

## View from the Chair

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### Amy Thompson

This time last year, you will recall, concerns about the changes to the EMA grant and the beginning of the dismantling of the institutional support for EAL provision, prompted us to carry out a survey in conjunction with the NUT. The survey showed that local authorities were already beginning to lose EAL/EMA services. By September, we were preparing for a worst case scenario of NALDIC membership halving. Thankfully, this has not materialised (yet).

However, we have had to make a number of decisions in order to meet the changing needs in a changing EAL landscape. One of the key decisions we made was taking the gamble to invest to save and revamped our website. In the new EAL landscape, NALDIC is no longer just a subject association serving the EAL profession or academics researching into EAL or training in EAL. With decreasing lead or coordination from central government and local authorities, schools and teachers are left to fend for themselves. In this landscape, our website has also to meet the needs of non-specialists, whilst at the same time maintaining its role as the leading authority on EAL for the specialists. We hope you will agree that the new website is now offering a much wider range of services than before, and meeting a greater range of needs.

Positive news has also come from the TDA. Prompted by the low rating for EAL from the annual NQT survey, which yet again shows that trainees continue to rate training in EAL poorly compared to other aspects, and by the TDA's own research showing great variability in the quality of initial teacher training in EAL, the TDA awarded NALDIC some funding to roll out three regional events aimed at ITE programme managers to improve the provision for EAL in their training programme. Another prompt to the TDA may also have been the fact that they are aware that there is an EU project developing a Core Curriculum for Teacher Education to address the language learning needs of the increasing number of additional language speakers in schools across Europe, brought about by the expansion of the EU.

Members will recall that some years ago NALDIC was funded to develop resources for ITE tutors.

This time round the training funded by the TDA was aimed at programme managers. The aim was to get those with the power to influence the ITE curriculum to review the place of EAL – and raise its profile- so that it is not confined to the half a day slot on EAL nor mixed up with other inclusion and diversity issues.

The regional ITE EAL events took place this term in Stockton on Tees, Exeter and Luton. The institutions that attended included not just the HEI teacher training departments, but also SCITTs, EBITTs, and Teaching Schools. As a result of the events, eminently led by Professor Constant Leung and Dr Jean Conteh, many ITE providers are now considering a range of changes to their ITE programme, including embedding the training across subject areas, more EAL specific tasks for their trainees, training in EAL for their subject area tutors. The proof of the pudding will be when the NQT Survey results show a significant rise in their rating for the training they received on EAL.

Apart from this initiative, the TDA also announced a project called Leading Partners in EAL. 17 consortia of schools working with HEI departments were successful in their bids. The aim of the project is to:

- develop and enhance trainees' and teachers' knowledge of teaching EAL pupils;
- demonstrate how schools' involvement in training can support the learning, access and achievement of EAL pupils;
- demonstrate how schools can organise effective training environments which also support pupils' EAL learning;
- further develop and strengthen partnership between providers of initial teacher training and leading practitioners in schools; and
- build coherence across training programmes in relation to support for EAL pupils, including more coherent approaches to EAL across subjects and improved integration of school and centre-based training.

Project schools will need to work on the project, and with each other, to develop school and centre-based training in EAL. In particular, schools must be able to:

- provide opportunities for trainee teachers to learn from, and work with, effective teachers and practitioners on the teaching, learning and assessment of EAL pupils

- provide excellent modelling of professional practice, and
- help trainees to plan for, and support, progress in EAL through, for example, subjects and main stream teaching, one to one tuition and small group teaching.

NALDIC does not have a monitoring or advisory role with regard to this project but hopes to gather the case studies and disseminate some principles and guidance based on the evaluations.

Meanwhile, with no steer from central government, other organisations are now moving into the EAL field. The British Council has published a report looking at current practice in EAL in UK primary schools ( see [www.naldic.org.uk/eal-advocacy/eal-news-summary/090312](http://www.naldic.org.uk/eal-advocacy/eal-news-summary/090312)) The report concludes that ‘The decentralisation leads to: inefficiencies in funding distribution; time-wasting, due to teachers and managers repeating work already done by others elsewhere; and a lack of knowledge through a lack of an effective training programme. This deficit of training means that teachers tend to ‘wing it’, rather than offer an innovative approach to the education of bilingual children.’

The report also points out that being bilingual in community/heritage languages is still regarded as ‘folk’ bilingualism, whilst being bilingual in the more prestigious European languages is regarded as ‘elite’ bilingualism. Added to that, a recent right-leaning think tank are ‘questioning whether children with English as a second language will grow up to feel British, get jobs and feel included.’ (Is second-language English an issue for children? [http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/today/newsid\\_9695000/9695432.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/today/newsid_9695000/9695432.stm)) I am reminded of the Blunkett comment that speaking another language at home causes schizophrenia.

Also recently published was a summary of the government’s policy on EAL. Curiously, it was published on the Cambridge Assessment website (<http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/ca/Viewpoints/Viewpoint?id=138962>) and does not appear on the DfE website. The statement included this:

***Teaching of mother tongue and culture from countries of origin***

*The Government recognises the benefits that derive from the maintenance of ethnic minority linguistic and cultural traditions, but believes the main responsibility for maintaining mother tongue*

*rests with the ethnic minority community themselves. We believe that English should be the medium of instruction in schools.*

So, despite the many years of government rhetoric on valuing diversity, nothing has changed since the Swann Report (1985) with regard to seeing the maintenance of mother-tongue/community languages as the responsibility of the ethnic minority community themselves, and seeing speaking another language at home as being incompatible with being a competent speaker of English as well.

I began by talking about concerns over the dissipation of the profession and implications for provision for EAL for our learners, and on NALDIC membership. With expectations increasing on schools to step up and fulfil their responsibilities for EAL, NALDIC recognises the need to reach out to colleagues from other disciplines, to share, collaborate, and enhance the ability of the teaching profession to address the complex cross-curricular needs of EAL learners. Professionals from other disciplines are also reaching out to NALDIC - the popularity of our annual conference is testament to that. It is the first time we have had to close applications due to oversubscription. I commend this issue to you, especially for those of you who were not able to attend the conference.

To conclude, whilst the EAL field may be experiencing some fragmentation, we have not experienced the big drop in membership numbers that we expected. A recent membership benchmarking study to which NALDIC contributed offered the following reassuring explanation:

*‘...despite the worldwide recession, retention rate was not adversely affected. This continues to support the view that membership is counter cyclical, i.e. when times are tough, people need help, advice and support more than ever.’* (Membership Research Report 2012, page 5)

The correspondence and enquiries coming through the new website certainly corroborate the truth in this.

Enjoy this issue and don’t forget to spend some time ‘rummaging’ through our website – you will find that it’s a treasure trove of everything you ever wanted to know about EAL!