

## SENCO VOICES

# The experiences of new primary school special educational needs coordinators: presenting the SENCO voice through concept-drawing and personal narratives

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**Through a narrative informed study, using concept drawing, ten newly appointed primary school Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) drawn from across three Local Authority areas at the start of their compulsory training, reflect upon and share their experiences at this early point in their SENCO career. Their experiences reveal that they like being SENCOs due to the support they provide for their pupils and professional colleagues together with the positive differences they perceive they make in terms of improved outcomes for children with special educational needs (expressed as their ‘Psychological Contract’). However, this is set against a climate which impacts negatively on their ability to meet the requirements of current legislation and statutory guidance (expressed as their Legal Contract). This climate is created through the Contextual Variety which exists between schools as they have their own culture/ethos which can result, as reported in this study, by SENCOs facing an**

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**excessive (and increasing) administrative workload, a general lack of resources, limited protected time, limited understanding about the role and special educational needs in general held by their colleagues and limited opportunities to develop as school leaders.**

**Key words:** SENCO, SEN, workload, primary school, narrative research, concept-drawing, experiences, leadership, administration.

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## **Introduction**

### ***Defining the issues faced by new Special Educational Needs Coordinators – in their own words***

From anecdotal evidence gained through informal discussions with newly appointed Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) attending their first day of training on their compulsory Special Educational Needs Coordination Award, there were indications that they did not share an equitable professional experience. SENCOs' complaints were varied: Some stated that their role was limited by the low priority for special educational needs within their own schools and of a general lack of understanding of special educational needs held by their Headteachers and leadership teams. Others commented negatively on the poor communication between their Headteachers and themselves while a significant number complained of Headteachers and school office managers/bursars not sharing information relating to funding for Special Educational Needs. Most reported having a lack of any protected time, resources and administrative support or any additional financial allowance for taking on the role; a significant number also complained of excessive micro-management by their Headteachers to such an extent that they felt every aspect of their work to be permanently monitored and assessed. Many SENCOs felt themselves to be pushed into the role of subordinate administrator/manager but denied the opportunity to evolve into transactional leaders within their schools as they were not included as a member of their schools' senior leadership teams (SLT) and had little (or no) input into the recruitment and deployment of teaching assistants. Some seriously considered why they had decided to take on the role in the first place, questioning their status as a SENCO – on one hand their lecturers on their SEN Coordinator's course presenting an image one SENCO called '*the perfect SENCO in the perfect SENCO world*' – while on the other hand there was the contrasting reality

of their own experiences when in post in their schools. Several admitted to feeling unduly stressed and experiencing what they perceived as the early signs of ‘burnout’ within the first few months of taking on the role. These issues formed the underpinning rationale for this piece of small-scale, insider-researcher led (by myself, as an ex-SENCO and current SENCO trainer) case-study inquiry as I felt the need to understand their general conditions of service and their early perception of themselves in the SENCO role to be essential knowledge in creating valid, relevant and realistic training for them.

### ***Defining the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO)***

The requirement for schools to appoint a SENCO to coordinate provision for pupils with SEN had existed since the adoption by all state funded schools of the DfEE (1994), Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Pupils with Special Educational Needs. The DfE/DoH (2015) Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years makes it clear that Governing bodies of maintained mainstream schools and the proprietors of mainstream academy schools (including free schools) ‘must ensure that there is a qualified teacher designated as SENCO for the school.’ (p. 97). The 2015 Code also states that the SENCO has the day-to-day responsibility for the operation of SEN policy and the coordination of specific provision made to support individual pupils with Special Educational Needs. In this role, the SENCO acts as the agent of their Headteacher and board of governors who hold the responsibility for the overall management and quality of that provision within their school. The SENCO is also engaged with the Headteacher and governing body in determining the strategic development of SEN policy and provision; the Code stating that, ‘They will be most effective in that role if they are part of the school leadership team.’ (p. 97). A direction is also made that if the appointed SENCO in the school has not previously been the SENCO at that or any other school for a total period of more than twelve months they must achieve a National Award in Special Educational Needs Coordination within three years of appointment. The current DfE/DoH (2015) Code supports the SENCO by stating that sufficient time, administrative support and resources should be provided by their school for the SENCO to carry out their role (although this support is not quantified or made a compulsory element within the Code). When commentating on the range of responsibilities expected of SENCOs Edwards (2016) stated that, ‘The SENCO role is huge!’ (p. 28). How this complex, specialist role which comprises administration, teaching, managing and leading becomes possible for a newly appointed SENCO sits at the heart of this study.

## Methodological approach

This study, completed in the 2017/18 Autumn Term after the DfE/DoH (2015) *Code of Practice: 0 to 25* had been assimilated and embedded within their schools, was designed to discover the perceptions of new SENCOs in mainstream primary schools on the scope of their own role and status in terms of what they do, what compelled them to take on the role of SENCO, and the nature of the working relationships with their colleagues and with their senior leadership teams. The findings were used to better personalise their compulsory SENCO training.

### **Participants: the ‘critical lens’ focused on the SENCO**

A selection of ( $n = 10$ ) primary school SENCOs from three different Local Authority areas volunteered to complete the ‘concept drawings’ and provide their accompanying narratives. The protocols established for this study followed the British Educational Research Association (2011) Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (Table 1).

All were qualified teachers who had been teaching for two, or more, years before taking on their SENCO role; ( $n = 6$ ) had been teaching for less than five years, ( $n = 3$ ) had been teaching for five to seven years whilst one SENCO had 16 years’ teaching experience (this was Megan, the Headteacher, who combined her school leadership role with that of the SENCO).

### **Research design and framework**

Data were gathered in the form of personal concept drawings supported by a reflective narrative which explained how their illustrations/annotations were constructed and how they represent their experiences at the outset of their professional journey in their schools, their perceptions of themselves ‘in role’ and the status of their role set within the field of political and educational change. This focus on SENCO narratives/perceptions of their versions of the truth makes this an interpretivist study exclusively drawing on qualitative data.

A research framework was constructed using three broad areas of influence which impact on SENCOs’ abilities to undertake their duties and responsibilities. The model was used to investigate the two key hemispheres of the SENCO role – what a SENCO is legally required to do (the Legal Contract) and the additional understanding and activities a SENCO brings to their role in the light of their

**Table 1.** Sample group characteristics

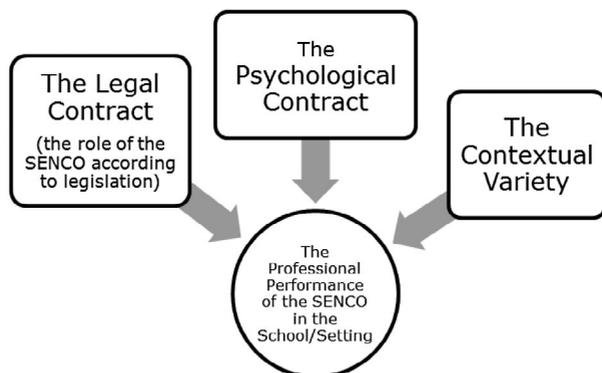
No	SENCO name (pseudonym)	Gender	Age	Years as qualified teacher	Years as a SENCO	Local authority	Primary school type
1	Julie	F	29	3	1	LA 1	LA (300 on roll)
2	Sarah	F	24	2	1	LA 1	Academy Trust (250 on roll)
3	Brenda	F	30	5	2	LA 1	Academy Trust (350 on roll)
4	Margaret	F	25	2	2	LA 1	LA (300+ on roll)
5	Isobel	F	Not given	3	1	LA 2	Academy Trust (250 on roll)
6	John	M	34	5	2	LA 2	LA (300+ on roll)
7	Penny	F	28	3	1	LA 2	
8	Megan	F	42	16	1	LA 3	Academy Trust (200 on roll)
9	Mina	F	36	4	2	LA 3	
10	Denise	F	34	7	3	LA 3	LA (400+ on roll)

own understanding, ethos and vision as a teacher (the Psychological Contract). Although the Legal Contract was set by Government legislation and statutory guidelines and the Psychological Contract was created through each SENCO's professional understanding of what is the 'right thing' to do as a teacher, they are both framed and affected by the third area of influence, the 'Contextual Variety' with each school having their own culture created through a complex inter-relation of tradition, ethos, values and priorities where the Headteacher (or Academy Chief Executive) exerts a significant influence on every aspect of the school and its life. It was at the intersection of these three powerful influences where the SENCOs had to function. This relationship is illustrated in Figure 1.

These three influencing factors provided the SENCOs with a rich professional mix combining what *had* to be done with *how* it was done in their schools. This should have provided some level of professional SENCO-role consistency across schools, however the capacity for inconsistency is provided through the contextual variety. Ekins (2012), Norwich (2010) and Petersen (2010), recognised that this is where a degree of uncertainty develops around the SENCO role due to it being open to such variation and interpretation; Hallett and Hallett (2010) recognising that this was unsurprising due to the reality of the role being dependent on context and the local interpretation of legislation that was sometimes contradictory (p. 51).

### ***The creation of the concept drawings***

The adoption of the concept-drawing model for the illustrations created a non-hierarchical design with the SENCOs undertaking a personal reflective evaluation



**Figure 1.** The key influences on SENCO performance

on their role as SENCO at this early point in their career pathway; this process was adapted from the approach used by Garner *et al.* (1995) who used similar drawings for teachers to explore their thoughts, feelings and experiences in a non-threatening way in a supportive professional setting. The SENCOs, in isolation, had 30 minutes in which to produce their concept drawings on A4 plain paper. The supporting narratives were provided by the SENCOs throughout the day as each individual had uninterrupted time in order to ‘talk through’ what they had drawn. Each narrative account was recorded (with agreement from each SENCO) and transcribed. One SENCO did not provide a narrative as she felt that the concept drawing could ‘*talk for itself*’.

### **Thematic analysis process**

Each narrative was subjected to a straightforward thematic analysis process (Braun and Clarke, 2014) with initial coding at regular intervals and then using a trial-and-error process of sorting, collating and identifying similarities, differences and patterns to gradually produce a set of refined themes; this was what Howitt and Cramer (2011) called ‘something of a trial-and-error process in which change and adjustment will be a regular feature’ (p. 329).

A proportion of the findings dealt with the ‘what is’ the experience of this tranche of SENCOs, before any detailed analysis or understanding of the ‘why it is so’, although most of the SENCOs did attempt to justify their drawings in their supporting commentaries as they set out their descriptions of activities, objects, processes and persons as well as the more difficult to quantify human characteristics and attributes such as happiness, personality, values and opinions ... all variables which were difficult to measure quantitatively with any degree of precision.

## **Findings**

### **The SENCOs’ concept drawings**

For this paper two SENCO concept drawings out of the original ten are presented.

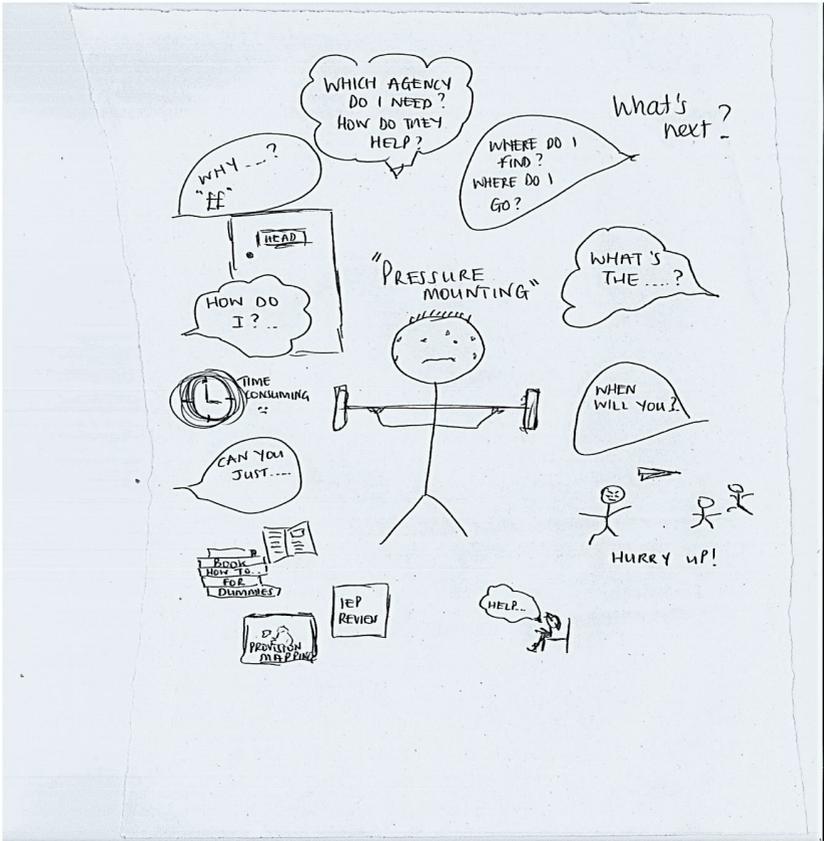
#### **1. Julie**

Julie is both the SENCO and a full-time class-teacher. In her drawing she places herself (the stick-person with perspiration dripping from her brow lifting a heavy weight) in the centre (positioned as per the concept drawing directions). There

are no connecting lines drawn between this central toiling SENCO figure and the variety of elements surrounding her. Each of these elements, apart from the cluster of drawings in the bottom left and the seated figure at bottom right with its plaintive cry of ‘*Help...*’ is in the form of a question or demand for instruction/direction from a faceless person or group who/which is not made specific. The bottom left cluster is depicted as a pile of documents, mainly those related to administrative tasks. This is a powerful design, no matter how simplistic it appears at first glance, which provides a brief ‘snap-shot’ into the perceived pressure placed on a new SENCO by other people (colleagues, the Headteacher, parents, pupils?) and by administrative tasks (Figure 2).

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

There were several key points emerging from Julie’s drawing and narrative: She illustrated and mentioned the demands placed on her by other teachers, by the Headteacher and by the amount of administration which she had to make sure



**Figure 2.** Julie's concept drawing [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com)]

was completed during and after the working day; she used this to illustrate the central theme of the 'Pressure Mounting'. Another important theme was shown by the forlorn 'Help ...' image and the impression of the SENCO being central to the support system of the school and thus being the only one able to help, but there is also the sense of the SENCO in a vacuum or unsupported in terms of her own professional development and well-being relating to the questions *why, which, where, when and what?* This was strengthened by the verbal comments made relating to lack of office space, having no confidential telephone line and of having no additional pay for undertaking the SENCO role. The final statement,

although made half in jest, did have something of a ‘sinister resonance’ about it ... the potential of an impending breakdown for the SENCO.

To begin the process for the complete cohort (10 drawings and narratives), Julie’s presentation provided the initial framework/model for the first broad theme entries. Table 2 presents these themes.

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

## 2. Sarah

Sarah’s concept drawing presents a complicated picture. She is sitting behind her desk with a bulging in-tray, arms held up and tears on her cheeks. The caption underneath presents a bold statement, ‘*SEN is in a mess!*’ and the strap-line in smaller handwriting adds the confirmation ‘*I don’t know enough*’ as if this lack of knowledge is the direct result of SEN being in a mess. The tears on Sarah’s cheeks make an interesting comparison’s to Julie who had beads of perspiration as she struggled with the weight of mounting pressure; in Sarah’s picture there is a whirl of demands, the top right with a sea of smiling faces

**Table 2.** Julie’s themes

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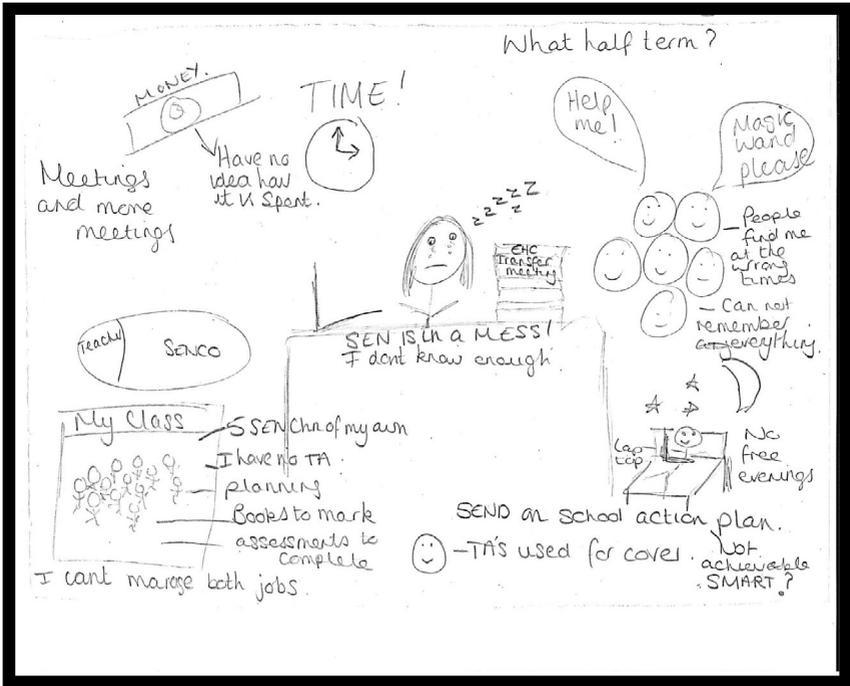
<b>Broad Theme</b>
<b>Having a Multi-Role:</b> Being a SENCO and Full-Time Class-teacher giving an increased workload and contributing to significant pressure and feeling unprepared
<b>The Demands from Colleagues:</b> The demands of the head and fellow teachers for information, support and instant action creating stress
<b>The Need for Professional Development:</b> For developing knowledge of SEN and processes/ procedures for managing and administering provision. administrative support
<b>Limited Resources:</b> Available in school
<b>No additional pay</b> allowance for doing the job
<b>Limited Status as Leader:</b> SENCO does not manage the TA team
<b>Likes</b> being the SENCO

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packed together and chanting out their needs ... *'help me'* and the interesting phrase ... *'magic wand please'*. Linked to this idea are two statements by Sarah: *'People find me at the wrong times'* and *'cannot remember everything'*, this almost implies that there is a sense of failure in that she is not able to manage the demands of others. Still on the right side of the page, this central theme of not being able to meet other's needs/demands is sandwiched between another emerging theme – that of the role eating into Sarah's own personal or 'quality' time; the question *'what half term?'* and the drawing of her sitting up alone in bed at night with an open lap-top engaged in SENCO and school administrative work with the supporting comment *'no free evenings'* presents a strong statement relating to this imposition.

Underneath the central SENCO figure are two statements: that SEN(D) is on the school action plan (a positive element) but that the targets for SEN(D) action were not achievable or SMART (Short, Measurable, Attainable, Time-limited). An emoticon (smiling face) indicates that Teaching Assistants being used for covering absent teachers is a positive factor for Sarah. The bottom left-hand segment of the concept drawing has its focus on the other side of Sarah's work – she is also a full-time classteacher (as clearly illustrated by the box full of stick-children with the title *'My Class'*); this class box is annotated with a series of statements of fact: (i) she has five children with SEN in her class (ii) there is no TA support (iii) that planning and (iv) books to mark and (v) assessments to complete all continue to place demands on her time and energy. The underpinning comment for this sector of the concept drawing is, *'I can't manage both jobs'*. Above this class box is an oblong which is divided, roughly, into two-thirds devoted to the SENCO function and one-third devoted to teaching (in Sarah's verbal commentary she stated that this would be her ideal model in terms of time dedicated to her role in school). The top left segment of Sarah's concept drawing is a mixture of specific duties (*'Meetings and more meetings'* expressed in a negative tone without any indication of any positive outcomes from these meetings) and the continuing pressure of lack of time (expressed in large capital letters with an exclamation mark). Finally there is an admission of lack of knowledge around how funding for children with SEN(D) is managed and spent within the school (Figure 3).

In many ways Sarah's concept drawing is similar to Julie's, particularly around the issues relating to time, excessive administration and the demands of others. However, Sarah introduces new elements around the imposition of the extensive SENCO duties intruding into her home life and the head-on clash between



**Figure 3.** Sarah’s concept drawing

managing two demanding roles – that of SENCO for the whole school community and that of being a full-time classteacher where there is no remission from the day-to-day duties expected.

Sarah’s verbal commentary justified, according to her own perception, many of the elements presented in her drawing:

That’s me in the middle and that’s how I feel most of the time and that’s what I’ve done in the staffroom a couple of times ... just got all teary. My friends were sympathetic but I don’t think the Head gives a ‘monkey’s chuff’ to tell you the truth ... just as long as I got on with it and got all the stuff done. I find it really hard at the moment doing all the SENCO stuff and being a classteacher – I’m always feeling that I’m doing a crap job at both of them and I’m really worried that my children will suffer.

Mind you I know that there are loads of other SENCOs on this course who are in the exact same boat as me and I don't know how they manage it either; I spoke to Mary (another SENCO in the same cohort on the SEN Coordination Award) and she feels just like me ... she even said that she thought of giving it up and just going back to being a classteacher and she's even being paid extra for doing the SENCO job too. Sounds like a bloody good idea too but ... really ... I like the SENCO job and I like the way that other teachers and parents think of me as being someone who cares and can make a difference but some of the teachers, TAs and parents think I've got a 'magic wand' that I can just wave to sprinkle my SENCO 'fairy-dust' over their problems and everything will be 'cured' – they have no idea how hard this job is because it just takes over. I find I'm taking tons of stuff home to do because there's no time during the day as I'm at it 100% of the time. I don't have a partner at the moment ... perhaps that's a good thing as we wouldn't be able to spend any quality time together anyway as all I'm doing is work ... work ... work.

This was a very personal statement by Sarah which touched on important issues related to SENCO wellbeing; the admission that she had been in tears in the staffroom due to the pressure of work in being both a new SENCO and a full-time classteacher was a courageous one to make. She discussed her use of the phrase '*magic wand please*' in the light of her feeling that many of her colleagues and parents felt that she could 'cure' any problems just by being the SENCO – a role which she does like in terms of being recognised as someone who does 'care'. However, Sarah also stated that she knew other new SENCOs were feeling similar pressures. Of significant interest is Sarah's perception that, whilst her colleagues 'cared' when she was in tears, her Headteacher did not. This feeling has been identified elsewhere; Mary Bousted, the general secretary of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, writing for the Times Educational Supplement on 20th October 2015 stated:

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

The last section of Sarah's statement supporting the drawing of her with her laptop open throughout the night was a pertinent one as it voiced her concerns over

the excessive work-load she experienced as a SENCO/classteacher and how this invaded her own time every evening, during the holidays (e.g. ‘*What half-term?*’) and even its potential for restricting any future personal relationships for her.

The Broad Themes extracted from Sarah’s narrative and drawing are shown in Table 3.

As previously stated, Sarah’s concept drawing and narrative did complement Julie’s perceptions of herself in the SENCO role around both the more negative themes and the positive aspect of liking being the SENCO and of being proud of making a difference for the pupils in her school.

## Discussion

Table 4 presents the collation of the generated main themes ( $n = 16$ ) from the complete participant group ( $n = 10$ ). A surprising feature of this collation was the majority of negative responses, most relating to the excessive workload leading to issues with well-being, lack of allocated time and resources, lack of payment for undertaking the SENCO role and a lack of opportunities for SENCOs to act independently as real leaders (rather than as administrators) – all factors previously identified in the earlier anecdotal evidence generated through discussions with the SENCOs. Something of a ‘balance’ is restored through these same SENCOs also stating that they enjoyed being in role as they knew that they ‘*made a difference*’ and that they were on a steep learning-curve which would lead to improved conditions and alleviate their feelings of self-doubt.

**Table 3.** Sarah’s themes

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<b>Broad Themes</b>
<b>Overwhelmed</b> by high workload and pressure to perform
<b>Difficulty balancing SENCO role</b> with other school commitments (class-teaching)
<b>Empathy</b> with other SENCOs
<b>Likes</b> being a SENCO (making a difference)
<b>Demands and lack of understanding from colleagues</b>
SENCO work has to be done at home ( <b>work-life balance</b> suffers)

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**Table 4.** Main themes

<i>Serial</i>	<i>Main themes</i>
1	SENCO well-being and work/life balance negatively affected by excessive SENCO workload
2	No (or little) additional time allocated for SENCO work
3	No (or little) additional resource allocation for SENCO work
4	No additional allowance (pay) for being the SENCO
5	Lack of support and/or knowledge of SENCO role by head and/or other staff & parents
6	Teachers passing on their responsibility for managing the learning experience of pupils with SEND in their own mainstream classrooms to SENCO (e.g. differentiation/personalising learning activities etc.)
7	Headteacher providing no (or few) opportunities for SENCO to act as a 'leader'
8	SENCO not on Senior Leadership Team
9	SENCO not able to act independently (micro-management by Headteacher)
10	Conflict between the SENCO role and maintaining the role of class teacher
11	Tensions created by Ofsted inspection
12	SENCO lack of knowledge/SENCO self-doubt
13	Performativity-driven school culture making SEND a low priority
14	Enjoying being the SENCO
15	Pride felt in being a SENCO and being able to 'make a difference'
16	Need for SENCO CPD & recognition of SEN Award

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

Several of the SENCOs were fairly new-in-post as teachers too, Beltman *et al.* (2015) stated that developing a professional teacher identity can be complex; when this idea was applied to developing a professional SENCO identity there was an understanding around the issue of this complexity and the reasoning that

the process of teacher development was based on teacher engagement informed by their life histories, their previous experiences of teachers and teaching, by learning and by societal expectations which all affected the way that they managed the ‘becoming process’. Beltman *et al.* also argued that self-image and ownership of an emerging professional identity were conditions that helped teachers to apply knowledge acquired through continuing professional development and training into their schools. This does have resonance when related to the SENCO role as the new SENCOs all went through the same pathway as they came to terms with re-imagining their identities as teachers into that of a SENCO affected by the same informing factors – their life histories, experience of teachers and teaching, their professional development/training and by societal expectations. However, there was an added layer of complexity for SENCOs as ‘societal expectations’ was extended to include the wider expectations of a performativity-infused educational system and the contextual variety inherent within their schools and settings. These factors, the personal and the contextual, interacting in a reciprocal and dynamic process to shape identity (Moore, 2004; Day *et al.*, 2007). Beltman *et al.* (2015) and Pillen *et al.* (2013) agreed that finding a balance between personal views and experiences and the professional or cultural expectations of what it means to be a teacher is a key part of developing a professional identity as a teacher. When applied to the role of a SENCO navigating between conflicting worlds such as their work-life balance, the friction between the class-teacher vs SENCO scenarios which played out in their schools and the realisation that they were expected to be a specialist, an expert and a leader where before they had been ‘led’ created significant tensions. Friedman (2004) described this gap between expectations and the reality shock of experience as ‘shattered dreams’ (p. 312).

‘*Shattered dreams*’ might have been an apt descriptor for the SENCOs who presented their thoughts and feelings through their concept drawings and commentaries but, perhaps, a better phrase was ‘the reality shock’ already mentioned as the data indicated that these new-in-post SENCOs (in the main) identified themselves as professionals who could conduct themselves as SENCOs and who were confident in themselves as teachers (the Psychological Contract) but with a strong awareness of the existing and potential complexities and challenges created by trying to comply with their Legislative Contract compounded by the Contextual Variety in their schools. This, in turn, raised questions in how to prepare new SENCOs for the reality of the workplace whilst maintaining a positive approach particularly as the new SENCOs in this sample had already experienced a range of negative experiences so early in their careers.

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