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**Perceptions and Views Regarding the Role of the Special
Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinators (SENDCos)
and Challenges Affecting the Role in the United Arab of
Emirates (UAE)**

التصورات والآراء المتعلقة بدور منسقي الاحتياجات التعليمية الخاصة والتحديات
التي تؤثر على دورهم في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة

by

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of the requirements for the degree of
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**Prof. Eman Gaad
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Abstract

It is noticeable that the UAE represents a unique context where many social and economic changes have been made over the last few decades. These considerable changes have undoubtedly put pressure on the education sector which has to respond to new demands for varied teachings methods and curricula to be used with all students to meet international standards. On the other hand, there is an obvious need for improvement in schools' inclusive practices. The expectations of the special and inclusive education have been rapidly increased over the last decade. Therefore, it is significant to introduce a person, such as the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities coordinator (SENDCo), who is able to lead the inclusion movement and bear the brunt of these changes in every school. Specific roles and responsibilities, yet flexible, can be allocated to that person to maintain consistency in his/her work and provide clear understanding about his/her roles. However, like many other countries, the UAE faces many significant social, cultural and financial challenges in the field of special education that would affect this role.

This mixed method study aimed to investigate the role of SENDCo from the perspective of teachers in the private schools in the UAE. Challenges affecting this role has been explored. Teachers and SENDCos from three private school participated in this study. Qualitative and quantitative data were gathered from using a questionnaire and conducting interviews. According to the response of 85 participants, SENDCos duties include operating day-to-day SEND provisions, overseeing SEND register, working in liaison with teachers, parents and external agencies, contributing to in-service training, and developing their professional skills. However, these roles, as the findings of this study revealed, are influenced by several challenges related to managing the time of the SENCo, managing SEND provisions and SEND register, liaising with teachers, parents and external agencies, developing in-service training and finally issues related to the UAE context. To overcome these challenges, SENDCos have to be prepared and trained to change attitudes and remove obstacles to full and effective inclusion in mainstream schools.

Key words: special educational needs and disabilities coordinator (SENDCo), inclusion, role of the SENDCo, challenges, perceptions, views

نبذة مختصرة

من الملاحظ أن الإمارات العربية المتحدة تمثل سياقاً فريداً حيث طرأت عليها العديد من التغييرات الاجتماعية والاقتصادية على مدى العقود القليلة الماضية. مما لا شك فيه أن هذه التغييرات الكبيرة قد فرضت ضغوطاً على قطاع التعليم الذي يتعين عليه الاستجابة للمتطلبات الجديدة لطرق ومناهج تعليمية متنوعة لاستخدامها مع جميع الطلاب للوفاء بالمعايير الدولية. من ناحية أخرى هناك حاجة واضحة للتحسين في الممارسات الشاملة للمدارس. وقد ازدادت متطلبات التعليم الخاص والشامل بشكل سريع خلال العقد الماضي.

ولذلك من المهم إدخال شخص مثل منسق الاحتياجات التعليمية الخاصة والإعاقة على أن يكون قادراً على قيادة حركة الدمج وتحمل وطأة هذه التغييرات في كل مدرسة وأن يكون له دور خاص ومسؤوليات محددة، لكنها مرنة لذلك الشخص للحفاظ على اتساق عمله. ومع ذلك مثل العديد من البلدان الأخرى تواجه الإمارات العديد من التحديات الاجتماعية والثقافية والمالية الهامة في مجال التعليم الخاص والتي من شأنها التأثير على هذا الدور.

تهدف هذه الدراسة المتعددة الوسائل إلى التحقق من دور (منسق الحالات الخاصة) من وجهة نظر المعلمين في المدارس الخاصة في دولة الإمارات. وقد تم استكشاف هذه التحديات.

شارك في هذه الدراسة المعلمون ومنسفو قسم الحالات الخاصة من ثلاث مدارس خاصة، تم جمع البيانات الكمية والنوعية من استخدام الاستبيان وإجراء المقابلات. وفقاً لرد 85 مشاركاً، فإن مهام منسق الحالات الخاصة تتضمن متابعة سجل طلاب الحالات الخاصة، العمل بالتنسيق مع المعلمين، أولياء الأمور، والوكالات الخارجية والاهتمام بالتدريب أثناء الخدمة وتطوير مهاراتهم المهنية. ومع ذلك فإن هذه الأدوار كما كشفت نتائج هذه الدراسة تتأثر بعدة تحديات تتعلق بإدارة وقت منسق الحالات الخاصة وسجل الحالات الخاصة، والاتصال بالمعلمين والآباء والوكالات الخارجية وتطوير التدريب أثناء الخدمة وأخيراً القضايا المتعلقة بسياق الإمارات العربية المتحدة.

للتغلب على هذه التحديات يجب إعداد وتدريب (منسقي الحالات الخاصة) لتغيير المواقف وإزالة العقبات التي تحول دون الدمج الكامل والفعال في المدارس العادية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: منسق الاحتياجات التعليمية الخاصة والإعاقة، إدراج، دور المنسق، التحديات، التصورات، وجهات النظر.

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List of Acronyms:

SEND: Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

UAE: United Arab of Emirates

COP: Code of Practice

SENCo: Special Educational Needs Coordinator

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

1.1.1 Inclusion as a Worldwide Phenomenon:

The inclusion movement is taking a place in many educational systems in several countries around the world such as US, UK, Canada, China and the UAE (Elhoweris & Alsheikh, 2010). However, inclusion is considered to be a new concept to many other countries (Morewood 2012). It is a controversial term that has different meanings to different people. Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandagou (2011) emphasize that "Inclusive education is exemplified in the call for 'Education for All' ". Inclusion can be simplified in a definition as the right of every learner to be part of a regular school and receive proper education with age-appropriate peers and be supported in classrooms by required adaptations, modifications and accommodations regardless of their abilities, race, gender or any other factor (Gaad 2011 and Amer et al. 2016). This goes in line with the philosophy of inclusion as assumed by Gaad and Almotairi (2013). They said that "The philosophy behind inclusion is ' equity in education ' which means all children have the right to be educated properly". Despite the simple message conveyed in its meaning, inclusion is highly questionable. The key questions raised by the concept of inclusion are not because of the difficulty in framing a global definition, but are rather questions related to its implementation and practices than can be meaningfully analyzed with reference to different national and international contexts of our increasingly globalised world. Thus the idea of inclusion remains to offer opportunities in education in general.

- 1- Inclusion concerns most of the decision makers and educators. This phenomenon, as Gaad (2013) points out, comes at the top of the global agenda in all regulations produced by the world governments. For instance, many countries, including the United Arab of Emirates (UAE), across the world support the Salamanca statement (UNESCO 1994). The Salamanca statement was introduced at a conference arranged by The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1994. It calls all government to give the right for all students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) to be enrolled in mainstream schools, support them and introduce legislations to put inclusive practices in place wherever possible (Gaad, 2011).

In the (UAE) which considered being a newly-formed country, inclusion finds its way in many private and public regular schools (Dukmak 2009). Many and rapid changes have been made to serve and provide opportunities to children with SEND in regular schools and include them in all social aspects in an attempt to provide equal and smooth experiences to all children in despite of their abilities or disabilities. The UAE government introduced the Federal Law 29/2006 which gives all SEND children the right to be enrolled in all private and public schools across the seven emirates (Alborno and Gaad, 2014). Articles 12, 13, 14 and 15 of this law assert that with appropriate modifications, accommodations and adaptations that aim to meet individual needs, children with SEND have an opportunity to be included in mainstream schools (MOE, 2010, p.93). For instance, in article 13, "The Ministry of Education ...shall be committed...to secure the complete participation of students having special needs." (as quoted in Gaad 2011). The Minister of Education then HE Dr. Hnif Hassan declared that : "Something wonderful is happening to children throughout the United Arab Emirates: They are learning that all people are entitled to equal opportunities. They are learning to understand, respect, and appreciate people with physical or intellectual differences." (as quoted in Gaad and Thabet 2009).

The Federal law 29/2006 was amended in 2009 through "School for All" initiative which is considered to be the practical side of this law and a guide that could be used to implement inclusive provisions in mainstream schools(Gaad 2014). According to the same resource, the initiative included the publication of the 'General Rules for the Provision of Special Education and Programs and Services' for public and private schools in 2010. It protects the educational rights of SEND children and emphasizes the equity in education in the private and public schools in the UAE (Anati 2012) and highlights the necessity for providing required support to meet the educational, social, and emotional needs of SEND students (MOE 2010). However, the requirements for implementing inclusive practice successfully are highly contestable and raised considerable debates (Gaad 2011). Clear procedure to measure the effectiveness of the implementation of the inclusive provisions is not clear (Alborno and Gaad , 2014 and Gaad , 2011). Moreover, many barriers can be found that prevent inclusion from being successfully and effectively implemented (Elhoweris and Alsheikh 2010).

Special and inclusive education has been shaped by recent developments across the UAE. For instance, in Dubai, as one of the seven Emirates in the UAE, one of the duties of the Knowledge

and Human Development Authority (KHDA) is collecting data and judging the school's effectiveness in implementing SEND provisions in the private schools. Another development is introducing Law No.2 of 2014 which protects the right of SEND students to be educated in a regular school with their peers and supports the 'My community... a city for everyone' initiative which was launched in 2013 and intends to make Dubai fully inclusive by 2020 (KHDA 2016). Recently, according to an article published in "Gulf News" newspaper in April, 2017 by Wam, people with disabilities have been recently empowered by a national policy launched by the Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum. He announced that people with disabilities are to be called "People of Determinations" rather than "People with Special Needs". This national policy ensures a decent life for this segment of people by creating a barrier-free society through providing equal opportunities for effective participation and access to community integration through six main themes one of them is education. Based on the same resource, the education theme emphasizes the development of the inclusive education system in public and vocational education and redesigning school curricula to meet the needs of people with SEND with a clear educational track for all types of disabilities. Moreover, it involves providing teachers and specialists with high educational qualifications for teaching people with various SEND.

1.1.2 Inclusion in Practice

Several research indicate that many countries agree that SEND students should access to education (Tissot 2013). However, conflicts appear when it comes to implications (Gaad 2011). Therefore, finding the best way to support, lead SEND provisions and manage resources and interventions is locally and internationally important (Vislie 2003). A variety of ways can be used around the world to do this (Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandagou 2011). For instance, in the US at the school district level, external staff carry out the responsibility of organizing provisions and assessments (US Department of Education 2004 in Tissot 2013) while other countries such as Hong Kong and England created a role for a named person who is responsible for leading special educational needs (Tissot 2013). In the UAE, the special education policies lack similar regulations.

In England, the role of the SENCo has been supported by the Code of Practice in 1994 by placing "a statutory obligation on all schools to identify a specialist teacher to co-ordinate provision for pupils with special educational needs" (Mackenzie 2007 p.212). Special Educational Needs coordinator (SENCo) is the job title that has been used to name the person who is responsible for implementing inclusive provisions and legislations related to SEND students (Cole 2005). Data analysis of a research conducted by Rosen-Webb (2011) described the SENCo as "teacher-leader practitioner with good analytic skills who can balance 'on the job' activity, strategic thinking and planning proactivity and 'firefighting' reactivity".

1.2. The Research Problem

Despite the fact that there is relatively a clear understanding of the concept of inclusion in the UAE, it can be questioned whether many practitioners and stakeholders who are working in the field of special and inclusive education have a clear idea of how to implement inclusion. This would raise questions regarding the practical political power which can put a framework to all schools to facilitate the implementation process of inclusion. In the 'General Rules for the Provision of Special Education and Programs and Services' handbook, special educational need teachers are the main occupational group who work with SEND students in collaboration with principals, regular teachers and specialists. In this handbook, there is a list of proposed personnel for special education services in schools (e.g. MOE 2010, p.39). However, guidelines regarding managing the work of those personnel is not mentioned. General responsibilities were mentioned to identify stakeholders' responsibilities and duties when serving SEND children. However, there is no clear position of a person who will be responsible for implementing, evaluating, and monitoring day-to-day special educational provisions. Although Muhlenhaupt (2002) argues that inclusion is a shared responsibility among all stakeholders, Pearson (2008) points out that every school should have a person who is responsible for implementing SEND provisions such as a SENCo.

In the UAE, the role of the SENCo is undefined in both policy contexts and in the research literature. Despite the fact that the post of the special needs coordinator (SENCo) has informally existed in schools in the UAE, the post itself and its job descriptor have not been specified in 'General Rules for the Provision of Special Education and Programs and Services' for public and

private schools. This shows ambiguity about the SENCOs' exact roles and responsibilities in addition to their status in schools in the area. Wedell (2012) argues that "SENCOs operate at the cutting edge of implementing the inclusion of children and young people with special educational needs in mainstream education."

Throughout my experience as a SENCO in one of the private schools in Dubai, an understanding of inclusion and exclusion has been formed, as I directly became involved in the complex contexts where SENCOs work in a mainstream school. I gained further insight into the challenges that a SENCO may face while undertaking his/her role. Personally, this study is of interest to the researcher on the professional level. Nationally, findings of this research would be used to develop and improve special educational policies in the future in the UAE.

1.3. Research Questions and Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine teachers' perceptions as well as SENCOs' views regarding the role of the SENCO and identify challenges that prevent SENCOs from effectively undertaking their roles and perform their duties. A convergent mixed method design will be used to develop a complete understanding of the research problem by converging qualitative and quantitative databases. Both kinds of data will be collected in parallel, analyzed separately and then merged in attempt to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the teachers' perceptions regarding the role of the SENCO in the private school in the UAE?
2. How do SENCOs view their work in the private school in the UAE?
3. What challenges would prevent SENCOs from effectively undertaking their roles in the private school in the UAE?

In this study, quantitative and qualitative data will be gathered to delineate what is expected from a SENCO in the private schools in the UAE as well as identify barriers that could affect the SENCOs' responsibilities. Data collection procedures will include collecting data from distributing a questionnaire to teachers to gather both qualitative and quantitative data and conducting interviews with principals and SENCOs to gather quantitative data.

1.4. Significance of the Study

Although "special educational needs" has become a definitive buzzword in the media as well as government policies, its implications and actual workings are shrouded in mystery. Sometimes the development of SEND policies and practices are locally, nationally and globally paid little attention (Rosen-Webb 2011, Norwich 2014). Accurate, up-to-date and reliable information about the current status of educational systems in general and special educational needs in particular is difficult to find in most of the Gulf countries including the UAE (Gaad 2011). Therefore, further research has to be carried out to improve educational system in the area.

The special and inclusive education is on the list of the priorities of the UAE educational systems due to the fact that the UAE intends "to create an educational process that adopts world-class standards" (UAE Interact 2007 as quoted in Gaad 2011, p.8). Therefore, the UAE looked to more established systems, such as the UK for guidance (Talhami 2004). However, the UAE has shown resistance to full inclusion which is currently implemented in the west (Spencer, 2009 in Gaad 2011).

After introducing the federal law 29/2006, schools were told to anticipate the needs of SEND students and to adapt to meet their individual needs. This movement toward inclusion fundamentally changed mainstream schools. However, as Anati (2012) argued, implementing inclusion is problematic across the various educational systems in the UAE. She stated that every school has its own procedures to deal with SEND students. Thus they view the work of the SENCo in different ways (Tissot 2013). Studies in other countries indicated that SENCos work in very different contexts, therefore, there is a variation in their responsibilities and roles (Szwed 2007). It is argued that to be effective within inclusive schools, the role of the SENCo has to be generalized with the flexibility to adapt to current situations (Szwed 2007).

There is a need for a full description and set of roles to be outlined by the UAE Ministry of Education. Generalized SENCo responsibilities have to be included in 'General Rules for the Provision of Special Education and Programs and Services' for public and private schools handbook in order for all private and public schools to follow. This will develop our understanding about the role of the SENCo, challenges that affect the role, and dilemmas where

they work. This person needs to be at the center of school life in order to fulfill the role (Evans 2013).

It is essential to enhance the field of special education with precious data that would help make a clear picture of the importance of having a SENCo in all inclusive schools with specified and unified general job general duties to ensure implementing and monitoring daily inclusive practices. Additionally, it would be advantageous to examine challenges that SENCos may have while performing their tasks within the UAE educational system. This study would be of interest to decision makers in the field of special and inclusive education. This study will contribute to introduce SENCos' responsibilities in schools and recognize challenges that would affect their work.

1.5. The Setting of the Study

This study will take place in three private schools (A, B and C) in Dubai in the UAE. All of them provide special needs educational services for SEND students. However, every school has its own procedure to support them. There is one SENCo in school C while there are two SENCos in schools A and B. The three schools run an American curriculum and follow the Common Core States Standards (CCSS). Each school has between 2000 to 2500 students from K to grade 12, around 3% of them are students officially identified with SEND and registered in the SEND department. The policy of the SEND departments in schools B and C, as the participated SENCos mentioned, is developed based on the 'General Rules for the Provision of Special Education Programs and Services'. On the other hand, school A follows a SEND policy implemented in some GEMS education school. The kinds of support provided for the SENCos in these school vary. SEND students in the participated schools to receive their education within inclusive settings in main stream classrooms with the help of special teachers.

1.6. The Structure of the Dissertation

This study can be described as an empirical study investigating the SENCos' role from various perspectives. It will include five chapters. In chapter one, a research background will be provided in addition to the research problem, significance of the study, study setting, and research questions and purpose. In the second chapter, a review of previous research related to the research questions will be included. The literature will critically be reviewed to show

deficiencies in the literature. Research design, research instrumentations, the populations of the study, the study sample, data reliability and validity and finally ethical considerations will be presented in Chapter three. Chapter four will contain the heart of the research; results and findings. Texts, tables and figures will be presented in this chapter to support the researcher's argument when writing chapter five that will contain the discussion part. In chapter five, the main conclusion, list of recommendations for further research and future practice will be presented in the same chapter. List of references will be included after chapter five directly. Copies of data collection instruments that will be used (such as the questionnaire, interview transcripts and so on) in addition to detailed quantitative data analysis will be found in the appendices section attached to this paper after the list of references.

Chapter two: Literature Review

2. 1. Introduction

This study will look at the SENCOs' roles and responsibilities from different perceptions in the UAE schools. Participants of this study (teachers) will set their expectations regarding the duties that a SENCO should carry out in their workplaces. Five SENCOs will also have an opportunity to address problems and challenges that affect their roles based on their own experiences. To gain better and deep understating about the research problem and answer the research questions, this research will adopt a mixed method design where quantitative and qualitative data will be gathered. Findings from this research will be analyzed and could be used to contribute to improving special educational policies in the UAE.

This section will include a critical analysis of related research studies related to the role of the SENCO, perceptions regarding the role and challenges that influence this role. Internationally, there are not enough studies conducted regarding the role of the SENCO (Lindqvist 2012). Similarly, there is a lack of contemporary research in the area of special needs coordination in the UAE, therefore, the researcher reviewed the literature of other countries, such as UK, where the SENCO position has been taking place since 1994. It is interesting to draw on an international perspective from Great Britain where the role of the SENCO is specified in the original Code of Practice 1994 which was revised in 2001 and then 2015.

In the UK, the government has supported the special and inclusive education through official Codes of Practice (COP) in 1994, 2001 and 2015 (Lehane 2016). All of these codes set out provisions to serve people with SEND with marginal and purely procedural changes between the three codes (Norwich 2014). While the 1994 original Code of Practice (COP) focuses on identifying and assessing students with SEND, the 2001 revised COP place a great emphasis on engaging and including those learner (Lehane 2016) and provided "practical guidance on how to identify, assess, record, meet and review special educational needs" (Mackenzie 2007). 2015 COP asserts student with SEND are to have educational and healthcare services provided for them as they are related to educational plans (Done, Murphy and Bedford 2016). However, what inclusive practices might look like and how to implement and assess them were not considered in the three codes (Lehane 2016).

In the three codes, the SENCo job description is identified (e.g. DfE, 1994 pp. 20-21 , and DfE and DoH 2015 pp 108-109). The role of the SENCo has been identified first in the Code of Practice (1994) and then revised in (2001) and finally in (2015). In spite of the fact that the Code of Practice applies exclusively to settings in Wales and England, all educational professions, teachers and school principles would benefit from consideration of its principles and guidance for good practice.

2. 2. The role of the SENCo:

2.2.1 The Role of the SENCo in the Light of the Three COP (1994, 2001, and 2015):

The 1994 Code allocates key responsibilities to the SENCos and broke new ground in 1994 by requiring that there should be such a post in every school with a named person to carry out the role (Ramjhun 2002). The role of the SENCo in the light of the Code of Practice has mainly focused on monitoring implementing the day-to-day inclusive provisions within and outside the school and removing barriers to learning (Lewis 2005 in Rosen-Webb 2011).

It is argued that the SENCo job descriptors as identified in the 1994 Code of Practice has shifted the role of the SENCo towards the direction of enacting managerial tasks rather than undertaking the specialist teaching role (Mackenzie 2007). According to the Department of Education (DfE, 1994 section 2:14), the 1994 has set out seven key areas of the SENCo's responsibilities as follows:

- "the day-to-day operation of the school's SEN policy;
- liaising with and advising fellow teachers;
- co-ordinate provision for children with special educational needs;
- maintaining the school's SEN register and overseeing the records on all pupils with special educational needs;
- contributing to the in-service training of staff, and
- liaising with external agencies."

The literature suggests that the SENCo has a pivotal role to play in the education of children experiencing SEND particularly in promoting their inclusion by coordinating SEND assessment and provision (Ramjhun 2002). The range of responsibilities associated with this role has been reinforced and acknowledged by the 2001 COP(Ramjhun 2002).

There is a conflict of arguments regarding identifying key roles for SENCos to undertake in schools in the COP. Szwed (2007) pointed out that the COP provides tightly prescribed common frameworks which attempt to create a definitive role description which "are viewed as counterproductive". In her case study, the complexity of four SENCos' working environment was analyzed. The findings of that study present that the SENCo roles, rather than the role, cannot be generalized due to different contexts. The participated SENCos reported difficulty in fulfilling their roles and a sense of frustration when working within certain specified role description. She said that SENCos work in very different situations where there is a wide variety of human and financial resources provided for SENCos as well as time allocated for the role. She stressed the point that the SENCo's work has to be outlined based on the context in which they work by practitioners. This is in line with one of the aporiae that Pearson (2010) explained. Emanuelsson (2001) asserts that SENCos cannot form a homogenous group; the role of the SENCo is context dependent. On the other hand, Garner (1996) reported the views of ten SENCos on the roles of SENCo specified on the 1994 COP. They suggested that working with specific roles brings both benefits to SENCos and SEND students. They enhance the status of the SENCo and suggests a more effective provision for SEND students. Participants in Garner's study stress the fact that including a job description for SENCos on the COP allow them to be part of key meetings concerning formulating SEND policies and providing more effective services to their pupils. Their roles enable them to have an impact on a far wider cross-section of teachers.

2.2.2. Perspectives Regarding the Role of the SENCo:

Special educational needs can be seen in different ways from different people. Consequently, the role of the SENCo can be affected by using different descriptions of their role and work with colleagues who use different discourses (Rosen-Webb 2011). People used to describe the role of the SENCo as a teacher, consultant, manager and above all a supporter for students with SEND. Based on data analysis from narratives of 18 SENCos in a study conducted based on the SENCos workplace learning experience and its academic dimensions Kearns (2005) described four

models which SENCOs adopt in their professional lives based on their performance. He considered these roles models as:

- 'Auditor SENCOs' who emphasized their managerial and administrative role in monitoring inclusive provisions for students with SEND and maintaining focus on legal issues.
- 'Arbitrator SENCOs' who emphasized their role as arbitrators who help clarify the concerns of teachers and parents and make them feel positive about inclusion.
- 'Rescuer SENCOs' who focused mainly on individual students with SEND and showed great commitment in planning and designing customized work for them. They were not interested in being a member of the management team. They seemed to lack skills in involving other staff in inclusive practices to meet individual needs. Additionally, they have difficulties in managing time and have their work accomplished.
- 'Collaborator SENCO' who tended to build strong relationships with teachers to share best practices in teaching and learning approaches. They engaged their colleagues in curriculum development and designing inclusive activities. They saw inclusion as a whole school process.

Kearns (2005) argued that these four types of SENCOs roles may help recruiters and trainers present different ways of enacting the SENCOs role by providing them with different examples of SENCOs' roles and responsibilities. However, different descriptions of SENCOs' role increase the responsibility of SENCOs in straddling discourses related to different descriptions of their role and work with colleagues who use different discourses as Rosen-Webb (2011) indicated in her study. Rosen-Webb's study suggests that the core of the SENCO role is "being a key player in teaching and learning development in their work". The nine SENCOs in her study described their work as:

- advisory in providing information and work with SEND students, teachers and parents;
- managerial in dealing with materials and funding;
- consultative in working with external agencies.

Participants in the same study indicated that the lack of clarity surrounding the role of the SENCo is considered to be a source of stress and anxiety that prevents them from carrying out their duties effectively. This is in line with Wedell (2006) who pointed out that the conflict in the SENCo role as an inhibiting factor in working against the professional development of the SENCo. Lack of clarity surrounding the SENCos dual positions as leaders and followers increases the "stressful nature" of undertaking their complex range of responsibilities (Kearns 2003 as cited in Rosen-Webb 2011). Linqvist (2012) argues that "tensions in the roles occurring within these different contexts need to be recognized".

General and SEND teachers' perceptions regarding the role of the SENCo and his/her professional identity were investigated in a study carried out by Agalotis and Kalyva (2010). The study aimed to identify the key areas of the SENCo roles in Greek schools according to general and SEND teachers in addition to compare their views to determine any differences in their responses. A total of 466 general and SEND teachers participated in that study. A mixed methodology was used to collect data via distributing a survey which included open-ended and close-ended questions. Findings from the study emphasize the SENCo role in advising teachers and parents, contributing to staff in-service training, monitoring and evaluating the performance of SEND students, contributing to knowledge dissemination by giving lectures and workshops to parents to raise awareness about the field of special education, and finally work with external agencies to benefit from services provided to SEND students. The study also stressed the point that every school should have a fulltime SENCo and he/she has to be trained in both general and special education. That study succeeded in shaping general factors that identify the SENCo roles, however, it failed to identify challenges that would affect these roles. As (Wedell 2012) argued, SENCos "have to tackle dilemmas about how to make appropriate decisions in difficult contexts" when they are enacting their daily responsibilities to meet individual needs. Two issues (time and caseload) were approached in the open-ended questions in the survey. However, their impact on the SENCo's role was not clarified.

Schools' leaders' perceptions regarding the role of the SENCo were also investigated in research such as Lindqvist (2013). Lindqvist took educational leaders' perceptions in some Swedish school regarding the SENCo role. In that study, the leaders appeared to have, to some extent, an ambiguous view of what tasks SENCos should accomplish at a school.

This conflict of attitudes related to SENCo's role signifies that there is a lack of understanding about what roles SENCOs should enact at schools. On the other hand, articles, as Pearson (2010) mentioned, demonstrate that people can have various expectations and SENCOs are expected to acknowledge the different expectations of the different stakeholders (e.g. principals, teachers, and parents). According to the same source, there is an argument regarding having a consensus about the expectations of the SENCo role. This would help SENCOs meet expectations related to implementing special educational provisions to serve SEND students.

2.3. Challenges that SENCOs may Face

2.3.1. Challenges Across the World

Findings from several studies revealed that SENCOs face challenges while establishing their occupational role and implementing inclusive practices (e.g. Cole 2005, Szwed 2007 and Linqvist 2012). The literature review clarifies some challenges that a SENCO may face while carrying out their roles in several countries such as the UK. According to DfE (1997), documents from 800 primary, middle and high schools across the UK were analyzed. Additionally, interviews were conducted with head teachers, SENCOs and regular teachers in 70 schools in the area to investigate the impact of the COP (1994) on the ways in which the role of the SENCO was developing. Based on that research, the definition of the role of the SENCOs was broadly welcomed by the SENCOs and their colleagues. SENCOs felt that the Code had enhanced the status of special needs work in many schools. However, the research reported some challenges that prevented the SENCOs from managing their roles. These challenges as listed in (DfE, 1997 p.5) fell into four areas:

- "The management of time;
- Keeping the SEN register and monitoring the progress of individual pupils,
- Liaison with colleagues, parents, external agencies and governors;
- and developing the in-service training role"

These findings are in line with Crowther et al. (2001) who argued that research from countries in which the role of the SENCO has been taken up, revealed that several challenges and issues are faced by the SENCO themselves and general educators in their effort to fit in the new situation.

Regarding the time issue, Crowther et. al indicated that some SENCOs has other teaching or managerial duties besides serving SEND students. Additionally, the number of the students that a SENCO should be responsible for carrying out inclusive provisions to meet their individual needs has been gradually increased. Therefore, further increasing demands on their time influenced their roles in supporting SEND students, monitoring their progress and keeping updated SEND register as Crowther et. al suggested in their study. Another point investigated in that study is the professional identity and qualifications that SENCOs should have to help them successfully undertake their role. It was clear from that study that almost all of the participated SENCOs have received some form of training during occasional training events. This point is considered to be a problem due to the fact that lack of adequate qualifications affects the SENCO role in developing in service training as the study proposed. A counter argument suggests that legitimizing these qualifications contradicts with the current emphasis that all teachers are teachers of SEND (Pearson 2008).

Lack of status and the restriction on the SENCOs' engagement in whole- school policy was highlighted in several research (e.g. Pearson 2008 and Szwed 2007) as a real tension affecting the SENCO' performance. A grounded theory research made by Evans (2013) showed that the participated SENCOs and SEND students for whom they were responsible for "felt on the edge of school life". The SENCOs in the study pointed out they are isolated from other staff at schools due to the nature of their jobs. The researcher in that study mentioned that SENCOs in many schools is not part of the teaching group or senior management team. Therefore, the SENCO role can be an isolated one. This would influence their effort while working with SEND students. The researcher stresses that the SENCO role has to be placed at the center of school life to improve outcomes for SEND students.

Lack of funding is another challenge investigated in various studies as a factor affecting the SENCO's performance (e.g. Pearson 2008). Schools vary in designing financial resources for special educational needs, therefore there is no consistent pattern of best practice (Tissot 2013). SENCOs in a study carried out by Cole (2005, p.300) mentioned that "there is insufficient funding available for SEN", consequently, as Hodkinson (2010) asserts, implementing inclusive practices will be affected.

SENCOs have to deal with daily challenges related to SEND provisions and tackle dilemmas about how to adapt situations and make appropriate decisions within complex contexts to meet individual needs. The challenges facing SEND students have parallels to the current position of SENCOs (Morewood 2012). In other words, the more restrictions on the SENCO role the more challenges will be facing SEND students.

2.3.2 Challenges Related to the UAE Context:

Besides all the challenges facing SENCO in other countries as mentioned earlier, in the UAE, inclusion is affected by ethical, social, cultural, and legal issues (Alborno&Gaad 2014, Gaad 2011, Gaad& Khan 2007, and Anati 2012). These issues have an obvious impact on implementing inclusion and affect the types of provisions provided to those segment of learners. Consequently, the SENCO roles and responsibilities will be affected.

Like the 1994 Code of Practice, "School for All" initiative has provided detailed and comprehensive guidance on the procedures to be followed on the identification and assessment of children who experience SEND. Both of them represent information about general roles and responsibilities of school staff, related authorities and professions to work in partnership with each other and with parents to meet the needs of SEND students. However, School for All failed in presenting the roles and responsibilities of SENCOs. The job title of Special Needs Coordinator (SENCO) has not existed yet in the UAE legislations.

Despite the fact that the inclusion idea is protected by the Federal Law 29/2006, the general guidelines of the practical side of this law can be criticized for the lack of regulations that provide special curricula for SEND students (Alborno and Gaad 2014) in addition to that lack of specific and clear procedure that measures, assesses and evaluates the implementation of the inclusive provisions applied in mainstream classrooms (Gaad 2011). These legal issues will add more difficulties in the field of special education coordination.

Many schools claim that they support inclusion and their doors are open for all types of SEND, but the attitudes vary when it comes to the implementation process. Making adjustments to schools' buildings and curriculum and students' academic achievement are concerns that are taken into consideration before accepting SEND students in most of the private schools in the

UAE (Gaad 2011). Moreover, the lack of required facilities, resources and equipment is another issue that prevents inclusion from being fully implemented (Bradshaw, Tennant, and Lydiatt, 2004). These are considered also to be barriers to the SENCo work.

Inclusion means different things to different people thus people have different attitudes toward the inclusion phenomena. Attitudes toward inclusion in the UAE were investigated in some studies such as (Gaad and Khan 2007 and Gaad and Thabet 2009). Many principals and teachers believe that SEND students will benefit more from being included in special centers (Centers for Preparation and Rehabilitation of Handicapped as known in UAE) than being enrolled in mainstream regular classrooms especially those who are identified with severe cases such as Down Syndrome (Gaad 2011). This negative attitude refers to several reasons. First, regular teachers are less confident about their abilities in serving students with SEND and make required adaptations, modifications and accommodations (Gaad and Khan, 2007). These findings are in line with a study carried out by Alborn and Gaad (2014) that declared reasons behind having negative attitudes toward inclusion. They argued that lack of training, load of work and the fear of failure were the main reasons behind having negative attitudes. Additionally, teachers have other responsibilities to meet individual needs for regular students with different backgrounds and cultures who are enrolled in the same classroom in most of the UAE schools (Gaad 2006). Besides all of these responsibilities, teachers also are frustrated from the lack of parental awareness about inclusion and the absence of the parents' role in such a process (Bradshaw, Tennant, Lydiatt and 2004). It is worth mentioning here that parents play a significant role as the first educator for their children. They have additional responsibilities when having a child with SEND. The importance of the collaboration work is agreed on by teachers and other school staff in order for inclusion to be successfully implemented (Lipsky and Gartner, 1996, in Alborn and Gaad, 2014). This is in line with Gaad and Thabet (2009) who stated that to achieve better outcomes, parents of SEND students have to be involved in all inclusive aspects. On the other hand, Gaad and Khan (2007) revealed that parents of SEND students lack for having adequate knowledge about inclusion. This, as the researchers argue, add more barriers to implementing inclusion and improving special education.

2. 4. Summary

There is a significant and international move towards including SEND students in mainstream schools in many countries. However, this movement is affected by various barriers. To facilitate the implementation of inclusive provisions and develop special education, some countries such as UK set roles and general guidelines for a particular person (SENCOs) to undertake the responsibilities of planning, implementing, monitoring and developing inclusive practices within and outside schools in collaboration with other school staff. Producing such regulations provides guidance to increase the effective functioning of SENCOs in different contexts in which they work. However, many countries, including the UAE, lack similar certain regulations.

Educators perceive the role of the SENCO differently. The studies presented thus far provide evidence that there is a lack of clarity and understanding surrounding tasks to be accomplished and duties to be carried out by the SENCO. There seems to be some evidence to indicate variation in SENCO role. In view of all that has been mentioned so far, one may suppose that there is a need for introducing SENCO in educational systems with identified responsibilities to ensure implementing inclusion effectively in the UAE schools. This study would contribute to identifying SENCO roles and responsibilities based on various perspectives in addition to identify challenges that affect SENCOs performance in the UAE schools.

Chapter 3: The Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Inclusion seems to be complicated in many schools across the UAE. Lack of understanding about who has to do what is considered to be one of the main barriers toward implementing inclusion successfully. Specifically, this study was designed to clarify tasks that have to be accomplished by SENCOs in schools and identify challenges affecting their roles from different perspectives. This chapter provides an overview of the research approach adopted to carry out this study. It offers summaries of the research design, data collection methods, research instrumentations, research sample and population, data validity and reliability, ethical consideration.

3.2. Research Design:

This research took place in the field of special and inclusive education where complex educational or social context can be found (Mertens and McLaughlin, 2004). In the UAE, there is not much has been written about inclusion in general and in the field of special education coordination in specific. Accordingly, this research is designed to gather information from different resources to develop a detailed view of the meaning of research problem as well as generalize the findings to a population (Cresswell 2014). The researcher is aware of the importance of choosing a research methodology to ensure that the research findings could contribute to a possible change in professional practice in the field of special and inclusive education in the UAE.

Since this research intends to generalize findings regarding the SENCOs' roles and responsibilities in schools and understand challenges that influence their roles in depth, mixed methods approached will be adopted. Using the quantitative or qualitative approaches, each by itself, would not help the researcher to best understand the research problem (Bell and Waters 2014). In this approach, a combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods is used in response to the research question. This method could be used due to its strength in blending both qualitative and quantitative methods to examine the research problem and minimize the limitations of both qualitative and quantitative methods (Walliman 2011).

While quantitative data enrich the research with many relevant numerical data, qualitative data can be used to describe social or human problems that cannot be presented in numbers (Walliman 2011). The combination of the two approaches helped identify the role of the SENCo in schools and enhance insights into challenges that affect the role. However, using this method is challenging due to the fact that the researcher has to be knowledgeable about both quantitative and qualitative forms of research in addition to the intensive time required to gather and analyze qualitative and quantitative data (Cresswell 2014).

In this research, a convergent mixed methods design will be used where qualitative and quantitative data were collected at the same time. Both data sets will be analyzed and the results will be compared and merged to see if findings confirm or disconfirm each other (see figure 1). Cresswell (2014) points out that this approach often provides a detailed view of participants qualitatively and scores on instruments quantitatively and together they yield same results.



Figure 1: Convergent Mixed Method Design

The quantitative and qualitative data will be gathered by distributing a questionnaire to teachers and conducting interviews with SENCos to gather qualitative data (see figure 2).

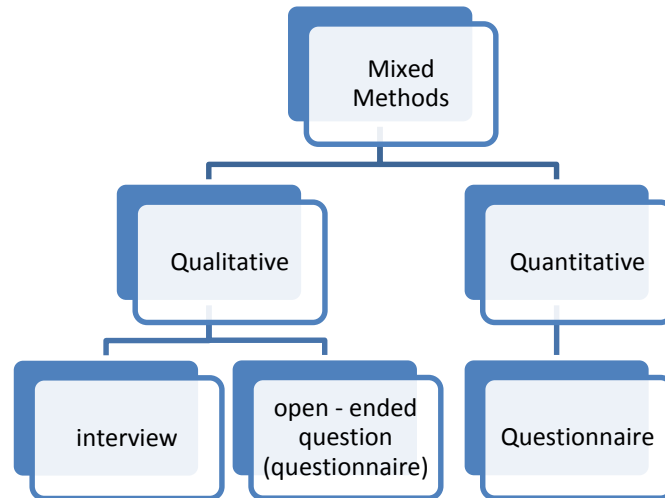


Figure 2: The Research Design Steps

3.3 Data Collection Method:

After getting an approval to gain access to participated schools, 100 questionnaires will be distributed in a paper form by the researcher herself as follows: 40 questionnaires to school A, 30 questionnaires to school B and 30 questionnaires to school C. The questionnaires will be given to participants after explaining the research aims and collected back after one week to ten days in every school. The second data collection method is conducting interviews with SENCOs. Emails will be sent and phone calls will be made with SENCOs to schedule appointments for interviews.

3.4. Research Instruments:

3.4.1 Questionnaire:

The researcher is aware of the advantages and disadvantages of using questionnaires. Questionnaires enable researchers to get information from many people, analyze answers straightforward with less pressure for an immediate response, and maintain respondents' anonymity (Gillham 2007). However, problems of data quality, correcting misunderstandings, respondents' literacy problems and the need for relatively simple questions are considered to be negative features when using questionnaires (Peterson 2004).

The questionnaire items have been designed to cross-reference with the research questions that aims to define the SENCOs' role from the perspective of teachers and identify challenges that affect the roles. The questionnaire has been designed to address the first and third research questions: 1. What are the teachers' perceptions regarding the role of the SENCO in the private school in the UAE? 3. What challenges would prevent SENCOs from effectively undertaking their roles in the private school in the UAE?

The questionnaire has been divided into three sections (See appendix 2) to gather both qualitative and quantitative data. Section A has been designed to gather the demographic information such as gender, age, teaching experience, the holding degree, and the current position where the responses of the questions will be ranged from 2 points (e.g. gender) up to 5 points (e.g. teaching experience). Sections B and C have been designed to gather quantitative and qualitative data respectively.

The researcher has reviewed the literature to identify important areas for investigation and decide on the questionnaire statements and interview questions to achieve the objective of the research and answer the research questions. The questionnaire statements have been adapted from the seven key roles of the SENCO as identified in the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Pupils with Special Educational Needs (DfE, 1994 p.20-21) which are: "1. the day-to-day operation of the school's SEN policy; 2. liaising with and advising fellow teachers; 3. coordinating provisions for children with special educational needs; 4. maintain the school's SEN register and overseeing the records on all pupils with special educational needs; 5. liaising with parents of children with special educational needs; 6. contributing to the in-service training of staff; 7. liaising with external agencies including the educational psychology services and other support agencies, medical and social services and voluntary bodies." and the primary duties and responsibilities for the administration of special education services in the UAE as identified by the Ministry of Education (MOE) in the 'General Rules for the Provision of Special Education Programs and Services (Public and Private Schools)' (MoE, 2010, pp.36). Both of these resources have been used to select and formulate the 32 statements in the questionnaire.

Section B has been designed to gather data in relation to teachers' perceptions regarding the roles and responsibilities of the SENCO with seven variables (32 statements) covering educational

provisions to SEND students (10 statements), Keeping register (4 statements), working in liaison with colleagues and fellow teachers (4 statements), working in liaison with parents (3 statements), working in liaison with external agencies (3 statements), contribution to knowledge dissemination and in-service training (4 statements), and professional development (4 statements). Participants will respond based on a 5 point Likert scale where 1 is strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree.

The researcher is aware of the importance of producing an acceptable questionnaire to respondents by removing ambiguity and wording and designing statements and questions using a jargon-free language. Using a Word document, the questionnaire has been designed in a way that will not give the researcher any problem at the analysis and interpretation stage when using IBM's SPSS Statistics software.

3.4.2 Interview:

The second data-gathering instrument that will be used is conducting interviews. In contrast to using questionnaires, researchers can adapt questions, follow up ideas and investigate feelings when conducting interviews (Creswell 2014). "the interview can yield rich material and can often put flesh on the bones of questionnaires responses" (Bell and Waters 2014, p.178). However, when using this method of data collection, being bias, time-consuming and analyzing results can present problems.

This instrument has been designed to answer the second and third research questions: How do SENCOs view their work in the private school in the UAE? What challenges would prevent SENCOs from effectively undertaking their roles in the private school in the UAE? Since SENCOs in the private schools in the UAE work in different educational contexts, based on the variation in school systems (Anati 2012), they play different roles and face various challenges in implementing inclusive provisions. Consequently, it is hard to code these challenges in numbers. Therefore, interviews were conducted with SENCOs to give them an opportunity to express their ideas and thoughts regarding their role and challenges that affect the role. However, as Seidman (2013) pointed out, establishing access and contacting participants, interviewing them, transcribing the data and then working with the material to come up with conclusions are

considered to be challenges in using this method of data collection that the researcher has to be aware of.

The seven stages of an interview as identified by the Brinkmann and Kvale (2015 p.30) have been followed by the researcher: "thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analyzing, verifying and reporting". First, the interview topic and purpose has been formulated. Next, The researcher has relied on the literature to pilot the interview questions with the assistance of the dissertation supervisor. The main roles of the SENCo as identified in the 1994 COP has been adopted to design the semi-structured interview questions conducted with the SENCos (See appendix 4).An interview protocol as defined in Creswell (2014) has been also developed to ensure using standard procedures from one interview to another (See appendix 3).Then, the researcher will start to interview participants after explaining the interview procedures, purpose and the topic. The interviews will be conducted in the form of face-to-face interviews and recorded using audio recording software. Audio-recording interviews help the interviewer concentrate on the topic and the dynamics of the interview (Merriam and Tisdell 2016).After that, the transcripts will be undertaken by the researcher herself to maintain anonymity and confidentiality. Microsoft word office will be used to transcript the recordings to analyze them closely. Then, the data gathered will be analyzed thematically. Data reliability and validity will be taken into consideration. Finally, the analyzed data will be used to communicate the study findings

3.5 The Population of the Study:

Creswell (2014) defines the population of a research as the entire set of individuals who have some characteristics selected for a research study. In this study, all SEND and regular teachers, and SENCos in the UAE private schools are considered to be the targeted population.

3.6 The sample of the study:

The study sample, which is defined as the representative unit of the targeted population (Creswell 2014), is chosen to be worked upon during the research by the researcher. Three private schools were chosen randomly to participate in this study. Participants in these three

schools had an equal probability of being selected. Selecting a random sample from a population provides the ability to generalize to a population (Creswell 2014). The present study sample consisted of a total of 85 participants (20 SEND teachers, 60 regular teachers, and 5 SENCos).

3.7 Pilot Test:

The questionnaire was piloted to test how long it takes the respondents to complete it, to check that all questions and statements are precise and clear and to enable the researcher to remove any items that provide unnecessary data. 25 trial questionnaires were tried out on teachers to ensure that respondents would experience no difficulties when completing the main questionnaire. A preliminary analysis was carried out using IBM's APSS Statistics software to see whether the format or the type of statements or responses would present any difficulties when the main data is analyzed.

A pilot study was also conducted with two SENCos at their workplaces to help the researcher determine if there are weaknesses in the design of the interview and make revisions before implementing the main study. Also, to ensure correct use of the audio-recording device, interviews were audio-recorded. This pilot study enhanced the researcher's interpersonal skills and increased the researcher's experience in interviewing as she is the main data collection instrument (Brinkmann and Kvale 2015).

3.8. Reliability and Validity:

Regardless of the type of the research, validity and reliability are concerns that can be approached throughout the research by drawing careful attention to a study's conceptualization and the way in which the data are collected, analyzed, and interpreted, and the way in which the findings are presented. The validity of data can be defined as the degree to what extent the information gathered measure what the study intends to measure to present accurate interpretations and credible conclusions (Creswell 2014) whereas "Reliability is the extent to which a test or procedure produces similar results under constant conditions on all occasions." (Bell and Waters, 2014 p.121).

In this study, the researcher was aware of some probable threats to validity when using convergent mixed methods. Some of which is, as Creswell (2014) argues, the unequal sample size that may provide more of a picture on the quantitative side than the less number on the qualitative side. However, other researchers considered the unequal sample sizes is not a problem due to the fact that the intent of collecting both databases differs (one is to generalize findings and the other is to gain an in-depth perspectives) (Leung 2015).

In order to enhance the accuracy of the data, the researcher attempted to create valid and reliable instruments. An instrument reliability is closely associated with its validity. If the instrument is not reliable it cannot be valid, however, the reliability of an instrument does not depend on its validity (Creswell 2014). Consequently, as mentioned earlier in the previous sections, the researcher developed the questionnaire and interview questions based on the literature review. Interview questions were also piloted with the assistance of the dissertation supervisor. A pilot test was conducted to ensure the validity and reliability of the instruments.

To increase data validity in this study, several steps were carried out. First, mixed methods were applied to assess the trustworthiness of the study (Merriam and Tisdell 2016). Although combining and comparing different data posed a difficulty in using this kind of data collection design (Creswell 2014), the use of triangulation has been applied where data has been gathered from more than one source (Walliman 2011). Second, to check the validity and accuracy of qualitative data, member checks technique was used with interview transcripts where the final transcripts were sent back via emails to participants to agree on the last findings. This technique determines that findings are accurate to participants (Leatherman 2007). Third, to establish the validity of quantitative data, the researcher focused on whether the scores on the questionnaire can be used to draw meaningful and useful inferences and have positive consequences when they are used in practice (Humbley & Zumbo, 1996 in Creswell 2014). Fourth, the final findings were compared to other related studies such as Crowther et al. (2001), Agalotis & Kalyva (2010) and Garner (1996). These steps assisted the researcher in determining that data are relevant to and representative of the research question.

To check the reliability of the quantitative data, reliability tests were conducted using IBM's SPSS software (see chapter 4). On the other hand, the reliability of the qualitative data was

determined by using the interview protocol to maintain consistency throughout the conducted interviews. qualitative data findings were compared to check the consistency of the questions responses. Leung (2015) argues that "the essence of reliability for qualitative research lies with consistency".

3.9 Ethical Considerations

While conducting this research, ethical issues had been anticipated to all research stages. The researcher looked for required ethical approval to ensure that the research adheres to accepted ethical standards. First, a permission letter was sent via email to obtain approval of individuals and gain access to all of the participated schools (See appendix 5). Second, an informed consent letter, whose elements are adapted from Sarantakos (2005 in Creswell 2014), was attached with the questionnaire for the participants to understand the provisions of the research before they provided data (See appendix 1). Ethical considerations such as anonymity and confidentiality were also encompassed in the informed consent letter. Bell and Waters (2014 p.49) argue that "the informed consent procedure reduces any legal liability of the researcher." Third, the interview protocol were read out at the start of the interview for the interviewee to understand their rights before any data collecting began. Interview transcripts were sent back to the interviewees to omit or rephrase their statements and agree on final findings. In these litigious times, the researcher ensured the participants' rights and her own position as well.

3.10. Summary:

This mixed methods research design aims to investigate perceptions regarding the role of the SENCo in the private schools and challenges that have an impact on the SENCo's role. The questionnaire used to quantitatively measure teachers' perceptions about the SENCo's roles and responsibilities as well as to qualitatively identify challenges that might affect the SENCo's role. Semi-structured interviews were used to indentify SENCos' views about their role and challenges that they may face in their workplaces from their own experiences.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Findings

4.1 Introduction

This study aims to identify the role of the SENCo in the private schools in the UAE and challenges that influence this role and prevent SENCos from effectively undertaking their roles. Convergent mixed methods was adopted to simultaneously gather both qualitative and quantitative data. A questionnaire was distributed to quantitatively collect data regarding teachers' perceptions about the role of the SENCo and semi-structured interviews were conducted with SENCos to gather qualitative data.

In this chapter, quantitative and qualitative data analysis and findings will be displayed whereby IBM's Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used to analyze quantitative data and qualitative data was analyzed thematically.

4.2. Demographic Information

This section presents the distribution of all participants according to their demographics such as gender, age, experience, highest degree, and current position. A total of 85 participants were involved in this study ((23.5%) SEND teachers, (70.7%) regular teachers, and (5.8%) SENCos) working in three different private schools in the UAE. As for the gender, most of the participants are females (83%) followed by the male participants (17%). The participants' age ranged from 20 to more than 50 as follow: (60.2 %) aged between 30-39 followed by (21.6%) aged between 20-29 followed by (14.8%) aged between 40-49 and finally (3.4%) whose ages are 50 and more. The large minority of the participants have years of experience more than 10 years (42%) followed by 6-10 years (28.4%) and then 3-5 years (22.7%) and finally 1-2 years (6.8%). Regarding the highest degree that the participants hold, the majority of the participants hold a Bachelor's degree (59%) followed by (26.1%) holding Masters degree, (13.7%) holding a high diploma and finally (1.1%) holding a PhD degree.

In summary, the large majority of the study sample were female regular teachers. The ages of the majority of the sample (60.0%) ranged between 30-39. The years of experience of the large

minority of them (42%) is more than 10. The majority of the study sample holds a Bachelor's degree (59%). The sample study distribution is displayed in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Information

Distribution of all demographic data for sample size:

Item	Gender	Age	Experience	Highest degree	Current Position
Male	15 (17%)				
Female	73 (83%)				
20 – 29			19 (21.6%)		
30 – 39			53 (60.2%)		
40 – 49			13(14.8%)		
50 and more			3(3.4%)		
1 – 2			6 (6.8%)		
3 – 5			20 (22.7%)		
6 – 10			25 (28.4%)		
More than 10			37 (42%)		
BA				52(59%)	
High Diploma				12 (13.7%)	
MA				23 (26.1%)	
PhD				1 (1.1%)	
SEND teacher					20 (23.5%)
Regular teacher					60 (70.7%)
SENCo					5 (5.8%)
Total	85	85	85	85	85

4.3 Quantitative Data:

4.3.1 Teachers' Responses to the Quantitative Statements in the Questionnaire:

This section includes data analysis for section B in the questionnaire used to collect quantitative data in attempting to answer the first research question: What are the teachers' perceptions regarding the role of the SENCo in the private schools in the UAE? 80 questionnaires were returned back and used in data analysis stage. This indicates that participants were relatively interested in the research purpose.

Section B in the questionnaire contains statements for seven factors in which every factor presents an area of the SENCos' roles and responsibilities. Participants had to respond to questions in a Likert scale type where (SD) is strongly disagree(1 point), (D) is disagree(2 points), (N) is neutral (3 points), (A) is agree (4 points) and (SA) is strongly agree (5 points).

The responses of the teachers (N=80) will be illustrated in bar graphs to observe teachers' perceptions regarding the roles and responsibilities of the SENCo. The data will be analyzed based on the seven factors where statements of every factor were computed. Seven bar graphs were created to present responses for every statement of each factor. Y axis in every bar graph shows the percentage of the responses in each statement while X axis shows the statements (ST) in the questionnaire. A detailed table that contains information about responses to all questionnaire statements is included in (appendix 6). Means and standard deviations for all statements are included in (appendix 7).

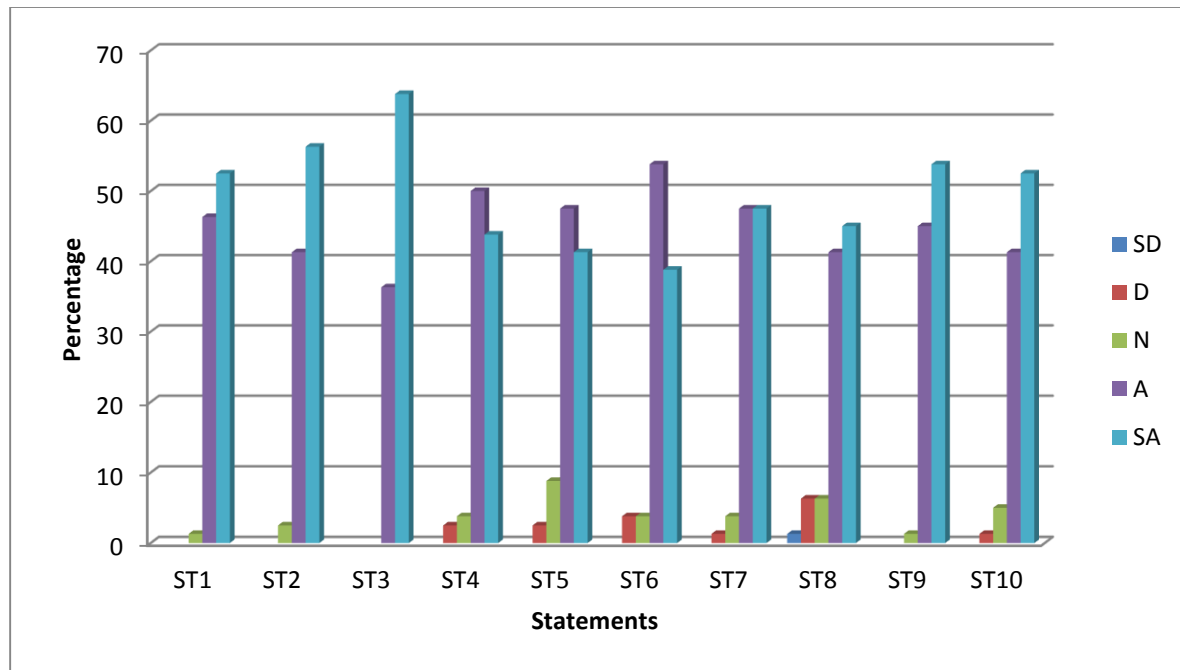


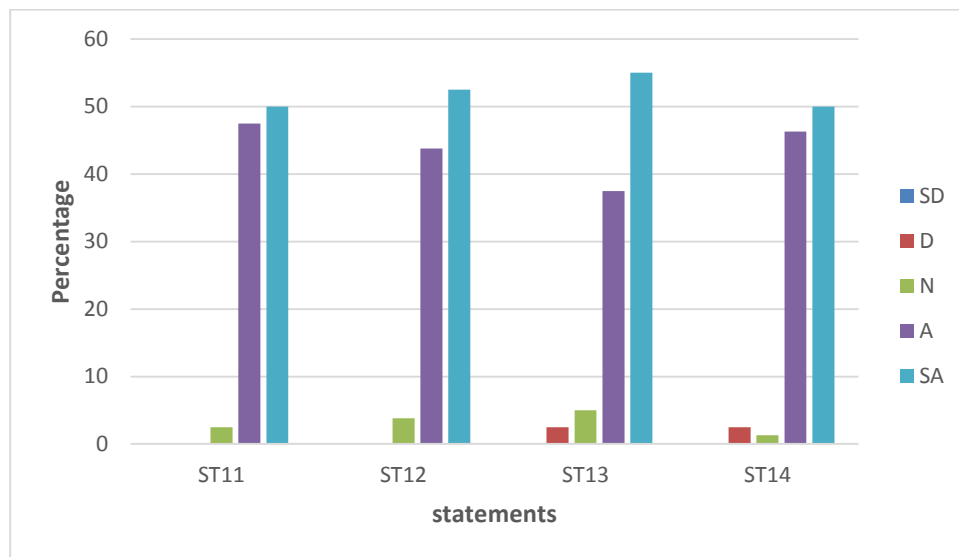
Figure 3: Factor 1; Educational Provisions to SEND Students

This bar graph presents teachers' responses to factor (1) statements that specify the role of the SENCo in providing educational provisions to SEND students where the SENCo is responsible for implementing day-to-day educational provisions to SEND students by monitoring and evaluating SEND provisions, making required modification, adaptation and accommodation in addition to managing IEPs and ALPs. Ten statements were included under this factor. Statistics presented in figure (3) show that the majority of respondents strongly agreed (49.50%) or agreed (45%) with this role followed by (3.63%) who were neutral, then (1.75%) who disagreed and then (0.13%) who strongly disagreed with a mean of 4.46 (SD= .641) for all statements (1-10).

The statements of factor (1) were categorized under (3) items where they were computed to summarize main findings as shown in table (3). The highest mean is for item (1) which points out the SENCo's role in monitoring and evaluating day-to-day special educational programs (M=4.56, SD=.521) followed by the mean of item (3) which signifies the role of the SENCo in managing IEPs and ALPs (M=4.54, SD=.701) and finally the mean of item (2) which identifies the SENCo's responsibilities in making appropriate and required modifications, adaptation and accommodations to meet individual needs (M=4.3, SD= .703).

Table 2: Data Analysis of the Three Items of Factor 1

Factor (1) Items	Statements	N	Mean	SD
1. monitoring and evaluating SEND provisions	ST1-ST3	80	4.56	.521
2. modification, adaptation and accommodations	ST4- ST6	80	4.3	.703
3. managing IEPs and ALPs	ST7-ST10	80	4.54	.701
Total	ST1-10		4.46	.641

**Figure 4: Factor 2; Keeping Register**

Teachers' perceptions regarding the SENCOs' responsibilities in keeping SEND register is illustrated in figure (4). This factor consists of four statements (11-14). The figure shows that almost all of the respondents (95.63%) chose point 4 or 5 from the five-point Likert scale (agree's) followed by (3.13%) who were neutral followed by (1.25%) who disagreed. The mean of factor (2) responses were measured ($M=4.46$, $SD=.622$).

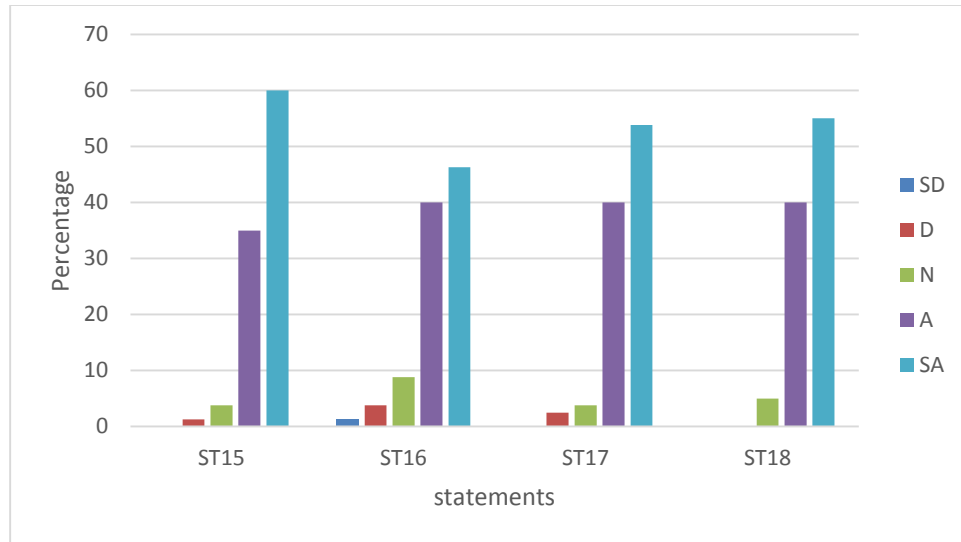


Figure 5: Factor 3; Working in Liaison with Colleagues and Fellow Teachers

Figure (5) displays statistics regarding teachers' perceptions about the SENCos' role in working with colleagues and fellow teachers. This factor consists of four statements summarizing the SENCos' responsibilities in collaborating with school staff to better serve students with SEND. Figure (5) shows that almost all participants (92.5%) strongly agreed or agreed with factor 3 as one of the SENCo's role followed by (5.31%) who were neutral, then (1.88%) who disagreed and finally (0.31%) who strongly disagreed . the responses of factor (3) statements were computed to come up with a mean of 4.43 (SD= .709).



Figure 6: Factor 4; Working in Liaison with Parents

(95.41%) of participants, as can be seen in figure(6), chose either agree or strongly agree from the questionnaire (57.08% and 38.33% respectively). This indicates that almost all participants stress the role of the SENCo in working in liaison with parents (factor4). (2.92%) were neutral, (0.42%) disagreed and (1.25%) strongly disagreed. The three statements of this factor were computed to measure the mean of the responses ($M= 4.49$, $SD= .696$).

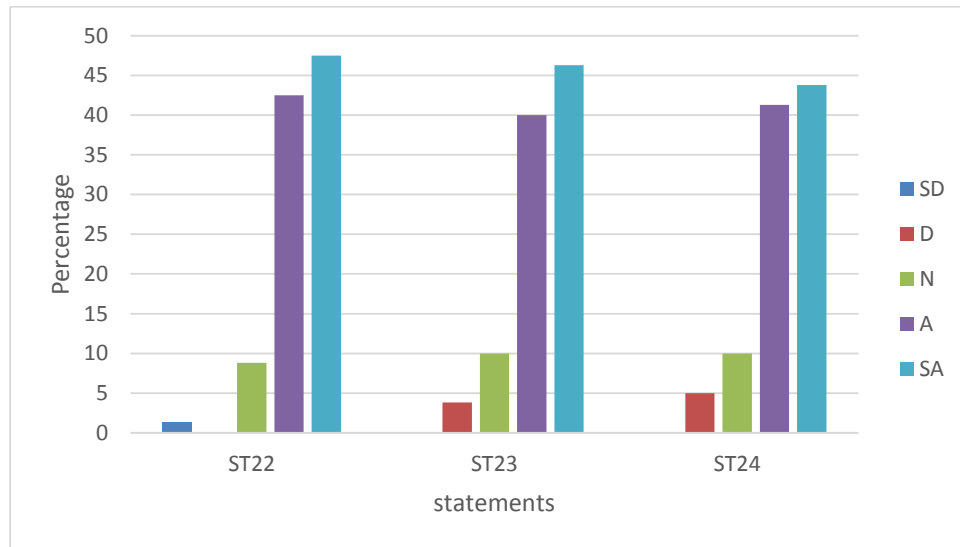


Figure 7: Factor 5; Working in Liaison with External Agencies

Figure (7) illustrates the analysis of gathered data regarding the role of the SENCo in working with external agencies (factor 5). This factor includes three statements that identify the SENCos' responsibilities in this area. Based on the results of the statements responses that were computed, statistics revealed that the large minority of respondents (45.83) strongly agreed with factor (5) followed by (41.25%) who agreed followed by (9.58%) who were neutral followed by (2.92%) who disagreed and (.42%) who strongly disagreed. the mean and standard deviation of factor (5) were measured ($M=4.29$, $SD= .791$).

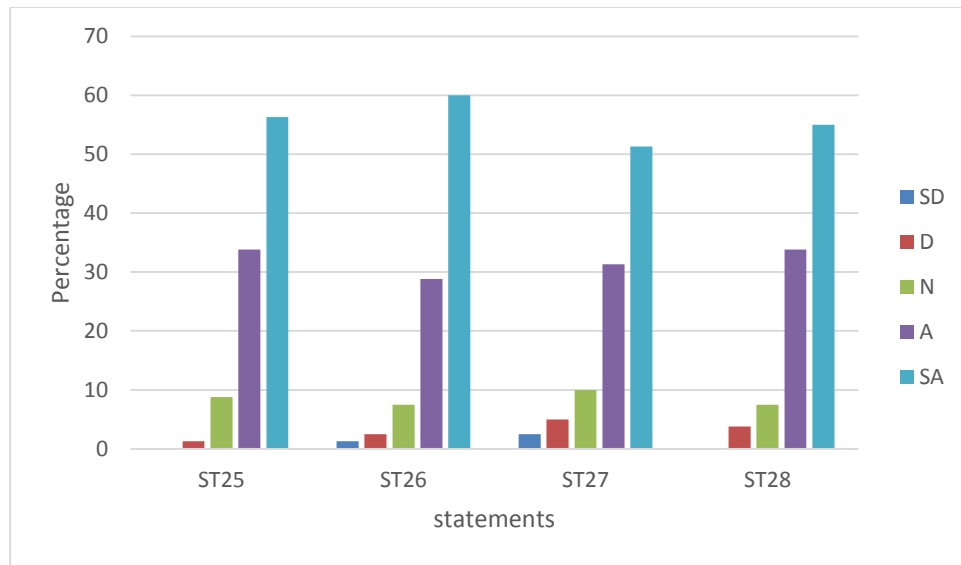


Figure 8: Factor 6; Contribution to Knowledge Dissemination and In-service Training

As can be seen from figure (8) which displays the data of factor(6), the majority of the participants (55.63%) strongly agreed with the role of the SENCo in contributing to and providing in-service training to parents and school staff to enhance knowledge and skills of special education. (31.88%) agreed with this role followed by (8.44%) who were neutral, (3.13%) who disagreed and finally (0.94%) who strongly disagreed. Four statements of this factor were computed with a mean of 4.38 (SD= .840).

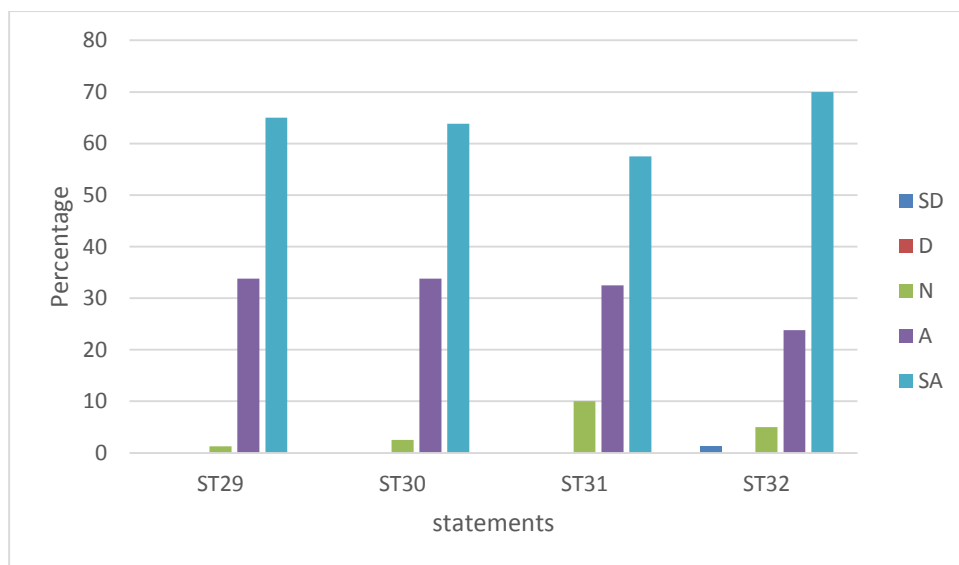


Figure 9: Factor 7; Professional Development

It is clear from figure (7) that almost all participants chose points 4 or 5 which indicates agreements with factor (7) that signifies the SENCo's responsibility in engaging in ongoing professional development to be updated and more knowledgeable about the field of special education. The responses of four statements were computed to analyze the data of this factor. (64.06%) strongly agreed with this role followed by (30.94%) who agreed, then (4.69%) who were neutral and finally (0.31%) who strongly disagreed. The responses mean of this factor = 4.58 (SD= .612).

4.3.2 Reliability Test

As pointed out earlier in chapter 3, validity and reliability has to be taken into consideration when developing research instruments. Validity is a necessary but not sufficient condition of a measure (Field 2013). A second consideration is reliability. To look at reliability, the questionnaire items should produce consistent results with the overall questionnaire (Field 2013). To be valid the instrument (in this study the questionnaire) must first be reliable. therefore, the researcher used statistical methods to determine reliability. Cronbach's alpha, which is the most common measure of the scale reliability (Field 2013), was used in this study to check reliability.

Cronbach's alpha is presented as a number between 0 and 1. Tavakol & Dennick (2011) point out that different reports suggest an acceptable alpha's value ranging from 0.70 to 0.95. They say that a low alpha's value indicates a low number of questions or poor correlations between items. On the other hand, as they add, a high alpha's value indicates redundancies or duplications as some items in a questionnaire are testing the same questions but in different ways. Therefore, it would be recommended to shorten the test length.

Reliability tests were conducted to determine the internal consistency of the Likert scale questionnaire used in this study and to assess the homogeneity of the questionnaire items. First, an overall reliability test was conducted to determine the reliability of the questionnaire on all statements (32 statements) and the value was .909 which is considered to be very high reliable (see appendix 8.1). Cronbach's alpha value for every statement was > 0.90 . This indicates very high reliability for every statement (see appendix 8.2). A reliability test was also conducted on each of the factors (variables) as presented in table 2. The values ranged between 0.774 and

0.860 which indicates high reliability for all factors. In summary, the reliability test results suggest that all of the items are reliable and the entire items of the questionnaire are internally consistent.

Table 3: Test of Reliability:

Factors	Value Cronbach's Alpha	item
1. Educational provisions to SEND students	0.860	10
2. Keeping register	0.774	4
3. Working in liaison with colleagues and fellow teachers	0.831	4
4. Working in liaison with parents	0.810	3
5. Working in liaison with external agencies	0.798	3
6. Contribution to knowledge dissemination and in-services training	0.825	4
7. Professional development	0.885	4

4.4. Qualitative Results

4.4.1. Teachers' Responses to the Qualitative Question in the Questionnaire:

This part of the questionnaire (section C) includes one qualitative question to explore teachers' perceptions regarding the challenges that may prevent a SENCo from effectively undertaking his role and responsibilities. This question is designed to answer the third research question : What challenges may prevent SENCos from effectively undertaking their role in the private school in the UAE? The researcher reduced the answers to this question to manageable and meaningful categories (Merriam & Tisdell 2016). Since most of the respondents answered this question using words or phrases, not statements (e.g. time, dealing with parents, lack of resources ... etc.), the researcher wrote up the analysis of the answers as a quantitative analysis in addition to writing some qualitative statements that support each category (Gillham 2007) . Teacher's responses were categorized into seven categories (A-G) as follows:

A. Time Management

Almost all of the teachers (98%) pointed out that the lack of allocated time is considered to be one of the main challenges that SENCos face while they are carrying their duties. Challenges for the management of SENCos' time can be summarized in teachers' responses as follows:

"The other unforeseen demands encroached on the time allocated to SENCos' duties is challenge."

"Time is the biggest challenge."

B. Limited Funding

Almost all of the teachers (95%) stressed that the limited funding is one of the significant challenges for the SENCos to enact their duties. This challenge causes a shortage of required resources, materials, and support staff (e.g. SEND teachers and TAs). The following are examples of some teachers responses:

"Not having enough numbers of TAs and SEND teachers who help control SEND student's behavior and improve their academic performance."

"SENCos are not getting resources to help the increased numbers of students with exceptionalities and support their teachers."

C. Lack of Parental Awareness and Their Support

Lack of parental awareness and their support is emphasized by almost all of the participants (94%) as a main challenge that affects the SENCos' role. The following are some quotes from the participants' responses:

"Lack of parental awareness about special education."

"The absence of the collaborative work between SENCos and parents of children with SEND is a main challenge."

D. Dual Responsibilities and Workload

The majority of respondents (50%) believed that the workload is another challenge that SENCos may face. Examples from some responses are presented below:

"Having several other management responsibilities. Besides being a SENCo, the SENCo in our school is also the math head of department."

"Teaching responsibilities; SENCos in many schools could be SEND teachers or regular teachers at the same time."

E. The Big Number of Students in the Classrooms

Most of the teachers (80%) said that the big number of students in one classroom is one of the challenges that affect the SENCos' work. The following are some examples gathered in the questionnaire:

"The big number of students in one classroom affects the SENCos' role in working collaboratively with teachers especially if we have severe cases like an autistic child."

"Having big sizes of classrooms with children with SEND is a challenge for SENCos and teachers."

F. Cultural Issues

Cultural issues and attitudes toward inclusion is also a challenge from the participants' perspectives. (60%) of participants believed that parents' and teachers' attitudes as well as some cultural issues impact the SENCos' role.

"The negative attitudes of some teachers toward SEND students affect the teaching and learning process."

"The attitude of denying from some parents"

"Cultural believes and thoughts in this country [the UAE] is a considerable challenge."

G. Multilingualism

(30%) of participants indicates that multilingualism (using two or more languages) is a considerable challenge that affects the SENCos role in identifying SEND students. The following is an example of one of the teachers' responses:

"Since many students in some schools, like ours, are ELL [English as second language learners], students may be misidentified because they are really low in the English language. Therefore, they could be overlooked in different situations."

4.4.2 Results from SENCos' Interview

The researcher analyzed the qualitative data thematically where findings that are relevant to the research purpose were categorized (Merriam and Tisdell 2016). Categories/themes were derived from interview transcripts based on participants responses. Two categories were generated to summarize findings regarding (a) the role of the SENCo and (b) main challenges affecting their roles. The interviews were conducted with five SENCos.

A. The Role of the SENCo

The data that falls under this category was investigated through the first and second questions in the interview (see appendix 4) which aims to answer the second research question: How do SENCos view their work? and support the quantitative data regarding the role of the SENCo. Data analysis results indicated that the participated SENCos view their work based on their own experiences and reflections. Three SENCos asserted that special education is a shared responsibility and their main role is to engage parents, school management and teachers in order for inclusion to be effectively implemented. The following are some responses about how SENCos view their work:

Dana: *"I view my work as a facilitator who works collaboratively with all involved partners."*

Muna: *"I try to bridge the gap between the school management and teachers just to go toward inclusion together and share ideas and best practices. My main role is to make everyone involved in curriculum development, designing activities, and serving SEND students."*

Jasmine: *"My work basically is to make all stakeholders (parents, teachers, and principals) sit on one table to maximize the opportunities provided to SEND students".*

On the other hand Janit view her work as a managerial task. She provides teachers with procedures for assessment and identification of SEND students. She said:

"Providing teachers with all needed procedures to identify and assess students with SEND is mainly what I focus on. It's all about managerial tasks."

The last SENCo, Barbara, stated that she focuses on teaching and supporting students in the classrooms. She mentioned:

"I support students with SEND and plan appropriate programs. I work closely with their teachers and provide them with teaching strategies to meet individual needs. I respond to concerns and volunteer to help teachers in classroom with strong commitment."

SENCOs were also asked about the responsibilities they are currently undertaking in their schools. Findings revealed all of the participated SENCOs (N=5) agreed that establishing the day-to-day educational provisions provided to SEND students, keeping SEND register, and working in liaison with teachers and parents are the key roles that they undertake in their workplaces. Samples from participants responses are as follow:

Dana: *"Identifying SEND students and looking at referral forms, working with the parents of SEND students, working with teachers who have SEND students writing IEPs and ALPs and monitoring the implementation process, updating data and related documents of SEND students....."*

Jasmine: *"I assess children and clarify their needs. I figure out the kinds of support and teaching techniques I also meet parents and train them to be aware of the challenges and how to deal with SEND students..... facilitate the IEP in each subject. I monitor the implementation of the daily SEND provisions.that I have updated documents for SEND students. I write individualized reports for each student at the end of each term"*

Four SENCOs out of five added that working with external agencies as part of their work. They said:

Janit: *"I also refer students to external agencies when needed for more clarifications about the student's case."*

Dana: *".....working with handicapped and rehabilitation centers if necessary....."*

Muna: *" I refer to other centers and invite them to come 3 times a week and they offer to do the assessment."*

Jasmine: *" I communicate with external agencies to know what kind of recommendation we can apply in our school."*

In terms of providing in-service training (Question no.7), four SENCos out of five stressed that this role is considered to be one of their responsibilities. They said:

Dana: *"The training happens 2-3 times a year in both languages English and Arabic. I do this in person....."*

Janit: *"..... it is one of my responsibility."*

Muna: *" I used to train teachers and parents."*

Jasmine: *" Providing training is one of my priorities."*

On the other hand Barbara mentioned:

".....I feel that I am not well-prepared to provide training for people. I don't think that providing training is in my area of responsibility."

Data yielded from (question No.8) indicated that all SENCos (N=5) agreed that they are responsible for working on their professional development. The following are some quotes from the interviews:

Dana: *"I regularly attend workshops."*

Janit: *"I actually attend regular SENCO network meetings ... in addition to SENCO Conferences...."*

Barbara: *"I have to participate in workshops and read about exceptional learning needs."*

Muna: *"I read a lot! I attend many workshops and conferences...."*

Jasmine: *"I have to read and attend workshops and conferences."*

B. Challenges that Affect the SENCOs' Roles:

Responses to questions (3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11 and 12) were analyzed to identify challenges that SENCOs may face while performing their tasks. Data from these questions will answer the third research question: What challenges may prevent SENCOs from effectively undertaking their role in the private schools in the UAE? SENCO's responses (N=5) were categorized as follow:

SENCOs (N=5) stated that significant challenges have been created while undertaking their roles and responsibilities in coordinating daily SEND provisions, maintaining SEND register, liaising with parents, teachers and external agencies, in addition to planning for and providing in-service training.

In terms of coordinating SEND provisions such as monitoring the progress of individual students, making required modifications, adaptations and accommodations, and managing IEPs and ALPs, the participated SENCOs stated that the management of their time, the big number of students in one class, teachers' negative attitude due to their workload, lack of ability or lack of confidence when dealing with SEND students, the complexity of certain cases, lack of special curriculum, lack of resources, lack of staff, lack of specialists, lack of financial support, lack of using assistive technology, multilingualism and the small size of classrooms are the main challenges. Samples from respondents are as follow:

Dana said, *"Regarding making appropriate accommodations, the big number of students in small classrooms is one of the challenges."*

Janit said: *"One of the challenges is the cooperation with the teachers."* She added, *"The teachers' attitude and their workload would prevent them from keeping the IEPs updated"*. She also mentioned, *"to what extent the teacher is able to differentiate"* would affect the kind of provision provided to SEND students. Regarding making appropriate modification, Janit pointed out that *".... the lack of special curriculum is a challenge. In certain cases, it is not practical to modify the current curriculum."*

Barbara said, *"There are not enough qualified staff in the special education who can also improve the level of SEND students and monitor their progress."* She added that *"Teachers attitude and their acceptance for the idea of inclusion"* is a barrier.

Muna said, *"The lack of special educators and specialists, lack of financial support, lack of using assistive technology, and lack of parents' support affect negatively on monitoring the progress of the SEND children."*

Jasmine argued that, *"The big number of students, the lack of staff..... dealing with teachers who are not trained enough..... the limited time..... lack of resources..... the communicating language"* are the challenges that affect monitoring the progress of individual SEND students. *"Another challenge here is also the lack of resources that facilitate the teachers' work."* as Jasmine added.

The five SENCOs asserted that the management of their time is the biggest challenge when undertaking the role of managing the daily SEND provisions. Barbara said, *"the main challenge here is time management."* Jasmine supports this point by stating that *".....the issue here is the limited time."*

Regarding the SENCO's role in maintaining SEND register, the participants (N=5) declared that time limitation and lack of using assistive technology are main barriers to keep SEND register. Samples from participants responses are as follow:

Dana said, *"Everything is regarding time limitation. Lack of using assistive technology is also a barrier."*

Jasmine said, *"There is [no] enough time to keep everything updated. One more thing here is the lack of using technology that would save a lot of time...."*

Participants (N=2) emphasized that keeping SEND register is a shared responsibility. Barbara argued that *"Teachers and SENCOs has to work collaboratively to keep SEND register updated."* Similarly, Dana said, *"I think that the documentation process should be a shared responsibility."*

Referring to the role of the SENCO in liaising with teachers, parents and external agencies, SENCOs identified some the challenges in undertaking this role. All SENCOs (N= 5) pointed out that time limitation and teachers' attitude affects the cooperation between SENCOs and teachers.

Dana said, *"I always try my best to keep in touch with them but it is all about time limitation"*.

Janite said, *"Teachers are scared. They feel that having SEN child is a burden..... it means extra work to them. From the teachers' perspective, having a SEND child could be a source of stress."*

Additionally, all SENCOs agreed that lack of parental awareness, cultural issues, parent's attitude, and the absence of the parent's roles are considered to be barriers to implementing inclusion.

Jasmine said, *"..... working with parents, lack of parental awareness and the absence of their support are barriers."*

Dana said, *"Regarding working with parents..... Lack of their knowledge in the special education and cultural issues are the main challenges in this area."*

Regarding working with external agencies, adding extra fees, over-diagnosing or unclear diagnoses are problems when referring SEND students to these agencies. All of the SENCOs said that these agencies are being profitable agencies. Samples from participants responses are as follow:

Janit said, *"these agencies over diagnose a child to get more money. so it's basically being commercial."*

Muna said, *".....the services provided by these agencies are very expensive."*

Barbara: "They view special education as a source for collecting money rather than an opportunity for learning."

In respect of planning for and providing in-service training, four SENCos identified two challenges to enact this role: time limitation and teachers' attitude. For example:

Dana mentioned, "I face challenges with the attitude of the teachers.... ."

Janit insisted that ".....time is the biggest challenge."

Participants added some other challenges related to the UAE context. For instance, the lack of a unified comprehensive SEND policy that can be implemented within UAE schools.

Jasmine argued that schools have their own ways in serving SEND students. She said "*I have to create my own story to achieve my targets.*"

Muna also mentioned that "*.....even the requirements for accepting special needs are different from one school to another.*" She added that "*Unfortunately, there is no unified program for SEND students.*" This puts SENCos in difficult situations from her own perspective.

4.5. Summary:

The coefficient of variation was measured to determine the variability of participants' responses to the questionnaire statements. The result indicates that respondents have a consistent attitude toward the role of the SENCos (CV=.15). Almost all of the teachers were either strongly agreed or agreed (53.96% and 38.55% respectively) with the seven main areas of the role of the SENCos (the seven factors in the questionnaire) followed by (5.38%) who were neutral, then (1.62%) who disagreed and finally (0.48%) who strongly disagreed (M= 4.43, SD= .701). The qualitative results support the quantitative results in terms of identifying the role of the SENCos. Challenges that affect the SENCos' role were realized after analyzing the quantitative data.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

This study aimed to investigate teachers' perceptions regarding the role of the SENCo and challenges affecting this role in the private schools in the UAE. Additionally, it intended to allow SENCos express themselves and explain how they view their work and challenges they regularly encounter in their workplaces. The present study adopted a mixed method design using both qualitative and quantitative data collection. The role of the SENCo and challenges influencing the role were examined based on the answers given by the teachers throughout a questionnaire that was distributed to collect both qualitative and quantitative data to measure the participants' perceptions. Interviews were conducted with SENCos to gather qualitative information.

This chapter will highlight the main findings that were presented in Chapter 4. The findings will be compared to other studies in the literature. Final conclusion, recommendations for future practice and further study in the field and the study limitations will be presented in this chapter.

5.2 Discussion

The SENCos' roles and responsibilities in addition to challenges influencing the SENCos' performance were examined (a) based on the participants responses (b) in the context of the seven following factors: (1) educational provisions to SEND students, (2) Keeping SEND register, (3) working in liaison with colleagues and fellow teachers, (4) working in liaison with parents, (5) working in liaison with external agencies, (6) contribution to knowledge dissemination and in-service training and (7) professional development.

5.2.1 The Role of the SENCo from the Perspective of Teachers:

With reference to the first factor defining the SENCos' role in operating the daily SEND provisions such as monitoring and evaluating SEND provisions, making required modifications, adaptations and accommodations, and managing IEPs and ALPs, the majority of teachers considered this role as a significant role. It could be argued that the reason behind this agreement is the idea that everything related to SEND students is the SENCo's responsibility. Although all

participated SENCos agreed that these responsibilities fall in their area of roles, three of them asserted the idea that implementing inclusive practices is a shared responsibility. As Emanuelsson (2001) indicated, SEND students and SENCos can be marginalized if SENCos are to be left alone to fulfill these responsibilities. Morewood (2012) argued that implementing daily SEND practices is a shared responsibility between teachers, SENCos and school management. In other countries such as UK, concurrent requirement that all teachers take the responsibility for SEND students in their classrooms facilitate the SENCo role to be organizationally more strategic to "deliver inclusive school cultures as a matter of compliance" (Done, Murphy and Bedford 2016). Specific measure in terms of teachers' training and professional development could be taken into consideration when developing SEND educational policy to introduce SENCo position.

In relation to the second factor of SENCos' role, keeping SEND register, almost all teachers agree that this duty belongs to SENCos. This again reflects their belief that SENCo is the person who should take care of all related issues to SEND students. However, updating data and related documents of the students receiving SEND services is also a shared responsibility. This goes in line with what some SENCos in this study suggested about sharing the responsibility of keeping SEND IEPs and related documents updated. Pearson, Mitchell and Rapti (2015) pointed out that SENCos are responsible for overseeing the records of SEND students in collaboration with teachers.

Regarding the third factor of SENCo's role, working in liaison with colleagues and fellow teachers, findings revealed that almost all teachers regarded this role as one of the SENCos' responsibility. Moreover, all of the participated SENCos saw this role as one of their vital duty. It can be argued that there should be a consistent collaboration between SENCos and teachers for exchanging information related to SEND students. SENCos are responsible for facilitating the implementation process of inclusion. They have to provide support and consultation about individual cases in order to make the right decisions (Lindqvist 2013). In order for SENCos to be productive in this area of responsibility, they have to develop their interpersonal skills throughout specialized training (Szwed 2007). Decision makers can consider these elements when selecting and training SENCos.

With respect to the fourth factor, working in liaison with parents, teachers perceived this role as an important role that has to be undertaken by the SENCo. Additionally, all SENCos in this study proposed that this is also one of their duties. Rosen Webb (2011) argued that the role of the SENCo can be described advisory in providing information and working with parents. Parents can be considered as a first educator for their children, therefore, SENCos are expected to support this group of people and provide them with necessary training in the field of special education.

Regarding the fifth factor, working in liaison with external agencies, findings revealed that teachers regarded that this role falls under the SENCo's duties. Also almost all SENCos agreed that they are responsible for collaborating with external agencies. Crowther et. al (1997 in DfE, 1997) suggested that it is useful for SENCos to spend time finding out about external agencies and the services they can offer. To make liaison more efficient, regular meetings, which can be attended not just by the SENCo but also by members of school management team, can be conducted to press for clear information and decisions related to SEND students.

In terms of the sixth factor, contribution to knowledge dissemination and in-service training, the majority of the SNED and regular teachers seem to believe that SENCos are responsible for developing and facilitating the implementation of training programs for teaching staff and parents to promote awareness about inclusive provisions. This role was perhaps regarded by teachers as one of the SENCos role due to the fact that teachers expect SENCos, as experts, to undertake the initiatives to develop training programs in their field of expertise. Wedell (2012) mentioned that SENCos are expected to take the responsibility of training school staff to serve SEND students because they are the experts in this field the leader of inclusion.

The qualitative findings from the interviews revealed that all participated SENCos believed in in-service training, however, it did not seem that they are all comfortable providing the training themselves. Most of them felt positive regarding this role, but one SENCo doubt her ability to undertake this role - either because of her experience as an in-service trainer or lack of expertise

in special needs education. This conflict attitudes regarding this role has to be dealt with prior to introducing the SENCo roles in the UAE education system.

In reference to the seventh factor, professional development, almost all teachers saw that the SENCo is responsible for engaging in ongoing professional development such as participating in conferences and attending workshops and training courses. Additionally, all SENCos agree that they have to develop their professional skills. These thoughts are in line with Rosen-Webb (2011) who asserted that the SENCo professional development is very important due to the fact that it enhances the SENCos ability to develop and support good policies at schools. SENCos need to have ongoing training in the field of special education in order to manage their highly complex task (Evans 2013).

5.2.2 How Do SENCos View Their Work?

Findings from the qualitative data gathered from the interviews revealed differences in the way SENCos viewed their work. Their individual stories reflect variation in SENCos role. Three SENCos viewed their work as facilitators whose main role is to make inclusion as a whole-school approach. They asserted the idea that inclusion is a shared responsibility between teachers, school management, parents and SENCos. On the other hand, two SENCos tended to adopt a restrictive focus. While one of them focuses on undertaking the responsibility of carrying out SEND provisions herself, the other one described her role as a managerial task as she is responsible for providing teachers with they need to serve SEND students. This variety of views reflects incoherent professional context for SENCos as developing practitioners. This is perhaps because of the variation in the SENCo status in schools and lack of understanding about what responsibilities SENCos should undertake. Kearns (2005) argued that "The status of the person appointed may signal the importance of the role and the expected outcomes." The ambiguity surrounding the SENCo status in schools has been highlighted in attempts to clarify the professional status where SENCos variously empowered by school management (Mackenzie, 2007) as well as the hierarchical status where SENCos are part of the school management team (Pearson, 2008). Decision makers have to take this ambiguity surrounding the SENCo role into account when identifying exact responsibilities, yet flexible based on different school contexts.

The role of the SENCo has to an emphasis on the important strategic role in advocating and promoting special educational needs in all school aspects by ensuring quality provisions are taking place in collaboration with school staff to co-ordinate resources (Tissot, 2013).

5.2.3. Challenges that Affect the SENCo's Role:

Qualitative findings from this study revealed that SENCos have been facing a number of significant challenges in managing their role. These fell into four main areas:

- Time management
- Managing SEND provisions and SEND register
- Liaison with teachers, parents and external agencies
- Developing in-service training
- Issues related to the UAE context

Regarding the first area of challenge, time management, almost all teachers and SENCos saw that implementing inclusive practices has created significant challenges for the management of SENCos' time. This challenge can be presented when SENCos carry out their duties in operating day-to-day SEND provisions, overseeing SEND register, liaising with teachers, parents and external agencies, and contributing to in-service training. A SENCo in this study has several other management responsibilities which make the other unexpected demands influence the allocated time to SENCo duties.

Findings from a research carried out by NASEN (National Association for Special Educational Needs) in the UK, the unrealistic allocated time were highlighted by the participated SENCos as the most significant challenge inhibiting the SENCos performance (Pearson 2008). Szwed (2007) support this argument by stating that restrictions on SENCos' time present a real tension in undertaking their responsibilities effectively. It would be recommended here, that prior officially introducing the SENCos' role in the UAE educational system, a time framework can be identified.

With reference to the second area of challenge, managing SEND provisions and SEND register, the big number of students in small classrooms, teachers' attitude, lack of special curriculum, complexity of certain cases, lack of resources, lack of staff, lack of specialists, lack of financial

support, and lack of using assistive technology are considered to be major challenges that hinder the SENCo from effectively managing daily SEND provisions, monitor the progress of SEND students and overseeing SEND register. First, teachers may have a negative attitude toward implementing daily inclusionary practices due to their workload, lack of confidence and not having the required ability when it comes to making required accommodations, adaptations and modifications (Gaad and Khan, 2007). Next, regarding the lack of resources, qualified staff, using assistive technology and financial support, Tissot (2013 p.35) pointed out that "there does seem to be a strong agreement [is] in the belief that funding for this important area is lacking". Then, the challenge of having a big number of students in small classrooms was highlighted as a main area of concern that prevents teachers from meeting individual needs in a mainstream classroom (Crowther et al. 2001, Agalotis and Kalyva 2010). Finally, in the UAE, there is no special curriculum provided for SEND students (Alborno and Gaad, 2014). This would add extra load on teachers and SENCos to modify the regular curriculum. This process becomes more complicated when dealing with complex cases of SEND students.

There is the challenge of ensuring that qualified and experienced staff are available to implement appropriate learning programs in addition to supporting the ordinary class teacher. Consideration will, therefore, need to be given to in-service training and other requirements of the teaching and non-tea SENCOs however, are mainly supposed to act as consultants and a resource to fellow teachers. It should not be assumed that they will undertake direct responsibility for all SEN students because of the specific nature and title of their post; this is not realistic or practical. Class and subject teachers have the duty to make the provision as planned in IEPs. There are implications for class teachers and coordinators in terms of time, planning, the availability of learning material and support staff. (Ramjhun 2002).

In respect to the third area of challenge, liaison with teachers, parents and external agencies, lack of parental awareness and the absence of their support, teachers' attitude, and issues related to services provided from external agencies were addressed as main areas of concerns affecting the SENCo's role. Parents play a vital role in educating their children. However, findings from several studies indicated that the lack of parental awareness about SEND provisions and the absence of their collaborative work add more barriers onto implementing inclusion in general (Gaad and Thabet 2009) and fulfilling the role of the SENCo in specific (Bowers 1996).

Regarding working with external agencies, SENCOs asserted the point that these agencies are being making-profit companies rather than educational institutes whose target is to support SEND students. This would raise considerable questions about how ethical the inclusion phenomena is in the UAE.

Regarding the fourth area of challenge, developing in-service training, teachers' attitude and their limited time were highlighted as barriers into organizing training sessions and workshops. On one hand, teachers have the belief that everything related to SEND students is the SENCO's responsibility (Agalotis and Kalyva 2010). On the other hand, teachers' and SENCOs' limited time add restrictions into developing such workshops and sessions (Crowther et. al 2001).

In reference to the fifth area of challenge, issues related to the UAE context, lack of unified SEND policy, cultural barriers and multilingualism were found as significant challenges if we put the SENCO's role in the UAE context. First, although the 'General' is considered to be the practical side of the Special Education Law in the UAE, it lacks specific guidelines and procedures to implement inclusion (Alborno and Gaad 2014). Having a unified SEND policy whose elements can be implemented across the UAE schools would provide SENCOs with guidelines to be taken into account when implementing inclusive practices. Next, social beliefs and cultural barriers to implement inclusion in the UAE, such as attitudes toward the acceptance of the inclusion idea, were investigated in several studies (e.g. Gaad 2011, Gaad 2013 and Gaad & Khan 2007). Findings from these studies revealed that applying inclusive provisions are negatively affected by such barriers. Finally, multilingualism, which means the use of more than one language, and its negative effect on the identification and assessment processes of SEND students were also emphasized by several researchers such as Ried (2009) and Wennås Brante (2013).

5.3 Conclusion

Many countries across the world support the inclusion phenomena (Arif and Gaad 2008). Legislations and laws have been introduced to guide the movement of this phenomena and protect the right of education for students with SEND (Gaad 2011). In the UAE, inclusion comes at the top of the strategic plans in all educational policies to "Ensure equal educational opportunities for all" to cope with the UAE 2021 vision (MOE. nd). Dubai strategic plan 2021 that was launched in 2014, for instance, clearly delineated the commitment to the inclusion of people with disabilities. However, when it comes to translating these legislations into practice and put them on the ground, challenges and conflict of attitudes arise. In the UAE, as inclusion has been recently implemented (Arif and Gaad 2008), general guidelines were introduced to provide a framework for inclusion and protect the Federal Law 29/2006, however, there is a lack of clear procedure to measure the implementation process (Alborno and Gaad , 2014). This would increase barriers onto implementing inclusion effectively in the area. Inclusion faces various challenges across the world. Consequently, each educational system is responsible for introducing relevant legislations and laws to provide guidance to schools and educators to formulate relevant educational policy.

To ensure effective and successful implementation of inclusionary practices, it has been suggested that every school appoint a person, such as a SENCo, with specific responsibilities for managing SEND provisions and supporting students with special needs in mainstream schools (Agalotis and Kalyva, 2010). A job description can be clearly identified to generalize key areas of SENCo role with providing flexibility in the role based on every school context. SENCos work in deferent contexts, therefore, they sometimes need to adjust their roles based on certain circumstances in order to meet individual needs and support school staff (Szwed 2007). However, having a set of generalized key roles would provide SEND students with equal opportunities in mainstream schools. Moreover, it would give clear guidelines for SENCos to follow to maintain consistency.

This study emphasis the importance of having a SENCo in every inclusive school as he/she operates at the cutting edge of implementing daily inclusive practices to meet individual needs. As Wedell (2012) said, "SENCOs' experience demonstrates both the scope for -and constraints

on- making inclusion work". Introducing SENCOs help "take care of and analyze educational difficulties at several levels in schools" (Lindqvist 2013). They ensure maintain a parallel special education system to general education in order to meet the needs of all students as the idea of inclusion suggests.

There is little research conducted in the field of special education in the UAE. Much of these research investigated attitudes towards inclusion and the challenges facing inclusion. This gives an understanding that there has been little work carried out to ensure effective practice and successful implementation. It also means that the implementation of inclusion is in its formative stage. Further research has to focus on how to develop inclusion practices and what is needed to change attitudes toward inclusion.

To strengthen relationships between the theory and practice of meeting the needs of special education, this mixed method research intended to identify the role of SENCOs and challenges facing them in the private schools in the UAE from the perspective of teachers. SENCOs views regarding their role and barriers into effectively performing their tasks were taken into consideration to have a clear picture of the status of the SENCO. Findings of this study emphasize the SENCOs' role in operating SEND provisions, overseeing SEND register, working collaboratively with parents, teachers, and external agencies, contributing to in services training, and the developing their professional skills. SENCOs need support in their difficult yet vital role (Evans 2013). However, over findings of this study revealed that there are many challenges facing SENCOs while performing their duty. These challenges can be seen as a series of hoops through which SENCOs have to jump. Recommendations for further practice and further research is presented below.

5.4 Recommendations

This study suggests that:

- providing training to teachers and parents in the field of special education seems to be important to help the SENCO operate daily SEND provisions in one hand and set clear expectations form SENCOs on the other hand.

- using the data of this study to delineate appropriate SENCo training choices and necessary educational policy measures to contribute to the successful introduction of this professional in the UAE educational system. Training SENCos in both teaching and management skills is also important to enhance their abilities to develop and support good practice at school, liaise with teachers and parents, and monitor students progress.
- key responsibilities should be identified and allocated to a specific person to promote effective SEND practice in schools in the UAE. However, providing flexibility based on different school contexts would help SENCos fit in their positions.
- for the SENCO to fulfill their role appropriately, it is recommended to identify the allocated time for SENCos to undertake their role effectively. For instance, the 2001 Code of Practice includes sections about the time required for SENCOs coordination in schools (e.g. section 5:33, p.50) (DfES, 2001).
- increasing the financial support to the field of special and inclusive education would remove many barriers that affect SENCos' performance.
- holding awareness campaign to increase people's understanding about inclusion.
- supporting teachers by both providing required materials and resources to facilitate implementing the inclusionary practices and having small number of students in one class.

5.5 Future and Further Research

As mentioned earlier, the role of the SENCo is a fairly new phenomenon in some countries. However, in many countries including the UAE, this position has not been officially introduced yet. Consequently, there is lack of contemporary research in the area of special needs coordination in the UAE. To support inclusion in general and SENCos' role in specific, further study could be conducted in the following area:

- What qualifications should a SENCO have? What personal quality should a SENCO have in order to successfully undertake their role? The SENCO identity can be investigated to ensure that effective inclusive practices are taking place. Investigating SENCos qualifications, identity and

personal quality would help the decision makers decide on the kind of training a SENCo may receive.

- The SENCO's professional and hierarchical status at schools which varies according to different school contexts (Mackenzie 2007). In terms of professional status, the SENCo should have what is called "authority of expertise" as Bush (2008 in Rosen-Webb 2011) pointed out. On the other hand the hierarchical status indicates whether or not the SENCO should be part of the Senior management team. This would help answer these questions: do the SENCO's professional and hierarchical status at schools affects the SENCos' responsibilities when carrying out the role of their positions? Is it important for the SENCO to have an authority at schools to develop SEND policies and enact their roles? To what extent being a member of Senior management team at schools help SENCos from effectively carrying out the role of the position? Enhancing the status of SENCos would ensure that a balanced curriculum with appropriate differentiation is to become a reality. Giving SENCos authority beside responsibilities in order for them to be effective and develop inclusive policies within their schools.

- Principals' and parents' perceptions regarding the role of the SENCo and challenges affecting the role could be also investigated. While parents play an important role in educating and supporting their children, principals play an important role in making decisions to lead inclusion and reduce or remove barrier into effectively implement inclusive practices.

- Perspectives from government school staff can be also investigated.

5.6 The Limitations of the Study

This study has some limitations as explained below:

1. Lack of information and studies conducted in the field of special and inclusive education in the UAE. The position of the SENCo and its job description is not officially presented in the UAE legislations and laws. Therefore, the literature that was reviewed regarding this post was about other countries which have different culture and contexts than the UAE.
2. Finding of this study cannot be generalized to government schools across the UAE emirates due to the fact that it was restricted to the private schools in Dubai.

3. The time limitation is considered to be one of the biggest challenges faced by the researcher. Therefore, this study was carried out on a small sample size of populations (N=85) in three schools in Dubai. To generalize findings the other Emirates in the UAE can be involved.

4. The number of regular teachers participated in this study is more than the number of SEND teachers. This unequal size of the sample might affect the results. Regular teachers seem to lay more emphasis than the SEND teachers on the SENCos roles. This due to the fact that SEND teachers have better knowledge in the field of special education.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: The Informed Consent Form



The Informed Consent Form

Dear all,

I am a Masters degree student at the British University in Dubai who is conducting a study about the roles and responsibilities of Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) and challenges that may prevent them from effectively undertaking their roles in the private schools in the UAE. The attached questionnaire is adapted from the Code of Practice in England and Wales (1994) in addition to the General Rules for the Provision of Special Education Programs and Services in the Public and Private Schools in the UAE (2013).

The questionnaire is designed to take SEND and regular teachers' perceptions related to the research objectives. By completing the three sections of the questionnaire, you will be part of this study. All information that will be collected in this study will be treated confidentially. your anonymity is guaranteed in the reporting of all data in any publications arising from this study. Your participation is completely voluntary.

All the data will be reported to the researcher herself, Amal Hammad. If you have any question please contact me at amal.hammad@yahoo.com.

NOTE: The questionnaire is not developed to evaluate what the SENCO is currently doing in your school. Please respond to the sections below based on your general experience, thought and opinion.

Your cooperation is highly appreciated.

Your sincerely,

The researcher

Amal Hammad

Appendix 2: Questionnaire

الجامعة
البريطانية في
دبي



The
British University
in Dubai

Questionnaire

Section A:

Q. 1	Your gender is :	Male <input type="checkbox"/>	Female <input type="checkbox"/>		
Q. 2	Your age is between:	20-29 <input type="checkbox"/>	30-39 <input type="checkbox"/>	40-49 <input type="checkbox"/>	50 and more <input type="checkbox"/>
Q. 3	How many years of teaching experience do you have?	1-2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3-5 <input type="checkbox"/>	6-10 <input type="checkbox"/>	More than 10 <input type="checkbox"/>
Q. 4	What is the highest degree you hold?	BA <input type="checkbox"/>	High Diploma <input type="checkbox"/>	MA <input type="checkbox"/>	PhD <input type="checkbox"/>
Q. 5	Are you a:	SEN teacher <input type="checkbox"/>	Regular teacher <input type="checkbox"/>	other <input type="checkbox"/>	

For the following items, please mark the box with your appropriate response as:

- 1- Strongly Disagree (SD)
- 2- Disagree (D)
- 3- Neutral/Don't Know (N)
- 4- Agree (A)
- 5- Strongly Agree (SA)

Section B:

Factors	No	Statement	Response				
			1	2	3	4	5
			SD	D	N	A	SA
1. Educational Provisions to SEND students		Monitoring and evaluating SEND provisions					
	St..1	The SENCO is responsible for following up and monitoring the performance of students with SEND.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	St..2	The SENCO is responsible for supervising the implementation of special educational programs in the school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	St.3	The SENCO is responsible for overseeing and monitoring the implementation of the school SEND's policy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
			Modification, adaptation and accommodation				
	St.4	The SENCO is responsible for providing the best services and programs for each student with SEND.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	St.5	The SENCO is responsible for modifying the learning and school environment to meet individual needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
St.6	The SENCO is responsible for making appropriate adjustments and providing necessary resources to maximize the academic achievement of students with SEND.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

		Managing IEPs and ALPs	
	St.7	The SENCO is responsible for ensuring access to the curriculum for students with SEND.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
	St.8	The SENCO is responsible for preparing and writing IEPs and ALPs.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
	St.9	The SENCO is responsible for monitoring and reviewing IEPs and ALPs.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
	St.10	The SENCO is responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of the IEPs and ALPs.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
2. Keeping register			
2. Keeping register	St.11	The SENCO is responsible for updating data and related documents of the student receiving special education services.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
	St.12	The SENCO is responsible for assisting in the identification process of students with SEND and maintain related documents.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
	St.13	The SENCO is responsible for developing simple and accessible record-keeping systems.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
	St.14	The SENCO is responsible for documenting SEND students' academic progress and achievement.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
3. Working in liaison with colleagues and fellow teachers			
3. Working in liaison with colleagues and fellow teachers	St.15	The SENCO is responsible for providing support and consultation about individual students with SEND to make the right decisions.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
	St.16	The SENCO is responsible for evaluating the teaching approaches used by teachers in the classroom to determine their effectiveness.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
	St.17	The SENCO is responsible for collaborating with other professions inside the school.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
	St.18	The SENCO is responsible for providing guidance to facilitate the implementation of the recommendations.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
4. Working in liaison with parents			
4. Working in liaison with parents	St.19	The SENCO is responsible for involving parents of students with SEND in the decision making process for all programs and plans provided to their children.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
	St.20	The SENCO is responsible for collaborating with parents to strengthen the home and school partnership.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
	St.21	The SENCO is responsible for holding regular meetings with parents at which they can discuss their concerns and follow up their children progress.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
5. Working in liaison with external agencies			
5. Working in liaison with external agencies	St.22	The SENCO is responsible for collaborating with staff at organizations and institutions to identify special education programs and services.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
	St.23	The SENCO is responsible for providing opportunities to SEN students to participate in activities in the wider community.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
	St.24	The SENCO is responsible for spending time finding out about external agencies and the services they can offer.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
6. Contribution to knowledge dissemination and in-			
6. Contribution to knowledge dissemination and in-	St.25	The SENCO is responsible for developing and facilitating the implementation of training programs to enhance knowledge and skills of special education.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
	St.26	The SENCO is responsible for organizing workshops and lectures for training of teaching staff and parents to increase understanding	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

services training		and promote awareness about inclusive provisions and SEND programs.	
	St.27	The SENCO is responsible for teaching "model" lessons.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
	St.28	The SENCO plays a crucial role in the teaching and learning development.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
7. Professional development	St.29	The SENCO has to participate in meetings, training courses, workshops, conferences and activities related to special programs.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
	St.30	The SENCO has to engage in ongoing professional development to acquire new knowledge and skills in the field of special education.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
	St.31	The SENCO has to conduct visits to other schools to observe the implementation of inclusive education.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
	St.32	The SENCO has to be knowledgeable about different areas and aspects of special education.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

SEN: Special educational needs
 needs Coordinator IEP: Individualized educational plan
 Advanced learning programs

SENCO: Special educational
 ALP:

SEND: Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities

Section C:

* From your own perspective, what challenges may affect the SENCo's roles and responsibilities?

Appendix 3: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocols

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

The interview procedure:

- Introducing myself
- Introducing the interview topic and purpose
- Taking the interviewee's permission for audio-taping the interview
- Informing the interviewee that the transcripts will be undertaken by the myself to maintain confidentiality.
- Informing the interviewee that they will have the right of reviewing, editing or erasing any statement from the transcript.
- Asking the interviewee if they would like their actual names or replaced names to be mentioned in the study
- Asking the interviewee not to name the school in which he/she works or third parties on recordings to maintain confidentiality.
- Taking the interviewee's permission to publish the research data
- Giving the interviewee an opportunity to ask any question before starting the interview
- Participants have the right to refuse to answer any question.
- Asking the interview questions
- Taking notes if needed
- Thanking the participant

Appendix 4: Interview Questions and Transcripts

Interview Questions

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

A: Demographic Information:

Q. 1	Your gender is :	Male <input type="checkbox"/>	Female <input type="checkbox"/>		
Q. 2	Your age is between:	20-29 <input type="checkbox"/>	30-39 <input type="checkbox"/>	40-49 <input type="checkbox"/>	50 and more <input type="checkbox"/>
Q. 3	How many years of experience do you have?	1-2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3-5 <input type="checkbox"/>	6-10 <input type="checkbox"/>	More than 10 <input type="checkbox"/>
Q. 4	What is the highest degree you hold?	BA <input type="checkbox"/>	High Diploma <input type="checkbox"/>	MA <input type="checkbox"/>	PhD <input type="checkbox"/>
Q.5	What is your current position?				

B: Interview questions:

1. How do you view your work as a SENCo?
2. What are the responsibilities that you are currently undertaking in the school? Does this affect your work as a SENCo?
3. What challenges do you think a SENCo may have in relation to coordinating SEND provisions such as monitoring the progress of individual pupils?
4. What about making the required modification, adaptation and accommodations to meet individual needs, are there any challenges that would affect this role?
5. Regarding managing IEPs and ALPs, are there any challenges that might prevent a SENCo from undertaking this role?
6. What challenges do you think a SENCo may have in relation to maintaining SEND register?
7. Do you have any challenges in liaising with teachers, parents and external agencies? What are they?
8. Do you believe in in-service training for school staff? From your own perspective, what challenges may prevent a SENCo from undertaking the responsibility of providing in-service training for school staff?
9. Regarding developing your professional skills, what is your responsibility in this area and how do you keep yourself updated in the field of special education?
10. Would you like to add anything else?

Appendix 4.1:**Interview Transcript****Date:** July 22nd, 2017**Place:** School C / in the SENCo's office**Interviewer:** researcher**Interviewee:** SENCo / Muna**A. Demographic Information:**

Q. 1	Your gender is :	Male <input type="checkbox"/>	Female <input type="checkbox"/>		
Q. 2	Your age is between:	20-29 <input type="checkbox"/>	30-39 <input type="checkbox"/>	40-49 <input type="checkbox"/>	50 and more <input type="checkbox"/>
Q. 3	How many years of experience do you have?	1-2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3-5 <input type="checkbox"/>	6-10 <input type="checkbox"/>	More than 10 <input type="checkbox"/>
Q. 4	What is the highest degree you hold?	BA <input type="checkbox"/>	High Diploma <input type="checkbox"/>	MA <input type="checkbox"/>	PhD <input type="checkbox"/>
Q.5	What is your current position?	SENCo / KG to grade 12			

B. The interview questions

1. Researcher: How do you view your work as a SENCo?

SENCo: I would like to say how I view inclusion. In my opinion, inclusion is a whole school approach. I work on the teachers self-esteem and engage and train them to design individualized activities. I try to bridge the gap between the school management and teachers just to go toward inclusion together and share ideas and best practices. My main role is to make everyone involved in curriculum development, designing activities, and serving SEND students

2. Researcher: What are the responsibilities that you are currently undertaking in the school?

SENCo: I'm the only SENCO in the school and responsible for all the subjects provided by the school (e.g. math, English, Science, Arabic ...etc). I have a huge responsibility. I help reporting special educators although we don't have special teachers for our department so I train regular teachers. I modify the curriculum and prepare the subjects that we are going to work on outside the classroom. I train the teachers to be aware of their relationships with the SEND students. I prepare workshops for all teachers about learning disabilities. I don't do any formal assessment, I refer to other centers and invite them to come 3 times a week and they offer to do the assessment. If I feel we need a deeper

investigation, I refer for the purpose of coming up with the right IEP. I do the SEND register. I supervise and guide the teachers to know the progress of the SEND child. The IEP gives me a good idea about the level of the SEND child. I have 52 students who are diagnosed and another list of students at risk whose parents refuse to diagnose their child but they receive almost the same service that SEND students receive..

Being the only SENCo at school doesn't only affect my work but also affects my life because I have to stay for late hours at work. sometimes I miss going to classes and seeing what students are doing inside the classroom. Ideally speaking, having 3 SENCos at school would be amazing.

3. Researcher: What challenges do you think a SENCo may have in relation to coordinating SEND provisions such as monitoring the progress of individual pupils?

SENCo: The lack of special educators and specialists, lack of financial support, lack of using assistive technology that would help us track students' progress, and lack of parents' support affect negatively on monitoring the progress of the SEND children.

4. Researcher: What about making the required modification, adaptation and accommodations to meet individual needs, are there any challenges that would affect this role?

SENCo: The teachers' attitude. If the teacher says "No" to the modification, adaptation and accommodation processes, changes will not happen in the classrooms and individual needs will not be met. Another thing is the lack of specialists in this field.

5. Researcher: Regarding managing IEPs and ALPs, are there any challenges that might prevent a SENCo from undertaking this role?

SENCo: IEPs are there. The challenge is to make sure that the IEPs and ALPs are fully implemented. If we have more staff then we could monitor what's happening with IEPs in the class. If we have special educators, this would help teachers and make them more relaxed because they wouldn't need to keep referring to me and checking whether they do it properly or not.

6. Researcher: What challenges do you think a SENCo may have in relation to maintaining SEND register?

SENCo: Lack of using assistive technology. If softwares are used, we will be able to follow the IEPs and do the graphs and statistics. IEPs and all related and updated documents can be put in one place so teachers and principals can access them easily whenever needed.

7. Researcher: Do you have any challenges in liaising with teachers, parents and external agencies? What are they?

SENCo: From my own experience in this school, things are getting much better. Teachers now are more aware of special education. but because they have too many duties rather than serving SEND students, it is not easy to conduct regular meetings with them to discuss any issues related to their children.

Parents: They don't come to meetings. They don't follow the recommendations we provide them with at home. They are always the ones who delay the progress of their child. They don't believe that the role we do is really important and at the same time they don't realize that their role is effective. We have to work in parallel.

External agencies: I really need them. I've been working with the same agency for 2 years and everything is perfect. They offer us individualized therapeutic service. They visit the classes. and they know everything about the students. if parents are not okay with the agency we are dealing with, they are free to go to another one .. we are not forcing them. However, the services provided by these agencies are very expensive.

8. Researcher: Do you believe in in-service training for school staff? From your own perspective, what challenges may prevent a SENCo from undertaking the responsibility of providing in-service training for school staff?

SENCo: Of course I do. I used to train teachers and parents. I have lots of responsibilities. Lack of time is a challenge here. In all schools, teachers refuse to stay after school. but I managed to make them come on Saturdays for 3 hours. Teachers prefer to do trainings outside school because they believe that a better knowledge would be provided there.

9. Researcher: Regarding developing your professional skills, what is your responsibility in this are and how do you keep yourself updated in the field of special education?

SENCo: I read a lot! I attend many workshops and conferences in both Dubai and Beirut. Even when I decide to do something of my own that would benefit the school, the management team supports me.

10. Researcher: Would you like to add anything else?

SENCo: Unfortunately, there is no unified program for SEND students. If you go to each school, even the requirements for accepting special needs are different from one school to another. so things are not clear. There is no unified SEN policy. We are suffering in this area.

11. How do you think that having a unified SEND policy would help you?

SENCo: At least I will not spend a lot of time prioritizing my duties. The duties that I have now are different from duties that my friend have in other schools. If everything is clear to SENCos, then everything will be clear to teachers, parents and students as well. Everyone will have a clear expectation regarding the SENCo role.

12. Researcher: Thank you

Appendix 4.2:**Interview Transcript****Date:** 22nd, June, 2015**Place:** School A/ SENCo's office**Interviewer:** researcher**Interviewee:** SENCo / Jasmine**A. Demographic Information:**

Q. 1	Your gender is :	Male <input type="checkbox"/>	Female <input type="checkbox"/>		
Q. 2	Your age is between:	20-29 <input type="checkbox"/>	30-39 <input type="checkbox"/>	40-49 <input type="checkbox"/>	50 and more <input type="checkbox"/>
Q. 3	How many years of experience do you have?	1-2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3-5 <input type="checkbox"/>	6-10 <input type="checkbox"/>	More than 10 <input type="checkbox"/>
Q. 4	What is the highest degree you hold?	BA <input type="checkbox"/>	High Diploma <input type="checkbox"/>	MA <input type="checkbox"/>	PhD <input type="checkbox"/>
Q.5	What is your current position?	SENCo / Grades 6 - 12			

B. The interview questions

1. Researcher: How do you view your work as a SENCo?

SENCo: I am the one who you can see me everywhere. Working with management, teachers and parents to ensure that inclusive practices are taking place in our classrooms. I oversee the teaching and learning process of SEND students by holding regular meetings with teachers to help them customize their lessons in order to meet individuals needs. My work basically is to make all stakeholders (parents, teachers, and principals) sit on one table to maximize the opportunities provided to SEND students.

2. Researcher: What are the responsibilities that you are currently undertaking in the school?

SENCo: I am the SENDCo who is responsible for SEND students for grades 6 - 12. I assess children and clarify their needs. I figure out the kinds of support and teaching techniques in order to satisfy children. I also meet parents and train them to be aware of the challenges and how to deal with SEND students. I communicate with external agencies to know what kind of recommendation we can apply in our school. I train the teachers through workshops and facilitate the IEP in each subject. I monitor the implementation of the daily SEND provisions. I report to the managers and make sure that I have updated

documents for SEND students. I deal with everyone from the principal to the support staff. I control all the technological issues related to using I pads. I write individualized reports for each student at the end of each term to discuss the progress of the SEND children, the area of strength and the weaknesses that we need to work on.

3. Researcher: What challenges do you think a SENCo may have in relation to coordinating SEND provisions such as monitoring the progress of individual pupils?

SENCo: The big number of students. The lack of staff who can help me in this role. I'm the only one dealing with 38 students with different needs, following-up the teachers, and contacting the parents. Another challenge is dealing with teachers who are not trained enough.. It's my responsibility to train them and make them understand dealing with children from the beginning. But the issue here is the limited time. I cannot find time to frequently hold meeting with teachers. The third challenge is the facilities and lack of resources. Everything depends on the resources. The fourth thing is the communicating language. For example, in our school the first language to be used is English since we run an American curriculum. The majority of our students are English as a second language learners. Their mother tongue is Arabic. So when we assess their progress we use the English language since all the standardized tests are in English. This sometimes affects identify the students progress.

4. Researcher: What about making the required modification, adaptation and accommodations to meet individual needs, are there any challenges that would affect this role?

SENCo: This role is a big role. It is considered to be a critical one in our field since we are dealing with individual cases. Lack of special curriculum is a barrier here. We are basically deleting difficult chapters and contents from the regular curriculum in an attempt to make the curriculum easier for SEND students. In my point of view this is not the best way to modify curriculum. I wish that could have special curriculum that suits individual cases. Another challenge is the big number of students in a classroom. We have around 30 students in one class and the classrooms are not big enough to give the opportunity for SEND students to move especially if the teacher has an ADHD child. This will affects making any required accommodation for SEND students.

5. Researcher: Regarding managing IEPs and ALPs, are there any challenges that might prevent a SENCo from undertaking this role?

SENCo: The main challenge here is the time. Managing IEPs and ALPs is time consuming. It is not difficult to set targets and specify teaching strategies for SEND children, but implementing what is written in the IEP is problematic. This refers to the teachers' attitude and their workload. Teaching SEND students is not considered as one of the teachers' priorities. Again this is due to the big number of students that a teacher has and the amount of duties that the teacher should carry out. Another challenge here is also the lack of resources that facilitate the teachers' work.

6. Researcher: What challenges do you think a SENCo may have in relation to maintaining SEND register?

SENCo: It is again all about time. There is no enough time to keep everything updated. One more thing here is the lack of using technology that would save a lot of time for all teachers, SENCos and principles.

7. Researcher: Do you have any challenges in liaising with teachers, parents and external agencies? What are they?

SENCo: Yes, of course. Regarding working with teachers, as I mentioned before, their workload and their attitude of accepting and supporting SEND students will definitely affect inclusion. Regarding working with external agencies, the challenge here is the high fees that parents have to pay in order to benefit from outside services. Also the unclear diagnoses, some agencies mention the areas of strength and weaknesses without giving a label for the case. Finally, working with parents, lack of parental awareness and the absence of their support are barriers.

8. Researcher: Do you believe in in-service training for school staff? From your own perspective, what challenges may prevent a SENCo from undertaking the responsibility of providing in-service training for school staff?

SENCo: Yes I do. Providing training is one of my priorities. Time limitation again. Teachers are too busy to attend after school workshops.

9. Researcher: Regarding developing your professional skills, what is your responsibility in this area and how do you keep yourself updated in the field of special education?

SENCo: I have to read and attend workshops and conferences.

10. Researcher: Would you like to add anything else?

SENCo: There is no a unified comprehensive policy to be applied at school in the UAE. This puts SENCos in a place where they try to make inclusion successful based on what each one thinks it is the best way to do it. I have to create my own story to achieve may targets. In this way, special education services will vary and therefore SEND children will not have equal opportunities to receive education and even to be accepted.

11. Researcher: Thank you!

Appendix 4.3:**Interview Transcript****Date:** June 15th, 2017**Place:** School A/ SENCo's office**Interviewer:** researcher**Interviewee:** SENCo / Janit**A. Demographic Information:**

Q. 1	Your gender is :	Male <input type="checkbox"/>	Female <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Q. 2	Your age is between:	20-29 <input type="checkbox"/>	30-39 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	40-49 <input type="checkbox"/>	50 and more <input type="checkbox"/>
Q. 3	How many years of experience do you have?	1-2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3-5 <input type="checkbox"/>	6-10 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	More than 10 <input type="checkbox"/>
Q. 4	What is the highest degree you hold?	BA <input type="checkbox"/>	High Diploma <input type="checkbox"/>	MA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	PhD <input type="checkbox"/>
Q.5	What is your current position?	SENCo and Math HOD / grades K - 6			

B. The interview questions

1. Researcher: How do you view your work as a SENCo?

SENCO: Actually I am here to make sure that inclusive provisions are taking place in our school. My work can be described as managerial. I put a lot of effort into documentation, writing action plans, setting clear targets within IEPs. Providing teachers with all needed procedures to identify and assess students with SEND is mainly what I focus on. It's all about managerial tasks.

2. Researcher: What are the responsibilities that you are currently undertaking in the school?

SENCo: I am a math HOD and SENCO. I am carrying out all the SENCo's responsibility in addition to the responsibility of being a math HOD from Kg to grade 5. I have a huge workload where I need another interview to talk about it. But I would say that providing, supporting, monitoring and evaluating day-to-day SEND provision is the core of my responsibility as a SENCo in addition to keep the SEND documents updated. I also refer students to external agencies when needed for more clarifications about the student's case.

3. Researcher: Does this affect your work as a SENCo?

SENCo: As I mentioned before I am playing two key roles in the school and this definitely affects my both roles. I cannot focus on my tasks as a SENCo or math HOD.

4. Researcher: What challenges do you think a SENCo may have in relation to coordinating SEND provisions such as monitoring the progress of individual pupils?

SENCo: One of the challenges is the cooperation with the teachers. How well the teachers are willing to cooperate as well as the school's provisions in terms of flexibility such as the ways and strategies of assessing students.

5. Researcher: What about making the required modification, adaptation and accommodations to meet individual needs, are there any challenges that would affect this role?

SENCo: This year we started to have the Atlas course which is an individual curriculum map for each student. We modify the curriculum, this helps with the challenges that we had last year. Last year we couldn't know where each student stops in each course because things weren't recorded properly. Now we have the Atlas course so everything is archived. Teachers and support teachers can access and see how well the student is doing. Another thing is the implementation, to which extent the teacher is able to differentiate, for example, if we have a 9th grade student who studies a 4th grade math, the teacher should know how to deal with a 5 years gap. I would like to add one more thing, lack of special curriculum is challenge here. In certain cases, it is not practical to modify the current curriculum.

In terms of accommodations we are fine, we apply for everything such as format, using calculators, the screen color, even the place where they are having the assessment. Sometime it's challenging to have all the equipments and necessary resources to meet individual needs.

6. Researcher: Regarding managing IEPs and ALPs, are there any challenges that might prevent a SENCo from undertaking this role?

SENCo : Yes, there are some challenges. The IEP involves everyone (parents, teachers, principles ... etc), so any delay from one side might cause the delay of all other sides. Teachers' attitude and their workload would prevent them from keeping the IEPs updated. so this would affect my job as a SENCO. another challenge is that some teachers are not able to reflect on the target accurately. The only thing they do is (all done.. all achieved).

This will provide me with unreliable information about SEND students. This also will affect monitoring the students' progress.

7. Researcher: What challenges do you think a SENCo may have in relation to maintaining SEND register?

SENCo: In terms of new admissions. Sometimes the communication with the registrar affects my role. If the student is a SEN student the SENCO is not informed. and we discover that after a period of time. The main challenge here is the lack of communication between me and administration.

8. Researcher: Do you have any challenges in liaising with teachers, parents and external agencies? What are they?

SENCo: Yes, over-diagnosing. Sometimes, these agencies over diagnose a child to get more money. So it's basically being commercial.

Teachers: Teachers are scared. They feel that having SEN child is a burden. because they always expect to be visited from inspection teams. so it means extra work for them. From the teachers' perspective, having a SEND child could be a source of stress.

Parents: The parents whose kid is already diagnosed are very cooperative with whatever you tell them.. but the new parents whose child is not identified are very challenging and sometimes it takes a month to convince them.

9. Researcher: Do you believe in in-service training for school staff? From your own perspective, what challenges may prevent a SENCo from undertaking the responsibility of providing in-service training for school staff?

SENCo: Yes, it is one of my responsibility. However, time is the biggest challenge. It's having the teachers free to do training

10. Researcher: Regarding developing your professional skills, what is your responsibility in this area and how do you keep yourself updated in the field of special education?

SENCo: I actually attend regular SENCO network meetings such as Dubai SENCo network meeting in addition to SENCO Conferences where people from around the world come and discuss new strategies.

11. Researcher: Would you like to add anything else?

SENCo: Inclusion is very expensive for the parents. When parents are applying to a mainstream school they have to pay extra fees for having an SEN child to get the support for their child. They pay extra fees. Sometimes parents cannot afford this. In addition to cultural issues and denying.

12. Researcher: Thank you

Appendix 4.4:**Interview Transcript****Date:** June 10th, 2017**Place:** School B in the SENCo's room**Interviewer:** researcher**Interviewee:** SENCo / Dana**A. Demographic Information:**

Q. 1	Your gender is :	Male <input type="checkbox"/>	Female <input type="checkbox"/>		
Q. 2	Your age is between:	20-29 <input type="checkbox"/>	30-39 <input type="checkbox"/>	40-49 <input type="checkbox"/>	50 and more <input type="checkbox"/>
Q. 3	How many years of experience do you have?	1-2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3-5 <input type="checkbox"/>	6-10 <input type="checkbox"/>	More than 10 <input type="checkbox"/>
Q. 4	What is the highest degree you hold?	BA <input type="checkbox"/>	High Diploma <input type="checkbox"/>	MA <input type="checkbox"/>	PhD <input type="checkbox"/>
Q.5	What is your current position?	SENCo / Grades 6-12			

B. The interview questions

1. Researcher: How do you view your work as a SENCo?

I am the one who is viewed as a rescuer when it comes to things related to the SEND students in my school. I think that it is time for all teacher to understand that teaching SEND students is a shared responsibility. It is the teachers' responsibility, the administration responsibility, the parents' responsibility and the SENCo's responsibility. This is the core of inclusion! I view my work as a facilitator who work collaboratively with all involved partners.

2. Researcher: What are the responsibilities that you are currently undertaking in the school?

SENCo: Identifying SEND students and looking at referral forms, working with the parents of SEND students, working with teachers who have SEND students, dealing with the intervention process which we plan for the child in need, working with handicapped and rehabilitation centers if necessary, writing IEPs and ALPs and monitor the implementation process, updated data and related documents of SEND students, training teachers in the field of special education and developing myself and increasing my knowledge in this field.

3. Researcher: What challenges do you think a SENCo may have in relation to coordinating SEND provisions such as monitoring the progress of individual pupils?

SENCo: In terms of academic issues in classroom. I need a link between me and the teachers, sometimes this link gets broken between us. I need an active log of what is happening with a certain student so that the teacher would refer to me directly. Teachers sometimes do not have time to keep this log updated and because I'm the only person coordinating SEND provisions, I find it hard to keep an eye on what's happening in the mainstream classroom. so we get surprised towards the end of the semester that the student is failing. This is what we fall in frequently and this is the main issue.

4. Researcher: What about making the required modification, adaptation and accommodations to meet individual needs, are there any challenges that would affect this role?

SENCo: Yes, there are always challenges specially when it comes to the curriculum modification. We have an amazing curriculum. The teacher's editions specify four levels of students (Above, below, on-level students in addition to level four which can be used when teaching SEND students). Teachers are fine dealing with the students having mild learning difficulties but when it comes to the complex cases they just pause and say that they don't know how to do it although I provide them with a list of strategies based on the needs of the child. But some of them don't try even to look into these cases and what I provide them with in order to help those students. I think that the reason behind this attitude is that our teachers are time limited, they have many things to do, for example if the teacher has 25 students and one SEND student, it is very hard for the teachers to adapt her lessons to meet the needs of all of her students in one class without assistance especially if she has a SEND child with a severe case.

Finally, regarding making appropriate accommodations, the big number of students in a small classroom is one of the challenges.

5. Researcher: Regarding managing IEPs and ALPs, are there any challenges that might prevent the SENCo from undertaking this role?

SENCo: Yes.. from my experience, I'm looking at 85 students with learning difficulties and I have 55 gifted and talented. We develop their IEPs and ALPs after conducting meetings with teachers and head of departments. This process takes very long time at the beginning of every term. Looking into all of the details of the IEPs and ALPs is really hard. Moreover, it takes me a whole month just revising those IEPs and ALPs at the end of every term. Time limitation is the main barrier here.

6. Researcher: What challenges do you think the SENCo may have in relation to maintaining SEND register?

SENCo: It's the documentation and just keeping things up to date. Everything is regarding time limitation. Lack of using assistive technology is also a barrier. Additionally, people in my school thinks that keeping SEND register updated is the SENCo's responsibility. However, I think that the documentation process should be a shared responsibility.

7. Researcher: Do you have any challenges in liaising with teachers, parents and external agencies? What are they?

SENCo: Definitely yes. Starting with teachers, I always try my best to keep in touch with them but it's all about time limitation. The teachers' workload prevents them from consistently share the progress of SEND students with me. Although I have a full authority to go to classrooms and observe SEND students at anytime, the amount of responsibilities that I have keeps me away from teachers. One more thing is that some teachers don't take inclusion seriously. This definitely will affect their work when dealing with SEND students.

Regarding working with parents, there are always challenges with dealing with them. Lack of their knowledge in this special education and cultural issues are the main challenges in this area. Sometimes they show carelessness about this field although their vital role in the field of special education.

Some agencies have restrictions, and I would say that most of the agencies are money-making agencies. if I want to get a meeting with them the parents have to pay for the agency although it's the parents' free rights to do this.

8. Researcher: Do you believe in in-service training for school staff? From your own perspective, what challenges may prevent a SENCo from undertaking the responsibility of providing in-service training for school staff?

SENCo: Yes.. The training happens 2-3 times a year in both languages English and Arabic. I do this in person and I involve everyone in it since we are an inclusive school. I face challenges with the attitudes of the teachers because they keep asking about the reason why they have to do this. They believe that SEND teachers are the ones who are responsible for SEND students.

9. Researcher: Regarding developing your professional skills, what is your responsibility in this are and how do you keep yourself updated in the field of special education?

SENCo: I regularly attend workshops.

10. Researcher: Would you like to add anything else?

SENCo: Yes, it's very rare to find a SENCo in the UAE who is bilingual. It's really hard to find a specialized person in the area who speaks more than one language. This is really important in the UAE schools where multinational students are receiving the same education in the same school. I would say that specialization and language are main issues in the UAE because this may lead to misdiagnose students in several cases.

11. Researcher: Thank you

Appendix 4.5:**Interview Transcript****Date:** June 18th, 2017**Place:** School B / SENCo's office**Interviewer:** researcher**Interviewee:** SENCo / Barbara**A. Demographic Information:**

Q. 1	Your gender is :	Male <input type="checkbox"/>	Female <input type="checkbox"/>		
Q. 2	Your age is between:	20-29 <input type="checkbox"/>	30-39 <input type="checkbox"/>	40-49 <input type="checkbox"/>	50 and more <input type="checkbox"/>
Q. 3	How many years of experience do you have?	1-2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3-5 <input type="checkbox"/>	6-10 <input type="checkbox"/>	More than 10 <input type="checkbox"/>
Q. 4	What is the highest degree you hold?	BA <input type="checkbox"/>	High Diploma <input type="checkbox"/>	MA <input type="checkbox"/>	PhD <input type="checkbox"/>
Q.5	What is your current position?	SENCo / Grades K - 6			

B. The interview questions

1. Researcher: How do you view your work as a SENCo?

SENCo: I support students with SEND and plan appropriate programs. I work closely with their teachers and provide them with teaching strategies to meet individual needs. I respond to concerns and volunteer to help teachers in classroom with strong commitment. Since I am not part of the senior management team, I have lots of time to be with SEND students. This is how I do it. I am here to provide direct support and teach SEND students.

2. Researcher: What are the responsibilities that you are currently undertaking in the school?

SENCo: I am responsible for SEND students from Kg to grade 6. I am involved in the identification process for students who display behavioral or academic problems. I conduct regular meeting with their teachers and parents under the supervision of the administration to help and support them. Making appropriate accommodations, modifications and adaptations in addition to identifying effective teaching strategies to meet individual needs are my main responsibility. Monitoring and evaluating the academic progress of the SEND students. I also document and update SEND profiles.

3. Researcher: What challenges do you think a SENCo may have in relation to coordinating SEND provisions such as monitoring the progress of individual pupils?

SENCo: The main challenge here is time management. The teachers are too busy carrying out their duties and I have too many things to accomplish. This negatively affects the communication between us. Additionally, there are not enough qualified staff in the special education who can also help improve the level of SEND students and monitor their progress.

4. Researcher: What about making the required modification, adaptation and accommodations to meet individual needs, are there any challenges that would affect this role?

SENCo: Teachers attitude and their acceptance for the idea of inclusion.

5. Researcher: Why do you think teachers may have such an attitude?

SENCo: This may be because teachers come from different backgrounds and their knowledge about special education is limited. We need the teachers collaboration to apply effective teaching strategies in the classroom. Without their help there is no way to modify, adapt or accommodate students individual needs.

6. Researcher: Regarding managing IEPs and ALPs, are there any challenges that might prevent a SENCo from undertaking this role?

SENCo: Teachers do not meet deadlines. This is the main challenge here. Meeting deadlines helps set long and short term objectives, monitor the academic progress and make required changes in the IEPs to keep them updated.

7. Researcher: What challenges do you think a SENCo may have in relation to maintaining SEND register?

SENCo: From my own experience, this is a shared role. Teachers and SENCos has to work collaboratively to keep SEND register updated. I wish we could use technology to solve documentation issues.

8. Researcher: Do you have any challenges in liaising with teachers, parents and external agencies? What are they?

SENCo: Yes.. Teachers and parents attitude is considered to be a challenge here. Cultural issues play a role here. Parents are the first support and we come as a second source of

support. Regarding external agencies, they are profitable.. They view special education as a source for collecting money rather than an opportunity for learning.

9. Researcher: Do you believe in in-service training for school staff? From your own perspective, what challenges may prevent a SENCo from undertaking the responsibility of providing in-service training for school staff?

SENCo: I believe in in-service training. But the problem here is that sometimes I feel that I am not well-prepared to provide training for people. I don't think that providing training is in my area of responsibility.

10. Researcher: Regarding developing your professional skills, what is your responsibility in this area and how do you keep yourself updated in the field of special education?

SENCo: I have to participate in workshops and read about exceptional learning needs.

11. Researcher: Would you like to add anything else?

SENCo: Yes I do. In order for the SEND child to be accepted in the SEND department, he/she needs a psychometric report. The problem in this report that it is very expensive in the UAE. Another thing is that our school doesn't have the capacity to accept many SEND students because we don't have empty rooms that could be used as resource rooms.

12. Researcher: Thank you

Appendix 5: Permission Letter



22 June 2017

To whom it may concern

This is to certify that **Mrs Amal Hussien Hammad** with student ID number **2015101111** is a registered part-time student in the **Master of Education – Special and Inclusive Education** Programme offered by The British University in Dubai.

Mrs Hammad is currently working on her dissertation and she is aiming to collect data. This will entail conducting interviews, observation, field visits, and etc.

The British University in Dubai would like to request your support and cooperation in completing her dissertation research.

Any information given will be used solely for academic purposes.

This letter is issued on the students' request.

Yours sincerely,



Amer Alaya
Head of Student Administration

Appendix 6:**Questionnaire/section B: Distribution of all statement responses from the sample size:**

Factors	QN	SD		D		N		A		SA	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Educational provisions to SEND students	ST1					1	1.30	37	46.30	42	52.50
	ST2					2	2.50	33	41.30	45	56.30
	ST3							29	36.30	51	63.80
	ST4			2	2.50	3	3.80	40	50.00	35	43.80
	ST5			2	2.50	7	8.80	38	47.50	33	41.30
	ST6			3	3.80	3	3.80	43	53.80	31	38.80
	ST7			1	1.30	3	3.80	38	47.50	38	47.50
	ST8	1	1.30	5	6.30	5	6.30	33	41.30	36	45.00
	ST9					1	1.30	36	45.00	43	53.80
	ST10			1	1.30	4	5.00	33	41.30	42	52.50
Summation of all answers (1 – 10)		1	0.13	14	1.75	29	3.63	360	45.00	396	49.50
Keeping register	ST11					2	2.50	38	47.50	40	50.00
	ST12					3	3.80	35	43.80	42	52.50
	ST13			2	2.50	4	5.00	30	37.50	44	55.00
	ST14			2	2.50	1	1.30	37	46.30	40	50.00
Summation of all answers (11 – 14)		0	0.00	4	1.25	10	3.13	140	43.75	166	51.88
Working in liaison with colleagues and fellow teachers	ST15			1	1.30	3	3.80	28	35.00	48	60.00
	ST16	1	1.30	3	3.80	7	8.80	32	40.00	37	46.30
	ST17			2	2.50	3	3.80	32	40.00	43	53.80
	ST18					4	5.00	32	40.00	44	55.00
Summation of all answers (15 – 18)		1	0.31	6	1.88	17	5.31	124	38.75	172	53.75
Working in liaison with parents	ST19	1	1.30	1	1.30	1	1.30	29	36.30	48	60.00
	ST20	1	1.30			1	1.30	35	43.80	43	53.80
	ST21	1	1.30			5	6.30	28	35.00	46	57.50
Summation of all answers (19 – 21)		3	1.25	1	0.42	7	2.92	92	38.33	137	57.08
Working in liaison with external agencies	ST22	1	1.30			7	8.80	34	42.50	38	47.50
	ST23			3	3.80	8	10.00	32	40.00	37	46.30
	ST24			4	5.00	8	10.00	33	41.30	35	43.80
Summation of all answers (22 – 24)		1	0.42	7	2.92	23	9.58	99	41.25	110	45.83
Contribution to knowledge dissemination and in-services training	ST25			1	1.30	7	8.80	27	33.80	45	56.30
	ST26	1	1.30	2	2.50	6	7.50	23	28.80	48	60.00
	ST27	2	2.50	4	5.00	8	10.00	25	31.30	41	51.30
	ST28			3	3.80	6	7.50	27	33.80	44	55.00
Summation of all answers (25 – 28)		3	0.94	10	3.13	27	8.44	102	31.88	178	55.63
	ST29					1	1.30	27	33.80	52	65.00

Professional development	ST30					2	2.50	27	33.80	51	63.80
	ST31					8	10.00	26	32.50	46	57.50
	ST32	1	1.30			4	5.00	19	23.80	56	70.00
Summation of all answers (29 – 32)		1	0.31	0	0.00	15	4.69	99	30.94	205	64.06
Over all questionnaire (1-32)			0.48		1.621		5.385		38.55		53.96

Appendix 7: Means and Standard Deviations of the Responses of all Questionnaire Statements

Descriptive Statistics			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
St.1	80	4.51	.528
St.2	80	4.54	.550
St.3	80	4.64	.484
St.4	80	4.35	.677
St.5	80	4.28	.729
St.6	80	4.27	.711
St.7	80	4.41	.630
St.8	80	4.23	.914
St.9	80	4.53	.527
St.10	80	4.45	.654
St.11	80	4.47	.551
St.12	80	4.49	.574
St.13	80	4.45	.710
St.14	80	4.44	.653
St.15	80	4.54	.635
St.16	80	4.26	.868
St.17	80	4.45	.692
St.18	80	4.50	.595
St.19	80	4.53	.711
St.20	80	4.49	.656
St.21	80	4.47	.729
St.22	80	4.35	.748
St.23	80	4.29	.799
St.24	80	4.24	.830
St.25	80	4.45	.710
St.26	80	4.44	.840
St.27	80	4.24	.997
St.28	80	4.40	.789
St.29	80	4.64	.509
St.30	80	4.61	.539
St.31	80	4.47	.675
St.32	80	4.61	.703
Valid N (listwise)	80		

Appendix 8: Reliability Test

8.1: Overall Test of Reliability:

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.909	32

8.2: Test of reliability for questionnaire statements**Item-Total Statistics**

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item- Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Q1.Gender	151.31	161.483	.182	.913
Q2.Age	151.19	160.711	.127	.915
Q3.Experience	150.16	161.986	.022	.918
Q4.Qualification	151.56	161.490	.059	.917
Q5.position	151.38	162.161	.099	.914
St.1	148.61	156.038	.541	.910
St.2	148.59	156.195	.506	.910
St.3	148.49	162.607	.050	.914
St.4	148.78	154.202	.523	.910
St.5	148.85	153.977	.495	.910
St.6	148.85	153.496	.536	.910
St.7	148.71	152.207	.697	.908
St.8	148.90	151.762	.482	.910
St.9	148.60	157.306	.444	.911
St.10	148.68	151.209	.734	.907
St.11	148.65	158.484	.337	.912
St.12	148.64	156.183	.484	.910
St.13	148.68	153.792	.520	.910
St.14	148.69	156.268	.414	.911
St.15	148.59	154.220	.560	.909
St.16	148.86	151.892	.505	.910
St.17	148.68	152.450	.616	.909
St.18	148.63	153.807	.629	.909
St.19	148.60	154.522	.477	.910
St.20	148.64	153.069	.613	.909
St.21	148.65	150.104	.718	.907
St.22	148.78	149.873	.711	.907
St.23	148.84	152.594	.518	.910
St.24	148.89	150.531	.600	.908
St.25	148.68	152.197	.614	.909
St.26	148.69	151.104	.564	.909
St.27	148.89	156.759	.228	.915

St.28	148.73	155.670	.364	.912
St.29	148.49	156.506	.525	.910
St.30	148.51	154.886	.616	.909
St.31	148.65	154.484	.508	.910
St.32	148.51	151.316	.674	.908