

Chapter 1: Introduction and Framework

The Strategies and the External Evaluation

The two most recent themes in educational change are how to achieve large-scale reform, while setting the stage for sustainable improvement. This evaluation of the national initiatives in literacy and mathematics in England provided an opportunity to examine first-hand the most ambitious large-scale educational reform initiative in the world. In the course of conducting this study a great deal has been learned about the policies, strategies and impact of deliberately attempting to achieve change on a massive scale within a relatively short time frame. Our report presents these findings and raises critical questions about how to bring about the fundamental reforms necessary for continuous improvement of the educational system.

The National Literacy Strategy (NLS) and the National Numeracy Strategy (NNS) are comprehensive government-initiated reform efforts, aimed at changing teaching practice and thus improving pupil performance in all

the nearly 20,000 primary schools in England. NLS and NNS can be seen as a dramatic “scaling up” of reform efforts developed through earlier pilot programmes, the National Literacy Project and the National Numeracy Project. The Strategies are comprehensive in planning and execution, pulling together various policy strands to provide clear direction and support for change. NLS and NNS incorporate extensive professional development, which involves an increasingly large proportion of England’s 190,000 primary teachers and has continued to expand as the Strategies have evolved.

To supplement and complement the evaluation of NLS and NNS carried out by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), the Standards and Effectiveness Unit (SEU) of the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) commissioned an external evaluation. SEU retained a team of researchers centred at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT) to provide this outside view of the implementation of NLS and NNS.¹

¹ The team also included Dr. Ben Levin of the University of Manitoba, who took primary responsibility for the value-for-money component of the evaluation.

The government has also committed to a programme of public third-party evaluations of other major policy initiatives. Both the government and the Department should be commended for these steps. Subjecting key policy priorities to external public evaluation can be risky for any government, which is one reason why it seldom happens.

In this final report, we review the key findings of our four years of data collection to provide a coherent account of the Strategies and the implementation process. We also articulate what NLS and NNS have added to the knowledge base about large-scale reform and identify issues for the next phase of the initiative. The intended audience for our report includes DfES, the NLS and NNS leadership, educators in Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and schools, and the broader educational policy community, both in England and internationally.

The Canadian external evaluation team has acted as a *critical friend* (Costa & Kallick, 1995; MacBeath, 1998) to DfES and other key partners by describing NLS and NNS from different perspectives, drawing connections between the international research literature on large-scale reform and the Strategies, and identifying issues for attention. Playing this critical friend role over a period of four years from November 1998, the team has examined evidence (collected by others as well as us) and followed the implementation of NLS and NNS at the national, LEA, school and classroom levels.

Our evaluation is inevitably limited in scope and we mention here two points about our mandate and focus. First, questions have been raised about the assumed definitions or models of literacy and numeracy (e.g., Brown, 1999; Dadds, 1999; Fisher, 2002) that are

embedded in the Strategies. Literacy and numeracy are not unproblematic categories, although such debates are more salient in the higher education community than they are in schools. Although we recognise the importance of such issues, as we are charged with looking at the *implementation* of the Strategies, we will address them only as they come up as implementation questions in schools and LEAs. Second, although the question of impact on pupil learning is an inevitable issue in any study of the Strategies, and we do discuss questions relating to pupil learning, the OISE/UT evaluation did not address this dimension in a systematic or focused way. Evaluation of teaching and change in pupil attainment are the focus of the HMI/Ofsted evaluation in two samples of approximately 300 schools, one for Literacy and the other for Numeracy. We have drawn on the HMI reports and on the work of other researchers to supplement our data gathering and strengthen our conclusions about the implementation of the Strategies as major large-scale reform initiatives.

Framework for the OISE/UT Evaluation

Factors in Large-scale Reform

The OISE/UT evaluation is an investigation of the process of *large-scale reform*. Under what conditions will large-scale reform succeed? Is it possible to create a central government initiative that (1) motivates educators to change their practice in line with the reform initiatives, (2) provides them with opportunities to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills, and (3) builds contexts that sustain the motivation and capacity for change? What does it take to reform a large national education system? Can the important elements of large-scale reform be described for others who are undertaking or aspiring to

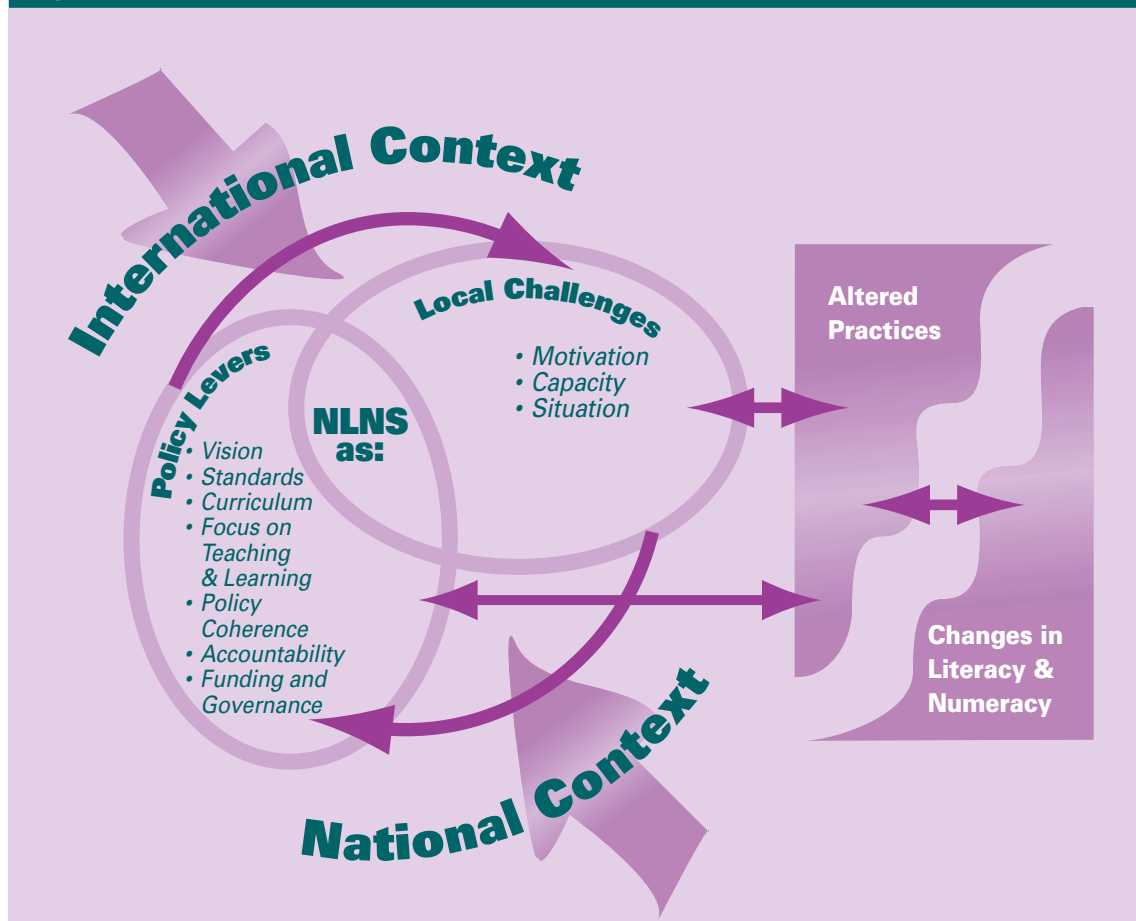
the same ends? If large-scale reform is possible, how long does it take to institutionalise the practices? Finally, the most significant question is whether or not large-scale reforms can be sustained, and if so, what seem to be the necessary and sufficient conditions for sustainability?

We developed a framework for looking at such questions by drawing on two reviews of pertinent international literature. The first (Fullan, 2000) described the international context for the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies by looking at the return of large-scale reform as a major force, identifying features of those reforms that appear to be making a difference. A second review, done by Leithwood, Jantzi and Mascall (2000), examined both the macro level (policy levers) and the micro level (local challenges) of

reform. The two papers provide different lenses for examining large-scale reform, recognising the importance of both central mandates and local action. The framework highlights different aspects of the Strategies, with little of importance left in the shadows. Throughout the course of the evaluation, this framework has been reviewed and refined to reflect our learning from NLS and NNS.

Figure 1-1 provides a graphic representation of our framework for viewing the Strategies, showing policy levers at the national level (on the left), conditions for implementation in LEAs and schools (in the middle) and improvements in pupils' literacy and numeracy (on the far right). Together the policies and local conditions influence practices and lead to changes in pupil outcomes. The framework was developed

Figure 1-1: Framework for the Evaluation of NLS and NNS



by mapping backwards from what NLS and NNS aim to accomplish, *improvements in pupils' literacy and numeracy*. We assume that, for such improvements to occur, pupils must directly experience more powerful teaching and learning. Changes in pupils' levels of literacy and numeracy are thus dependent on *altered practices*, particularly on the part of teachers, but also headteachers, LEA advisers and consultants and, at least potentially, parents. At the central or national level, the Strategies can be seen as *policy levers* that stimulate the desired changes in schools and LEAs. All of this activity is occurring within a unique cultural, political, economic and educational *context*.

Policy Levers

Viewed through the first lens of NLS and NNS as major national policy levers for large-scale reform, the framework draws attention to the content and structure of the initiative. Comprehensive reform initiatives need to include:

- a vision and goals for the reform and for the education of pupils;
- standards for judging the performance of pupils and others;
- curriculum frameworks and other teaching resources to assist in meeting the standards;
- a focus on teaching and learning (including teacher learning);
- coherent, aligned policies to support the initiative;
- accountability and incentives linked to performance; and
- sufficient funding and workable governance structures.

This list of factors was derived from our study of relevant literature in 2000; since that time, we have become aware of research that would suggest making one adjustment in emphasis. The study of the effort to change mathematics teaching in California schools in the early 1990s (Cohen & Hill, 2001) reinforces the importance of all the factors listed above, but highlights in particular the necessity of teacher learning. If teachers do not have deep and sustained opportunities to learn what the reform is about and what is expected of them in teaching, the desired changes are unlikely to occur and will not be sustained (e.g. Little, 1993; Neufeld & Boothby, 1999). The research into the California mathematics reforms reinforced other research in showing how difficult it is to provide such high quality learning experiences on a broad enough scale to impact more than a minority of schools and teachers. As we will outline in Chapter 4, the infrastructure developed by NLS and NNS has been key in providing such learning experiences to teachers in England.

Local Implementation: LEAs and Schools

The second lens on NLS and NNS focuses directly on schools and LEAs, and on variations in the success of efforts to improve teaching and learning. Such variations can be explained, broadly, in terms of the influence that reform efforts have on educators, looking at three features:

- motivation;
- capacity; and
- situation.

Motivation refers to the willingness to put effort into implementing the Strategies, while capacity refers to pre-existing or newly developed skills and understandings that individuals bring to their work with NLS and NNS. Situation refers to the extent to which the organisational context in the school and LEA fosters appropriate changes in practice: This could be termed *organisational capacity*.

The complete framework suggests that to be successful, centralised actions must build and sustain a comprehensive infrastructure to support change in classroom and school practice. The support must motivate educators, build their capacity to implement the reforms and foster the development of school cultures that will sustain improved practices.

At the beginning of our study, the Strategies could be considered as clearly defined policy interventions, with launch dates, clear expectations for initial implementation in classrooms and specific targets for 2002. The Strategies four years later are more complex; our conceptual framework has proved to be flexible enough to handle the nuances of these 2002 versions, which are a set of many inter-related policies and practices that have evolved through the interaction between central initiatives and local contexts. Our investigation moved from looking at the initial adoption of the Strategies to a consideration of how the Strategies were being implemented several years on, when the novelty had faded.

Sustainability

Throughout the evaluation we have identified sustainability as the ultimate indicator of success. Sustainability, however, does not necessarily mean fidelity to all aspects of the Strategies. NLS and NNS embody a set of

principles, together with a wealth of teaching approaches to realise these principles in classrooms. The long-term success of the Strategies will depend on teachers developing the capacity to select and modify teaching approaches, making decisions on a moment-by-moment basis to best meet pupils' learning needs. This recognition adds another dimension of complexity to our model of change and to the goals of NLS and NNS over time. Here we look briefly at how the issue of sustainability relates to motivation, capacity and situation (organisational capacity).

Motivation and Sustainability

When innovative policies are introduced there may be substantial fanfare, as well as visible pressure and support to encourage involvement. As we document later in this report, such was the case with NLS and NNS. Early motivation to implement the Strategies was usually *extrinsic* (i.e., the behaviours happened because of an external pressure to conform and to meet a particular expectation). Although such a call to action can create awareness and focus the agenda, actions based on extrinsic motivation persist only as long as there is an external reinforcement to continue. When the pressure is gone, the concomitant behaviours disappear as well. When the motivation becomes *intrinsic*, the behaviours are more likely to carry on (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Deci, Koester & Ryan, 2001). With regard to the Strategies, we would look for indicators of intrinsic motivation to increase over time, such that teachers and headteachers felt a sense of ownership and commitment.

Capacity and Sustainability

Making and sustaining changes in schools is hard intellectual and emotional work (Hargreaves, Earl, Moore & Manning, 2001).

Sustainable change depends on ongoing learning, individual and collective. With regard to literacy and mathematics learning, teachers and headteachers need the individual capacity – skills, knowledge and understanding – to go beyond initial implementation and superficial understandings.

Organisational Capacity and Sustainability

Although motivation and capacity are essential to sustain the push for higher standards and enhanced learning for pupils, they will not be sufficient. Many attempts at educational change have flourished and then disappeared for lack of attention over time (Elmore, 1995) in cases where the situation (or organisational capacity) does not provide enough support for changes to become established. For shifts as far reaching as those embedded in NLS and NNS to continue, schools must support ongoing teacher learning through development of local work cultures where self-monitoring and ongoing improvement have become part of the daily life of the school.

Methodology

Overview

Throughout the four years of the evaluation, we have used a number of data collection procedures to ensure that our conclusions were based on multiple sources of evidence, using a variety of methods. These were:

- semi-structured interviews;
- postal surveys;
- participant observation (meetings, training sessions);
- school site visits (these included interviews and classroom observations);
- a review of current UK research relevant to the Strategies; and
- document analysis (NLS and NNS documents as well as material from DfES and other agencies).

We used research by others in the UK as a supplement to our own data. In some cases, such studies focused on questions that were important but not part of our mandate; in other cases, the research addressed questions in more depth than we were able to do given our remit and resources.

Data gathering

National/regional: NLS and NNS as policy levers, view from the bridge (regions and LEAs), value for money

- **attended meetings of Literacy and Numeracy regional directors, Policy Programme Group, Implementation Group, and Literacy Numeracy Strategy Group, as well as regular meetings with various DfES staff;**
- **observed NLS and NNS regional briefing/training sessions for LEA line managers and literacy/numeracy consultants;**
- **attended NLS and NNS headteacher conferences;**
- **participated in DfES/TTA ITT conferences;**
- **reviewed documents related to all aspects of Strategies;**

- interviewed DfES and CfBT staff and NLS and NNS leaders (national directors, deputy directors, primary and ITT regional directors) (Sample interview protocols in Appendix A); and
- conducted interviews (individual and group) with people from a range of educational groups and organisations with an interest in various aspects of the Strategies.²

Local: Schools and LEAs – the view from the schools, the view from regions and LEAs (the bridge), value for money

- two postal surveys (in 2000 and 2002), each to two samples of 500 schools, one for Literacy and the other for Numeracy. Parallel questionnaires went to headteachers and teachers (sample questionnaires in Appendix B);
- a postal survey to all literacy and numeracy consultants in LEAs across England in 2002 (questionnaires in Appendix B);
- repeated visits to 10 selected schools (with various sizes, locations, pupil populations, levels of attainment) and their LEAs: 4 to 6 days in each school; team interviewed headteachers and teachers, observed literacy and mathematics lessons, and analysed documents (protocol for interviews in Appendix A);
- interviews with literacy and numeracy managers and consultants from LEAs of the 10 selected schools, attended training sessions and staff meetings in some of those LEAs; and
- observations and interviews in 17 other schools (including special schools) and LEAs. Three of these were one-day visits to schools early in 2000, while the others were single visits as part of shadowing regional directors or HMI, or attending meetings locally.

Members of the team spent 354 days in England collecting data, from November 1998 to July 2002, plus approximately 8 days gathering data through telephone interviews and conversations.

We interviewed approximately 350 persons, some individually and others in small groups. Although some individuals were interviewed only once, we talked with many others several times over the course of our study. Sample interview protocols are given in Appendix A.

Throughout the study, we found people very willing to speak with us and share their thoughts and experiences. Because we were outside the system, with no ownership

of the Strategies and no responsibility for judgements about schools or individuals, we may have heard slightly different reports from those given to DfES, HMI/Ofsted,

² The Canadian team interviewed spokespersons from teacher unions and headteacher associations; higher education institutions (about both research and teacher training); HMI/OFSTED; QCA; associations such as the Literacy Trust, the Basic Skills Agency, the Teacher Training Agency, the General Teaching Council and the British Dyslexia Association; subject associations; LEA management and professional staff; and independent consultants involved with education and/or with various aspects of the Strategies. In most cases, interviews were conducted several times over the course of the evaluation. Questions focused on the interest that each organisation had in the teaching of literacy/mathematics or in the Strategies.

regional directors, or even LEA advisers or consultants. All respondents were guaranteed confidentiality.

Schools and LEAs

The two data sets that provided insights into the view from the schools for this report were (1) surveys of teachers, headteachers and consultants and (2) interviews and observations in selected schools and their LEAs.

Surveys of Teachers, Headteachers and LEA Consultants

The external evaluation team contracted with the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) for a significant amount of the work entailed in collecting the survey data. The external evaluation team developed the survey instruments (NLS surveys for headteachers, teachers, and consultants; NNS surveys for headteachers, teachers, and consultants; see Appendix B for sample questionnaires). NFER was then responsible for their distribution, collection and entry into a data file. The data file was returned to the external evaluation team for analysis and interpretation.

School surveys: Two representative samples of 500 schools were selected for the teacher and headteacher surveys, one sample receiving surveys about NLS and the other sample about NNS. Both samples were selected at random from the NFER database of schools to be representative of the whole primary school population in terms of school type, national curriculum test results, region and proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. An NFER staff member telephoned each of the schools in the two samples to find out the number of teachers at each school. Many

headteachers, when informed of the purpose of the call, declined to participate in the survey, usually citing lack of time due to pressures of other commitments for teachers. Of the 499 schools contacted in the Literacy sample (one school was withdrawn by the LEA), 223 (45%) agreed to participate. Of the 497 schools contacted in the Numeracy sample (3 were withdrawn by their LEAs), 245 (49%) agreed to participate. The mean number of teachers per participating school was 12.

The response rates for the participating schools were as follows:

- For the NLS survey, 79% of headteachers responded (176 respondents). Teachers responded from all schools; of the 2617 teachers sent surveys, 1501 or 57% responded.
- For the NNS survey, 80% of headteachers responded (197 respondents). Teachers responded from 99% of schools; of the 2828 teachers sent surveys, 1527 or 54% responded.

Consultant surveys: The consultant surveys, which paralleled those sent to schools but included additional questions related to the consultant and LEA role, were sent to all the literacy and numeracy consultants who were supported by money from the DfES Standards Fund as of February 2002 – 350 literacy consultants and 398 numeracy consultants. Response rates were 85% (299 consultants) for NLS and 85% (340 consultants) for NNS.³ The great majority, 85% of surveys returned, included responses to the open-ended questions about strengths and limitations of the Strategies.

³ Some initial uncertainties with the consultant database arose with some former consultants still listed as being in those positions. With these uncertainties resolved, the numbers were 350 NLS consultants and 398 NNS consultants.

Site Visits and Interviews

While the survey data provided a cross section of views on many of the issues surrounding the implementation of the Strategies, site visits to schools and LEAs allowed a fuller exploration of some issues from the perspective of a diverse, though small, group of educators. We visited a set of 10 schools and their LEAs on repeated occasions over the last three years of the study.⁴ These schools offer a view of NLS and NNS in a broad range of circumstances and contexts. The group includes schools in difficulty and schools that are high performing. Some schools have received considerable outside intervention while others have received little or no additional support. Overall, these schools contribute to a picture of the implementation of the Strategies as experienced by teachers, headteachers and pupils.

The repeated school visits were designed to provide a detailed picture of the implementation process of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies in the ten sites. The research questions addressed the extent to which the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies were being implemented in the sample schools and the organisational and teaching changes associated with the implementation of the Strategies. More specifically, we looked at the successes associated with the Strategies (with any clues as to whether such successes could be

replicated in other school settings); the obstacles or barriers blocking implementation of NLS and NNS (and how these were being dealt with and with what success); and any unintended consequences arising from the implementation of the Strategies.

The following table compares results from our pool of selected schools to the national averages for Key Stage 2 English and mathematics assessments from 1996 to 2002.

Despite much individual variability in the year-to-year results of the selected schools, the average scores for the group of 10 schools are generally similar to the national average scores and show overall improvement from 1996 to 2002. For the smaller schools in the sample, the Year 6 cohort may have as few as 12 to 15 children, and therefore, as teachers and headteachers usually recognised, differences between cohorts from year to year may be marked. Year-by-year changes need to be interpreted with caution. It is also the case that, like many schools in England, a few of our sample schools began implementing aspects of NLS prior to 1998 and aspects of NNS prior to 1999.

During our visits, we talked with teachers, literacy and numeracy co-ordinators and headteachers in each school and observed literacy hours and daily mathematics lessons. In LEAs, we talked to Strategy and line managers and in most cases, literacy and

⁴ The OISE/UT team used the 1998 DfEE (as it then was) database of schools in England to select a random sample of 50 schools, from which we intended to select a set of 10 schools varying in location, type of community, size of school and performance on the 1999 Key Stage national assessments. As the random sample did not include schools representing all relevant categories, we supplemented the pool with names of 15 additional schools. From this expanded pool, a set of 10 schools was drawn based on the 1999 primary school performance tables, geographic location, size of school, and urban to rural setting. The set of 10 schools ranged in size from 115 to 475 pupils, and in performance on the Key Stage 2 assessments from 33 to 92% Level 4 in English and from 40 to 87% Level 4 in mathematics. The 10 schools were each in different LEAs and varied in geographic location and in rural to urban type of community. Three schools declined the offer to participate (because they felt unable to give the time necessary); similar schools replaced them. The 10 selected schools were chosen to characterise typical schools in various settings and circumstances and to provide illustrative examples. They do not constitute a sample that would allow generalisations to the whole primary school population in the country.

Table 1-1: Percent of Pupils Achieving Level 4 on KS2 English and Mathematics National Assessments from 1996 to 2002								
Year 6 tests	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	1996 to 2002
English								
National Average	56	63	64	70	75	75	75	+19
Selected Schools	46	60	60	63	77	73	75	+29
Mathematics								
National Average	53	61	58	68	72	71	73	+20
Selected Schools	50	57	59	63	72	66	72	+22

numeracy consultants. In addition to the selected schools, we have had opportunities to talk to teachers, headteachers and LEA advisers from other settings, thus supplementing the data from the selected schools. The sample schools and LEAs were assured that they would not be identified in any of our reports, oral or written.

OISE/UT Interim Reports

During the four years of our study, we produced two interim reports (Earl et al., 2000, Earl et al., 2001). Here we review key findings and highlights from these two reports.

Highlights from First Report

In our first report, covering the period from November 1998 through December 1999,⁵ we based our conclusions on data gathered in relation to the view from the centre. Looking at the Strategies as central government policy levers, we concluded that, viewed in relation to other efforts at large-scale reform across developed nations, NLS and NNS were among the most comprehensive and fully developed. Each of the dimensions emerging

from the education reform literature had been attended to, although with varying degrees of emphasis and success.

We concluded that NLS and NNS were characterised by notable strengths in areas such as leadership, policy alignment, pressure and support, communication, resources and responsiveness. At the same time, we identified a number of challenges for the next stage of policy intervention, highlighting the importance of the Strategies paying more attention to new teachers, assessment literacy, professional learning communities and dissenting voices.

In the first report, we suggested that the initial gains in the 1999 national tests were probably due largely to higher motivation on the part of teachers and others at the local level. The clear direction and support, including the NLS and NNS materials and widespread communication, together with awareness of the national Key Stage 2 tests, led teachers to spend more time and focus more intensively on teaching literacy and mathematics. Although schools generally used the lesson

⁵ For a more detailed description see the first report, entitled *Watching and Learning: OISE/UT Evaluation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies*, and the second report, *Watching and Learning 2: OISE/UT Evaluation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies*. Both are available on the *DfES Standards Site* (*Watching & Learning: OISE/UT Evaluation of NLNS*): http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/literacy/publications/?pub_id=134&top_id=0&art_id=2139 (*Watching & Learning 2*): http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/literacy/publications/?pub_id=530&top_id=0&art_id=0

and timing guidelines of the Strategies, we concluded that teachers were probably using their existing capacities more fully, rather than having developed substantial new skills and knowledge. We observed that future increases in pupil learning would require further increases in professional capacity (both individual and organisational), along with continued development of supportive work situations.

Highlights from Second Report

In our second report, published in mid-2001 on the basis of data gathered through the end of 2000, we continued to be guided by the framework presented in our first report. In addition to looking at the Strategies as policy levers directed by the government, we broadened the focus to include the view from the schools. We also addressed the question of value for money, concluding on the basis of information then available that the Strategies were providing reasonable value for money. A relatively small additional central expenditure (in the region of 5% of the overall cost of primary schooling) levered significant shifts in the use of ongoing resources in schools, such as teacher time and attention.

To learn how NLS and NNS were perceived and experienced in schools and LEAs, we gathered data through postal surveys and through site visits to schools. Using our framework, we looked at the motivation and capacity of teachers and headteachers to implement the Strategies and the extent to which their work contexts supported their efforts. We also explored the relationship between local perceptions of the Strategies and the central intent, particularly where the two differed from each other. Our data indicated that the majority of teachers were implementing the lesson plan and timing of

the Strategies; in other words, the structures were in place. However, we concluded that many of those in schools needed further professional development and increasingly supportive work situations in order to deepen their skills and knowledge.

We found that the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies had made significant changes in primary education in England in a remarkably short period of time. The change was pervasive, moving literacy and mathematics to the top of the teaching agenda. We indicated, however, that sustaining change would require consistent pressure and support, and raised several questions for consideration by DfES and the Strategies:

- How deep are the changes in teaching that occur as a result of the reform?
- Are there unintended costs or consequences of the reform?
- How is the reform being organised to be sustainable in the long-term?
- What data are available about implementation, training needs and success in changing learning, and how are such data being used?
- How are parents, families and the community engaged in understanding and supporting the reform?

Our second interim report concluded that much had been accomplished but much more needed to be done to address the reform agenda more comprehensively. The questions we raised suggested directions for future development.

Dissemination

During the four years of our evaluation, we began to disseminate our initial findings

beyond the interim reporting meetings with various DfES and NLS/NNS audiences. Members of the Canadian team also gave presentations to the following:

- a joint DfES/TTA ITT conference in London in 2000;
- the International Reading Association (IRA) in New Zealand (with NLS presenters) in 2000;
- the British Educational Research Association (BERA) in Cardiff in 2000;
- the International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement (ICSEI) in Toronto in 2001;
- the UK Reading Association (UKRA) in Canterbury in 2001;
- the Canadian Association for Educational Administration in Ottawa (CAEA) in 2001;
- the American Educational Research Association (AERA) in New Orleans in 2002 (with NLS/NNS presenters);
- the Canadian Society for Studies in Education (CSSE) in Toronto in 2002;
- the International Reading Association (IRA) in Edinburgh in 2002 (with NLS presenters)⁶; and
- a DfES-organised academic symposium, in which researchers from universities and other educational organisations heard from the evaluation team and discussed issues related to our external evaluation of NLS and NNS, in London in 2002.

In these sessions, questions and observations from the audience contributed greatly to our

thinking about the evaluation and about issues related to large-scale reform.

Organisation of the Report

Over the four years of our evaluation, our framework for large-scale educational reform has provided a useful lens on the Strategies and their impact on primary schools in England. We have continued to use this framework throughout our work, although as a more flexible organiser in the latter phases of the study. In Chapter 2, we look briefly at the international and national contexts in which the Strategies were developed and launched. The remainder of the report portrays the results of our enquiry – Chapter 3, the view from the centre; Chapter 4, the view from regional directors and LEAs (the bridge); Chapter 5, the view from the schools; and Chapter 6, an estimate of value for money. We conclude, in Chapter 7, with a summary of notable successes of the Strategies to date, as well as discussion of the challenges emerging from the evaluation and some suggestions for future directions. The picture we present is not always straightforward. The Strategies themselves are complex policy initiatives, weaving together various strands intended to change practice across an entire country and evolving considerably over the past four years. We have integrated information from a range of perspectives and from people who have diverse roles, differential access to information and varied kinds of experience. The context and frame of reference of these individuals inevitably shape their perceptions and levels of understanding, not only of the Strategies but also of other central policy initiatives.

⁶ Symposia will be held at the International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement (ICSEI) in Sydney in January 2003 and at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association in Chicago in April 2003.