

NALDIC Annual Report to the Membership: 2008-2009

In our annual report we outline the activities we have undertaken to address our key priorities and the progress made in enhancing provision for bilingual learners in our schools.

Priority 1: To continue to develop the professional field of EAL

Expected outcomes: the continued promotion and awareness raising of EAL as a specialist curriculum subject area; of EAL as a distinctive pedagogic practice; and of the role of EAL specialist teacher and teaching assistant.

In the final phase of our TDA funded project to develop an EAL Subject Resource Network (SRN), we released a strand of work to support tutors to help trainees meet 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 enlisted many well known academics and practitioners to develop a series of professional modules for tutors: Primary EAL and National Curriculum Subjects; Assessment for Learning; Working with other adults to support bilingual learners; and EAL and SEN. In this way, the SRN provides ITE tutors with extensive but accessible background information on key aspects of EAL teaching and learning. The website (<http://www.naldic.org.uk/ittseal2/index.cfm>) is an open and free resource and continues to attract significant traffic, notching up more than 80,000 visitors over the past year.

A popular new resource featured on our main site (<http://www.naldic.org.uk/index.cfm>) was our EAL and ICT vodcast series. Authored by Chris Pim, the 10 vodcasts covered topics from using Google Earth with newly arrived learners to hosting Flashmeetings. The vodcasts were greeted enthusiastically by members:

'This is an excellent, inspirational and powerful exploitation of the technologies we have at our disposal: thank you NALDIC.'

'Congratulations. Brilliantly organised, tightly edited, clear professional help for fellow-professionals. Well done, NALDIC - Teachers' TV should sign you up'

In a major piece of work, NALDIC undertook the National Audit of English as an Additional Language Training and Development provision on behalf of the TDA. This was published in February 2009. The audit surveyed EAL training courses which took place in 2007-8, involving more than 11,247 participants from across the school workforce. Conclusions from the audit were that the situation regarding EAL continuing professional development (CPD) and vocational training remains patchy and inconsistent. There remains a high level of variation between the training available to staff in different local authorities and regions and significant barriers to individuals and schools gaining access to useful information about the content, quality and applicability of CPD courses. A further key finding was that there appeared to be limited consistency and agreement about appropriate content areas for CPD and vocational training for staff performing different roles within the school workforce. This means that much of the offering is insufficiently differentiated and relatively low level. The major gap in the training offer identified by respondents was sustained and accredited CPD for EAL specialists and coordinators. It is regrettable that despite a series of government funded projects and initiatives aimed at improving the understanding of EAL issues among the school workforce, high quality, relevant CPD and vocational training for mainstream and specialist staff is not yet readily available nationally.

This audit fed into the work on the TDA's 5 Year Strategy to promote the development of the EAL workforce in schools. This strategy marks an important first step in recognising the importance of this work in ensuring the attainment, progress and well being of bilingual learners in our schools and we hope will go some way to redress the neglect of EAL professional development in public policy discourse over the years. Whilst we recognize that non-specialist training and development affect a greater number of the school workforce we continue to argue that the exclusive policy focus on ‘mainstreaming’ EAL which has been pursued over the past years has been misdirected. Rather than achieving the laudable aim of extending expertise across a wider proportion of the school workforce, it

appears to have diminished the knowledge and skills base available. In our response to the TDA 5 Year Strategy we have argued that EAL as a whole school and cross curricular concern as well as distinctive subject area needs to be led by specialist teachers and managers whose work is validated through the development of accredited specialist training which focuses on EAL pedagogical issues. This is the hallmark of many of the most successful approaches internationally.

Priority 2: To develop NALDIC's advocacy role on behalf of the EAL field and those working in the EAL field.

Expected outcomes: Equitable provision for EAL learners.

NALDIC's 16th Annual Conference was entitled, *EAL: more than just good practice* and it more than lived up to its billing as our keynotes, seminar and workshop speakers delivered a wide-ranging and stimulating programme of events that produced an extremely pleasing set of evaluations from those attending. We were treated to two excellent keynote addresses with Pauline Gibbons, Associate Professor, Language and Literacy, University of Technology, Sydney, returning to NALDIC for a third time, getting us off to a great start with her talk on Challenging Pedagogies: more than just good practice, in which she described the findings from a recent research project in Australian schools looking at EAL pedagogy in science. The text of her talk is gaining 'classic' status within our field being both erudite and immensely readable. In the afternoon, we were treated to a session by Candace Harper, Assistant Professor, School of Teaching and Learning, University of Florida who talked about reading instruction and why, for EAL students, it requires more than just good practice. The conference theme enabled our contributors from a wide range of situations and backgrounds to really challenge conference participants to consider what is required of them in teaching situations to ensure equitable provision for EAL learners. This indicates just how key our active conference programme is in advocating for change. Event organisation is however time consuming and resource-heavy and our active Events group welcomes members who are able to get further involved. In particular we are seeking support from local authorities in the delivery of our professional development programme which explores current thinking in the field of EAL and focuses clearly on what is distinctive about EAL pedagogy.

Advocating for change is something which the NALDIC Executive undertakes, seemingly unceasingly. Alongside our regular programme of NALDIC meetings and focus groups, we have taken part in consultations and provided written responses on behalf of the field including:

- Letter to OFSTED re Inspecting English as an additional language October 2008
- Open Letter to the Cross Party Group on Balanced Migration February 2009
- Response to New Inquiry into Teacher Training February 2009
- Letter to DCSF re the status of EAL Teachers February 2009
- Response to the GTCE Draft Code February 2009
- Response to the Independent Primary Review: Interim Report February 2009
- Briefing paper on Dedicated Provision for Learners New to English June 2009

All these responses and reports, and many more, are available on the key documents page of our website at <http://www.naldic.org.uk/docs/resources/KeyDocs.cfm>. Alongside these formal statements and position papers, Executive and General Council members have continued to lobby for equitable provision for bilingual learners at a host of meetings with agencies such as QCDA, TDA, OFSTED, National Strategies, GTC, and the DCSF and through our work with the Council for Subject Associations (CfSA).

The range and extent of our collaborations grows each year. NALDIC has been nominated by King's College London as a partner in a new EU funded project exploring the qualification needs of teachers working with second/additional language learners in a mainstream context across Europe. Funded by Comenius, the aim of the project is to improve the pre- and in-service training of all teachers for their work with this group of pupils by developing and promoting a competence-based European Core Curriculum for teacher education across member states. Given the inconsistencies noted in the audit of EAL professional development in England, we are delighted to be involved in this important EU wide initiative which promises much in a pan-European context.

Priority 3: To continue to define and develop effective provision for EAL learners and the role of bilingualism in education

Expected outcomes: Effective EAL pedagogy is made explicit, continues to be developed and disseminated.

This year *NALDIC Quarterly* themes have included Multilingual Europe: hopes and challenges; EAL: more than just good practice; EAL and subject English; and Personalisation. We also published Occasional Paper 22 which traced the links between language and citizenship in the United Kingdom and our fourth set of Practice Papers. We have collaborated with Sage, a major publisher, to complete a new NALDIC book *English as an Additional Language – a reader for teachers working with linguistic minority pupils*, Constant Leung and Angela Creese (Eds.) which will be published in early 2010.

In a further exciting development, NALDIC has been working with Pearson Education to provide support for teachers with EAL students in mainstream English GCSE classes. This includes guidance and a range of materials to support teachers and their students learning EAL. We are delighted to be involved in this innovative project which, to our knowledge, is the first time that a leading educational publisher has sought to reflect the reality of our linguistically diverse classrooms in their course books and materials. The materials, developed for the 2010 GCSE English specifications, are due to be published in early 2010 and we will update you with further information nearer the publication date.

Through our engagement with government policies and policy makers we have continued to lobby for effective provision for EAL learners. This work includes, for example, supporting the entitlement of all learners to have access to EAL teaching and learning (language-conscious teaching) in mainstream curriculum contexts as well as part of dedicated option classes (specialist EAL teaching and learning). It also includes campaigning to ensure that bilingual learners benefit from appropriate pupil and context sensitive assessment which pays attention to their distinctive needs and supports their language learning development. Professional experience in school over the past thirty years has shown EAL development is a very complex phenomenon. In our multiethnic and multilingual school population we have plurilingual pupils who may be fluent in a community language but their level of English language competence is close to that of their mother tongue English speaking peers. At the same time there are other pupils who are at the very beginning stage of learning English at the point of arrival at school. Between these two types there are countless others at various stage of learning to use English for academic and social purposes.

This year we have developed draft KS1 and KS2 descriptors which are intended for use in formative assessment by teachers. They relate to day-to-day assessment of pupils' learning as part of teaching (e.g. talking to pupils about work or marking pupil writing), and using the insight gained from informal assessment to help pupils make progress with their curriculum work. More specifically, they are designed to assist teachers in:

- recognising the language accomplishments made by many of the EAL learners-users as they move through the various stages in the long process of developing English language competence in ordinary curriculum and school contexts
- gaining an overview of the long term EAL developmental trajectories; this professional knowledge of EAL development is vitally important in any attempt to assist pupils to make progress with their language development through the curriculum on a day-to-day basis
- developing professional expertise in noticing pupil EAL accomplishment, diagnosing language learning needs, and offering informed guidance to lead pupils to achieve their next level of learning.

Many colleagues have warmly welcomed these descriptors which add to mainstream and specialist teachers' understanding of how additional language is acquired and how they can help. Disappointingly, government agencies have not followed our lead on the importance of appropriate assessment. It has been made clear that the controversial QCA A Language in Common is to be updated to bring it in line with Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP) but will not be removed, nor will the extended scale be rewritten or revised.

Priority 4: To promote the role of bilingualism in education

Expected outcomes: An enhanced awareness and increased knowledge about the value of bilingualism to bilingual learners' academic achievement.

NALDIC has recently published a Working Paper on Developing a Bilingual Pedagogy for UK Schools. This replaces our 1998 *Working Paper 3, Guidelines on Bilingualism*. It aims to share understandings about the use of bilingual pedagogies for bilingual students and staff, and endorse the development of children's bilingualism through these pedagogies. We are aware that the bilingual approaches used by schools are often transitional and once the pupil has acquired sufficient fluency in English the use of first language stops. The new Working Paper, along with our 17th Annual Conference, provide opportunities to consider ways in which these negative features can be overcome.

Priority 5: Continue to develop NALDIC's administrative and strategic functions

Expected outcomes: NALDIC administration is perceived to be more responsive to members and contribute to an enhanced strategic role for NALDIC

Midway through the year, we moved from our temporary offices in Luton to the University of Reading. We sadly bid farewell to Rosemary James our senior administrator who had taken a significant role in developing NALDIC's financial and organisational procedures. The fire at our temporary offices and our move to Reading presented some challenges but we have now appointed a permanent administrator, Maggs Harrison, who has much to offer the organisation. We continue to work on our plans to develop a permanent central resource base and dissemination point for EAL across the country. In our view, this is needed more than ever as we move into a yet more challenging situation in the year to come.

One of the consequences of the move has been to delay our plans to identify 'recruitment champions' to take an active role in publicising NALDIC membership, particularly in regions where our membership audit in 2007-8 identified that we have fewer members. Our e-network to provide information and support to members working with isolated bilingual learners has continued and members in twenty local authorities have remained in contact. A new regional group of members in Northern Ireland was established earlier this year following recognition that there was a need to bring together and support colleagues working in this particular area of the UK. Regular feedback from members indicates that the benefits of membership of NALDIC are valued but we need to reach out and attract more members. We are more than aware that at a time of increasing interest in the field of EAL from commercial companies promoting a range of different materials and guidance, colleagues working in this field need the professional experience and collective wisdom provided by membership of NALDIC. If you are interested in publicising NALDIC membership or if you wish to establish a regional group in your area, please contact Peta Ullmann. petaull@hotmail.com.

Conclusion

The forthcoming year poses challenges. In March 2009 we noted with particular concern that specialist staffing has failed to keep pace with increases in pupil numbers. Figures from the 2008 school census indicated that EAL pupil numbers rose by approximately 25% between 2004 and 2008 to stand at 824,380 whilst the number of identified EAL/EMA specialist teachers nationally increased by only 253 to 3,658, an 8% increase. And this was in the 'years of plenty'. At the same time we have been concerned by the increasingly common rhetoric, which in the words of David Gillborn: '*... presents white people as victims of race equality measures. The idea that white and minoritised youth could both excel in the same school system is just not considered. So talk of race equality shifts from being about social justice and is now recast as a kind of competitive threat to white people*'.

NALDIC has argued, and continues to do so, that supporting the achievement of pupils learning English as an additional language requires time, support and funding which is equivalent to that provided to learners studying any other subject in preparation for fruitful futures and working lives. Making this a reality requires determination, stamina and extraordinary commitment from teachers and academics in the field. We look forward to working with all of you over the forthcoming year to bring equality for bilingual learners a little nearer.