

VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

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Pessimism of the Intellect, Optimism of the Will.

(Antonio Gramsci)

I begin this piece by outlining some of the key developments that have taken place since the last conference and their impact on the EAL field including: The Schools White Paper: The Importance of Teaching; The mainstreaming of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant and the impact on the EAL profession and Cameron's speech on the failure of state multiculturalism

These developments herald a pessimistic outlook for our field. But there are grounds for optimism as many specialist teachers in schools continue to dedicate themselves to the needs, entitlement and betterment of their EAL pupils. Some of the more optimistic developments include: MPs debate on funding for EAL provision; the English Baccalaureate; building new alliances and NALDIC's involvement with EU initiatives

Soon after the NALDIC Conference in November, the Schools White Paper: The Importance of Teaching was published (Nov 2010 <http://www.education.gov.uk/b0068570/the-importance-of-teaching/>.) The central message of the paper is – schools are to be 'freed from the constraints of central Government direction and teachers placed firmly at the heart of school improvement'.

This edition focuses on a new EU project aimed specifically at developing a core curriculum for teacher education in the face of pupil movements across Europe. Many schools across EU countries are now experiencing the kind of new arrivals we have been experiencing in the UK for some time. An EU-wide focus on teacher education is long overdue and the opportunity to be involved in this initiative is welcomed by NALDIC.

The focus on teachers and teacher education is also the focus of the Schools White Paper: The Importance of Teaching. In the paper, the government places the responsibility for raising attainment and closing the attainment gap on schools and teachers.

Indeed there is much in the White Paper about the need to close the gap for disadvantaged groups. However, though minority ethnic pupils are mentioned once in the paper, in contrast to the

frequent mention of pupils on FSM and pupils with SEN, the needs and entitlements of EAL pupils are not mentioned at all. Whilst one may argue that the terms 'disadvantaged' and 'vulnerable groups', include EAL learners, by failing to mention them as a distinctive group, their needs will continue to be seen in deficit/pathological terms. In that sense, their needs are no more distinctive than the needs of those of other 'disadvantaged/vulnerable groups' such as pupils on FSM and SEN pupils. In this light, provision to meet the needs of EAL learners will continue to be managed by SEN- trained, but not EAL-trained Inclusion Managers.

According to National Statistical First Release the proportion of pupils for whom English is an additional language has risen year on year from 7.5% in 1997 to 14% in 2009 (16% in primary schools, 11.6% in secondary schools

<http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000925/sfr09-2010.pdf>).

Attainment indicators in English, mathematics and science at Key Stage 1, 2 and 3 show that pupils for whom English is a first language consistently outperform their peers for whom English is an additional language in all three core subjects in these Key Stages. Yet still EAL has not been accorded the same importance as catering for pupils with Special Educational Needs. A fact that seems to have eluded the EHRC's triennial report on How Fair is Britain.

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/key-projects/how-fair-is-britain/>

and also <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/key-projects/how-fair-is-britain/online-summary/education/>

Despite the year on year increase in EAL pupils in our schools, and in contrast to the statutory framework for pupils with Special Educational Needs, learners of EAL in our schools have no National Curriculum entitlement to EAL teaching and learning. NALDIC has responded strongly to the White Paper and argued that as long as this situation persists, our position is that these pupils' additional needs require specific and clearly defined provision and specialist teaching.

<http://www.naldic.org.uk/docs/resources/documents/NALDICResponsetotheSchoolsWhitepaper2010.pdf>

The combined effect of government policy on training 'on the job', and the decimation of local authority EMA services, means that there is a real danger that the gap in teacher knowledge in the field of EAL will remain unsupported despite the government's intention to improve quality of teaching and learning. This is

despite the annual NQT survey showing that NQTs persistently rate themselves least well prepared for meeting the needs of EAL and minority ethnic pupils, compared to all other aspects of their ITE course including meeting the needs of SEN pupils and behaviour management.

Given this situation, and the lack of a statutory national qualification for teachers of EAL, we do not believe that there is enough expertise within schools to adequately train teachers in the areas of EAL and minority ethnic achievement. The focus on 'on the job' training also goes against the emphasis on the need for teachers to have good academic competence and subject knowledge (para 2.8, 2.9 of the White Paper), as exemplified by the development of the MaST course and the SENCo accreditation, both of which require HEI-based training and not school-based training.

The 2006 PISA report lists a number of factors that contribute to the closing of gaps between 'immigrant' and 'non-immigrant' pupils, including having language development frameworks and progress benchmarks. Britain is the only English-speaking country not to have developed a specific EAL scale by which to measure progress in learning English as an additional language, and as such is contrary to the recommendations in the PISA report. Though there has been no progress in developing a national system for assessing progress in EAL, involvement in the EU-wide teacher education initiative may offer another opportunity to look at this area again.

A further blow to the field of EAL has come with the termination of the ring-fencing of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant and its mainstreaming into the Direct Schools Grant. Despite overwhelming support for the retention of the ring-fenced grant, and despite the survey work carried out by Pricewaterhouse Coopers on reviewing the formula for distribution of the DSG, a clear message emerged regarding EAL which was that

'Headteachers indicated that they would favour the retention of locally devolved funding to support EAL needs, in addition to easily and immediately accessible local budgets and resources' (PWC, 2009).

This is quite different from asking local Schools Forum to 'hand back' to local authorities a proportion of the DSG to provide for central services, particularly as it is well documented that EAL need is already under-funded at school level.

Already through our NALDIC/NUT EMAG Survey, nearly 70% of local authorities surveyed are deleting posts or making forced or voluntary redundancies. This is despite the School Finance Regulations having been amended to: *'enable LAs to retain funding centrally within DSG for services which support schools in narrowing achievement gaps for under-performing ethnic groups and in meeting the specific needs of bilingual learners. This would enable LAs to continue services funded wholly or partly from the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant'*.

This situation was highlighted in a recent article in the Times Educational Supplement (18 February 2011) The article highlighted that plans to devolve the ethnic minority achievement grant to schools are leading to extensive job losses in local authority teams supporting non-English speakers, undermining the base of specialist expertise available to schools. In future, schools will receive the money directly and will be expected to buy back services from private or public providers. There are fears that this will lead to schools buying in support "on the cheap" by taking on untrained teaching assistants or using online resources in place of a teacher.

Frank Monaghan pointed out that: *"Classroom teachers will be expected to cope on their own and we will get the usual headlines about children being held back by children who don't speak English. They will be demonised and made to feel it's their fault, rather than our fault for failing to address their needs."*

Frank's remarks reflect the unease following David Cameron's speech on the need for immigrants to be better integrated into British society in order to curb extremism. According to Cameron, one of the 'practical' ways to ensure integration is by *'making sure that immigrants speak the language of their new home and ensuring that people are educated in the elements of a common culture and curriculum'*. <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/speeches-and-transcripts/2011/02/pms-speech-at-munich-security-conference-60293>

Whilst this would seem to suggest that the government is advocating increased focus on teaching English as an additional language, it is yet another example of lack of joined-up thinking when many of those specialists with responsibility for training or delivering EAL support are being lost to the field due to the impact of mainstreaming EMAG, reduced funding to local authorities and the impact of the White Paper on the changing relationship between local authorities and schools.

The speech has also been widely criticised for its untimeliness and the context in which it was given – at a conference on international security. Critics point out that, *'from now on, 'ethnic minority' policy will not only be securitised but will act as an adjunct to anti-terrorist laws'* (Liz Fekete, IRR, 7 February); and the illogicality of using learning English as a strategy to help stop extremism when many of those who have carried out/plotted atrocities have been highly educated. It is most unfortunate to juxtapose EAL with anti-terrorist measures, and at the same time removing 'Community Cohesion' as a statutory duty for schools.

Meanwhile, a welcome debate around the issue of funding for EAL pupils took place in parliament. Stewart Jackson Conservative MP for Peterborough urged the government to take note of *'the small number of LEAs with significant numbers of English as an additional language pupils, particularly at primary level'* and argued that EAL learners *'should be taken into consideration in designing the post-2011-12 architecture of the pupil premium'*

He argued that the focus of the pupil premium is *"too narrow and that multiple pressures caused by the needs of migrants (including deprivation, EAL and mobility factors) ought to be included for the Pupil Premium basis in the future."*

In response Nick Gibb confirmed that he *'would consult on developing and introducing a clear, transparent and fairer national funding formula based on the needs of pupils. ...English as an additional language will certainly be a factor in the review and consultation.'* and that he would take the issues around EAL raised in the debate into careful consideration. We applaud those working in the field for the excellent briefing they provided for Stewart Jackson.

And so from Lynn (Cameron) to Dave (Cameron) – from EAL teaching focusing on specialist knowledge and expertise and a field that includes advanced bilinguals – we are moving into a world of marketisation, where EAL provision may be reduced to interpreting and translating, using teaching assistants for induction classes and seemingly quick-fix online solutions offered by commercial companies.

An unforeseen development that may work to the advantage of some EAL pupils, is the introduction of the English Baccalaureate and the inclusion of languages as one of the five subjects that make up the EBAC. Although IGCSE in English as a second

language is not included, a number of 'community languages' that are currently offered by the various exam boards are included. However, this does not mean there are no more barriers to overcome, as Asset Languages are not included and some exam boards have introduced new assessment procedures – namely, the controlled assessments for speaking and writing – which have created additional complications for schools to overcome when entering pupils for community languages.

http://www.naldic.org.uk/docs/news/archive/news_item.cfm?newsid=1222&Pp=1

I began by referring to this edition which heralds a new EU-wide initiative to develop a European Core Curriculum for Mainstreamed Second Language Teacher Education in response to the increasing numbers of second language learners across schools in the EU. But apart from this initiative, NALDIC has also been involved in two Council of Europe projects – MARILLE (Majority language instruction as basis for plurilingual education) <http://marille.ecml.at> and the Languages In and For Education initiative http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/ListDocs_Geneva2010.asp#TopOfPage

To conclude my view from the chair, NALDIC remains focused on

- 1) maintaining membership – For NALDIC to be viable, to continue to provide support and a lead in this field, we need to keep up our membership.
- 2) providing professional development – This must be part of our core work as a professional organisation. Apart from our annual conference, and publications, we will need to explore other ways to support the professional development of our members especially in the brave new world.
- 3) developing partnerships – As schools are told that they cannot do it alone and should form partnerships, so NALDIC must forge new alliances. We need to forge alliances both within the UK and beyond. We have already begun to do this with the work we have started to do with other European countries. NALDIC can only stand to gain.

So whilst we are experiencing a period of change in England amongst real concerns about the future of the EAL field, new platforms and alliances may yet help the field see in a new dawn.