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SENCO CPD: towards the NPQ

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Professional development for SENCOs (Special Educational Needs Coordinators): the future of an accredited National Award

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The current level 7 (Masters) NASENCO entails

- analysis and application of multiple knowledges (from theory, research, practice)
- critical responses to existing theoretical discourses, methodologies or practices (prompting novel approaches)
- critical ethical awareness in their practice (managing the implications of ethical dilemmas)
- analysis of complex, incomplete or contradictory evidence/data (arguing for alternative approaches (Seec 2016))

Equipping SENCOs with the necessary resources for agency to ensure inclusive school cultures and challenge discriminatory or unfair practices



- SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan (DfE 2023a) proposes developing the workforce by replacing the mandatory National Award for SENCo (the NASENCO) with a new leadership level SENCo NPQ (National Professional Qualification) for schools (DfE 2023b).
- We have argued the NPQ **risks failing to equip SENCos 'to offer research-based challenges to existing school policies or practices'** (Done et al. 2022:2) with **implications for SENCo** competency and advocacy – a **de-professionalisation** of the role.
- Our research therefore explored the experiences of students completing the mandatory NASENCO to identify its impact on students' knowledge, skills, confidence and practice, and on student perceptions.

The selected 14 NASENCO learning outcomes



NASENCO Learning Outcome Number and Description

1f. The policy and legislative context for health and social care, including safeguarding and the health and well-being agenda

2b. Leadership and management processes and tools that support change in schools

2c. The role of leadership and professional challenge in supporting and promoting a culture of continuous professional development linked to improvement;

3a. The breadth and complexity of the causes of under achievement

4a. Theories of learning as the basis upon which to design effective interventions

4e. Relevant theory, research and inspection evidence about effective practice in including pupils with SEN and/or disabilities.

5d. Establish systems to collect, analyse and interpret data, including Raise On-line, to inform policy and practice, raise expectations and set challenging targets for children and young people with SEN and/or disabilities.

6b. Promote improvement in teaching and learning to identify, assess and meet the needs of children and young people with SEN and/or disabilities, within a person-centred approach.

7a. Select, use and adapt approaches, strategies and resources for assessment to personalise provision for children and young people with SEN and/or disabilities.

7b. Draw upon relevant research and inspection evidence about teaching and learning in relation to pupils with SEN and/or disabilities to improve practice.

7c. Undertake small-scale practitioner enquiry to identify, develop and rigorously evaluate effective practice in teaching pupils with SEN and/or disabilities;

8c. Interpret specialist information from other professionals and agencies and demonstrate how it has been used to improve teaching and learning and outcomes for children and young people with SEN and/or disabilities.

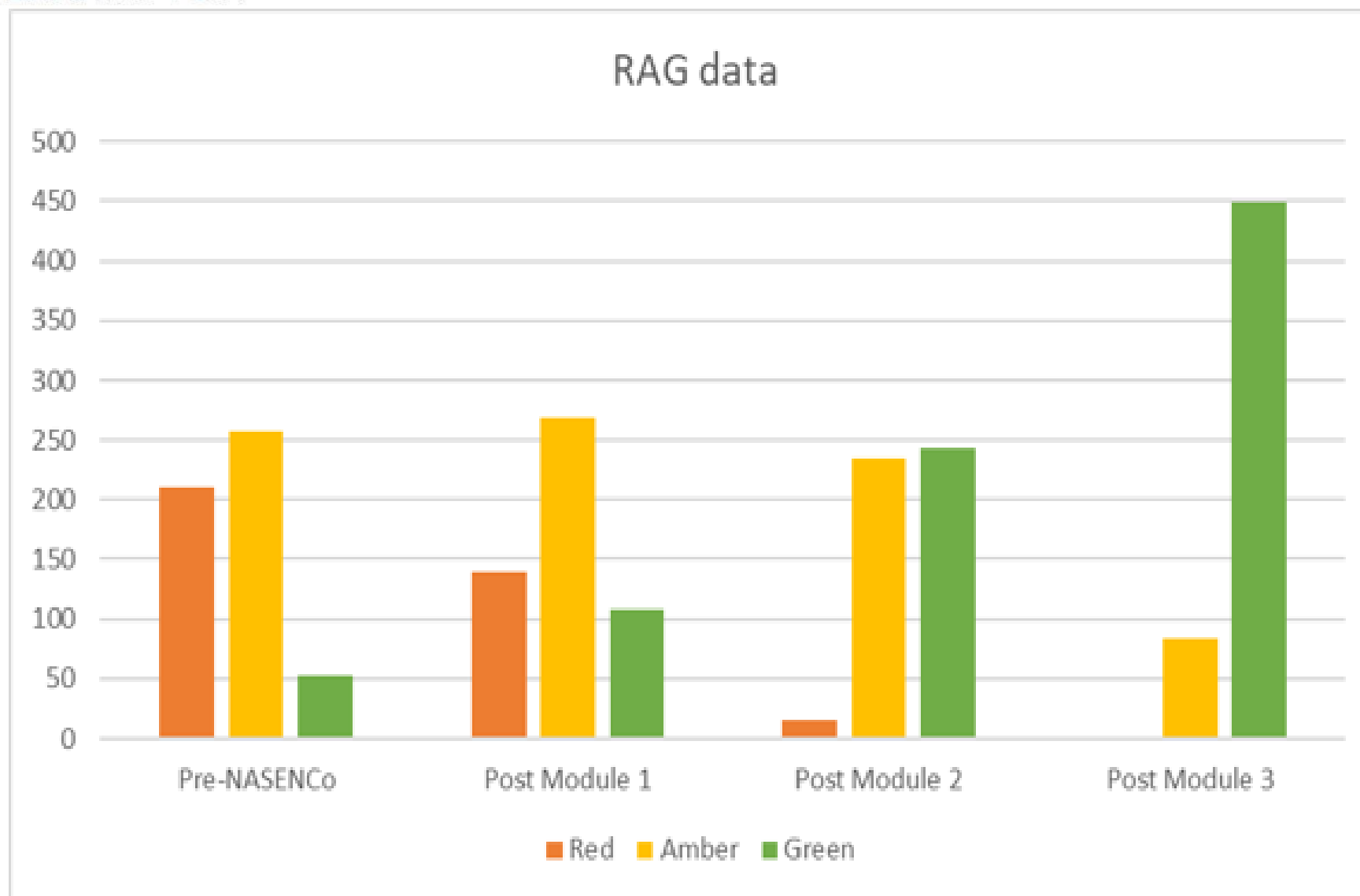
9d. Plan and intervene to meet the needs of children and young people with SEN and/or disabilities.

9f. Make effective use of data to evaluate and report on the effectiveness of provision and its impact on progress and outcomes for pupils with SEN and/or disabilities



RAG chart completed at end of Module 3 showing detail for LO 7c (Participant C4007)

NASENCO Learning Outcome 7c	Pre-course	End of module 1	End of module 2	End of module 3	Detail of evidence for rating, including how they plan to bridge any gaps.
Undertake small-scale practitioner enquiry to identify, develop and rigorously evaluate effective practice in teaching pupils with SEN and/or disabilities;	Yellow				I have completed small scale research for my PGCE and loved doing this
		Yellow			I am looking forward to doing this for my setting to inform practice in my setting. I am already thinking about what this could involve and which areas of school it could impact.
			Green		Undertaking the research for this module has been really interesting and allowed me to continue to further extend my reading and knowledge whilst questioning what I am reading. Use of academic journals has allowed me to extend my knowledge of useful tools for practitioner enquiry and shown me how I could implement these within school.
				Green	Further to the small-scale research completed for this qualification I am now also undertaking a research project around provision in school and how it is mapped and sold to the local authorities. The idea is to make the funding process more transparent for LAs so they know what the fees provide and at



Case Study 1 (primary)

	Pre course	Post Module 1	Post Module 2	Post Module 3
1f				
2b				
2c				
3a		See quote below		
4a		See quote below		
4e				
5d				
6b			See quote below	
7a				
7b				
7c				
8c				
9d	Left blank			
9f				

3a (post module 01 comments) I found this a particularly interesting area to research. **I read literature around this area and took part in the discussion in our seminar. It made me question how my school is distinguishing between underachievement and SEND.**
Action: to sit in on Pupil Progress meetings to hear how the year teams differentiate between underachievement and SEND and hear the stories that sit behind the data

6b - (post 2 module comment) At year group level, I ensure that I am championing the needs of SEND children in all curriculum areas and sharing my research with my colleagues. **I found the lesson study approach particularly valuable in improving teaching and learning**



Case study 2 (secondary)

	Pre course	Post Module 1	Post Module 2	Post Module 3		
1f						
2b						
2c				See quote below		
3a		See quote below	See quote below			
4a						
4e			See quote below			
5d						
6b						
7a						
7b						
7c						
8c						
9d						
9f						

Post module 01 - 3a. *The NASENCO course has helped me identify the 4 groups of needs and understand many causes of the underachievement. The department review has stated over 12 actions of improvements, I have been holding SEND pupil panel to identify the difficulties they face and how these difficulties are supported by teaching staff. These discussions were then shared with Heads of Departments and to then be shared with teaching staff. More work in understanding the causes of underachievement in specific departments is needed, more intervening from SLT required*

Post module 02 - 4e. *The NASENCO course has provided me with a strong insight of the theories, but more planning to promote growth mindset is needed for the implementation of these strategies. We have a tendency to introduce new strategies and due to the time-pressures and workload it becomes difficult to review and discuss the impact of these strategies. Review stage must be visited.*



Findings

- Inconclusive data demonstrating transformative professional development; despite growth in confidence, we noted a persistence of former **constructions of the SENCo** role, in the current neo-liberalised educational environment.
- SENCos became highly engaged with research frameworks that supported their capacity to use contextually driven **evidence-informed approaches** in their practice.
- SENCos value their engagement with varied learning activities and conversations outside of their own settings; therefore, SENCos would benefit from opportunities for regular **critical and reflexive dialogue**.
- Critical thinking and reading, and access to research literature was enabled by the HEI delivering the NASENCO. This should be supported to facilitate **knowledge building and feelings of expertise**.
- The data captured learner stories to do with role, identity and practice for SENCos.



National Professional Qualification (NPQ) for SENCOs

National Professional Qualification for SENCOs – Primarily for SENCOs, school leaders or aspiring SENCOs.



One – School culture

Learn that...	Learn how to...
<p>1.1 The SEND Code of Practice (2015) is underpinned by the social model of disability, whereby people are disabled by barriers in society, not by their impairment or difference.</p> <p>1.2 Attending school alongside pupils with SEND can have a positive impact on the attitudes of pupils without SEND towards their peers with SEND.</p> <p>1.3 High quality teaching has a long-term positive effect on pupils' life chances, including for pupils with SEND and particularly for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.</p> <p>1.4 Teacher attitudes towards inclusion and SEND</p>	<p>Contribute to establishing and sustaining a positive and supportive culture across the school and for all pupils, including by:</p> <p>1.a Working with other leaders to develop, implement and monitor the effects of school policies and operational guidance to create an inclusive environment where everyone feels welcome, safe, and that they belong.</p> <p>1.b Articulating, modelling and promoting inclusive and ambitious attitudes and practices, anticipating and challenging stereotypes and addressing misconceptions.</p> <p>1.c Modelling the use of positive and strengths-based</p>



We view educating SENCOs as a political and ethical task.

We recognise the concept of transformative learning, in which professional learners in HE develop a professional identity as change agent committed to social justice (Kreber 2022).

In these times of uncertainty and threat towards inclusive school cultures, it has never been more important that SENCOs are empowered to challenge discriminatory or unfair practices, and to advocate for better outcomes for children and young people with SEND and their families.



Will the new NPQ equip SENCOs with the theory and deep critical reflection needed to challenge, develop, and transform existing school policies and practices?



Developing Your Expertise as a SENCo *Leading Inclusive Practice*

**Edited by Helen Knowler, Hazel Richards
and Stephanie Brewster**





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Thank you and questions...



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