

Clash of the titans: Rose vs Alexander

Beyond the headlines the Rose Review of primary education offers no real change at all, argues **Sue Lyle** – instead it's the independent Cambridge Primary Review that should shape future policy

Labour looks set to be consigned to the political wilderness again at the forthcoming general election. What will be its legacy to education? We don't need a crystal ball to answer that question, as we are in the unusual position of having two reviews of the primary curriculum to consider. Both were led by figures well known in education. Robin Alexander and Jim Rose were two of the 'three wise men' appointed by Margaret Thatcher in 1992 to review the National Curriculum (Alexander, Rose & Woodhead 1992). The third, Chris Woodhead, went on to become chief inspector of schools before moving into academia, while Alexander and Rose have produced separate reviews of the primary curriculum and ignited a debate which is dividing the education world.



Review is an independent review of the primary curriculum commissioned by the Government to review the curriculum and consider in particular:

- reading, writing, numeracy and ICT
- personal development
- transition and progression
- introducing languages at Key Stage 2.

In contrast, the Cambridge Primary Review is entirely independent of government. Initiated in 2004, it is informed by 60 research consultants, a management group and a 21-strong advisory committee with members from various backgrounds both inside and outside education (Cambridge Primary Review 2009). This review has been the most thorough review of primary education since the Plowden Report in 1967 (DES 1967).

The finest academics in education have been brought together to analysis, synthesise and report on the evidence gathered and to offer proposals for the future of primary education. The final report will be a holistic and comprehensive review with a much wider provenance than Rose, and will be reported under the headings of:

- childhood
- children's development and learning
- parenting and caring
- home and school
- cultural diversity
- pedagogy and classroom practice
- assessment and testing
- standards and quality
- the relationship between schools and other agencies
- teachers and their training, deployment and development
- school leadership and improvement
- the structure of primary education as a whole and its relationship to pre-school and secondary provision
- the way the system is funded and administered, and the context of policy.

Because most of these issues are outside the remit of the Rose Review, it is unfair in some ways to compare the two reviews; as stated earlier, Rose was put together very quickly in response to a clear government remit while the CPR is the result of a four-year democratic consultation and academic review. The CPR starts from a very different place to Rose, identifying different problems and offering different solutions.

What is interesting is the way the press have responded to the two reviews. Headlines in all the serious daily papers painted a unanimous picture of Cambridge's interim findings: primary school children have been let down. Denied fun, enjoyment, happiness and the opportunity to use their imaginations and creativity; oppressed by the tedium of the National Literacy Strategy and the pressure of national tests, their teachers ground down by excessive prescription, a surveillance culture and a rhetoric of 'standards' which is micro-managed by the DCSF, QCA and Ofsted.

How did we get to this? It is important to remind ourselves of the educational contexts that form the background to Alexander's damning view. New Labour came to power in 1997 on the mantra of 'education, education, education', yet as soon as it gained power it showed its willingness to abandon its core beliefs and values and acquiesce in the Thatcherite revolution. Under Thatcher, education, like everything else in government, was opened up to the marketplace. The results have been catastrophic and in failing to find an alternative to Thatcherism, New Labour will leave office having failed to take advantage of its huge majority and squandered the opportunity to create an education system fit for the 21st century.

Government control

Thatcher's Education Reform Act (1988) ushered in an era in which, for the first time, central government took control of the curriculum. The curriculum was described in terms of 10 subjects with literally thousands of statements of attainment for children to meet. By the end of Key Stage 2 for example, an 11-year-old was expected to have achieved almost 600 separate attainment targets in geography alone – a subject that was meant to take up no more than 5 per cent of curriculum time. Although the Thatcher revolution did not prescribe teaching methods, the sheer volume of content meant that traditional transmission approaches soon came to dominate classrooms.

But how do you make teachers do what the Government says? This was ensured by a number of ground-breaking changes to the ways in which our schools were run. By far the most far-reaching change was the introduction of LMS (Local Management of Schools). The power was shifted away from local education authorities (an attempt to marginalise those authorities Thatcher caricatured as 'the loony left') to the school. Headteachers were turned into managers and bursars overnight. Control over schools passed to the governing body: a voluntary group with the power to hire and fire and impact on how things were done, which was also made legally responsible for everything that went on in the school.

Power was also given to parents. Children were no longer expected to attend their neighbourhood schools; instead parents were given the right to choose. The idea was that poorly performing schools would lose the support of parents and would wither away. This set in motion competition between institutions to gain pupils and resources, and schools rose to the challenge. A church school in one area started a leafleting campaign to parents in the area to tempt them away from a school with about 15 per cent ethnic minority pupils by asking: "Wouldn't you prefer a Christian education for your child?" It succeeded. Today it has a brand new extension, while the school it was poaching from is now 85 per cent ethnic minority, with only a third of the pupils it had and lots of spare classrooms. That's how the market works.

Meanwhile the testing regime, supported by regular inspection, has made accountability and performance the name of the game. Publishing the league tables and results

of national tests and inspection reports has turned pupils and parents into consumers of education. Schools have risen to the challenge of the marketplace and become fixated on producing high-achieving children according to narrow measures of achievement. Thousands of hours are now spent by headteachers and their staff producing the school development plan with precise goals, learning outcomes and targets. Each year must see improvement or the school is regarded as 'failing'.

The curriculum itself is directed at each stage of production with performance indicators. Individual teachers whose pupils don't reach their targets are often named and shamed in front of their colleagues. There are quantitative indicators for everything: measuring and accountability rule. Results on national tests are the key measure of quality – schools who don't achieve the government targets are automatically seen as failing. This state of affairs has led many to ask what we truly value in education.



Undermined

At the same time, the professional status of teachers has been undermined. The introduction of teaching assistants who can be 'trained' to look after classes has contributed to the notion that teachers are mere technicians who are not required to think too much. This is nowhere better reflected than in initial teacher education – or initial teacher *training*, the notion that preparation of teachers could be considered education long having disappeared. ITT has been subjected to the same precise controls and inspection regimes as schools. Competence checklists are used to determine whether trainees can be let loose in classrooms.

This was the Thatcher legacy – which New Labour extended. Control over curriculum content was not enough: David Blunkett introduced control over teaching processes. The introduction of the literacy and numeracy strategies in 1997 and 1998 respectively were the biggest constraint on teaching and learning ever introduced. Unfortunately this flagship policy has not delivered the goods. Schools in the UK are near the bottom of the European league tables and our children are labelled 'the unhappiest in Europe'.

Something has gone drastically wrong. And it is the

National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies that Alexander has singled out for most criticism. The bureaucracy of an accountability agenda, with its emphasis on performance, detracts from teaching and learning, as everything taught has to be recorded and assessed in one form or another. Teachers' lives are dominated by a race to cover the curriculum, tick the boxes and get the children through the tests.

It is against this background that we must consider the two primary reviews. First, the Rose Review (Rose 2008). This is very important as, despite the announced consultation period for the review, the QCA was charged with developing the new programmes of study two months before the consultation period was over. This doesn't say much for consultation. However, I don't envy the QCA this task – the Rose recommendations are confusing to say the least, so let's start to unpick them.

In considering how to conceptualise the curriculum, Rose recommends it is no longer described in terms of subjects, but as six areas of learning; however, he also says that "discrete subject teaching... must not disappear from primary schools". His brief was to reduce the content of the National Curriculum, but "priority" must still be given to literacy and numeracy. In fact literacy must be extended by "developing spoken language intensively", not only as part of the literacy strategy but by extending speaking and listening to build the vocabulary germane to each subject (subjects?) and area of learning (does this sound like a reduction?).

To prepare pupils properly for the future, ICT is to be extended to "meet the challenges of an uncertain world" and programmes introduced to promote personal development. In addition, from 2011 primary schools must introduce one, two or even more modern foreign languages. Therefore by page 15 of the review we have more ICT, priority for literacy and numeracy, more speaking and listening, introduction of modern foreign languages, and more personal development including skills for "learning and life" to make children "responsible citizens", as well as the "soon to become statutory" PSHE and citizenship framework.

These recommendations are couched in largely meaningless rhetoric such as "essential knowledge, skills and understanding", "essential reading, writing, numeracy and personal skills" and a "commitment" to lifelong learning, the development of "good attitudes to learning" and so on. Essential for what? To whom? Why? Such questions cannot be answered without clear elucidation of values and aims for the primary curriculum, but Rose has merely taken the aims for the secondary curriculum and made these the aims for all key stages.

We mustn't blame Sir Jim too much for this: his brief was not to consider aims and values but to reduce content, as he says primary schools need protection from "curriculum overload", so therefore we must "reduce prescription" ("where possible"). He reiterates that there are to be no unnecessary extras thrown at teachers – the new initiatives he outlines are necessary and need to be "embedded". In addition to speaking and listening, ICT, modern foreign languages and personal development, there must be "personalised" teaching and more attention to Assessment

for Learning, which Rose acknowledges needs “more teaching time and more planning time than before”. In addition, schools must also embed APP (Assessing Pupils’ Progress). True, it means a huge extra workload for teachers – but, according to Sir Jim, once this is fully in place teachers won’t need to rely on “testing as the main source of evidence for achieving national standards”. In my extensive experience as a teacher educator I have yet to meet a teacher who relied on testing as their main source of evidence. Teachers like AfL and they don’t need to be persuaded – but they need the time to do it properly.

So what does this ‘root and branch review’ give us? In sum, we keep existing structures of knowledge, understanding and skills, but we add “the development of good attitudes” – hasn’t Rose stopped to consider that poor attitudes may derive from a sterile diet of ‘the basics’? We keep subjects, but not exclusively, as we will also have six areas of learning, and we extend “enquiry and problem-solving”. And don’t forget those other essentials, “sustainable development, financial capability and health and safety” (they are tucked away on page 27).

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Platitudes

In the whole review there are just two paragraphs about children’s learning and development, which contain a series of platitudes and, just in case teachers were under any illusions about child-centred education, or child-initiated learning, or child-led enquiry, we are told that “good primary teaching involves far more than waiting for children to develop by following their every whim”. Mrs Thatcher would be proud of Sir Jim.

There is only one reference to the most influential theorist of the last 40 years – Vygotsky (Vygotsky 1962; 1978). Of the volumes of commentary and innovation arising from Vygotsky’s work, Sir Jim picks ‘scaffolding’ as the most important piece of theory to inform his review. If you were hoping for a more considered review of the huge amount of well-respected research that has come from the Teaching and Learning Research Project or the Cambridge Primary Review, you won’t find it here. Teachers should know by now – this government regards them as technicians, not as thinking professionals. What possible use could teachers have for theory?

The tone of the review is patronising. Teachers are rapped over the knuckles for not having enough subject knowledge. That is hardly their fault. The micro-management of initial teacher education, with its focus on the core subjects, pays little more than lip service to the foundation

subjects. It is too late to complain that primary teachers are not equipped with the subject knowledge they need to provide a well rounded education (yet all primary school teachers will be expected to teach a modern foreign language by 2011; how they will be prepared for this, Rose doesn’t tell us). He does tell us that the review is “unlikely to substantially reduce these demands [for subject knowledge]” and recommends teachers “seek imaginative ways of providing teaching to the required depth”. A “promising route” to “in-depth teaching” is through ICT. This seems to imply that subject knowledge is something teachers can look up on Google and present in Powerpoint. The implication that knowledge and understanding is little more than facts and information is naive, and from someone as influential as Rose, extremely worrying.

The nitty gritty of the review is discussed under ‘Aspects’. In Aspect 1: Curriculum Design and Content, Rose reveals his Piagetian routes. In discussing the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) he states there should be “rich opportunities for playing with sand and water” to help children learn “to appreciate something of the states in which matter exists”. He suggests that the Three Little Pigs can help children see “how the properties of a material determine its use”. The assumption that young children are concrete thinkers, that learning moves from the concrete to the abstract, from the simple to the complex, completely ignores the volumes of work that have informed the education of young children aged from three to seven right across Europe. Our more successful European partners have built their primary curriculum on research evidence based on observation of real children in educational and natural settings.

Examining the Rose Review further, my frustration grows. In this so-called “root and branch review” of the primary curriculum, “total content simply has to be reduced” yet “no key ideas currently brigaded in subjects should be downgraded or lost”. The intention is to “embed and intensify these ideas to better effect in cross-curricular studies and... teach them directly as unmissable knowledge and skills”. To put this into practice Sir Jim proposes six areas of learning:

- understanding English, communication and languages
- mathematical understanding
- scientific and technological understanding



- human, social and environmental understanding
- understanding physical health and well-being
- understanding the arts and design

But, and this is a big but, “literacy and numeracy must still be prioritised”. These skills should be secured through “rigorous, discrete teaching”. “ICT and personal development are... of crucial importance.” We will still have programmes of study with the “essential knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes that we want children to acquire between the ages of 5 and 11”. The programmes of study are to be put together by subject specialists – why, then, are we re-badging this as “areas of learning”?



It is in Aspect 2: Literacy, Numeracy and ICT, that Rose reveals the truth behind the review: no real change is expected. The priorities haven’t changed; the mantra of raising standards in reading, writing and numeracy continues by giving children more of the same kind of teaching that has been critiqued so dramatically by witnesses to the Cambridge Review. The only change is to add more speaking and listening, to provide opportunities for drama and role play. But language must still be taught “systematically” and “regularly”.

What will the Rose Review give us in the end? The main problem defined by Sir Jim is curriculum overload. His solution is to reaffirm the “core curriculum” of language and numeracy and add ICT, modern foreign languages and PSE, and to replace the foundation subjects with areas of learning. I predict we will continue to have maths and English in the morning (funnily enough, that’s what I did in primary school in the 1950s), with perhaps a little more oracy and occasional drama and role-play (I had that) and areas of learning in the afternoon, where the current foundation subjects will be squashed together. Personal development, ICT and everything else will also have to be squashed in. And don’t forget – teachers must inculcate positive attitudes to learning.

The real problem of curriculum overload can’t be tackled if literacy and numeracy are still to occupy the lion’s share

of the curriculum and be the only measure of standards. It is hard to see how this review can address the marginalisation of the arts, the humanities and even the third core subject, science. We seem set to continue with the split between ‘the basics’ and the rest of the curriculum, and children’s entitlement to a ‘broad, balanced and rich curriculum’ which could engage and excite them seems unlikely to be enacted. The lack of clearly stated values and aims undermines the credibility of the review.

Sheer scope

In contrast The Cambridge Review set out from the first to discuss what aims, values and principles should underpin the primary curriculum. Cambridge considers the implications of recent research on children’s development and learning, while Rose ignores this. The sheer scope, breadth and depth of the Cambridge Review put Rose into the shade. For Alexander’s team, the curriculum has to be grounded in a much wider array of contingent concerns than could be considered by Rose’s narrow remit.

Following Rose the curriculum is set to continue; ‘business as usual’ is the main message. His review has failed to address the key problems clearly laid out by Cambridge following widespread consultation (Alexander & Flutter 2009). Witnesses to Cambridge identify the problems with the curriculum:

- dominated by coverage – content to be checked off – unnecessarily detailed and prescriptive
- privileges retention and recall of facts
- values shallow, not deep learning
- forces teachers into ‘transmission mode’ – the same approach for all learners
- denies children opportunities to learn how to learn
- leaves no time for reflection and evaluation.

Witnesses for the review included teachers and headteachers, from teacher unions and higher education, from subject organisations and charities. As can be expected from such a widespread consultation, many views are expressed and discussed at length in the review. However, some things can be generalised from their findings. Teachers want:

- more freedom to develop the curriculum to meet the needs of their children
- more emphasis on the humanities, the arts and PSHE
- more opportunities for ‘fun’, ‘challenge’, ‘excitement’, more ‘hands-on’ experiences, more talk, more drama.

In contrast to Rose, the Cambridge Review does not see curriculum overload as the problem. What stands in the way is the dominance of New Labour’s flagship National Literacy (NLS) and Numeracy (NNS) strategies. The daily literacy and mathematics lessons take half of the available teaching time or more. The loss of opportunities for creative activities is blamed not on overload but on curriculum prescription – in particular, the NLS and NNS and its accompanying high-stakes

assessment. The visual and performing arts, geography and history have been almost squeezed out. These are the very areas that pupil witnesses to the CPR said they valued.

In a damning critique Alexander highlights the absurdity of the first version of NLS with its 1,024 objectives, its advice not to do individual reading, to eschew structured phonics and to not consider speaking and listening. The prescriptive nature of the teaching methods and the overriding emphasis on reading, writing and grammatical awareness are all widely condemned by witnesses to the review. The 2007 version of the NLS is also criticised. Based on very weak evidence, structured phonics is now obligatory. The reductionist division of objectives into 'word-level', 'sentence-level' and 'text-level' is abolished, but the types of books children will study and the kinds of writing they will do are prescribed and the emphasis on grammar is still emphasised. Teacher witnesses complain that "reading for pleasure has disappeared under the pressure to pass tests".

Rose ignores all of this in his apparent endorsement of the NLS. Under Rose we are still set to have an essentially Victorian curriculum with its emphasis on the three Rs plus ICT and PSHE and a sprinkling of citizenship.

Aims for primary education

The Cambridge Primary Review set out to review all aspects of primary education, not just the narrow remit given to Rose. In doing this they consulted widely and collected an impressive evidence base. One of the key outcomes from the analysis and synthesis of the evidence is the formulation of aims for primary education. These cover learners' personal development, their relationships with others locally, nationally and globally and different aspects of learning or pedagogy. The review sets out the aims using active verbs to emphasise engagement, rather the passivity that has become associated with a transmission approach to the curriculum and the overwhelming concern for 'coverage'.

The aims acknowledge that learning is an individual and reciprocal process with the emphasis on "interdependence, respect, reciprocity and citizenship". Children should feel part of a learning community in the classroom where individual "well-being" is an essential starting point for learning. The processes of learning should aim for "engagement", emphasising the importance of motivation to stimulate children's interests, leading to "empowerment" which recognises the power of education to develop citizens capable and willing to contribute to their communities. The aim of "autonomy" acknowledges the ultimate goal of learning how to learn, so learners are equipped for lifelong learning.

Aims for the individual's relationships with others emphasise the communal nature of learning and the need for pupils from diverse backgrounds to understand their differences and learn from each other in school to meet the further aim of "empowering local, national and global citizenship". The aim to "celebrate culture and community" is an invitation to focus on the local and the regeneration of communal life which is also reflected in the recommendation that 30 per cent of the curriculum should link to the specific

needs of local communities and be decided by them. This is also linked to the Vygotskian principle that all learning takes place in a social, cultural and historical context and acknowledges that children come to school with a vast amount of experience and capability which should be built on.

The third set of aims draws explicitly on our understanding of how children learn. Knowledge is not to be covered or transmitted but explored, giving children the opportunity to know and make sense in order to develop understanding. Skills are important, but are embedded in knowledge and understanding and are not seen as a decontextualised set of aims, but developed through engagement in content. The content should be designed to excite children's imaginations. Imagination has been a neglected word in education; with a few notable exceptions (see, for example, Egan 1988), writers about education have ignored what Egan sees as the most important resource in the classroom: children's imaginations.

The final aim is "enacting dialogue" and has clearly been influenced by Robin Alexander's own research into dialogic teaching. This aim is potentially the most revolutionary as it encompasses the fundamental building block of learning: interaction in the classroom. Dialogic teaching will require teachers to work very differently from the pedagogic approach popularised through the national literacy and numeracy strategies: "Dialogic teaching ... explores the learner's thought processes. It treats students' contributions, and especially their answers to teacher's questions, as stages in an ongoing cognitive quest rather than as terminal points. And it nurtures the student's engagement, confidence, independence and responsibility." (Alexander 2006: 35)

Alexander summarises dialogic interactions as ones where pupils ask questions, state points of view and comment on ideas which arise in lessons. Teachers have to take account of pupils' ideas in developing the subject theme of the lesson and use talk to provide a cumulative, continuing, contextual frame to enable students' involvement with the new knowledge that they are encountering and creating (for an overview of dialogic teaching see Lyle 2008).

A shift to dialogic teaching would require a complete re-thinking of the function of talk in our classrooms and, as acknowledged by the review, successful implementation of the aims has huge implications for teachers' professional development and for initial teacher training (which will also need re-branding as 'initial teacher education' once again).

As an experienced teacher, curriculum developer and teacher educator I fully endorse these aims and acknowledge that translating them into objectives will be a challenge.

Domains

Having established the aims for the curriculum, we need to know how these will be realised through content. In choosing to describe the content of the curriculum as domains, the review seeks to avoid preconceptions about

what the term means and distance itself from the labels of 'subject' or, in Rose's terms, 'areas of learning'. The biggest change is the move away from the current arrangements which identify a core curriculum and 'the rest'; in contrast all eight domains are considered of equal importance and as essential for all children. This is the single most important change proposed. The domains are presented alphabetically to avoid the assumption that some are more important than others. They are:

- arts and creativity
- citizenship and ethics
- faith and belief
- language, oracy and literacy
- mathematics
- physical and emotional health
- place and time
- science and technology.



Going back to the original conception of the National Curriculum as an 'entitlement' curriculum, each of the domains is essential and should be protected. Detailed domain descriptions, for which there is insufficient space here, are provided in the report and make very interesting reading.

Each of the domains will have an essential core of knowledge, skill and/or enquiry and the capacity to contribute to the achievement of one or more of the 12 proposed aims for primary education. They should also build on the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and bridge to the secondary curriculum, while respecting the distinctiveness of the primary phase of children's education. The proposed changes could transform the primary curriculum, but fortunately teachers would not be required to start from scratch; despite the dominance of government strategies and the National Curriculum, many innovative projects have already begun.

The review places 'language, oracy and literacy' at the heart of the curriculum, but its proposals bear little relationship to the current narrow concept of literacy. Literature, language and communication, a modern foreign language and the electronic handling of information through ICT should all take their place here, the review recommends. In particular, speaking and listening must be properly embedded in this domain and across the whole curriculum. Linked to the aim of 'enacting dialogue', oracy is considerably more rigorous than the current 'speaking and listening' area and enhances both literacy and the curriculum as a whole.

Fortunately, we have much to draw on to help teachers develop spoken language intensively. The important work of the National Oracy Project in the 1980s collected a body of respected evidence from classrooms all over the UK to demonstrate the power of oracy in children's learning, enjoyment and attainment (Norman 1992). Following on from this, the work of Neil Mercer and his associates at the Open University has created a body of knowledge and understanding (Mercer 2000) of the practical changes teachers can make to embed oracy into the curriculum. A guide for teachers on how to organise talk for learning through collaborative group work has been one of the practical outcomes of this research (Dawes *et al* 2000). In a recent discussion on effective learning the National School Improvement Network (NSIN 2002) emphasised the importance of collaborative group work and argued that when learners work together they develop higher-order skills. The NSIN emphasises that collaborative learning and the development of co-operative cultures and group investigation methods give better academic results as well as helping learners develop a range of other skills including "interpersonal and management skills, improved communication skills and positive multi-ethnic relations", all of which link to Cambridge's aims for education.

In creating domains Alexander has tried to link together areas of knowledge that have epistemological coherence – that is, they share modes of exploration or enquiry. Children, for example, should know what it means to think like scientists or artists, historians and geographers. The actual content of each domain is not outlined – that will come later – but the indication is that schools and teachers will have the opportunity to reclaim their professionalism by using the framework provided to develop the domains as they see fit and use them to fulfil the aims.

Teachers should welcome the rehabilitation of arts and creativity. The current arrangements have driven art, music, drama and dance to the margins, yet, as many of the creative partnership arrangements have shown, it is these areas of the curriculum that have the most potential to engage children and excite their imagination.

'Citizenship and ethics' encompasses all aspects of how we learn to live together. The review emphasises a questioning, exploratory approach to exploration of ethical issues. It cites the value of such practices as Philosophy for Children (P4C), which many schools have developed to

explore what are often seen as controversial issues with their pupils.

The area of science and technology has also developed many of the pedagogic approaches that will help teachers fulfil the aims of the curriculum, such as Cognitive Acceleration through Science Education (CASE) (Adey & Shayer 1994). Common to subject-based approaches like CASE is the development of disciplinary-based cognitive tools to examine ideas so that children learn how to 'think like a scientist' through 'enacting dialogue'. A similar project has been developed in mathematics (Preston 2002) and the SPRinG scheme developed by researchers involved in the Teaching and Learning Research Project (TLRP) has also produced excellent guidelines for teachers focusing on science and collaborative group work – see the TLRP website.

Place and time as a domain also has a fascinating body of work to support teachers who wish to take the aims of the Cambridge Review seriously, such as in geography (Leat 2001) and history (Fisher *et al* 2002).

Work from all these projects has been disseminated to teachers through SLT's sister publication *Teaching Thinking & Creativity*. They have the potential to inspire teachers who want to see how the aims of the CPR can be enacted through the domains of learning.

National and local

Support for the idea of a national curriculum was strong in the witnesses to the review, but they also recognised a need for schools to respond to local contexts. In response to this Cambridge proposes a 70/30 split in curriculum time between a national and community curriculum. The aims and domains are the same; the split in time is part of the process to allow schools to determine a significant part of what each domain contains to reflect local concerns and capitalize on local opportunities.

Unfortunately, it is unlikely that the government will do anything to implement the recommendations of the Cambridge Primary Review, they have already asked the QCA to prepare programmes of study to support the findings of the Rose Review. In the event that New Labour is out of office next year we have to wonder what a Conservative alternative might adopt as education policy. Is it possible that they will accept the findings of Cambridge as they inevitably seek to dismantle the policies and practices of New Labour? Is it too much to hope that our politicians can stop treating education as a political football and listen to the democratically generated witness-based review of primary education that has taken four years to produce?

The Cambridge Primary Review presents new aims for primary education which is grounded in evidence on children's development, needs and capabilities and an assessment of national and global conditions requiring an educational response. It represents the most widespread and important review of primary education since Plowden and deserves to be considered seriously. It is time, I suggest, for the teachers' unions to make their voice heard. Teachers

are the single biggest voting group – they can exercise that power in the ballot box. As the National Association of headteachers flex their muscles and take a vote on boycotting the Key Stage 1 and 2 SATs, they may just sense their power to take back their professional entitlement to decide the best way forward for the children in their care. I hope they do.

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