

# **Chair of NALDIC'S Annual Report to the Membership: 2000-2001**

## **Introduction**

My period of office as Chair of NALDIC has been a time of significant and almost continuous upheaval and change in the way our work is funded, managed and carried out. We are well aware of the losses in terms of specialist expertise and targeted support and the worrying signs that the 'inclusion' agenda increasingly swamps real focus on EAL as a major factor in the attainment and progress of minority ethnic group pupils. However, the OFSTED report on 'Managing Support for the Attainment of Pupils from Minority Ethnic Groups' asserts that, so far, the quality of support work has been maintained despite the changes, and this must surely be a tribute to the resilience of the profession. There have also been refreshing indications that colleagues are beginning to seize the initiative and set their own agenda. The many attempts by professionals around the country to 'improve' on the QCA step descriptors for assessing EAL in a variety of ways show how inadequate professionals find these as a tool for describing the range of developmental pathways that EAL learners take. These attempts cannot be wholly ignored and must be taken seriously as an indication that something more appropriate is needed.

The lack of a clear framework for specialist training for EAL has also been recognized in the OFSTED report, which calls for the protection of 'the integrity of EAL teaching as a specialism by retaining a capacity to support and train the specialist teachers'. However, this lack of support at the level of strategic policy does not prevent colleagues all round the country making strenuous efforts to improve their own skills and take up all available opportunities to train themselves, evidenced for NALDIC in the success of our Conferences and seminars and the enthusiasm and confidence of members taking part in them.

A recent welcome sign of recognition of the need for EAL knowledge and skills for teachers is in the TTA consultation on its revised Standards for the Award of Qualified Teacher Status. There are many clear statements in this document which suggest a move towards recognizing that EAL is a distinct area of professional knowledge and not just a set of generalized enabling strategies in the classroom. NALDIC particularly welcomes this position and hopes that it will provide a basis for further articulation of what is now required. We are also grateful for the support of members in making representations over the years about the lack of attention to EAL.

## **Committee matters**

During the year, the Committee and the Publications Group have continued to meet at regular intervals. An Executive Committee, made up of officers of the Association, has been formed and has met to discuss administrative and strategic matters and make recommendations to the main Committee, in order to streamline its work and cope more efficiently with business matters. Roles and responsibilities of the various Committee office holders and members have been discussed and agreed. The annual 'Thinking Day' was held in May, when a start was made on the NALDIC position paper on assessment, consideration was given to the association's research agenda and discussion centred around the celebration of ten years of NALDIC was begun.

Co-opted members of the Committee have continued to make valued contributions to the work of the association. Unfortunately, because of pressure of work and his commitments in NASSEA, Pinaki Ghoshal is unable to continue as a co-optee. He has been a valuable member of the committee whose involvement we shall miss greatly. This also raises the issue of links with and involvement of colleagues

from the north of England - we need to ensure that members from all parts of the country are able to play their part in our work and that NALDIC continues to represent effectively its members from all parts of the UK.

I must also express my thanks to all other members of the Management Committee who continue to put in a great deal of hard work and commitment. Particular thanks are appropriate here to Anna Chapman, whose work on putting in place effective processes for financial management made the transitional stage for the new Treasurer, Sara Green, considerably easier. Sara has been fully operational as Treasurer since January and is continuing to improve efficiency in this area.

### **NALDIC Organisation**

NALDIC has continued to use some of its financial balances to improve the association's administrative support. Following Cressida Jupp's work in improving NALDIC's administrative processes, the work of managing the membership database and membership services is now largely handled by Robert Soper, under the direction of the Membership Secretary, Su Shaw. Bob has also been instrumental in setting up a Direct Debit facility for members' subscriptions, which will come into effect fully during November and which we are confident will both reduce the volume of administration required during the membership renewal period, simplify procedures for members and ensure a stable membership base for NALDIC. Bob has also provided very effective administrative support for the National and Luton Conferences, while publications and the Bristol Conference have been handled by Daksha Bakhrania in Watford.

We hope to make effective use of our financial balances for carrying out commissioned research and tasks as outlined in our Development Plan (to be presented in draft at Conference and to all members later in the year), and to celebrate appropriately ten years of NALDIC in 2002.

### **Publications.**

This year has been a prolific one in terms of NALDIC publications. We have published two Occasional Papers, "Subject Teachers' and EAL teachers' discursive classroom practices: teachers' relationships and talk" by Angela Creese (Occasional Paper 13) and "Learning from listening: talk in a multilingual mathematics classroom" by Richard Barwell (Occasional Paper 14). Following our Working Paper on "The Distinctiveness of English as an Additional Language", and in order to exemplify some of the principles outlined there, we published 'vignettes' of good practice at Primary and Secondary level on the NALDIC website. These vignettes have now been gathered together into a collection, published as Working Paper 6. I am sure members will agree that they help us to articulate what good EAL work looks like in the classroom and mark a significant addition to our list of publications. I would like to thank Hugh South for his continued work in editing all these publications, and in particular his editorial input to the vignettes, with support from Cressida Jupp. Sales of all publications continue steadily, indicating the fact that they meet a need felt by members and other professionals to be able to keep in touch with developments in our field.

*NALDIC News* will be published three times this year - contrary to our usual practice, the final Newsletter for 2001 will be sent to members soon after the Conference. This is because the majority of the copy for this Newsletter has come from the September Conference on Assessment of EAL, run in a joint partnership by NALDIC, the University of Bristol, Coventry Minority Group Support Services and the Bristol Ethnic Minority Achievement Service. Hugh South will be guest-editing this edition of the Newsletter, with support from the other Conference partners, and because of the time-scale involved, it has not been possible to prepare it for publication pre-Conference. The production of the Newsletter is a

major task, and we thank Carrie Cable, our regular editor, for her continued efforts in providing the relevant, lively and stimulating publication we have come to expect, but would urge members, on Carrie's behalf, to contribute to its content with articles, write-ups of classroom research, reviews, reports, case studies, etc.

The NALDIC website has been further developed and redesigned this year, thanks to the efforts of its editor, Nicola Davies. Of particular value has been the News section, keeping members up to date on a whole range of issues affecting our work and opening pathways to other sites of interest.

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

This year, NALDIC has responded to a range of consultations, including the Home Office review of the NASS vouchers scheme, and the DfEE consultation on guidance for schools on ethnic monitoring. We have also been represented at QCA meetings on the National Monitoring and Evaluating of the English curriculum. In responding to the TTA consultation on Draft Standards for the Award of Qualified Teacher Status, NALDIC welcomed the inclusion of the needs of pupils with EAL in the proposed new standards, and regards the document, as a major improvement on previous ITT documents, with a clear recognition that all teachers should be equipped to respond to the language and learning needs of pupils with EAL.

NALDIC is considering its response to the KS3 National Literacy Strategy EMAG training package, 'Raising aspects of managing ethnic minority achievement'. Although the package is intended to offer specific additional guidance relating to pupils with English as an Additional Language, many EAL professionals have expressed concern that the focus of the training appears to be on EMAG / school management issues rather than EAL.

As a further development of our work on the assessment of EAL, NALDIC has formulated a position paper setting out the principles upon which its stance on this issue is based. This was published in draft on the website and at General Council for discussion and amendment by members, and the final paper was disseminated at the Bristol Conference on assessment of EAL in September. It will be circulated to all the membership with the November Newsletter.

### **Meetings and Conferences**

NALDIC Annual Conference 2000, "Advancing EAL learning: theory into practice", was our eighth and the biggest in our history, with 300 delegates booking places. We were fortunate to have two internationally distinguished speakers who have both been extremely influential in our field giving keynote presentations at the Conference: Pauline Gibbons from the University of Technology, Sydney, author of the publication "Learning to Learn in a Second Language" which has been a core influence on many EAL specialist teachers in this country, spoke on "Teaching as mediation: scaffolding second language learning through classroom interaction"; and Bernard Mohan, from the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, provided us with "Some insights from the Vancouver Project on Language/Content Integration". With a range of afternoon seminar groups, the Conference was well-received and inspirational.

The NALDIC General Council meeting took place in London in July with Roxy Harris as the guest speaker. This meeting continued to explore a theme which had been the focus of discussion throughout the year for NALDIC, that of the interface between EAL and race equality. Roxy put forward a series of campaigning demands for NALDIC to take up, including the need for training and career development, support for specific types of language need, the maintenance and development of first language literacy

and the setting up of a national centre for EAL to promote excellence and raise standards of teaching and learning in EAL. The ensuing discussion focused on these challenges and on ways in which EAL contributes in a constructive way to race equality. A draft Action Plan for EAL and Race Equality was produced, and Roxy's recommendations and the Action Plan will inform NALDIC's future direction.

Two very successful regional Conferences were organised this year, signs of the increased level of activity of our association during 2000-2001 and the enthusiasm of our members and other professionals in the field to enhance their specialist knowledge and share understandings and practice. The first was held in Luton in March and its theme was "Improving the Mathematics Achievement of Children learning English as an Additional Language". The Conference covered perspectives on Mathematics learning in the broader sense, taking in the numeracy strategy and research insights, the view from the classroom, as well as pupil, community and parental attitudes to Mathematics. The main speakers at this event were Professor Margaret Brown of King's College London, Dr Guida d'Abreu and Professor Tony Cline from the University of Luton, and Dr Frank Monaghan from North Westminster School, London, with afternoon seminar presentations by Dr David Baker from the University of Brighton, Richard Barwell from the University of Bristol and Sandra Howard and Lesley Hancock from Coventry LEA.

The second Conference, "Exploring Diversity in Assessment: Challenges for English as an Additional Language" held in September this year at the University of Bristol, was something of a new departure for NALDIC in that it was a joint venture between NALDIC, the University of Bristol, Coventry MGSS and Bristol EMAS. In order to ensure that participants had more time to discuss issues in some depth and to hear a number of different perspectives, the format was varied so that a range of speakers each made a short presentation, followed by structured discussion and feedback. A further innovation was the introduction of 'Poster Presentations', with practitioners presenting work in progress. The day, designed to provide a bridge between classroom practice, research and policy, included input by the Chair of the organising panel, Dr Pauline Rea-Dickens from the University of Bristol, and also by Dr Constant Leung from Kings College London, Dr Sheena Gardner from the University of Warwick, Pinaki Ghoshal from NASSEA, Faye Catterall and Sarwat Khan from Bristol EMAS and Dawn Lama from Coventry MGSS. This conference was indicative of the great interest in assessment of EAL currently within our profession, the work going on in different parts of the country around this theme, and the frustration felt because of the lack of an appropriate assessment strategy for EAL. It will certainly lead to further work for NALDIC to undertake on this issue.

In July 2001, NALDIC held its first Summer School. This was a two-day event on the theme of "EAL/Language Support Teacher Professional Identity in School – Knowledge, Status and Space", organised by Dr Constant Leung at Kings College, and tutored by Constant and Dr Angela Creese. The School attracted 18 participants, and was felt to be extremely stimulating and worthwhile, providing an opportunity for in-depth study of EAL practice. NALDIC is considering how best to build on this success in future years.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, I would particularly like to thank all my colleagues on the NALDIC Management Committee for their support during my term of office. I feel sure that the new Committee is in a strong position to carry out the priorities that NALDIC has identified for itself, with the continued strong support of the membership of the association.