

# NALDIC Annual Report to the Membership: 2004-2005

## Introduction

The past year has been an extremely busy one for NALDIC, both internally and in relation to national developments.

Our action plan for 2004-2007 contains four main strands

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

We have continued to address these strands through our activities in 2004-5 whilst at the same time ensuring that we remain alert to national developments and challenges.

## Committee and organisational matters

One of the most significant developments has been organizational. Since the previous AGM, we have followed expert legal advice and are now a charitable company. Our registered offices continue to be in Luton. Our part time administrative assistant has supported us to operate more effectively as an organization in terms of response and services to members and the wider public. We are now hoping to consolidate these gains through the appointment of a permanent assistant. Membership has continued to grow and in the past year has widened to include further overseas members and new members with roles outside schools and local authorities.

Our committee has been restructured and we have focused on expanding the opportunities for members to become more directly involved in our decision making processes through the development of the NALDIC General Council which meets three times a year. This body includes representatives from our regional and special interest groups as well as our affiliated organizations. This year, the group has addressed future provision for EAL, has considered the main content and approach of the Primary National Strategy EAL programme, and has explored the theme 'Inclusion: a reality for EAL learners'.

## Publications.

Publications Committee agreed to focus on the area of community languages and bilingualism during 2004/05. This aim has been addressed through three publications: In Occasional Paper 18, Arvind Bhatt, Nirmala Bhojani, Angela Creese and Peter Martin explored how complementary schooling can be included in the wider educational agenda. This paper, *Complementary and mainstream schooling: a case for reciprocity?*, was based on the authors' study of two complementary schools in Leicester. On a similar theme, Leena Robertson's Occasional Paper, *Teaching and learning in community language schools*, argues that community language schools are important domains of learning and that they are often viewed only from a mainstream perspective. She provides an example of practice in one community language school and highlights the need for further such studies. A third publication on the theme of community languages and bilingualism was the report of a workshop held at the University of Luton, *Assessing children's use of knowledge and use of community languages for educational purposes*. This is a valuable report which draws on a wide range of contributors and summarises practice in a number of local authorities. We are particularly grateful to Tony Cline and Helen Abji for their work in compiling the report. The of community languages theme was also explored in the Winter 2004 edition of *NALDIC Quarterly* through a range of articles.

The practice of sharing the job of editing *NALDIC Quarterly* amongst members of the Publications Committee is now firmly established and we are very grateful to those committee members who have taken on the job of editing particular editions over the year. We are particularly grateful to this year's Guest Editor, John Landon, and to his contributors, for the Summer edition of *NALDIC Quarterly* which focussed on developments in Scotland.

A new and important contribution to the range of NALDIC's publications will be an innovative 'practice papers' series. For a long time there has been a need for EAL practitioners to have access to accounts of classroom practice. The intention of the 'practice papers' series is to contribute to meeting this need. We hope that members will find the papers of intrinsic interest and that they will be a valuable source of ideas for reflection and debate. Preparation for

publication of our first three papers (published in a single volume) has been taking place over the year and copies will be distributed to members very shortly.

This report also notes the statement on the role of the EAL teacher, 'Promoting EAL Teacher Professionalism' which NALDIC published during last year. This short paper extends and updates the view of the role of the EAL teacher set out in 'The EAL Teacher: Descriptors of Good Practice' (2002). Although brief in length, the statement has important implications and could be the basis for valuable discussions between EAL professionals. It deserves careful consideration.

Among the publications planned for the near future is a new Working Paper on 'isolated' learners. This will be of particular interest to the many NALDIC members who work with bilingual pupils in 'low density' schools. It is hoped that a further Working Paper on bilingualism and first language development will be published as an outcome of a week-end seminar held in the summer term. As always, we welcome contributions to our publications from members and we are particularly pleased to receive articles to include in *NALDIC Quarterly*. We also welcome feed-back on our publications and, even better, letters to the editor for publication in *NALDIC Quarterly*.

The NALDIC website [www.naldic.org.uk](http://www.naldic.org.uk) has continued to flourish and particularly with the addition of the ITTSEAL site which is dedicated to EAL in initial teacher education. The site can be reached directly at [www.naldic.org.uk/ittseal2/index.cfm](http://www.naldic.org.uk/ittseal2/index.cfm) or through a link on the top right of the NALDIC home page at [www.naldic.org.uk](http://www.naldic.org.uk). Since the site was launched in January 2004, it has become clear that it was being used not only by its target audience of new initial teacher educators, but also by a much wider community of teacher educators and researchers, EAL professionals and student teachers. Feedback to the site to date has been extremely positive.

*'I feel the issues raised on your site will be of importance to me as Lincolnshire is predominantly white' - 4<sup>th</sup> Year BA Hons Primary student*

*'I have found your website to be the most helpful and informative' - Final Year Secondary ICT PGCE student*

*'As a teacher trainer I would wish to use these materials immediately and I am widely recommending them to colleagues and students. I just wish they had been around when I started in teacher education'. - **Experienced ITE tutor with responsibility for EAL***

Since the official launch by the TTA (now TDA) of all the sites developed by subject associations in December 2004, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of site visitors. Visitor numbers to the site trebled and 'hits' now average around 4000 a month. NALDIC sees this project as a significant development in ensuring that initial teacher education prepares all student teachers to respond to the language and learning needs of pupils with EAL in line with the revised Standards for the Award of Qualified Teacher Status. NALDIC is continuing to commission materials for the site and is also involved with further initiatives with the TDA to support the development of this aspect of initial teacher education. For example, we have met with other subject associations involved with the TDA project to develop joint approaches to working with EAL learners in subject areas and have addressed to a national conference for school based initial teacher educators. We also hosted a very successful induction seminar for new ITE tutors which took place in London in February 2005.

## **Conferences and seminars**

NALDIC has also continued to be at the forefront of developing the professional field of EAL. Our 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference 2005 *Talking it through: Speaking, listening and learning English as an additional language* was held in London in November 2004. The conference addressed some of the key issues in the current UK situation through a combination of seminars, demonstrations and workshops. The keynote address *A language learning Strategy: Production before comprehension* was given by Professor Merrill Swain from OISE, University of Toronto. She was supported by a wonderful range of seminar speakers including Jill Bourne, Priscilla Clarke, Jennifer Jenkins and Neil Mercer and a host of stimulating workshop presenters.

As part of our work on addressing emerging issues in the field, we held a working weekend at the University of Warwick in March 2005 to discuss the issues of isolated bilingual learners. Data indicates that 16 per cent of learners of English as an additional language (EAL) in England are currently educated in areas where less than six per cent of all pupils are learning EAL. Despite this, relatively little of the professional literature and guidance appears to focus on the needs of bilingual learners acquiring EAL in mainly monolingual areas nor to directly address the distinctive challenges that teachers of such 'isolated' pupils often face. Yet behind every isolated bilingual learner there is often

an isolated teacher. We developed a definition of isolated bilingual learners to mean learners whose first language is not English and who are learning in schools and settings where few (if any) other pupils share their first language; English as an additional language acquisition needs; ethnic, religious or cultural heritages. This working weekend brought together the professional experience and practice of many specialists familiar with the challenges of mainly monolingual settings and encouraged reflection on different approaches. The work of the group culminated in Working Paper 8 which is due to be published in November 2005.

### **NALDIC responses, delegations and other activities**

We have also continued to develop NALDIC as a subject association for EAL and maintaining the advocacy role of the organization. NALDIC has responded to a wide range of consultations, including the OFSTED consultation on the Framework for inspecting schools, the new school funding arrangements from 2006 and most recently the DfES consultation on 'Inclusion, equality and diversity: data'. We have also produced statements and briefings: the NALDIC statement on promoting EAL Teacher Professionalism published in March 2005 and a Briefing Paper on the Assessment of pupils learning EAL in July 2005.

We have also been represented at QCA English subject association meetings to discuss developments in relation to National Curriculum English, CILT meetings leading to the mapping of community language provision in England Scotland and Wales, and supporting the GTC to develop teacher professionalism in relation to EAL issues.

A major area of work for NALDIC this year has been involvement with a variety of agencies to ensure that new technologies and media support the language and learning needs of EAL and bilingual pupils. We received additional funding from the DfES to support the development of guidance and exemplification of how ICT can be used effectively in classroom practice to embed EAL learning across the curriculum. As part of this initiative we supported the development of Embedding ICT@ KS3 video case studies launched by the DfES at BETT in January 2005. These demonstrate the use of ICT with EAL learners in KS3 subject areas. This series of CD based 'EAL videos' feature lessons split into bite-size sections that focus on specific aspects of teaching and learning where emphasis is placed not just on how technology is used but why. A range of EAL models of support are featured. The mainstream teacher may have worked collaboratively with an EAL specialist, be supported by a bilingual assistant or indeed the two practitioners may have swapped roles. Each video introduces the target EAL pupils with a synopsis of their English language developmental needs and voice-over narration throughout demonstrates how the technology has impact for the differing needs of the students. These are available in all KS3 subjects and were filmed in schools from Liverpool to Gloucestershire and all points in between.

Other initiatives in this area have been: working with the BBC and an educational consortium to advise on the development of digital content for EAL and bilingual learners; advising educational publishers on the development of ICT based resources; and authoring guidance material for BECTA on supporting the learning of EAL pupils through ICT. We have also been involved with supporting Teachers' TV to develop stimulating programmes related to the teaching of EAL learners in mainstream schools, both through lobbying and through providing advice to independent film companies commissioned to undertake this work. The results of this work can be seen in the current Teachers TV programming on EAL which has now been given a much higher profile within the channel's output.

### **Conclusion**

It has been a productive year for NALDIC in terms of organizational developments, publications and involvement in a range of consultations and other initiatives in the field. This represents an enormous amount of time and effort on the part of many members for which we are extremely grateful. While this is encouraging for NALDIC, it does stretch the capacity of the organization to the limit on occasions. As well as increasing overall capacity by recruiting as many new members as possible, therefore, it is also important for the future work of NALDIC for more members to become involved in whatever way they can. This year, groups of members have been involved in looking at the EAL materials being developed for the Primary National Strategy, in two writing weekends on bilingualism and isolated learners and in looking at the issue of inclusion at our general council seminar. There have also been opportunities to feed into several consultations and contributions for NALDIC Quarterly are always welcome. In the coming year, we hope that more members will be encouraged to assist in taking forward the work of the organization.

Although significant progress has been made in several areas, the overall picture nationally is unfortunately, far from encouraging. There have been a number of developments in the wider national context, which will impact significantly on the field of EAL. While some of these have been positive, rather more have been negative.

The government has continued to develop its Aiming High strategy of which EAL continues to be a substantial element. There has been a welcome move towards recognition of the needs of bilingual pupils as a mainstream responsibility and a key element of management responsibility. There has also been some movement in the provision of professional development opportunities for EAL teachers and for teaching assistants. EAL has been increasingly embedded in the National Strategies and work on assessment has been carried out and published and ethnic monitoring incorporated into PLASC. The DfES continues to make positive statements regarding EAL and NALDIC has been consulted and involved at a number of levels. In some senses, then, it could be argued that the profile of EAL has never been higher.

However, the rhetoric is regularly undermined by the impact of many of the policies emanating from the government and little, if any, progress has been made on achieving our key aims. On assessment, for instance, our aim for EAL pupils to have the right for their English language development to be appropriately assessed has been further undermined by the DfES' insistence on promoting the QCA steps as an adequate model for EAL assessment against a considerable amount of professional opposition. The challenge for us is to continue to argue for and work to illustrate appropriate system in the face of official endorsement of an inadequate one.

Other more fundamental challenges involve the failure to firmly establish the need for a specialist qualification or to acknowledge EAL as a specialist curriculum area which taken with the financial situation is likely to increase the erosion of EAL expertise in the field.

Reductions in EMAG for many authorities following the implementation of the national formula are beginning to be felt at the classroom level with the prospects of further problems as the reductions continue into future years. Some county and urban authorities with large numbers of bilingual students have been particularly hard hit with some schools and authorities looking at redundancies. Even some of the 'winners' are experiencing difficulties where tight LA budgets are making it difficult to find the matched funding required to obtain the increased grant. The possibility that, in 2008, EMAG will be discontinued as a ring-fenced grant and added to the single schools budget is not likely to reassure practitioners. This would mean spending on EAL would be at the whim of individual head teachers with the possibility of local authority blocks being subject to different local priorities and financial constraints.

Greater autonomy for schools, particularly academies and foundation schools, together with increased control of admissions outlined in the White Paper are likely to disadvantage EAL pupils, particularly beginners. It is unlikely to be long before it is suggested that they should be taught English before they are admitted, thus opening up the prospect of a return to language centers. Of course, the fact that the number of EAL specialists will have decreased by that time due to financial insecurity, the lack of status and the failure of the government to establish EAL as a distinctive specialism will only serve to compound the issue. The failure to embed EAL effectively in ITT and to recognize fully the importance of promoting specialist qualifications at PGCE level will also have a negative long term impact. As qualified and experienced practitioners who have developed skills over the years leave, there is little prospect of their skills being replaced. There is currently little incentive for new teachers to take up EAL or for serving teachers to transfer into the field. Yet the need continues to increase. We are currently seeing a large influx of EAL pupils from Eastern Europe arriving in areas where EAL has not been a major issue and where EMAG funding is correspondingly low.

It is thus more important than ever that NALDIC remains a strong and active organization able to retain and increase its membership in order to continue to develop its role as a subject association and an advocate for EAL practitioners and bilingual pupils in the face of these challenges and to continue to work towards the recognition of EAL as a distinctive area of the curriculum, the need for specialist training from ITT onwards linked to a continuum of professional development for all teachers and other professionals and for adequate funding for these aims to be achieved.