

NALDIC Annual Report to the Membership: 2006-2007

Introduction

NALDIC's priorities for the year 2006-2007 have remained the same as in previous years, with some rewording and the addition of an objective to strengthen our focus on bilingualism in education. They therefore read as follows:

- To continue to develop the professional field of EAL
- To develop NALDIC's advocacy role on behalf of the EAL field and those working in the EAL field
- To define and develop effective provision for EAL learners and the role of bilingualism in education
- To promote the role of bilingualism in education
- To continue to develop NALDIC's organizational, administrative and strategic functions

Our work and the activities we have undertaken in the past year have continued to address these strands and we have also sought to respond effectively to the changing EAL landscape.

Committee and organisational matters

Our administration continues to be based in Luton, improving the quality of our services to members and working with our part-time administrator, Rosemarie James, to provide stability and effective administrative support and ensure that publications orders, conference booking and membership queries are dealt with quickly and accurately. These organisational improvements helped us to minimize problems during a difficult time this summer: we had to move offices within Luton, because our landlord's lease at the Spires had expired and was not renewed. Members will understand that this was an upheaval and inevitably caused some disruption to our systems, but we are confident that any initial problems have been overcome. Unfortunately, our current office base is unlikely to be permanent and we may well be on the move again towards the end of the 2007.

Members will be aware that the Executive Committee reluctantly felt it was necessary to increase the membership fees to £30 from September 2006 in order to more closely reflect our increased running costs. However, responding to suggestions made at the AGM in 2006, it was decided to consider ways both of supporting retired members and of encouraging new members to join the Association. We now offer a retired members renewal rate of £20; an introductory rate of £15 for the first year of membership to new members paying by direct debit is also offered. These new rates are in addition to the discounted part year membership rate of £15 to members joining between April 1st and July 31st, and the opening of membership to institutions such as schools. An annual subscription to NALDIC Quarterly is also available to institutions such as schools or university libraries for £20.

The Executive Committee continues to provide strategic leadership and direction to the organization and develop NALDIC policy and practice. It has also been active in fulfilling NALDIC's advocacy role, responding to a range of consultations during the year and linking with professional organisations and Government agencies to further work in the field of EAL. The Finance and Administration Committee has put appropriate measures in place to ensure that NALDIC complies with charity, finance and employment legislation, and has put in place a system of forward planning to help us in continuing to meet members' needs and interests. There are now seven Regional NALDIC Groups and six Special Interest Groups: some of these have regular meetings and are well supported by members in the various areas; others would welcome the more active involvement of members, and the Executive would urge members to think about contributing to the work of one of these local networks in responding to the increasing numbers of EAL learners in schools outside major conurbations and the needs of staff, many of whom are inexperienced, working with them. The NALDIC General Council, a body which includes representatives from these regional and special interest groups as well as our affiliated organisations and which provides valuable support to NALDIC's work and development, met in March 2007. The meeting was addressed by Professor Constant Leung, who, in his talk entitled 'Renewing the EAL agenda', addressed some of

the challenges and potential priorities for NALDIC and helped the Association to identify specific developments and tasks it needed to commit to. The group also considered the NALDIC response to the Primary Review and the implementation of the national strategy for EAL. The Research Group has held two meetings, one of which focused on a presentation by Charmian Kenner of Goldsmiths College on her recent ESRC-funded research project, which investigated ways in which schools could best support learning for second and third generation children whose families speak another language.

As always, NALDIC seeks to broaden and strengthen its work on behalf of the membership, and we are aware that the importance of this is recognised by our members, as borne out by the recently- received members' comments below, which have given us great encouragement:

NALDIC. A huge thank you to all of you who have worked so hard over the years to promote good practice'

'NALDIC has been a real life line to me at times during my career. Joining the association opened my eyes to a whole world of thinking about EAL and a whole network of colleagues who were struggling with the same issues'

'NALDIC has provided much of the information for new developments in the field. This has greatly assisted me both in my teaching and management roles'.

Publications.

New NALDIC publications this year have included the second in our innovative 'practice papers' series, which included 'Developing inference training with primary EAL pupils' by Bernadette Hall, 'Evaluating secondary national strategy literacy materials' by Olivia Roth, and 'Using first language assessment as a diagnostic tool' by Nighat Yasmin. This series provides EAL practitioners with access to accounts of classroom practice which we know members have found to be a valuable source of ideas for reflection and debate. The series continues to arouse considerable interest in higher education institutions preparing EAL specialists for specialist degrees and is one of the few channels for sharing classroom based work in the field in the UK. We say this with a mix of pride and regret.

The practice of sharing the job of editing *NALDIC Quarterly* amongst members of the Publications Committee has been very successful and we are very grateful to those members who have taken on the job of editing particular editions over the year, Peta Ullmann, Helen Abji and Susan Rankin-Reid. The success of *NALDIC Quarterly* has also been enhanced by focusing on a theme for each edition. This year we have produced editions focusing on: reading, advocacy and talk. We are particularly grateful to this year's Guest Editor, Simon Murison-Bowie, and to his contributors, for the Autumn edition of *NALDIC Quarterly* which focuses on research. We also say thank you and goodbye to Tim Spafford and Bill Bolloten who provided us with excellent reports on refugee issues each edition - their contribution has been enormous and enormously appreciated. As always, we welcome contributions to our publications from members and we are particularly pleased to have seen a further increase in submitted articles from members to include in *NALDIC Quarterly*. We would also be keen to receive submissions for our *Practice Papers* series and proposals for our *Occasional Papers*.

The NALDIC website www.naldic.org.uk has continued to expand. In 2006, we secured support from the Teacher Development Agency (TDA) to continue our successful work on developing subject resource materials and programmes for those involved in the preparation of new teachers. In particular, we have developed electronic resources to help lecturers ensure that student teachers in all contexts are able to meet the controversial new QTS Standard 19 which requires them to 'Know how to make effective personalised provision for those they teach, including those for whom English is an additional language or who have special educational needs or disabilities, and how to take practical account of diversity and promote equality and inclusion in their teaching'. This year we have developed materials on: primary and early years curriculum issues in EAL; using digital video clips to demonstrate good pedagogic practice; and working with others in the wider workforce. Alongside this, we have undertaken filming in a number of schools to look at assessment for learning in EAL and have run induction events for new lecturers. This year, the ITE site (www.naldic.org.uk/ittseal2/index.cfm) has had over 60,000 visitors with 10,000 returning regularly.

Conferences and seminars

NALDIC has continued to promote the professional field of EAL through its programme of events and conferences. Our 14th Annual Conference in 2006, *'Advocacy: Entitlement, Inclusion and Expectations'*, was a particularly successful event. The conference departed somewhat from our usual format: in view of current concerns about the continuation of sound specialist EAL teaching and possible funding changes post-2008, we wanted the conference to help NALDIC develop our priorities and enable us to shape our work for the next few years. We therefore invited speakers from across the British Isles to share with us their perspectives on the education of bilingual learners and explore ways in which practitioners can ensure high expectations and full entitlement for EAL learners in future. Our keynote speaker was Joe Lo Bianco, Professor of Language and Literacy Education at the University of Melbourne and a long-term advocate for equitable language rights and language policies. We had already had experience of Joe's lively style at a previous NALDIC conference keynote in 1999, and in 2007 he was equally challenging and insightful as he ranged widely over recent debates across the English-speaking world, showing how language policy is an index of wider social and cultural policies and exhorting us to use both 'stats and stories' to make our case. He was supported by Constant Leung who analysed the context for EAL in England; Joanna McPake looking at provision for learning community languages in Scotland; Matthew Wallen outlining the special status given to the Irish language in the Republic of Ireland; and Meirion Prys Jones giving an overview of current language planning policies and practices in Wales. Discussion groups in the afternoon focused on fleshing out the statement "To create the necessary conditions for EAL learners to achieve within our educational system, they will be entitled to ...", and covering aspects of the curriculum, assessment/progression, first language maintenance, professional standards, and EAL specialist teachers. Many delegates spoke warmly of the relevance and interest of the theme and the quality of both the keynote and other speakers. The Conference edition of the NALDIC Quarterly (NQ 4.3) has a full report of the event.

Because of the changing demographic which has seen increasing numbers of EAL learners in schools and areas which have not previously had experience of these learners, and the impact of workforce remodelling, which has meant that increasing numbers of teaching and learning assistants and other non-qualified staff are now working in the field, we have sought to respond to these changing contexts and connect with these new audiences through our events programmes. Following a successful first Regional Practitioner Conference organised with the Collaborative Learning Project last year, two further such Conferences have taken place, one in Cambridge and one in Durham. In each case, NALDIC members in the local EMA teams have taken on the responsibility of liaising with venues and publicising the event in their region, and their support, enthusiasm and hard work have been invaluable. We have found this model - a small number of delegates (typically around 50), a practice-orientated keynote address, followed by a range of practical workshops demonstrating support strategies across age phases, and networking opportunities - very effective in supporting staff who may be encountering EAL learners for the first time. In the Spring and Summer Term of 2008, we intend to host at least two more such conferences jointly with local authority EMA services most probably in Wales and in the Eastern Region. In addition, in the Spring Term 2008, we will be hosting a second national EAL and ICT conference, supported by funding from BECTA

NALDIC responses, delegations and other activities

One of the main consultations to which NALDIC made a response this year was the Primary Review, a very important and wide-ranging initiative, set up independently with the support of the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and based at the University of Cambridge under the direction of Robin Alexander to ask questions about how successful current educational systems were, and where education in the twenty-first century and beyond should be heading. Our response focused on four priority areas for NALDIC: the distinctiveness of EAL as a cross-curriculum discipline; the assessment of EAL; linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism; and the development of the EAL specialism. These issues have been echoed in the results of the first of the Primary Review's major consultations, Community Soundings, which has found that many parents are concerned about the lack of provision for different languages in schools. Teachers and others are equally concerned about the funding available to support children effectively. As the report concludes *'it is clear that a pattern of schooling premised upon the relative stability of its intake is being called increasingly into question, and that resourcing in respect of matters like language provision may not be keeping pace with need. This, without a doubt, is now a*

national challenge'. Throughout the year, we have continued to raise such issues with government agencies and others, on behalf of our members and EAL learners across the country. We recently responded to the consultation on Community Cohesion, and have commented on the DCSF 'Teaching Units to support guided sessions for writing in English as an additional language (pilot materials)'. We have also produced a briefing paper on funding and a position paper on effective provision for newly arrived beginners of English as an additional language. These papers and our many other reports and responses, can be viewed at <http://www.naldic.org.uk/docs/resources/KeyDocs.cfm#Responses>.

Conclusion

The 'stats and stories' which Joe Lo Bianco urged us to use to make our case continue to accumulate. The total number of pupils learning EAL in our primary and secondary schools has risen by over 50% since 1997 but the number of sufficiently trained, qualified and experienced EAL teachers is very limited. Language provision is recognised as a local, national and global challenge. It is not, however, an insurmountable one. Recent international research points out that 'investment in language support measures will likely reduce the disadvantage in school achievement' and investigates provision in Australia and Canada where the influential PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) study showed no significant gap between the performance of immigrant and non-immigrant students and also in Sweden, where the gap is very narrow. The researchers' conclusions are challenging to the UK context, identifying as they do the following key factors for language programmes which successfully reduce gaps in achievement:

- systematic programmes with explicit standards and requirements;
- curricula determined at the local level but based on central key curriculum documents, including language development frameworks and progress benchmarks;
- high standards for the programmes such that students acquire language skills in the context of the mainstream curriculum and can integrate into the appropriate level of instruction;
- time intensive programmes;
- teachers instructing second-language learners have received specialized training (either pre- or in-service), with some completing postgraduate degrees in teaching the language of instruction as a second language; and
- teachers of second-language learners tend to cooperate with class teachers to ensure they meet the needs of immigrant students.

In his final View from the Chair, Steve Cooke noted that 'As we move further into the 21st Century it appears that the UK will become increasingly multilingual and that this linguistic diversity will be apparent throughout the UK and not just in traditional urban centres. It could be argued that virtually all schools will need, to some extent, to reconfigure themselves as 'international schools' serving communities which are ethnically, linguistically and socially diverse and are composed of a range of nationalities'. As Steve pointed out 'Serving the community is not just a matter of being hospitable to diversity but of developing a pedagogy which is enabling for all'. This view has been echoed by respondents to the Primary Review's Community Soundings who argued that 'The future of Britain is multi-lingual, and this needs to be reflected in support services for parents, EAL support in schools and in the school curriculum'. With members' support, NALDIC will continue to bring 'stats and stories' to the attention of our policy makers, offering not only questions but also answers in our efforts to advocate effectively on behalf of bilingual pupils and EAL practitioners and to create first-class educational provision for all.