useful to get together in mentoring sessions and share the types of evidence we were using and it was an opportunity to reflect so really good practise.

31 And were there any drawbacks? Was there anything about doing it that was a hindrance?

32 Well obviously the management of doing your job and managing a qualification at masters level is quite a challenge. And sometimes when you're having to read so many documents and articles and write in a masters style sometimes you wonder what, you know the benefit to your actual day to day job is there, but actually I think it is because you have to do a lot of formal writing as SENCO so I think actually having to do that in an essay doe help. But yes, management and that work balance and study for a qualification can be a slight draw back. In terms of what's actually taught on the course, it was all of benefit I don't feel that there was anything we covered that I didn't think I would ever use or wouldn't be relevant to my job.

33 Ok, thanks, so do you feel that you have more confidence or increased belief in your ability to do your role now that you've done the training?

34 Definitely it gave me a really grounding in understanding special needs. I think I'm really fortunate to have done it when all the changes in legislation were happening. Because ordinarily I'm assuming as SENCO you'd be left to do that yourself and find out about it yourself

from others

Comment [U14]: management: time, commitment, responsibilities

Comment [U15]: Relevance and use to the role of SENCO: Content

Comment [U16]: Timing: changes in legislation

and being on the course it really went into it all in a lot of detail so I really felt that I was able to come back and share that information with my colleagues. It helped to demonstrate that I did have a good understanding and able to deliver the role of the SENCO because I was able to pass all of that information on in ways that were needed to my colleagues. Especially when taking over from, becoming SENCO following on from somebody who had been SENCO for 15 years I think I needed to be able to convey that confidence to my colleagues, being new to the role. I definitely gave me a good grounding, and a good understanding that I could feel confident in but also my colleagues could feel confident that I did know what I was doing.

35 So do you think it's mainly the training that has helped with your confidence or did that come in with you actually doing the role?

36 Both I've said many times to my colleagues, doing the first of everything and knowing I've done everything once. Knowing I've done an annual review, knowing I've done an application for additional funding, I've done a TAC doing all of those things once definitely gives me the confidence. Having the opportunity to do the qualification and to shadow my predecessor helped me start the year with a certain level of confidence but obviously that's building as I gain experience.

37 So would you say that they were on equal grounding?

38 Yes yea, I don't think I would be able to be effective in my role if I didn't have one or the other

Comment [U17]: Support

Comment [U18]: Contributing to the school

Comment [U19]: Confidence: self and others

Comment [U20]: Importance of training and experiences

Comment [U21]: Shadowing: experiences/learning from others

38 Yes yea, I don't think I would be able to be effective in my role if I didn't have one or the other and I feel I need both of them. I can't imagine starting the role without having some of the experience that I had previously and I know some people do it. I don't know how.

39 Yea it's a big role.

40 Yea my interest in being a SENCO grew from classroom experience of working with children with special needs and you do gain some experience and understanding because you do your part, you attend an annual review, you make sure you act on the advice of the professionals that come in. But actually starting the role you realise that there's so much more to it than what you see as a classroom teacher. So, I think experience as a classroom teacher is invaluable I think but it's such a small part, you only see such a small part of it.

41 Yea. So do you feel that the training you've completed encourages you to feel more committed to the school?

42 Umm, yes, yes I think so. The school do partly fund my training and also, not just the monetary side of it the fact that they felt confident enough to give me the role. Obviously I do feel a commitment to the school because of that.

43 So, since the training have you felt any more loyalty towards the school or sense of belonging maybe to the school, as you've had the opportunity to train?

Comment [U22]: Training and experiences

Comment [U23]: Past experiences

Comment [U24]: Breadth/ depth of the role

Comment [U25]: Funding as investment in the SENCO: increase commitment

Comment [U26]: Investment/ belief in the individual

Table Tools: Design, Layout

44	Um yea as I said, because they have given me the role, I think it's more really to do with the fact they gave the opportunity to take on the role and I feel I want to see myself do a good job for the school. I suppose I've always felt quite loyal to this school. So um yea it does instil that in you, the fact that the school backed me to do it.	Comment [U27]: Ambition to perform for school
45	So now that you've done your training do you feel that you do anything over and above that of the role and what might be expected from the role?	Comment [U28]: Increased loyalty
46	Yea I find that I get quite involved in safeguarding and I have done, I think that was recognised that the role do overlap so much. My predecessor was safeguarding lead as well as SENCO so I have gone on with my training for safeguarding. Um so yea a lot overlaps with safeguarding. I know behaviour is an area of special needs but when we've had significant behaviour issues in class I've gone in to support which probably isn't strictly a SENCO role but again I've had a lot to do with behaviour as well so all aspects tie in to the SENCO role but I think it's very difficult to put very strict boundaries around the role of the SENCO as it overlaps so much. Especially in work with families as well we try to work very closely with our families here. We have a nurture team and sort it's of seen as my role as in the nurture team, but kind of not. I think they have to go hand in hand to support the kind of families we have here.	Comment [U29]: Overlap: other school roles
47	Do you seem to have taken on a broad role. So as far as you as a SENCO and your sense of identity with that role... would you say you have a sense of belonging within the school?	Comment [U30]: Over and above SENCO role: increased commitment
		Comment [U31]: Difficult to define the role

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Table Tools: Design, Layout

47	Do you seem to have taken on a broad role. So as far as you as a SENCO and your sense of identity with that role... would you say you have a sense of belonging within the school?	
48	Yea I think it's developing. I think with any changes , and any changes with staff it's a role which has to (develop). So yea I think already there are elements of the role I didn't really realise would be me but actually it makes sense that they are . Certain things that where the line of SENCO and Phase Leader can really overlap and I think probably we need to work that out so yea I think I'm getting there, I think it's evolving really. And things like my working hours and thing like that, it was very much, see how it goes with the hours that I'm working and the role that I take on so I know that that was always intended to be reviewed at some point.	Comment [U32]: Role development over time
49	And were there any drawbacks to completing the training?	Comment [U33]: Role developing over time
50	I think that one thing that came to light through my training was how differently schools respond to the role of SEN because there was such a broad range of people there. There were some teachers that were full time in the classroom and they covered their SEN role as a coordinator role really so they were having to do their work after school and during PPA time . And there were other teachers like me where it was their complete role and I know that's partly due to maybe differences in need in school there were some people there from very small village schools with maybe not that need there and someone who would need more time. And also the course was secondary and primary together so it was a really broad spectrum and I	Comment [U34]: Drawback: comparison between SENCOs
		Comment [U35]: Course: mix of primary and secondary

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know when I looked around for a course that I could do to gain the qualification it was mostly based in **universities** and it was quite spread out and I do wonder whether that if it is something that is a requirement for people to have would it be a benefit for local authorities to invest in their own way of obtaining the qualification. Um because whilst it was great to be able to share your experiences with other people, sometimes your experiences were so different it was difficult to relate to them. Um like I said I then needed to make sure I then went on all of the borough courses so that I knew the borough way of doing things and the paperwork they **use**.

But if it's something that is required I wonder whether actually whether having local authorities managing their own qualification in some way would be a way of people being able to obtain it easily and more quickly and schools could get on board with it more. Obviously that would have a cost but that's the only thing I would pick up on. It was a really good course but it was definitely, you know, a useful process and my personal development file, I've referred to it already so it is a really useful working **document**.

51 So explained a little about my research before starting. Would you recommend the training do you think it would be beneficial for others to complete?

52 Yea, I think it's really good to have the training especially in light of the new code of practice which gives a lot of responsibility to the role of the SENCO. And in terms of, I think it is largely, recognisable with SENCOs in a managerial role because there's so much about quality first

Comment [U36]: Location of course as a drawback

Comment [U37]: NA – broad grounding, need for LA courses also

Comment [U38]: Continuing to make use of the training over time

which gives a lot of responsibility to the role of the SENCO. And in terms of, I think it is largely, recognisable with SENCOs in a managerial role because there's so much about quality first teaching and making your teachers **understand** their part in the process that I think it's really important to have a SENCO that can disseminate that information and give teachers the resources they need. So if it is more the managerial role I think having, and that's a change for a lot of people, recognising that it requires a qualification **to** be a SENCO actually helps in promoting the role in school and actually seeing SENCOs as somebody is a person within the school who has the knowledge that can be disseminated to teachers rather than somebody that just picks up things for teachers which I think previously a lot of the time SEN has been seen as, the child has been seen as the responsibility of the SENCO rather than the class teachers. I think there is great benefit in having that recognition in term of the qualification to give the right focus to the role.

53 So does that recognition give you more confidence then?

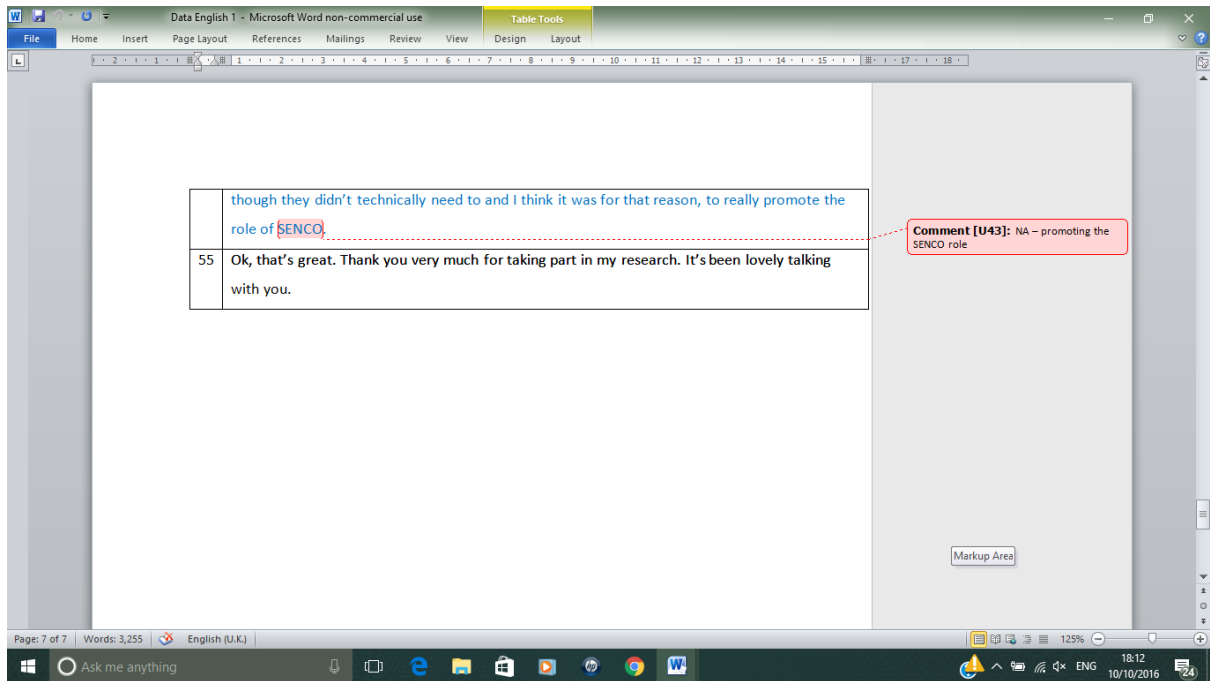
54 Yea I think so because it gives me more confidence and reassurance with asserting **myself**. I know I've studied for it and I've learnt a lot through doing it and so I definitely feel that that **helps**. I'm sure though that there are a lot of SENCOs who did the course that I did who need to do it because I know it's only if you become SENCO since 2009 but there were a lot of SENCOs on my course who actually had opted to do it and their schools wanted them to do it even

Comment [U39]: Understanding and information sharing

Comment [U40]: NA as recognition/ strengthen leadership role

Comment [U41]: Confidence: Reassurance Asserting

Comment [U42]: Self-belief



Initial Thematic Map – Searching for Themes - Training Group

Code	Admin	Participant/ Example	Code	Management	Participant/ Example	Code	People Management	Participant
1	Applications	1	1	SEN Register	1, 3, 4, 5, 6	1	Managing TA's	1, 4, 6
2	Meetings / Annual Reviews	2, 4, 5, 6	2	Coordinating	2, 4	2	Managing staffing	2, 3, 5, 6
3	Referrals		3	Monitoring	2, 4, 5, 6			
4	Reports		4	Reviewing	2, 4, 5, 6			
5	General paperwork		5	Timetable responsibilities	2, 5			
			6	Planning	3, 5, 6			
			7	IEP's	3, 4			

Reviewing and Refining Themes

Code	Support	Participant/ Example	Code	Working with others	Participant/ Example	Code	Leadership Role	Participant
1	Interventions	2, 3, 5	1	Liaising with Service	1, 2, 4, 5, 6	1	Budgetary Knowledge	1, 4, 6
2	Observations	2, 4	2	Working with Social Services	1, 6	2	Liaising with other/ working with SLT	2, 3, 5, 6
3	Advice	2, 3, 4, 5, 6	3	Working with families	1, 2, 4	3	No defined role	2
			4	Running interventions/ groups	2, 5, 6	4	Training/ presenting/ feeding back to others	2, 3, 4, 6
			5	Safeguarding	1	5	Whole school level	3

Defining and Naming Themes

SENCO Roles and Responsibilities	Self – Efficacy	Organisational Commitment	Learning
Administrative responsibilities	Confidence	School support	Training
Leadership Role Working with others	Self – belief	Sense of belonging	Experiential learning