

View from the Chair

Amy Thompson

Since the last issue of NQ, the onslaught on the framework that has supported the work of the EAL profession has continued.

EMAG has been mainstreamed with no ring-fencing required at school level. Though the number of EAL pupils is increasing in our schools and the need for EAL support remains, the mainstreaming of EMAG has made it easier for local authorities to target EAL/EMA services as they juggle with decisions as to where their cuts should be made. In this development we share many of the issues faced by Traveller Education Services. Whilst I write, we await the results of our joint NALDIC/NUT Freedom of Information request to local authorities on changes to their EMA/EAL service http://www.naldic.org.uk/docs/news/archive/news_it_em.cfm?newsid=1326&Pp=1.

We now know that schools will no longer be required to demonstrate their contribution to Community Cohesion under the new inspection regime. We now hear that the Equalities Act itself may be under review. The proposal appears on the [Cabinet Office's new Red Tape Challenge website](http://www.redtapechallenge.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/qualities/), which was set up to seek ideas from the public on how to reduce the burden of regulation <http://www.redtapechallenge.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/qualities/>

We are concerned about how all this will impact on the government's vision of a fair and integrated Britain when services that have a central role in this vision are being written out of the script. The analysis of UK performance in the 2009 PISA Report has already highlighted some key pointers related to our field <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/33/8/46624007.pdf>

'the importance of acknowledging the diversity within the student population with an immigrant background and the key role that language plays in integration policies targeted to immigrant students or parents (Table II.4.4 in the PISA 2009 report).'

'Australia, Canada or New Zealand have a larger immigrant intake than the United Kingdom but score significantly better (Figure II.4.3).'

Whilst within local authorities and schools, the role of EAL teachers has not always gained the recognition it deserved, it remains to be seen whether with the ongoing depletion of the field of trained professionals, it will be a case of absence

makes the heart grow fonder rather than out of sight, out of mind

Perhaps it is the multi-faceted nature of the EAL pedagogical approach which makes it difficult for mainstream education to slot us in since the tendency is always for policy makers to reduce pedagogy to a handy tool-kit of teaching techniques (cf Report about Second Generation Migrants and the pedagogical approach in the UK, Jan 2010

http://www.bridge2g.eu/userfiles/file/P3_National%20Report%20in%20UK.pdf

On the other hand, the multi-faceted nature of EAL-pedagogy always makes it relevant to all aspects of education and, in particular, to the area of language teaching, be it the teaching and learning of the language of instruction, the first language, bilingual development or modern languages. This is what is explored in this issue of NQ.

One of the areas for future attention will be the focus on reading, with the introduction of the reading test for 6 year olds. NALDIC has written extensively on the subject in the past. But colleagues may wish to be alerted to the 2009 PISA research on reading. NALDIC's last General Council meeting looked at some of the headlines and implications with Professor Constant Leung. The definition of reading literacy may offer some clues as to areas of focus to come:

Reading literacy... is defined in terms of students' ability to understand, use and reflect on written text to achieve their purposes. This aspect of literacy has been well established by previous surveys such as the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS), but is taken further in PISA by the introduction of an active element of the capacity not just to understand a text but to reflect on it, drawing on one's own thoughts and experiences. There are also two major modifications in this new version of the reading framework. It incorporates the reading of electronic texts and elaborates the constructs of reading engagement and metacognition. <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/11/40/44455820.pdf>

So, whilst we await the results of our FOI request and a repeat survey of local authority EMA services, we look to developing the field in the light of changes to come. We hope this issue of NQ offers new perspectives and some ways forward for the field.

In recognition of the single most challenging time for the EAL field, and for colleagues caught up in the cuts:

'Nobody can go back and start a new beginning, but anyone can start today and make a new ending.' Maria Robinson.