

Impact case study (REF3b)

<p>Institution: University of Cambridge</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: UoA25</p>
<p>Title of case study: The Cambridge Primary Review: Generating Informed Public Debate over a Future for Primary Education</p>
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words) The Cambridge Primary Review (CPR) produced the most comprehensive and authoritative review of English primary education since the 1960s. Combining educational research with a commission of enquiry, this major initiative produced a series of reviews and reports which received extensive coverage in the UK media, generating sustained, informed public debate about primary education with considerable impact on the thinking and activities of practitioners and policy-makers. Subsequently a national network of regional CPR centres has become a standard source for serving and trainee teachers and CPR's website has been accessed in 75% of the world's countries.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Research Team Cambridge-based core team members: Professor Robin Alexander (employed as a Director of Research in the Cambridge Faculty from 10/2001 until 05/2013) led the Cambridge Primary Review series of projects, launched in 10/2006, which received funding of almost £800k from the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation. Leading members of the core team were Christine Doddington, Ruth Kershner (both University Senior Lecturers, employed in the Faculty since 2001), Linda Hargreaves (Reader, employed in the Faculty since 2001), first David Harrison then Julia Flutter (Research Associates in the Faculty from 10/2006 to 10/2010). Other Cambridge contributors included Peter Cunningham, Usha Goswami, John Gray, Christine Howe, Mary James, John MacBeath, Neil Mercer, Dominic Wyse. Other key non-Cambridge contributors included Michael Armstrong (retired headteacher), Wynne Harlen (Bristol), Elizabeth Hartley-Brewer (consultant), Berry Mayall (Institute of Education), Stephanie Northen (journalist), Gillian Pugh (Chair of the Enquiry), Colin Richards (Cumbria) and David Utting (consultant).</p> <p>The need and context: The 1967 Plowden Report relaid the foundations and rationale for the conduct of primary education in England. Compared to Plowden, subsequent reviews of the primary curriculum, in particular those on teaching in literacy and numeracy, had been both partial and piecemeal. By 2006, there was recognition of an increasing divide between the concerns of the teaching profession and those who managed them. The absence of any wide-ranging and holistic review of English primary education to provide a vision and guide policy and practice prompted the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation to fund the Cambridge Primary Review. In contrast to the Plowden Report, the distinctive strength of the CPR was that it was conducted entirely independently from government</p> <p>Methods and Approach: The CPR undertook a three-year enquiry into the condition and future of English primary education, combining the rigour and procedures of educational research with the aspirations and public face of a commission of enquiry. Between 2007-2009 results of the CPR culminated in the publishing of 31 interim reports and 40 briefings (see 3.1). It concluded with the publication and dissemination of a final 600-page report <i>Children, Their World, Their Education</i> (see 3.2). The report brought together four strands of research in order to triangulate potentially contrasting evidential sources, viewpoints and data-sets (as explained in Appendices 1 to 7 to the final report). The evidence base consisted of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) 28 research surveys (6 of which specifically involved members of the Cambridge Faculty), produced by 66 academics from 20 institutions. These surveys reviewed some 4,000 published sources and were carefully peer reviewed before publication in a companion 850-page volume (see 3.3). (2) 1052 invited written submissions were received from a wide range of organisations and individuals, often with extensive supporting literature. These were subjected to detailed content analysis by the Cambridge core team. (3) 87 national, regional and local focus groups or 'soundings' attended by 757 witnesses, orchestrated and analysed by the Cambridge core team.

(4) Searches and re-assessments of official statistical and demographic data, both national and international, undertaken by the Cambridge core team.

Sixteen of the 24 chapters in the final report were authored or co-authored by members of the Cambridge Faculty.

Key Findings/Conclusions: The review addressed 10 themes, 22 sub-themes and 100 questions relating to issues of value, process, content, quality, management, structure, governance and policy in English primary education, and to contingent questions about childhood and society. The final report was summarised in 78 formal conclusions and 75 formal recommendations for policy and practice. The 15 recommendations to which CPR gave particular prominence in a 42 page summary of the review, circulated to all UK schools, elected politicians and educational organisations when the report was published, were:

- (1) the need for a new approach to primary education based on CPR's 12 aims and 13 principles;
- (2) the need for new structures to enable the processes of primary education including: strengthened early years provision; extension of the foundation stage to age six and a later starting age for *formal* schooling at age 6 in line with international research and practice;
- (3) narrowing the gap between vulnerable children and the majority whilst reducing the "long tail of underachievement";
- (4) a full review of special educational needs;
- (5) redefining standards to include all aspects of learning, not just the 3R's;
- (6) ensuring breadth, balance and quality in the revision of the national curriculum;
- (7) reforming assessment procedures with formal assessment only at end of primary stage;
- (8) ending the 'state theory of learning' embodied particularly in the National Strategies;
- (9) full review of primary school staffing;
- (10) reform of initial teacher training;
- (11) replacing the professional standards as currently specified;
- (12) extending school and professional partnerships;
- (13) protecting rural schools, middle schools and school libraries;
- (14) reversing the tide of decentralisation;
- (15) ending the primary/secondary funding differential.

Perhaps most importantly, the CPR called for a 'new discourse' which would facilitate a more mature and informed way of talking about primary education and policy development based firmly on high-quality research.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

3.1 The 40 widely-disseminated research briefings published during Phase 2 may be downloaded from the CPR website <http://www.primaryreview.org.uk/publications/overview.php>.

3.2 Alexander, R.J. (ed) (2010) *Children, their World, their Education: final report and recommendations of the Cambridge Primary Review*, 600 pp, Routledge, ISBN (pb) 978-0-415-54871-7. Six of the book's 14 contributing authors, including the lead author/editor, were from the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education. The book won First Prize in the 2011 Society of Educational Studies Book Awards; this prize is awarded for 'the quality of research and scholarship, the originality of analysis and argument, theory/practice relations; and the quality and accessibility of the writing'.

3.3 Alexander, R.J. with Doddington, C., Gray, J., Hargreaves, L. and Kershner, R. (eds) (2010) *The Cambridge Primary Review Research Surveys*, Routledge, 850pp, ISBN (hb) 978-0-415-54869-4. The book's 5 editors, and 7 of its other contributors, were from the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education. All these surveys were carefully peer reviewed before publication.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The CPR incorporated a comprehensive communications strategy to place its work in the public eye, maximise discussion and debate about its reports, and secure policy and professional leverage for its proposals. Without the contribution of CPR, the debate on reform of primary education in England would have been much more narrowly configured and less well informed. What follows are some key indicators of the CPR's impact on the constituencies of policy, schools and the general public, in both the UK and internationally.

Public Debate in the Media: Public debate about the condition of English primary education was a key objective of the CPR. It secured major interest from the media as a result:

1. On the day the final report was published (16 October 2009) CPR was the top news story in

the UK. National television coverage included BBC, ITN, Channels 4 and 5 as well as Sky News (18 in total including all related outlets). National radio included items on Radio 4's flagship *Today* programme as well as Radio 5 (11 in total). National press: including *Guardian*, *Independent*, *Daily Telegraph* and *Times* (over 30). International press: including outlets in Australia, Canada, China, Germany, Malaysia, Spain and New Zealand (total over 30). (see 5.1).

2. Independent media analysis shows that on five of the ten previous occasions between 2007-09 when the CPR released its reports it was the top UK news story overall for those days with 3 of these top ratings occurring since January 2008. (See 5.2).
3. CPR's findings were widely reported in the national press. In the interests of balance we have drawn on media reports from across the political spectrum. The proposals for a later starting age for the formal processes of schooling at 6 (preceded by education based largely around more informal activities), the reform of national testing and the provision of greater freedom to teachers to determine how they teach were a common denominator in most coverage. *The Guardian* had detailed discussion of Findings 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8 and 15 (as numbered earlier in Section 2). *The Independent* gave particular emphasis to Findings 2, 3, 5, 7, 8 and 10. *The Daily Telegraph* majored on Findings 2, 3, 5, 8, 12 and 14. Meanwhile *BBC News* gave considerable attention to Findings 1, 2, 3, 7 and 9. In an editorial the *TES* said: 'Politicians may dismiss the Cambridge review, but it is a must-read for teachers' (see 5.1)
4. After publication there was considerable follow-up on social networking sites and in specialist media. Examples include Mike Baker, the highly influential BBC Education Correspondent, who wrote that the report ought to carry the testimonial 'this book should change English primary schools forever. This is the most thorough, research-based analysis of primary schools I have seen in over two decades of reporting on education'. Mick Brookes (General Secretary of the NAHT) wrote about 'why the Cambridge Review is required reading for all schools' (see 5.1). Meanwhile Matthew Taylor (Chief Executive of the RSA) described it as the 'most comprehensive and far-ranging review since Plowden' (see 5.3),

It should be noted that the report was received with scepticism in many quarters and some of the coverage was overtly hostile (see 5.1). There was also a good deal of misreporting of CPR's recommendations (see 5.1 and below).

Influencing Practitioners' Attitudes and Behaviours: Network and Commercial Partnerships

The construction of a national CPR Network has secured CPR's long-term influence:

5. CPR obtained further funding from Esmee Fairbairn to build a national network of teachers keen to take forward its proposals. By 2012 this comprised a 5000-strong database with regional centres located at twelve universities, each with a programme of events and action school-based research and/or development projects, focusing particularly on aims, curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. Many schools have now reformed important aspects of their work in line with CPR principles (see 5.4 and 5.5)
6. Between the publication of its final report in October 2009 and the start of its partnership with Pearson in 2013, the CPR organised or contributed to over 400 conferences, seminars and meetings convened for the purposes of professional dissemination and/or policy engagement (see 5.6).
7. In mid-2013, Pearson, the world's biggest educational publisher, decided to enter into partnership with the CPR Trust for a three-year period in order to produce joint materials and professional development for schools (see 5.7).

International Influences: International interest in CPR has been high:

8. CPR's website has been accessed from 147 countries, with many of which there has also been direct correspondence, followed by invitations to speak in 11 including Australia, Chile, Germany, India, Israel, Netherlands, Norway, Singapore and the United States see 5.8).

Influencing Policy: CPR has had an impact on policy in the following ways:

9. In its early days CPR secured major publicity for its ideas and proposals. As a result the government launched its own review of primary education with a more restricted remit which resulted in The Rose Review (see 5.9).
10. Just before the 2010 general election CPR published a list of 11 policy priorities which it

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sent to political leaders and publicised in the press. Since the election there has been significant movement on several of these. For example, CPR made major contributions to the government's public reviews of the Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 2 assessment, inspection, professional standards and the curriculum. CPR principals held discussions of its implications with DfE officials and with ministers at 22 meetings between June 2010 and September 2012 (see 5.10).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

5.1 A Media Archive containing all the CPR press releases as well as details of coverage in diverse media outlets can be accessed through links on the menu at http://www.primaryreview.org.uk/media/media_contacts.php. See especially the period between October 2007 and April 2010.

5.2 The Managing Director, Margrave Communications Ltd. [Nominated referee 1] will confirm that the days when CPR was top UK news story overall were on and immediately after 12.10.07, 2.11.07, 29.2.08, 20.2.09 and 16.10.09.

5.3 For the RSA chief executive's assessment of the CPR's launch and its media, political and public reception, see <http://www.matthewtaylorblog.com/thersa/the-two-worlds-of-education-discourse/>

5.4 For details of the CPR network and its regional centres (and contacts for each) see http://www.primaryreview.org.uk/network/about_the_network.php.

5.5 For examples of schools organised in accordance with CPR evidence and principles, contact Headteacher, The Wroxham Primary School, Potters Bar. [Nominated referee 2].

5.6 A full list of these events can be provided on request. For his leadership of the CPR, its director was given the 2011 Fred and Anne Jarvis award for educational campaigning by the National Union of Teachers (NUT), Europe's largest teaching union. In the same year he received a similar prize, for services to education, from the Association for Managers in Education (AMiE). For details of these awards see <http://www.teachers.org.uk/node/13017> and <http://amie.atl.org.uk/Images/elm-2010.09.pdf>

5.7 Commercial arrangements can be confirmed with Managing Director Primary, Pearson [Nominated referee 3].

5.8 CPR website access may be confirmed by Google Analytics: The URL is password-protected but access can be arranged on request through the Faculty:
<https://www.google.com/analytics/web/?pli=1#report/visitors-geo/a19186572w38420192p38021949/%3F.date00%3D20110804%26.date01%3D20120801/>

5.9 See *Independent Review of the Primary Curriculum: Final Report*, London: DfES, point 3, page 8 which comments that 'A helpful response to the interim report was provided by the Cambridge Primary review, led by Professor Robin Alexander'. The only other report referenced at this point was one produced by the Select Committee for Education.

5.10 Contact Director, Education Strategy, Performance and Analysis, Department for Education [Nominated referee 4]