

Idiom by Lon Yan

死灰復燃

si3 hui1 fu4 ran2

Education chief Eddie Ng Hak-kim has officially pronounced the Territory-wide System Assessment for Primary Three students dead. But parents and teachers who see the examination as a pointless torture for over-loaded students are not rejoicing, because a new examination is on the way.

The government calls it Basic Competency Assessment Research Study, or BCA in short. You may, of course, call it BCARS, or simply BS. Both alternative acronyms are just as valid.

Ng insisted that “BCA 2017” is an “extended research study,” not a resumption of TSA. He assured schools that the data collected won’t be used to judge them, and told parents that their children won’t be subject to extra drilling.

But those who oppose the old test can’t help feeling being played, for they see BS as

just the reincarnation of the TSA, the same examination under a different name. In other word, they said, BS is the TSA “死灰復燃” (*si3 hui1 fu4 ran2*).

“死” (*si3*) is “dead,” “to die,” “death,” “灰” (*hui1*) “ash,” “dust,” “復” (*fu4*) “to repeat,” “to come back,” “to return to the normal or original state,” and “燃” (*ran2*) “to burn,” “to ignite.” Literally, “死灰復燃” (*si3 hui1 fu4 ran2*) is “dead ashes burn again,” “cold ashes burn once more.”

The idiom means “to rise again from the ashes,” “to resurge,” “a waning influence rises up again” “It also means “the buried past comes alive again,” “defeated rebels stage a comeback.”

Even cold ashes do sometimes flare up again, so you must pour a lot of water on the fire if you really want to extinguish it.

Terms containing the character “復” (*fu4*) include:

復古 (*fu4 gu3*) – to return to old ways

復原 (*fu4 yuan2*) – to restore; to rehabilitate; to recuperate

復發 (*fu4 fa1*) – to have a relapse (of a disease)

復活 (*fu4 huo2*) – resurrection