



Primary school children

Primary schools exert unnecessary pressure on students: report

3 days ago

LONDON (AFP) — Primary schoolchildren in England fail to produce better academic results than their Western counterparts even though they start school at an earlier age and are subjected to more tests, a leading educational study said Friday.

The three reports from the Cambridge-based Primary Review also said that educational alternatives, including Steiner-Waldorf schools and home schooling, produce better academic results.

The Primary Review said there was an emphasis on testing and league tables in England.

By comparing England's curriculum and assessment policy with those in 22 other countries, including France, Norway, New Zealand and Japan, the authors found a "unique" system dominated by tests and league tables.

Kathy Hall -- from National University of Ireland in Cork -- and Kamil Ozerk -- from the University of Oslo -- said "No other country appears to be so preoccupied with national standards -- a preoccupation which is manifested not only in the aims and curriculum rationale but also in the structure of the curriculum and in the nature of the assessment system," the review said.

"It seems that England leads the emphasis on published league tables where individual schools are listed in relation to the aggregated attainments of their pupils, thus holding schools to account in a very public way," it added.

A second Primary Review report, from Anna Riggall and Caroline Sharp -- at the National Centre for Educational Research -- said some children found school too stressful.

"There has been a continuing concern about the quality and appropriateness of provision for four-year-olds in reception classes," they said.

Teachers said the reports exposed the limitations of the current testing regime.

"Uniquely, England is a country where testing is used to police schools and control what is taught," said Steve Sinnott, the general secretary of the National Union of Teachers

A Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) spokesman said: "We make no apology for our focus on school standards.

"We want every child to achieve to the best of their abilities, succeed and be happy, and we know that parents and teachers want that too," he added.

The Primary Review is an independent inquiry which is looking at 10 major themes before publishing final recommendations in October 2008.

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