

Mike Baker

TV and Radio Broadcaster, Journalist, Conference Moderator & Media Trainer

16 February 1957 - 21 September 2012

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Cambridge Primary Review - one year on

08 Nov 2010

One year on from publication of the Cambridge Primary Review (and what a year it has been!), its lead author, Professor Robin Alexander, has delivered a lecture assessing the new policy climate for primary school reform. He believes we are now at a 'critical moment' for primary education.

Delivering the annual Simon Lecture to a packed house at the Institute of Education, Prof. Alexander asserted the continuing relevance of the review's recommendations in the light of developments since the General Election, particularly the dropping of the Rose Review proposals by the coalition government which has again 'left the door open' for wider reform.

Looking ahead to the proposed **review of the national curriculum**, Prof. Alexander said the Cambridge Review had three particular concerns:

'...first, that 'minimal entitlement' may be defined as little more than the 3Rs, thus consolidating the historic gulf between the so called 'basics' and the wider curriculum; second, that misplaced nostalgia for past educational certainties may prevent schools from addressing the difficult but necessary questions about the relationship between human development, culture, social change and the curriculum which - in the very different context of today's uncertain and perilous world - the Cambridge Review has explored; third that not all schools have the capacity or will to explore such questions and may prefer to settle for minimalism, the recycling or those tired dichotomies I referred to earlier, or ready-made curriculum packages which may be right for their circumstances and well founded educationally, or they may not.'

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On the government's **review of Key Stage 2 SATs**, Prof. Alexander commented:

'But at last there are signs of change. Yesterday, Michael Gove announced the remit and membership of the external review into Key Stage 2 testing, assessment and accountability which he trailed in September. We recommended such a review and it's good to see that its remit includes some of our concerns. However, I'm deeply disappointed that not one of the country's acknowledged assessment experts is on the panel...Yet we have a review, so let's contribute to it, not prejudge it.'

The full lecture can be found at: www.primaryreview.org.uk/publications/public_lectures.php

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