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Storm over school tests

Anushka Asthana, education correspondent
The Observer, Saturday 15 March 2008

The head of the powerful regulatory body for teachers has launched a fierce attack on the 'over-cluttered' national curriculum and high-stakes testing regime, arguing that children are simply being drilled to pass exams.

Keith Bartley, chief executive of the General Teaching Council, said teachers were being forced to follow a 'prescriptive' syllabus that was failing to equip pupils with the skills they needed for adulthood. The relentless pressure to pass exams meant pupils crammed in knowledge and then quickly forgot what they had been taught, he added.

The strongest example, argued Bartley, was in key stage two, when

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children are aged between seven and 11. 'The research indicates that everything in year six drives towards the test, but in year seven they have forgotten what they learnt because the only purpose of learning was to pass the test,' said Bartley.

He will put forward his case tomorrow at the Childhood, Wellbeing and Primary education conference, which will be hosted by the GTC in London. The event will focus on the findings of two studies, the Primary Review and the Good Childhood inquiry.

Yesterday, Bartley received support from headteachers. John Dunford, general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said: 'We have assessment for accountability instead of assessment for learning and this high stakes regime dulls creativity.'

A spokesman for the Department for Children, Schools and Families said: 'The government does not accept that children are over-tested or that these huge improvements in standards are the result of teaching to the test.'

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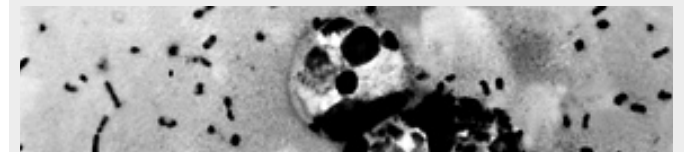
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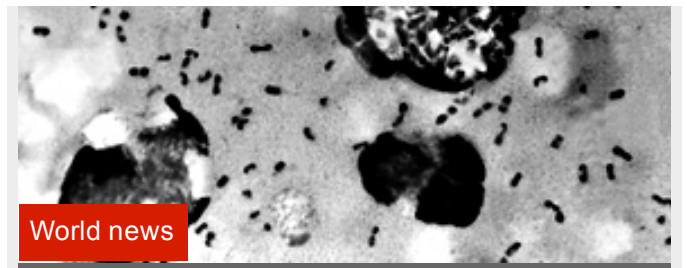


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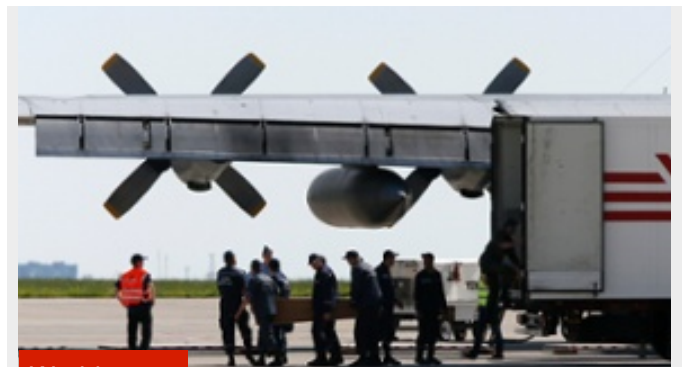
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