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Robin Alexander ^a

^a Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge, UK

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Evidence, rhetoric and collateral damage: the problematic pursuit of ‘world class’ standards

Robin Alexander*

Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge, UK

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Drawing initially on evidence assembled by the Cambridge Primary Review, and acknowledging Maurice Galton’s trenchant critiques of recent educational policy, this paper tracks the rise and decline of the flagship standards agenda which was launched by the Blair government in 1997 and came to dominate the work of England’s primary schools during the next 13 years. The official claims about educational standards are assessed against the evidence, as are contingent claims about the regime’s efficacy. The analysis finds both positive and negative outcomes from Labour’s reforms, but also methodological problems, collateral damage, a suspect definition of ‘standards’ and a corrosive political discourse that has frustrated the proper pursuit and application of evidence. England’s experience is then placed in an international context: first, by reference to the increasing use of high stakes testing in the United States and elsewhere; second, through the quest for ‘world class’ standards and schooling to which, prompted by the international surveys of student achievement, more and more governments are signing up, often copying each other’s policies in the hope of outperforming them. Not only is the phrase ‘world class’ almost meaningless in practice but it is also informed by a supremacist mindset which is at odds with twenty-first century global imperatives and sensibilities, and by international comparisons which make indefensibly selective use of such evidence as is available to explain why some countries outperform others. Although the initial focus is on the period 1997–2010, the paper ends by warning that the conditions exposed here are unlikely to be unique to the government that was defeated in the 2010 general election.

Keywords: standards; tests; international comparisons; policy; primary education

Like some other contributors to this special issue who have been on the educational scene for – shall we say – several decades, Maurice Galton has expanded his focus from what goes on in classrooms to take in the context of policy by which classroom events are framed. This is partly a natural progression, but it also reflects the way that over the past two decades policy has intruded with ever greater insistence into those aspects of teachers’ work and lives from which policy-makers used to keep their distance – whether they were Minister of Education George Tomlinson in the distant 1940s (‘Minister knows nowt about curriculum’) or Secretary of State Kenneth Clarke as recently as 1992 (‘Questions about how to teach are not for

*Email: rja40@cam.ac.uk

government to determine'). Policy, then, can no longer be ignored, whatever aspect of education one researches or writes about.

This article takes one prototypical policy episode, the 'standards' agenda of the 1997–2010 Labour Government, about which Maurice himself has written (Bangs, MacBeath, & Galton, 2010; Galton, 2007). Its context, like that of much of Maurice's work, is primary education. The article can also be treated as a sequel to an earlier piece in this journal which revisited Brian Simon's celebrated question 'Why no pedagogy in England?' in light of the first phase of Labour's efforts to transform English primary education (Alexander, 2004). The connection is apt, for Galton and Simon co-directed ORACLE, Britain's first large-scale systematic observational study of primary teaching (Galton, Hargreaves, Comber, Wall, & Pell, 1999; Galton & Simon, 1980).

Of all the so-called 'levers' of systemic reform, tests are the instrument of choice in policy-makers' efforts to do the two things which they believe they must always be seen to do: raise educational standards and call teachers and schools to account. This means that tests are high stakes not just for children and teachers but also for politicians, and that they may be as much about accruing electoral capital as making educational progress.

Not surprisingly, there is now a counter-culture. From the United States comes a burgeoning literature on the role of high stakes tests in initiatives ranging from A Nation At Risk in 1983 to NCLB, the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act of President George W. Bush. It's from one of the most powerful critiques of NCLB, by Sharon Nichols and David Berliner (2007), that I coin for the subtitle of this paper that chilling euphemism beloved of four-star generals, 'collateral damage'. More recently, Diane Ravitch – erstwhile advocate of marketisation and standards-based federal reforms, and former assistant education secretary to President George Bush senior – has witheringly repudiated NCLB in a book subtitled *How testing and choice are undermining education*. As reviewers have been quick to point out, when such criticisms come from the left they tend to be dismissed, but coming from someone so closely identified with conservative administrations they cannot be ignored. Ravitch concludes that 'at the present time, public education [in the United States] is in peril. Efforts to reform public education are, ironically, diminishing its quality and endangering its very survival' (Ravitch, 2010, p. 242).

In England, the testing of 7- and 11-year-olds was introduced along with the national curriculum in 1988 and then made pivotal to the Blair government's post-1997 standards drive. Inevitably, therefore, tests and testing loomed large in the evidence to the Cambridge Primary Review, a three-year independent enquiry into the condition and future of English primary education which, *inter alia*, examined this strand of policy in some detail and whose final report was published in October 2009 (Alexander, 2010).

Smarting from the media's massaging of the report's conclusions (it was immediately clear that nobody in or close to government had actually bothered to read the report itself) and for political reasons unable to acknowledge the possibility that its standards strategy may have been less than completely successful, the Labour government summarily rejected the final report of the Cambridge Primary Review in its entirety. In this, the Cambridge Review's experience was far from unique. In May 2008, the House of Commons Children, Schools and Families Select Committee had published a highly critical report about the government's approach to assessment and testing (House of Commons, 2008). This too was dismissed, as

were similar reports from the teaching unions and numerous distinguished experts and commentators. ‘The literacy and numeracy tests of 11-year-olds’, insisted ministers, ‘are here to stay: they raise standards, they deliver accountability and parents want them. There is no alternative’. In 2010, members of two of Britain’s teaching unions increased the pressure by voting to boycott the SAT tests for 11-year-olds. Meanwhile, the Assessment Reform Group had sustained a 21-year campaign for approaches to assessment which align more closely with both research evidence and the imperatives of learning and teaching (Mansell & James, 2009).

By 2009, tests so dominated educational discourse in England that of the 10 themes, 23 subthemes and 100 research questions addressed by the Cambridge Primary Review (listed in Alexander, 2010, appendix 2), the press mostly concentrated on just three: what the Review said about the school starting age (which many journalists got wrong, as therefore did ministers), the tests for 11-year-olds, and government micro-management of what goes on in schools; or how primary schooling should start, how it should end and who should control it. There was much less media interest in the educational process itself, in what happens during the vital formative years between children’s entering primary school at age four or five and being tested just before they leave it at age 11. The clear implication was that input and outcome are what matter most: manipulate one, measure the other, and that’s education. Still no pedagogy?

In fairness, media editors were only responding to what they claimed the public wanted. Yet precisely because the debate about assessment has been so media-driven, many have found it difficult to gain a hearing for the self-evident truths that there’s more to assessment than tests, and that criticising the post 1997-test regime doesn’t mean that one is soft on standards or accountability. On the contrary, as the Cambridge Review final report insists, the issue is not *whether* children should be assessed (they should), or *whether* schools should be accountable (they should) but *how* and in relation to *what*. (Alexander, 2010, recommendation 85).

The drive to raise standards has been the cornerstone of recent education policy in England. Drawing on the Cambridge Review’s evidence, the first part of this paper assesses what England’s 1997–2010 standards drive has achieved in the primary sector, and with what consequences and side effects. Broadening both perspective and evidence, the second part of the paper examines the international dimension of the English experience, notably policy-makers’ increasingly obsessive interest in international surveys of educational achievement, their eagerness to cherry-pick the policies of those countries that head the achievement league tables, and the associated rhetoric of ‘world class’ standards.

English primary education: a strategy for reform

The Blair government swept to power in 1997 with the slogan ‘education, education, education’. It promised to raise standards in England’s 17,300 primary schools and launched a programme of unprecedented investment and intervention. The chosen instruments of reform were:

- National literacy and numeracy strategies which prescribed in detail not just the content but also the methods of daily literacy and numeracy lessons to be taught in every primary school and classroom in the country.

- A sustained sequence of supporting publications and materials – 459 government documents on the teaching of literacy alone were issued to schools during the eight years from 1996 to 2004 (Moss, 2007), or more than one a week – not to mention comparable material on numeracy and much else besides.
- The extension of the existing national test regime at ages 7 and 11 to include targets for the percentage of 11-year-olds who should achieve specified literacy and numeracy levels by 2002 and each year after that.
- The publication of annual school-by-school test results and inter-school league tables.
- A national inspection system which checked schools for compliance with the strategies and ‘named and shamed’ those not up to scratch.
- Competencies and standards for initial teacher training and in-service professional development which were closely aligned with this agenda.
- Ring-fenced funding to support in-service courses for teachers in areas of policy priority.
- Local authority school improvement partners (SIPs) charged with checking on each school’s measured outcomes and ensuring that they followed the prescribed or preferred routes to improvement, again as measured by the tests.
- The extension of the powers of national bodies, and the tightening of government control over them.

The standards agenda was classic stick and carrot. The intrusiveness of the instruments listed above was ostensibly made more palatable by improving primary teachers’ working conditions: over the period 1997–2009, 35,000 additional teachers and 172,000 teaching assistants were appointed and government sanctioned a 27% increase in teachers’ pay and a 55% increase in per-pupil funding. Averaged at 2.25% per annum, the pay increase looks less impressive, though the increase in support staff was undeniably spectacular, if of doubtful efficacy (Blatchford, Bassett, Brown, & Martin, 2008).

Success? Standards in primary education 1997–2008

We turn now to the question of the degree of success achieved by the post-1997 standards agenda. The then Secretary of State for Education, David Blunkett, upped the ante when he launched the standards drive in 1997, promising that he would resign if the 2002 literacy and numeracy targets were not met. They were not, but by then he had been moved to another ministry, so his successor resigned instead. Yet by 2006–2007, despite the failure to meet the targets, the government was claiming that its standards agenda had been an unqualified success. Thus, quoting the words of ministers and their advisers: ‘Today’s newly qualified teachers are the best trained ever’ (Michael Day of the TDA, quoted in Revell, 2006); ‘Standards stayed the same for 50 years before rising sharply in the late 1990s’ (Barber, 2007, p. 150); ‘Primary standards are at their highest ever levels. This is not opinion: it is fact’ (Adonis, 2007); ‘Primary standards are at their highest ever levels... This huge rise in standards since 1997 follows 50 years of little or no improvement in literacy and represents a very good return in our investment in the literacy strategy’ (DCSF, 2007); ‘Independent inspections show there have never been so many outstanding and good primary schools, and Key Stage 2 results show huge progress over the last decade’ (DCSF, 2009a).

Note the gung-ho relationship with eternity – the speakers here use the words ‘ever’ or ‘never’ four times. To test these and similar claims, the Cambridge Primary Review commissioned six independent surveys of the test and inspection data, together with the contingent research and policy literature, by groups of senior academics at five universities and the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER). At Durham, Peter Tymms and Christine Merrell concentrated on the national tests. At NFER, Chris Whetton, Graham Ruddock and Liz Twist examined the international achievement surveys featuring England – TIMSS, PISA, PIRLS and so on. Wynne Harlen of Bristol University and the Assessment Reform Group considered both the trends in these data and the wider assessment issues. Peter Cunningham and Philip Raymont of Cambridge looked at the national school inspection system under Ofsted. Working with Dominic Wyse from Cambridge, Harry Torrance and Elaine McCreery of Manchester Metropolitan University reviewed literature and data across the post-1997 standards drive as a whole, taking in curriculum, assessment, inspection and the national strategies. Meanwhile, Maria Balarin and Hugh Lauder of Bath University set the entire standards agenda in the context of national educational policy and governance.

The three reports on the test data were published in November 2007 (Tymms & Merrell, 2007; Whetton, Ruddock, & Twist, 2007; Harlen, 2007). They were duly sensationalised by the media with headlines sharply at odds with the confident claims of ministers and advisers quoted above: ‘Primary tests blasted by experts’ ... ‘Too much testing harms primary school pupils’ ... ‘Literacy drive has almost no impact’ ... ‘Literacy drive is flop, say experts’ ... ‘Millions wasted on teaching reading’...¹

Matters were not helped when in February 2008 the Review published the other three reports, on inspection, governance and the overall trajectory of post-1988 reform (Balarin & Lauder, 2008; Cunningham & Raymont, 2008; Wyse, McCreery, & Torrance, 2008). ‘Failed!’ shouted the newspaper headlines, ‘Political interference is damaging our children’s education’ ... ‘An oppressive system that is failing our children’ ... ‘School system test-obsessed’ ... ‘England’s children among the most tested’ ... ‘Our children are tested to destruction’ ... ‘A shattering failure for our masters’ ... ‘Primary pupils let down by Labour’ ... ‘Primary schools have got worse’.²

On this basis one might conclude that a meeting of minds on the government’s standards drive was beyond reach. However, the truth of the matter lay somewhere between the political hype and media scaremongering, and indeed each of the reports cited above was careful to give credit where it was due and, taken together, the six studies were considerably more positive about the government’s record than was compatible with the media maxim ‘First simplify, then exaggerate’ (McGaw, 2010, quoting a respected British journalist).

In fact, the Cambridge Primary Review offered the one thing with which few politicians or sub-editors can cope: a mixed message. In its final report, the Review combined the findings of the six commissioned research surveys cited above with its other relevant data to offer an overview of trends up to 2008. It reported that the national and international evidence on standards in England’s primary schools was both positive and negative, but also in certain respects problematic. (The four sub-sections which follow compress information presented in detail in the final report and companion research volume: Alexander, 2010, pp. 328–342 and 471–4; Alexander, Doddington, Gray, Hargreaves, & Kershner, 2010, pp. 431–520 and 727–817.)

Positive evidence on standards of primary pupils' attainment up to 2008

Thus, within the limitations and variations of the measures used, standards of tested pupil attainment were fairly stable over time. Pupils' attitudes to their learning in the tested areas were generally positive, though they appeared to decline with age. The national data showed modest improvements in primary mathematics standards, especially since 1995, though different datasets told different stories; the international data also showed substantial improvements in primary mathematics from 1995 to 2003. The international data from 2001 showed high standards in reading among English pupils by comparison with those from other countries, but the later data (from 2006 onwards) suggested that the 2001 results may have been misleading (England appeared to be above the international average but not exceptionally so). The international data showed considerable improvements in primary science by comparison with other countries, though there were methodological reservations about the studies in question.

Negative evidence on standards

However, the Blair government's national literacy strategy had a far less pronounced impact on reading standards than might have been expected from the level of investment (the national strategies in combination cost GBP 2 billion of taxpayers' money during the decade 1998–2008), and gains in reading skills were sometimes at the expense of pupils' enjoyment of reading. There was some evidence of an increase in test-induced stress among primary pupils, and much firmer evidence of stress among their teachers; at the same time, the primary curriculum narrowed in direct response to the perceived demands of the testing regime and the national strategies, to the extent that in many schools children's statutory entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum was seriously compromised. Confirming and perhaps tacitly condoning this tendency, there was no reliable evidence on national standards in areas of children's learning outside those aspects of literacy, numeracy and science which were tested, other than that in many schools such learning had been squeezed out by the post-1997 standards drive itself.

Meanwhile, England's historically wide gap between high and low attaining pupils in reading, mathematics and science persisted throughout the period in question. Already evident at a very young age, it widens as children move through the primary phase, and it is more pronounced in Britain and the United States than in most other developed countries. This attainment gap maps closely onto indicators of inequality in other aspects of children's lives, notably income, health, housing, risk, ethnicity and social class; and it confirms that tackling inequalities in educational outcome requires action across a broad range of public policy, including much that lies outside the control of schools.

Methodological problems with national testing and inspection

Beyond this balance sheet, and serving to compromise many of the public claims about standards, there were methodological problems with the evidence on which judgments about standards were based. For example, up to 2000, England's national system of assessment had a low level of dependability both in relation to results for

a given year and as a basis for tracking trends over time. After 2000, the quality of the data improved, but overall this means that claims about long-term trends must be treated with scepticism. There were similar reservations about data from school and teacher training inspections during the same period, where the methodology changed too frequently to allow year-on-year comparison, and there were problems of validity in relation to what was inspected and of reliability in the inspection process. Though in some respects the international comparative evidence on trends in pupil attainment was encouraging, overall it was rather thin, and there were – and are – considerable challenges in the devising of international measures and the interpretation of international data. Finally, as Mansell (2007) argues, Labour's concept of 'standards' was highly problematic yet was routinely presumed to be straightforward.

Questionable claims and assumptions about standards

On the basis of its re-assessment of the standards data, the Cambridge Primary Review's final report went on to challenge claims and assumptions by which the Blair/Brown governments of 1997–2010 had sought to justify their standards drive and their insistence that national tests of literacy and numeracy were the only way forward. Here are some examples:

Testing of itself drives up standards. Formative assessment embedded in good teaching has a much greater impact, while the impact of national tests on standards is at best oblique.

Parents support testing. Many parents who were interviewed or submitted written evidence to the Review were as worried about high stakes testing as were teachers. All of them wanted to know how their children were getting on, but unlike government they did not see such information as synonymous with high stakes tests (Alexander & Hargreaves, 2007, p. 25).

Tests are the only way to hold schools to account and monitor the performance of the system as a whole. Tests are one way among several, and in fact are less suited to this purpose than, for example, inspection and sample achievement surveys.

The pursuit of standards in the 'basics' is incompatible with a broad, balanced and enriching curriculum. Official inspection evidence and test data show the exact opposite, and primary schools which deliver high standards in the 'basics' do so in the context of a broad and well-managed curriculum (DES, 1985; HMI, 1978; Ofsted, 1997, 2002, 2008, 2009). Interestingly, both children and parents told the Cambridge Primary Review that literacy and numeracy, though paramount, must not be pursued at the expense of the wider curriculum (Alexander & Hargreaves, 2007, pp. 13, 25, 35).

Literacy and numeracy are valid proxies for the curriculum as a whole. Numeracy and – especially – literacy are foundational, but they do not encompass all that the rest of the curriculum embodies. In any case, the exclusive concentration on literacy and numeracy has compromised schools' wider educational purposes, so awarding them proxy status is self-defeating.

England has the best-trained teachers ever. Much repeated by Ofsted, the TDA and the government, but empirically unsustainable, as the available measures of newly-qualified teacher competence go back only a few years, offering a somewhat eccentric definition of ‘ever’.

England has the highest standards ever. By the same token, a meaningless claim. It can be neither proved nor refuted.

Looming over the entire standards drive and the debate about what it is legitimate to infer from the available standards data is the problematic nature of the term ‘standards’. As Mansell argues and demonstrates:

The word ‘standards’ ... has been routinely abused in the last few years, by politicians and others. ‘Raising standards’ ... is implied to stand for improving the overall quality of education in our schools. That, in the public mind ... is what the phrase means. The reality in schools, however, is that ‘raising standards’ means raising test scores, as measured by a set of relatively narrow indicators laid down more or less unilaterally by ministers ... The two meanings are not interchangeable, and should not be treated as such. (Mansell, 2007, p. 25)

The Cambridge Review’s evidence shows how, over the period 1997–2010, the pursuit of this narrow concept of ‘standards’ at the primary stage seriously compromised children’s legal entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum and – exacerbating the problem and tacitly condoning the neglect – provided the central and in many cases sole criteria for the work of local authority School Improvement Partners (SIPs). It is also possible (though the evidence on this from, for example, HMI, 1978, Ofsted, 1997 and 2002 is oblique) that because HMI and Ofsted have shown a close association between standards in literacy/numeracy and the scope and quality of the wider curriculum, the narrowing of the curriculum in pursuit of an even more restricted definition of standards may have had the opposite result to that intended, depressing standards in ‘the basics’ rather than raising them.

Educational standards, the Cambridge Review argues – and this argument is central to its proposals on curriculum and pedagogy as well as those on assessment and standards – should be redefined as *the quality and outcomes of learning in the entire curriculum to which children are entitled by law* (Alexander, 2010, recommendations 47, 70, 81 and 125). This definition is close to what Mansell (quoted above) takes to be the public perception.

There’s a further twist. England has performance standards for teachers as well as pupils. From 2007, these were specified as behaviours required of teachers at different stages of development from novice to expert, or what were called ‘newly qualified’, ‘post-induction’, ‘post-threshold’, ‘excellent’ and ‘advanced skills’ (TDA, 2007, currently – 2011 – under review). But the nominated standards had no obvious empirical basis, and indeed ran counter to what we know, mainly from American research, about the way professionals develop in their thinking and practice as they acquire greater expertise (Berliner, 2004; Bond, Smith, Baker, & Hattie, 2000; Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986; Ericsson, 1996) – a trajectory in which Maurice Galton has also taken a considerable interest (Galton, 1995, 2007). The crucial point is that professionals move from a condition of needing external support to one of self-regulation in which, through experience, precedent and practice, they internalise an extensive operational repertoire on which they draw almost uncon-

sciously and which can yield ways of working which to outsiders may look idiosyncratic but which in fact are very securely grounded. The British government's framework for teachers' professional development did not allow this possibility. It required teachers at every stage to operate within an externally defined set of competencies, while the national literacy, numeracy and primary strategies of 1998, 1999 and 2003 expected every teacher, regardless of age, experience or situation, to teach the prescribed four-part literacy lesson and three-part numeracy lesson every day of the week.

Thus the Cambridge Review was forced to conclude that far from raising standards of teaching this approach may actually have depressed or at least contained standards by constraining the work of the country's most talented teachers – even assuming the prescribed teaching strategies to be well-founded empirically, which in the case of the national teaching standards and national literacy strategy they were not. The TDA framework may have worked tolerably well for novices, because it gave them the support they needed, but the nation's best teachers may have been constrained and diminished by it: that, indeed, is what senior teachers claimed in their evidence to the Review. Thus is the circle of learning and teaching closed. As the Cambridge report noted: 'Children will not learn to think for themselves if their teachers are expected merely to do as they are told' (Alexander, 2010, p. 496).

Collateral damage, myth and other policy ailments

By now we are firmly in the arena of collateral damage. The Cambridge Primary Review's evidence shows that the post-1997 drive to raise standards in literacy and numeracy in England's primary schools undoubtedly yielded positive gains, but at considerable cost, educationally and professionally as well as financially. The tests impoverished the curriculum; the national strategies and professional standards impoverished pedagogy in both conception and practice – a trend evident from the outset (Alexander, 2004); in many primary schools a professional culture of excitement, inventiveness and healthy scepticism was supplanted by one of dependency, compliance and even fear; and the approach may in some cases have depressed both standards of learning and the quality of teaching.

One of the Cambridge Review's commissioned research surveys suggested that Labour's standards package amounted to what, following Lauder, Brown, Dillabough, and Halsey (2006), the authors called a 'state theory of learning'. This combined the repeated high stakes testing of pupils, a national curriculum and mandated pedagogy in literacy and numeracy (Balarin & Lauder, 2008), to which can be added requirements for inspection, initial teacher training, continuing professional development and so-called 'school improvement' by which compliance with the theory is secured.

The Review's final report quoted this argument but warned against the 'Stalinist overtones' of the phrase 'a state theory of learning', insisting that such a charge needed to be proved or refuted rather than unthinkingly adopted (Alexander, 2010, p. 291). Ignoring the warning but joyously seizing on the epithet, the *Daily Mail* (2009) launched a stinging attack on the government's 'Stalinist control of teaching'.

But of more fundamental concern is what the Review's evidence revealed not just about the *substance* of policy but also about the way policy is created and sustained. The Review took place against a backdrop of growing concern about the condition of democracy in Britain. The Power enquiry sponsored by the Joseph

Rowntree Trust reported ‘high and widespread alienation’ towards politicians, the main political parties and the country’s key institutions. Dismissing claims that the public had voluntarily disengaged from formal political processes out of apathy, the 2006 Power report concluded:

Citizens do not feel that the processes of formal democracy offer them enough influence over political decisions ... the main political parties are widely perceived to be too similar and lacking in principle ... people feel they lack information or knowledge ... The political parties are widely held in contempt ... Voting is simply regarded as a waste of time. (Joseph Rowntree Trust, 2006, pp. 16–17)

No less seriously, the Power report talked of a ‘crisis of disengagement’: a ‘loss of mandate and legitimacy’; a ‘loss of dialogue between government and governed’; the growth of a ‘quiet authoritarianism’... where ‘policy is made in consultation with a small coterie of supporters... and general elections become empty rituals’ (Joseph Rowntree Trust, 2007, pp. 33–35).

The Power analysis was shared by eminent political commentators and historians (for example, Hobsbawm, 2007; Sampson, 2004) and it spoke to a malaise which was more profound than the scandal of MPs’ expenses which exercised the British press during 2009–10. These are the conditions which ensure that an independent enquiry like the Cambridge Primary Review, however authoritative and evidentially well founded it is, will make little headway if it says what a government does not wish to hear.

The Labour government’s response to independent reports from many sources and on many topics, not just from the Cambridge Review and not just on education, show how far the proper discourse of policy – rational, respectful of evidence yet prepared to test it, responsive to alternative viewpoints, open to criticism – has been degraded in Britain. In place of a discourse likely to create policies which have the best chance of success with the minimum of collateral damage, we have four corrosive pretenders, the discourses of dichotomy, derision, myth and meaninglessness (Alexander, 2009).

The discourse of dichotomy reduces everything to mutual exclusives, to a choice between grossly over-simplified alternatives, to the politics of them and us, with no middle ground. Caught in the crossfire are matters which are important and – inevitably – complex: curriculum, pedagogy, the question of how we define quality in education. The discourse of dichotomy gives them no quarter, reducing the options to basics *versus* breadth, child-centred *versus* subject-centred, accountability *versus* anarchy, and tests in literacy and numeracy *versus* the collapse of civilisation as we know it (Alexander, 2008, pp. 72–92). Characteristically, both government and opposition deployed this discourse in response to the Cambridge Review’s critique of the post-1997 standards regime, claiming that those who presume to criticise the national tests must be against both assessment and accountability (DCSF, 2009a; Gove, 2009). Thus the discourse of dichotomy shades into a *discourse of derision* (Kenway, 1987; Ball, 1990), which defines the tone of government responses to anything that has been said and done which is off-message. If you don’t like it, first misrepresent then ridicule it, personalising the attack where possible and appealing to the lowest common denominator of popular prejudice. Again, the favoured ploy is sharply to polarise issues and viewpoints so as portray opposition as extreme or bizarre.

If the discourses of dichotomy and derision are crude and transparent devices to pre-empt debate and neutralise opposition, the *discourse of myth* is perhaps more

insidious. It's the tendency, again endemic in British policy discourse but particularly striking since 1997, to ignore history or rewrite it to support the current agenda and underwrite exaggerated accounts of progress. This tendency was famously or notoriously exemplified by the claim of a senior Labour strategist and prime ministerial adviser that as a result of his government's interventions teachers in England's schools had at a stroke graduated from being 'professionally uninformed' to a post-1997 state of 'informed professional judgement'. The 'information' that secured this dramatic transformation of the competence of an entire profession was of course the government's national strategies, to the successful 'delivery' of which teacher education, school inspection and much more were directed. (The episode is discussed in Alexander, 2004.)

While the discourse of myth is about the denial or destruction of the past, the *discourse of meaninglessness* is about the ultimate in collateral damage: the destruction of language itself. Once one has negotiated the macho, militaristic rhetoric that framed the 1997–2010 standards drive – tough new initiatives, task forces, step changes, hitting the ground running, driving up standards, rolling out innovation, zero tolerance, best practice, world class schools, back to basics and the rest – one encounters the opaque banalities of managementspeak, epitomised in the influential McKinsey report *How the world's best-performing school systems come out on top*, a lavish tome replete with nuggets such as 'Top-performing school systems leverage a substantial and growing knowledge about what constitutes effective school leadership to develop their principals into drivers of improvement in instruction' (Barber & Mourshed, 2007, p. 30).

Supremacy or sustainability? The quest for 'world class' standards

The 2007 McKinsey report is our cue for considering next the international context which is invoked to justify national policies such as those which the Cambridge Primary Review has examined. 'My ambition', said Secretary of State Ed Balls in his introduction to the Labour government's 2009 White Paper which was later savaged in the legislative 'wash up' just before the 2010 British general election, 'is for this country to have the *best school system in the world*. . . schools are central to our. . . vision. . . to make this *the best place in the world to grow up*' (DCSF, 2009b, p. 2, my italics). Or, firmly back in the discourse of meaninglessness we find the stated aim of QCDA 'to develop a modern, world class curriculum that will inspire and challenge all learners and prepare them for the future' (QCDA, 2009). To which one might respond that since a national curriculum agency would hardly set out to develop an outdated, parochial curriculum that bores and alienates learners and prepares them for the past, the aim isn't worth uttering.

The British National Health Service has also been infected – if the metaphor may be permitted – by the 'world class' bug. 'World class commissioning', we are told, 'will be the delivery vehicle for world class clinical services and a world class NHS' (Britnell, 2007). When the phrase 'world class' is used three times in one sentence we might ask whether it amounts to anything at all. Indeed, in her 2002 study of the relationship between education and economic growth, Alison Wolf comments that 'In recent years, the term "world class. . ." has become a political and marketing slogan, with little attempt to define its meaning' (Wolf, 2002).

In fact, 'world class' is rather more than a slogan because it has teeth – and they bite. In the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise, academics at British universities

had their research output judged ‘recognised nationally’, ‘recognised internationally’, ‘internationally excellent’ or ‘world leading’. Such ratings produce yet more league tables, and, crucially, are linked to the level of funding which each university receives. Internationally, a place in the THES-QS ‘top 100 universities’ ranking is eagerly sought. In 2009 the field was led by Harvard, Cambridge, Yale, UCL, Imperial, Oxford and Chicago (THE, 2009) In the Shanghai ARWU ‘top 500’ list the front-runners were Harvard, Stanford, Berkeley, Cambridge, MIT and Caltech (Center for World Class Universities, 2009). In 2010, a British university – Cambridge – achieved the rare feat of outperforming the American stalwarts and coming first (THE, 2010).

Despite this, both lists were, and invariably are, dominated by American universities. The Toronto *Globe and Mail* asked, on behalf of its supposedly envious Canadian readers, ‘How do the Americans do it?’ – answering, without a moment’s hesitation, ‘money, of course. . . a significant world class university is a billion-dollar a year operation, minimum’ (Globe and Mail, 2006). Never mind, according to statistics provided by *The Economist* (2009), that the United States also outperforms Canada on less desirable indicators such as alcohol consumption, childhood obesity and the proportion of its population in prison; that Canada is in the happy, or should we say euphoric, position of outperforming the United States not just in school-level educational achievement but also in cannabis use per head of population (ibid.); that Canada is much higher up the UNICEF league table of childhood well-being than the United States (UNICEF, 2007); or Canada’s superior performance on any number of contrary indicators of educational quality and social well-being. For that matter, never mind that British universities stormed home in 2009 with four out of the top six places in the TES list, but Britain came bottom in the 2007 UNICEF rankings of childhood well-being in the world’s richest nations (ibid.). Never mind all that: world class schools and universities are what matter most.

But America’s dominance of the world university league tables is not matched at school level: twenty-second in maths and nineteenth in science in PISA 2006; eleventh at Grade 8 and ninth at Grade 4 in TIMSS 2007. In these matters Canada is well ahead, and in the discrepancy between school and university performance may lie uncomfortable truths about what money can *not* buy, and about what, for the 50% of Americans who do not go to university, money might be spent on but is not. The discrepancy, much sharper in Britain and the United States than many other countries, between supposedly ‘world class’ university rankings and other measures, whether of poverty, equity, well-being or school performance, ought to raise very uncomfortable questions indeed for the governments of these two countries – questions which are moral no less than economic.

In any case, an alternative perspective on ‘world class education’ is also gathering strength, and it is no less driven by global awareness. Here some different league tables command our attention: for example, the ranking from first to 179th place on the United Nations Human Development Index (HDI) which bands nations by ‘high’, ‘medium’ and ‘low’ human development with its composite measure of life expectancy, education and per capita GDP (UNDP, 2008), and whose backdrop is the global gulf between rich and poor and the increasingly doomed pursuit of the United Nations’ Millennium Development Goal of achieving universal primary education by 2015. At this point, a fault line opens up between ‘world class’ as *beating* the world, and world class as *sustaining* the world; between competition and

co-operation; between education for national supremacy and education for global interdependence. The alternative perspective is captured in the subtitle of the 2007–8 HDI report – *Human solidarity in a divided world* – and though the focus here is climate change it could as well be poverty, geopolitical instability or exponential population growth:

Climate change is the defining human development challenge of the twenty-first century ... In a divided but interdependent world, it challenges all people to reflect upon how we manage the ... one thing that we share in common: planet Earth. It challenges us to reflect on social justice across countries and generations ... It challenges the entire human community to undertake prompt and strong collective action based on shared values and a shared vision. (UNDP, 2008, pp. 1–2)

‘Shared values and a common vision’: how very different from McKinsey’s ‘How the best-performing school systems come out on top’.

Uses and abuses of international comparison

The race to industrialise during the nineteenth century (and for that matter American reaction to Sputnik in the twentieth) remind us that the supremacist view of world class education is hardly new; but what has transformed it from conversation piece to political obsession and multi-national industry is the availability of data which positively *invite* the league table treatment. Those data have been mainly provided by the IEA and OECD, who between them have produced the achievement studies in mathematics, science, reading literacy, citizenship and technology which announce themselves by a bewildering procession of acronyms: FIMS, SIMS, FISS, SISS, TIMSS, TIMSS-R, PIRLS, ICCS, SITES, TEDS-M and PISA.

I stress, though, that our concern here is not the achievement surveys themselves, which in the right hands are valuable tools of policy, but what people do with them. Thus from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) the 2007 McKinsey report extrapolated its ‘top 10’ school systems and, in a classic statement of the obvious allied to reductive overtones on the matter of pedagogy, it concluded:

Analysis of these top ten school systems suggests that three things matter most: (1) getting the right people to become teachers, (2) developing them into effective instructors and, (3) ensuring that the system is able to deliver the best possible instruction for every child. (Barber & Mourshed, 2007, p. 2)

In fact, McKinsey’s ‘top 10’ make a strange assembly: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Finland, Hong Kong, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea. Canada is represented by just two of its provinces, Alberta and Ontario. Here we have countries, a city state, a special administrative region, provinces and both unitary and devolved national systems. Is it really the case that all of them reduce teaching to instruction? If not, what do they have in common? (The remit for the 2011 national curriculum review uses the term ‘jurisdictions’ instead of ‘school systems’, as if this somehow secures the equivalence that McKinsey’s top 10 geographical entities lack – DfE, 2011).

Before we consider that question, let us dwell for a moment on the case of Finland, the country whose educational magic everyone wishes to capture. Do the systemic reformers really understand what makes Finnish education so effective?

Finnish commentators highlight factors such as: relative cultural and linguistic homogeneity; low rates of immigration; a well-motivated and educated teaching force with a high entry bar (only 15 per cent of applicants to teacher training courses are accepted); high levels of student interest and engagement with reading *outside* school; universal entitlement to high quality pre-school education coupled with a relatively late start to formal schooling and an emphasis on thoroughly preparing children, socially and linguistically, for learning in school; decentralised decision-making and a high degree of institutional and professional autonomy (Lyytinen, 2002; Fredriksson, 2006).

Beyond these, Finland has two features which are rarely, if ever, mentioned by those who see testing, league tables, competition and a narrow curriculum as the route to ‘world class’ status: a paramount commitment to social and educational equity through a genuinely comprehensive school system of consistently high quality, with a minimal private sector which co-exists rather than competes with the public sector; and no national tests, league tables, national system of inspection, national teaching strategies or other so-called ‘levers’ of systemic reform in which governments elsewhere have invested so heavily. Clear assessment criteria are written into the national curriculum and are regularly applied by teachers, but there is no national testing as such until the national matriculation examination at the end of secondary education (Eurydice, 2009). In short, Finland appears to top the ‘world class’ rankings by eschewing the very conditions which some other countries believe to be vital to success.

Small, rich or equal?

So what, apart from good teachers, teaching and teacher training – absolute prerequisites, undeniably – do the top-performing systems have in common? Taking Ruzzi’s synthesis of all the international achievement survey results from 1995 to 2003 (Ruzzi, 2006), we find that at the very top of the combined league table are five states – Finland, Singapore, Taiwan, Canada and Hong Kong – which are prosperous, have small populations and/or compared with Britain or the United States are relatively homogenous culturally and linguistically. If we then take the 19 countries which between them secured the top 12 places in reading, mathematics and science during the period in question, their average population is just 18.1 million. Remove Japan, the one country in the list with a large population, and that average national population drops to 12.1 million, which in global terms is truly minute. The McKinsey report doesn’t say that the best performing school systems come out on top because they are small and rich, but if you play the game of educational cause and consequence at that level that’s what you might reasonably conclude.

This, of course, is simplistic, but monofactorial extrapolations from multifactorial data (or slick readings of complex situations, or policy cherry-picking) is the name of the game. Yet take the case of the United States. It features in neither Ruzzi’s nor McKinsey’s league tables despite its massive educational purchasing power and dominance of the university rankings. It has a population of over 307 million (Finland has just 5 million). It is culturally highly diverse. In its decentralised education system there is considerable variation in funding and provision among its 50 states and 13,500 school boards. There are massive disparities in the wealth, health and prospects of its citizens, and considerable divergence in matters of value and identity. On some measures it is the most unequal of all the world’s rich countries. It seems

reasonable to suggest that in this case size, diversity and inequality militate against wealth, and that if money can buy a world class university system, at least as judged by the chosen measures of research productivity used in the THES and Shanghai league tables, it takes much more than money to achieve a world class school system. For while university systems cater for the relatively privileged, national school systems are expected to cater for all, including both those for whom government-funded schools are the only option and those who can afford to buy out of the system and into private education. In this context, the fact that Finland's private schools co-exist but do not compete with its public schooling seems doubly significant.

On this basis, Japan's appearance among the 'small, rich and educationally successful' nations in Ruzzi's analysis is not the anomaly it may seem, for in terms of the income difference between a country's rich and poor, Japan emerges as the most equal of the world's 23 richest nations (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009, p. 17). Wealthy and educationally successful Singapore is bottom of their equality list but has only five million inhabitants.

So in cautiously seeking to make sense of PISA, TIMSS and the other international achievement surveys, we find a constellation of factors in which wealth, demography, equity and relative equality all play a significant part alongside the school and education system factors on which McKinsey concentrates, though in the end it is culture that determines how wealth is disposed, how education is conceived and how much or little equality matters (Alexander, 2001). For Wilkinson and Pickett, however, equality is the key:

Greater equality, as well as improving the wellbeing of the whole population, is also the key to national standards of achievement and how countries perform in lots of different fields . . . There is not one policy for reducing inequality in health or the educational performance of school children, and another for raising national standards of performance . . . If . . . a country wants higher average levels of educational achievement among its school children, it must address the underlying inequality which creates a steeper social gradient in educational achievement. (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009, pp. 29–30)

Confirming my earlier observation that the problem is not so much the tests as what people do with them, PISA's own commentary on its 2009 results identifies equity as a key factor:

The best performing school systems manage to provide high quality education to all students. Canada, Finland, Japan, Korea and the partner economies Hong Kong-China and Shanghai-China all perform well above the OECD mean and students tend to perform well regardless of their background or the school they attend. (OECD, 2010, p. 9)

The McKinsey report rightly says 'The quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers' (Barber & Mourshed 2007, p. 40). But we should also remember erstwhile United States Commissioner of Education Ernest Boyer: 'A report card on public education is a report card on the nation. Schools can rise no higher than the communities that support them' (Boyer, 1983). An echo, perhaps, of Basil Bernstein's 'Education cannot compensate for society' (Bernstein, 1970)?

There has to be a sting in the tail. The top 10 education systems in the McKinsey list owe their ranking to their performance in the PISA international surveys of the educational achievement of students approaching the end of compulsory

schooling (or, in Singapore's case, to its performance in TIMSS 2003). PISA assesses mathematics, reading, science and problem-solving. But what of the broader curriculum to which English children are entitled by law but which, as the Cambridge Primary Review's evidence shows, so many of them have been denied because of the drive to achieve supposedly world class standards in literacy and numeracy? (Alexander, 2010, pp. 203–278). Are mathematics, reading, science and problem-solving – important though they undeniably are – all that a world class education, any education, is about? Can they legitimately be treated as proxies for the whole? And if we say, no, students' educational achievements are certainly about what is tested in PISA but they must also be about much more, would these 10 still 'come out on top'?

Conclusion

We reached this point via England's experiment in systemic educational reform during the period 1997–2010. This sought to raise standards in literacy and numeracy and thus propel England to the top of the league table of 'world class' education systems as defined by the criteria and methods of the international student achievement surveys and the now rather weary nostrums of managerialism and school effectiveness. But, as the Cambridge Primary Review's evidence shows, the post-1997 standards regime was at best a partial success and at worst impoverished the education of a generation of England's children while disempowering a generation of England's teachers. Meanwhile, if it means anything at all, 'world class' is a highly questionable notion in a world in which humanity's very survival depends on international co-operation. And we surely cannot allow the equating of world class education with top scores in the PISA and TIMSS tests to pass unchallenged. What kind of a world is it, we might ask, that allows global educational excellence to aspire no higher than competence in literacy, numeracy and science, essential though these undoubtedly are?

The Cambridge Primary Review tries to offer constructive alternatives. It does so by going back to basics – in the best sense – and asking what primary education is for, what kind of a curriculum is needed for today's children and tomorrow's world, what kinds of pedagogy are most likely to secure that vision, how learning is best assessed, formatively as well as summatively, the kinds of expertise which all this requires, how teachers for tomorrow's primary schools should be trained and deployed, and how the balance of responsibilities between government and schools should be changed to re-empower both teachers and children.

In redefining those responsibilities, policy-makers and the public need to be realistic about what schools can and cannot do. For in a society like Britain's, where the wide educational gap between high and low attainers maps with depressing precision onto the equally wide equity gaps in wealth, health, wellbeing, risk, opportunity, ethnicity and social class, narrowing the educational gap requires commensurate efforts across a much wider range of social and economic policy than education alone. That, indeed, is a key finding of the comprehensive epidemiological synthesis provided by Wilkinson and Pickett's (2009) influential study *The Spirit Level*, referred to above. What schools can and should do is to concentrate on the task for which they exist and for which their teachers, one hopes, are trained: providing a rich, fulfilling and empowering education which secures children's basic skills while raising their sights to larger educational horizons. To achieve this, we need to move from a concept of

standards as test scores in limited aspects of literacy and numeracy to one that relates to the quality of provision and achievement across the entire curriculum to which children are entitled. That, contrary to the belief of those who see testing as the solution to every educational problem, is no soft option.

In pursuing its alternative vision, the Cambridge Primary Review is not alone. There's now a growing consensus across a wide spectrum of professional, parental and public opinion in Britain, the United States and many other countries that the obsession with tests and league tables has had its day and that we need a richer and more humane educational vision for today's children and tomorrow's world – and hence a genuinely world class definition of 'world class'.

Prospects

As this special issue of *CJE* goes to press it is unclear whether the earthquake of the 2010 general election will permit a no less seismic shift in official educational thinking, or whether once the dust has settled the old political and linguistic polarities will reassert themselves, and larger educational visions will once again be obscured by the discourses of dichotomy, derision, myth and meaninglessness, and by applications of the international evidence which are politically expedient and culturally naive rather than principled and informed.

Regrettably, one post-election event suggests that the 'world class' mindset and its attendant foibles may be with us for some time yet. In January 2011 the UK's recently-elected coalition government launched a review of England's national curriculum, arguing that it needed to focus on a limited core of mainly propositional knowledge in a narrow range of subjects, because this is what accounts for the success of high performing 'jurisdictions' like Finland, Singapore, Hong Kong and Alberta. In arguing that it is legitimate to extrapolate from Alberta (population 2.9 million) to England (population 51 million), the government ignored arguments about demography, culture and the multi-factorial complexity of cause and consequence in international comparisons which are rehearsed above.

Since far from being unique to high performing systems a narrow curriculum dominated by propositional knowledge in traditional subjects is the international curriculum default, it is as likely to correlate with the student performance at the bottom of the international achievement survey league table. That is to say, governments in countries which appear well down the PISA league table are as likely to espouse a curriculum of 'essential knowledge in the key subject disciplines' (DfE, 2011) as those which in McKinsey's words 'come out on top'. In short, there is no correlation.

Precisely the same error was made in 1996, when it was argued that whole class teaching was the key to raising standards because it was used in high performing school systems (Reynolds & Farrell, 1996), for whole class teaching is the international *pedagogical* default and is no less prominent in low performing systems (see Alexander, 2008, pp. 9–42, for a detailed critique). As I noted above in respect of Finland, and as Maurice Galton comments in relation to the 2011 National Curriculum Review, such misplaced attributions of causality also conspicuously ignore other factors which demand proper consideration. For example, and updating Mark Bray's (1999) analysis, Maurice notes that in Hong Kong and Singapore parents of between 45 and 60 per cent of primary school pupils secure their children's educa-

tional advantage within the public schooling system (and conceivably contribute to the performance of those systems as a whole) by paying for regular out-of-school tuition (Galton, 2011).

What is interesting about this recent political development is not just the way it repeats many of the misconceptions chronicled here, but also its failure to recall, let alone learn from, other searches for the ‘ingredient X’ of high standards which governments themselves have commissioned. (The ‘discourse of myth’, I noted earlier, is about the wanton denial or destruction of the past, but it may also stem from genuine though not excusable ignorance). It’s also instructive that the three efforts preferred by successive governments – Conservative, Labour, Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition – have each come up with a different answer to the same question. In 1996 the Ofsted-commissioned *Worlds apart* study Reynolds and Farrell (1996) identified a mix of factors, prominent among which was the pursuit of common goals through whole class teaching. The McKinsey report (Barber & Mourshed, 2007) singled out teachers, teaching and pedagogical leadership, but then announced that it had nothing to say about pedagogy and thus denied itself – somewhat perversely, one might suggest – the option of probing the very factors it had highlighted. The paper by Tim Oates (2010), which was endorsed and introduced by Michael Gove (Secretary of State for Education in the UK government elected in 2010), draws on McKinsey but does not mention the Reynolds and Farrell study, and it concentrates on curriculum structure, focus and content. This was translated into the government’s instruction to its National Curriculum Review ‘expert group’ (which Oates was then asked to lead) that it should reduce the statutory National Curriculum requirement to that ‘core of essential knowledge in the key subject disciplines’ to which I refer above (DfE, 2011). On the other hand, neither Reynolds and Farrell nor McKinsey say much about curriculum.

Yet each of these very different conclusions stems from the same objective: to identify the core factors in the success of those educational systems which outperform England in international student achievement surveys. Unsurprisingly, what is also notable about all three studies is their failure to engage more than fleetingly with the literature on the methodology, possibilities and pitfalls of international educational comparison, let alone comparative studies which have explored education, pedagogy and culture from the inside and through ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1975) rather than factorial shorthand. Indeed, Reynolds explicitly dismisses mainstream comparative education research on the grounds that it fails to yield the certainties of his own school effectiveness paradigm (Reynolds & Farrell, 1996; Reynolds, Creemers, Stringfield, Teddlie, & Schaffer, 2002). Studies such as these speak to the political imperative of decisiveness born of conviction and untroubled by inconvenient data. Doubt is for dons – and the real world.

The story is instructive in its outcomes too. The 1996 Reynolds and Farrell study led the government of 1997–2001 to claim that switching to whole class teaching would raise standards, and this indeed is what was attempted in the national literacy and numeracy strategies which were central to the standards drive discussed in the first part of this paper. The 2007 McKinsey report, though approvingly cited by politicians across the board, generated sentiment rather than action since it merely stated the obvious. Tim Oates’ 2010 paper was enlisted to support the 2010–2015 government’s insistence, inspired also by the ideas of E.D. Hirsch (1987), that the curriculum should be reduced to its propositional essentials and by

this means, in turn, standards would be raised. Governments are still a long way from using international evidence with the necessary methodological discrimination and cultural insight; and they continue to cling to a one-dimensional vision of 'world class' schooling.

Notes

This paper draws on the author's presentations at the British Association for International and Comparative Education (Presidential Address, September 2009), the University of Melbourne (Miegunyah Lecture, March 2010), and the Brian Simon Memorial Lecture (November 2010) – preserving some of the tone of these oral events – as well as on evidence collected by the Cambridge Primary Review, an independent enquiry into the condition and future of English primary education funded from 2006–2010 by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. The Review's final report, published in October 2009 with a 2010 imprint, was edited by Robin Alexander, with contributing authors Robin Alexander, Michael Armstrong, Julia Flutter, Linda Hargreaves, David Harrison, Wynne Harlen, Elizabeth Hartley-Brewer, Ruth Kershner, John Macbeath, Berry Mayall, Stephanie Northen, Gillian Pugh, Colin Richards and David Utting. From October 2009 the Review entered a three-year phase of dissemination and professional network-building, with continuing support from Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, taking advantage of the professional freedoms offered by the coalition government elected in May 2010; www.primaryreview.org.uk.

1. Sample media headlines from 2 November 2007, in order of quotation: (i) *The Independent* and *Sky News*, (ii) *The Daily Telegraph*, (iii) *The Guardian*, *The Daily Mail* and *ITN*, (iv) *The Times*, (v) *Daily Mirror*.
2. From 2, 8 and 29 February 2008: (i), (ii) and (iii) *The Independent*, (iv) *Daily Express* and *BBC News*, (v) *The Times* and *BBC News*, (vi) and (vii) *The Independent*, (viii) *The Daily Telegraph*, (ix) *BBC News*.

Note on contributor

Robin Alexander is Fellow of Wolfson College, Cambridge University, Professor of Education Emeritus at Warwick University and Director of the Cambridge Primary Review (2006–2012), which in terms of both scope and evidence is the most comprehensive enquiry into English primary education since the 1960s. Editor and lead author of *Children, their World, their Education: final report and recommendations of the Cambridge Primary Review* (2010) and lead editor of its companion volume *The Cambridge Primary Review Research Surveys* (2010), Alexander currently oversees the review's programme of dissemination and professional networking based on 12 regional centres. His publications on dialogic teaching are widely used in schools throughout the UK and beyond, and his other recent books include *Essays on Pedagogy* (2008) and *Culture and Pedagogy: international comparisons in primary education* (2001), which won both the AERA Outstanding Book Award and the Society for Educational Studies Book Prize.

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