J116: INDIVIDUAL PAPERS: NAPLAN - What is the perception of NAPLAN testing by students in low SES schools?

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Purpose

This paper reported the findings of an interview study on disadvantaged students' perceptions of the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). The design of NAPLAN is to identify whether all students have the literacy and numeracy skills that provide the critical foundation for their learning. The purpose of the paper investigated the student's perceptions of NAPLAN and how it reflected the classroom implementation of the test, and discusses how the implementation does not reflect the NAPLAN's intention.

Method

Participants included 55 Year 5 students selected from five low SES schools in Queensland, where average performance on NAPLAN tests was substantially and persistently below the national average. The sample contained 28 male and 27 female students. To understand their perceptions about NAPLAN tests, these students were interviewed. The main interview questions include:

- What do you know about the NAPLAN test?
- What did the teacher do to prepare you for the NAPLAN test?
- What did the teacher say about the NAPLAN test?
- Do you care about your results in the NAPLAN test? Why?
- Do you know about your NAPLAN result?
- Did your teacher or parents talk to you about your NAPLAN results? What did they say?

Results

When asked about their knowledge of NAPLAN a 7% of students (N=4) could identify the test correctly in either content or format. The majority of students, 49% (N= 27) did not remember doing the test or recall anything about the test without prompting. When questioned about preparation for the test 41% (N= 23) remembered doing some sort of practice questions. The question regarding what the teacher said about NAPLAN 45% (N= 25) stated they received encouragement such as ‘do your best’ or ‘be prepared, sharpen your pencils’. When student's were asked if they cared about their results for the test, 53% (N=27) of students said yes. Yet when asked if they knew their result, (84% N= 46) had not seen or been told their results. Only 4% (N=4) were specifically spoken to by a teacher or parents about their result. All four of these students recalled general comments such as 'well done' and not specifically about the category results.

Conclusion

The results showed that the use of NAPLAN tests among these disadvantaged students deviated from its design intention.
The findings will be discussed in terms of the need for improved implementation of NAPLAN at the classroom level.

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