Published on *Adam Smith Institute* (http://www.adamsmith.org)

Balls vs. Johnson vs. Parents [1]

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Boris Johnson says that he?d like to give "one almighty head-butt [3]" to Ed Balls over the Minister's refusal to give more support to Latin classes in state schools. At its core, this spat is a case of two politicians fighting over what other people's children should be taught, and it demonstrates the folly of having a state-designed national curriculum.

Boris might have a point about Latin ? it is central to European history and the basis of some of the world's great languages. It?s possible that Ed Balls might be right that his children would benefit more from spending their time dancing and learning about technology. But who is either of them to impose his beliefs onto how other people's children are taught?

We cannot know for sure whether Boris or Balls is correct. By imposing a one-size-fits-all plan in the shape of the national curriculum, the decision affects children across the country, often against their parent?s wishes. The only fair solution is to give parents a choice and giving schools the freedom to decide their own curriculums. This would encourage experimentation and take some power over other people?s children away from the government.

If Boris is right and children learning Latin do well, other parents would demand Latin classes for their children and the practice would spread. If Ed Balls is right and learning Latin is harmful, the practice would decline with much less damage having been done than if every student in the country had been forced to learn it. People like Boris Johnson would be free to choose Latin classes for their children, and people like Ed Balls would be free to choose dance and technology classes.

Both Johnson and Balls are wrong to think that they know how to educate other people's children. The debate around the national curriculum should centre one question: Who knows best for children ? their parents, or Ed Balls and Boris Johnson?

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