

VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

Amy Thompson

As news of the new national curriculum has leaked out piecemeal over recent weeks and consultation deadlines have been set during the summer holiday, we hear that there is going to be less central directive on the curriculum (apart from areas such as phonics, grammar and testing...). Teaching, however, true to the government's white paper 'The Importance of Teaching', continues to be the focus, with the strengthening of Ofsted in this area. The dismantling of local authority EMA services and the National Strategy (strange how quickly these terms now seem antiquated), along with the disappearance of 'EAL' from official discourse, would seem to herald the demise of the EAL profession. The lively exchanges on the EAL-bilingual forum would belie that this is the case (e.g. the recent valiant efforts of the eal-bilingual community trying to track down the quote 'reading and writing float on a sea of talk' - What's the reference? Which book? What page? All this in response to the lack of attention to Listening and Speaking in the new primary curriculum for English.)

With the focus on teaching and the classroom, it seems apt that this issue of NQ is devoted to exploring the roles of the specialist EAL practitioner – whether Coordinator, Teacher or Teaching Assistant. Whilst I would say that the theoretical framework for EAL has been developing strongly over the past twenty years through the work of NALDIC, the views from practitioners of what is happening on the ground seem hardly to have changed since I was last in the classroom as an EAL support teacher. It isn't that the EAL subject knowledge base isn't there. What seems to be there are the same old tensions and contradictions – having to deal with mainstream teachers' lack of EAL knowledge, lack of structural support, lack of time for the multi-tasking EAL teacher/coordinator, having to fit a square peg into a round hole... One is tempted to say '**plus ça change...**'

So, what can NALDIC do to help improve the situation on the ground for EAL practitioners? What does this mean for NALDIC? It means that, while remaining an association for EAL specialists, the work has to broaden out to capture

the 'unconverted' and the 'uninitiated'. We can no longer rely on local authority advisory teams to be our mouthpiece in talking to schools. We have started to do this. The last issue of NQ informed readers that we have begun to work with ITE providers to target trainee teachers – the future mainstream classroom teachers. We are actively participating in debates and dialogues (e.g. our participation in the Cambridge Assessment conference), and working with other organisations and subject associations (such as the Association for Primary Education, NATE, and the Council for Subject Associations). We are establishing links with professionals from other disciplines (e.g. Speech and Language Therapy, as you will see from the June conference report). We are beginning to see EAL on their agenda. For other associations/professionals to also take up the cause will form a much more powerful advocacy for EAL.

Needless to say, to reverse the trend for EAL, to re-establish the importance of this field and to work towards our ultimate goals of achieving an EAL curriculum and assessment framework, is not an easy task. We have been bolstered by the continuation of our membership numbers, the increase in demand for training, and the goodwill and support from friends and supporters – and here Nick Ullmann deserves a special mention for his valiant sponsored cycling on behalf of NALDIC - to have inspired such effort must be the ultimate accolade for NALDIC.

Have a good summer and a good rest! Relax with this copy of NQ – you will find, yet again, something for everyone!