

Teaching is Assessing

A study of teachers' attitudes towards the national tests and academic ability



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Abstract

With an increasing focus on the national tests in Sweden, investigating how the tests affect teachers is highly relevant. The aim of this study is to provide further insight as to what role the national tests in English 5 and 6 play on teacher mindset, in order to allow for an informed evaluation of the role they play in assessment. This was achieved by a mixed methods approach, using both a questionnaire and interviews as data collection methods. Results showed that teachers in general believe that the national tests are a good and fair assessment of English ability, with some exceptions for students affected by stress or other external factors. Furthermore, a few indications that some teachers seem to hold a partly fixed mindset about their students' abilities could be found.

Keywords: High-stakes tests, growth mindset, fixed mindset, Swedish National Tests.

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1. Introduction

With the aspiration to make education equal for all students, educational systems in Sweden and all over the world have had an increasing focus on standardised high-stakes tests (HST) in the last decades (Day, 2002; ShayesteFar, 2020). Tests are categorised as high-stakes if the results have serious consequences for students or educators (Cholis & Rizqi, 2018). Standardised tests with high stakes can have an equalising effect since the tests are the same for every student who takes them, and thus the consequences are too. This phenomenon can be found in the Sweden with the standardised *national tests* that students take at the end of elementary and secondary school as well as some courses in upper-secondary school. In the last years, the stakes for the national tests in upper-secondary school have become even higher. Most recently, in 2017, the Swedish government passed a bill which states that the national tests should carry even more weight when it comes to a student's final grade than they had done before (Swedish Government, 2017), raising the stakes of the national tests further. Now, the guidelines from the Swedish National Agency for Education make it clear that the results from the national tests are the most essential piece of information a teacher should refer to when grading their students (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2022a, p. 41). Furthermore, in a report about how to make grades more equal on a national level, the Swedish National Agency for Education concluded, among other things, that the more weight the national tests carry, the more equal the final grades will be (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2020). It therefore seems that the Swedish educational system is moving in the direction of continued increase in focus on high-stakes centralised national tests.

Although the national tests might be one way to provide an equal assessment tool, HST come with many unfortunate side effects, not only for students but also for teachers. For example, for teachers working in a system with HST, such effects include lower motivation and lower job satisfaction (Jones, 2007). Furthermore, effects include raised stress levels for

teachers (Gonzalez et al., 2017; Learned et al., 2020), as well as students (Heissel et al., 2021). Additionally, one of the most detrimental side effects of standardised HST, such as the Swedish national tests, is the negative influences on the students' academic motivation (Jones, 2007) and achievement (Nichols, 2007). Specifically, a school system with heavy focus on grades, where HST determine a big part of the grade, seems to lead students to focus less on actual learning, and more on the grades themselves (Löfgren et al., 2019; Jones, 2007). For example, this could mean that students focus on making their teacher think that they understand, instead of actually understanding. Naturally, this should lead us to consider what is more important in education: equal assessment or that teachers stay motivated to provide good education and that students want to learn?

One aspect to keep in mind when discussing the effects of HST on academic motivation is the concept of growth and fixed mindset. Although academic motivation depends on a multitude of factors, a growing body of research suggests that having a growth mindset is an integral part of it (Yeager & Dweck, 2020; Dweck, 2019; Dweck, 2007). A growth mindset is “the belief that intellectual ability can be developed” (Yeager & Dweck, 2020, p. 1), and thus a fixed mindset is the belief that intellectual ability stays fixed. When teachers have a growth mindset, they focus on making fair assessments that take all individual students into account (DeLuca, 2019), promoting the process of learning (Rissanen et al., 2019), and contributing to their students' development of a growth mindset about their own abilities (Mesler et al., 2021). Although no clear link between HST and fixed mindset has been established yet, some reported effects of HST (Löfgren et al., 2019; Jones, 2007), such as the shift in focus away from the process of learning towards assessing existing knowledge, suggest that there could be a connection between the two. Because of the detrimental effects it can have on learning, it should be essential for educational systems to make sure that they do not use assessment strategies that could promote a fixed mindset.

Due to the big role the national tests play in Swedish education today, awareness of what effects they have on teachers and students is of great importance. Without proper knowledge about the national tests, policy makers risk making decisions based on what seems good intuitively, which does not necessarily reflect reality. Much uncertainty still exists about the relationship between the national tests and teachers' mindset. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to provide further insight as to what role the national tests in English 5 and 6 play in teacher mindset, in order to allow for an informed evaluation of the role they play in assessment.

This study will be guided by the following questions:

- What are some teachers' attitudes towards the ability of the national tests in English to measure students' proficiency?
- How do some teachers' attitudes towards their students' abilities relate to their attitudes towards the students' results on the national tests?

2. Background

In this section, a background and some previous research on the topics of HST and mindset is presented separately.

2.1 High-Stakes Tests

As this paper's first research question has to do with the national tests ability to measure students' proficiency, it is relevant to introduce the term 'validity'. According to Hughes (2003) "a test is said to be valid if it measures accurately what it is intended to measure" (p. 26). As the national tests are intended to measure students' proficiency in English, the first research question concerns the experienced validity of the national tests by the asked teachers.

The role of the national tests has been developed as a reaction to the problems that arose from the implementation of a goal-oriented grading system in Sweden, Gustafsson and Erickson (2018) writes. The previous, norm-based grading system did not seem to have that problem but was exchanged for the goal-oriented due to other factors (pp. 3–4). The new system had problems with equal assessment, and as a reaction, the national tests started playing a larger role in grading in hopes of mitigating this inequality (pp. 5–6). As the inequality has continued to exist, the national tests' role in grading has grown (p. 6).

The national tests in upper secondary school are mandatory for all students in the last mandatory course they take in English, Swedish or Swedish as a second language, and mathematics (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2022b). Although it is not mandatory in every course, schools can choose to conduct the national tests in all of the courses the national tests are produced for. This means that some students in college preparatory programs write at least three national tests each year in upper-secondary school.

For every course the school chooses to conduct the English national tests in, it is a time-consuming endeavour. The English tests consist of four parts, each focused on one skill:

writing, reading, listening, and speaking. Writing is tested through one assignment where the students are asked to produce a specific type of text with a certain reader in mind (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2022b). This part takes 80-100 minutes to conduct, depending on the course (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2022b). Reading and listening is tested through a few different type of assignments where the students answer either through multiple choice or by one or a few words (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2022b). The reading and listening parts together take about 160 minutes, excluding any breaks (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2022b). The tests are corrected by the teachers, which is a laborious process despite the guidelines for how this should be done provided by the Swedish National Agency for Education. Furthermore, the speaking part is conducted for two students at a time and takes about 30 minutes for each pair (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2022b). During the test, the pair of students are asked to discuss a given topic (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2022b). For a class of 30 students, the speaking part alone would take 7.5 hours. Some schools will choose to take a whole day to conduct the speaking part, and other schools will let the teacher conduct them during lesson time. Regardless of what option the school chooses, the tests are time consuming.

The reason for conducting these time-consuming tests are that they serve two main purposes: to provide a ground for assessment that is equal for every student in the country, and to generate statistics of how well students are meeting the knowledge requirements in the different parts of the country (Swedish Government, 2017). For these tests to be equalising, they have to be high-stakes, i.e., play a big role in grading, or else, schools could ignore the results if they do not affirm what earlier assessments of particular students have shown.

The stakes of the national tests are high as a result of a few different guidelines. For example, the grade a student is given should reflect the knowledge and abilities they possess at the end of the course (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2022a, p. 37). Since the national

tests are scheduled towards the end of the courses, and most teachers spend several lessons preparing for them, it is normal to end up with them as the only grounds for assessment collected at the end. This, together with the phrasing that the test results should be taken into “particular consideration”¹ (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2022a, p. 9), means that the results of the national tests indeed do play an instrumental role in grading.

One other important role the national tests have in the Swedish school system is to help battle grade inflation. When there is an increase of the grade average without a corresponding increase of knowledge in students, grade inflation is present (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2020). Grade inflation is generally something educational systems want to avoid since it contributes to unfairness between students over time. In Sweden, it has been observed that grade inflation is lower in the subjects that have national tests (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2020), and thus the conclusion that they are the reason has been drawn, although some research has questioned this conclusion (Gustafsson & Erickson, 2018).

Besides the positive effects the national tests are intended to have, there are a few other positive sides to HST. A commonly reported one is that of positive washback. Washback, in the testing context, is teachers’ instruction in preparations for the tests are affected by the tests (Bachman & Palmer, 2010). In this context, Positive washback would be when the preparations have a positive effect on language learning, which has been found in some studies on HST (Cholis & Rizqi, 2018). Another effect of HST that could be considered positive is the motivation it provides some students with. Because of the high stakes, students seem to be motivated to pass them, and thus might apply more effort when studying for them than they would have done otherwise (Jones, 2007). It can be argued, however, that this effect is not entirely positive, since the motivation to pass the tests does not necessarily imply motivation to learn.

¹ särskilt beaktas

Even though HST offer some positive effects, the negative side effects should not be neglected, as they are many and, in some cases, quite severe. Firstly, multiple studies have confirmed that HST induce stress in both students and teachers (Heissel et al. 2021; Gonzalez et al., 2017; Wuthrich et al., 2020). Wuthrich et al. (2020) composed a large review of studies to examine students' well-being towards the end of high school and found that when the tests they labelled as high-stakes approached, stress levels increased. This stress was worse for those students who had a stressful social background, which implies that the inequalities caused by the socioeconomic gaps were increased even further.

Another often talked about phenomenon that occurs in HST environments is that teachers unknowingly, or knowingly, teach to the test, meaning that they conduct teaching with the sole purpose of their students passing the tests. For example, in a qualitative study of Swedish science teachers, Jonsson and Leden (2019) showed that the teachers used the national tests as a substitute for the curriculum. In another study (Learned et al., 2020), teachers expressed the view that their teaching did not contribute to the students' knowledge much more than how to score well on the tests.

Moreover, in HST environments, students tend to focus only on performing well on tests. Jones (2007) reviewed current research to find outcomes of HST and showed that students seem to lose their 'love of learning' and focus more on performing well on the tests in systems with HST. The same has been found by Löfgren et al (2019). This could for example mean that students focus more on making their teachers think they understand, than actually understanding. Interestingly, this kind of focus on looking smart, is typically found in people with a fixed mindset (Dweck, 2019).

2.2 Mindset

Growth- and fixed mindset are terms coined by Carol Dweck, used to describe two opposite views of intelligence. Dweck (2019) describes it as follows:

Individuals who believe their talents can be developed (through hard work, good strategies, and input from others) have a growth mindset. They tend to achieve more than those with a more fixed mindset (those who believe their talents are innate gifts). This is because they worry less about looking smart and they put more energy into learning. (p. 26)

Here, Dweck uses the word *talent* synonymously with the words: *ability* and *skill*. Though it sounds like you have either a fixed mindset or a growth mindset, Dweck (2019) insists that all people have a mix of the two: a fixed mindset about some abilities and in some contexts, and a growth mindset in others.

The concepts of growth and fixed mindset are often talked about in educational contexts, as they are so closely linked to learning. For example, Dweck (2007) explains that students with a growth mindset seem to enjoy working hard, since they believe that hard work can make a difference in their achievements. A logical implication would be that these students who seem to work harder also perform better. This claim is investigated in an extensive review of the current literature on the topic by Yeager and Dweck (2020), who find that mindset indeed does predict outcomes, and that these results are replicable and generalisable. In fact, a growth mindset seems to be as strong a predictor of student achievement as their socioeconomic background (Claro et al., 2016).

When it comes to things that can affect students' mindset negatively, Dweck (2007) provides a few examples. Generally, what gives students a fixed mindset is hearing things that affirm the view that intelligence is static. This means that telling them that they are intelligent, or good at something, could suggest to students that they have an innate ability, and thus they

do not need to work hard for it (Dweck, 2007). Other things that can indicate to students that intelligence is stable is hearing of geniuses who did not need to work for their talent, and when educators seem to value results over effort (Dweck, 2007). Unfortunately, a focus on results over effort is partly built into a school system with HST.

Even if the focus of education is on students and their achievements, teachers' mindsets should not be neglected as they can have serious consequences for their students. Smith et al. (2018) explain that teachers with a fixed mindset are more likely to believe that underperforming students do not have the ability to succeed, and as a result, create a performance focused classroom environment rather than a learning focused one. If teachers believe that some students simply do not have the ability needed to succeed, it logically follows that they might not give these students as much attention and instruction as they would the higher performing students, widening any pre-existing achievement gap. Furthermore, it has been found that teachers with a fixed mindset seem to influence their students to have a more fixed mindset over time (Mesler et al., 2021). Consider for example the relationship between teachers' mindset and their approach to assessment. DeLuca et al. (2019) investigated this relationship and found that teachers with a growth mindset had more of a formative assessment approach, assessment as a part of the learning process, than their counterparts who leaned more towards summative assessments, assessment focused on the results. As mentioned above, a focus on results is one factor that can lead students to develop a fixed mindset. Clearly, students benefit from having teachers with a growth mindset as opposed to a fixed one.

3. Method

A mixed methods approach was chosen for this project, which entails using both qualitative and quantitative methods during data collection as well as the analysis and interpretations of the data (Mackey & Gass, 2016, p. 277). In this section, a thorough description of the process of both collecting the data and analysing it will be provided along with an integrated discussion of the limitations of the chosen methods.

3.1 Data Collection

The decision to gather data through both a questionnaire and interviews was made for the reason that it seemed particularly appropriate for answering the research questions of this study. Because this study aims to investigate attitudes, an approach where many teachers could participate seemed appropriate, hence the questionnaire. However, the second research question is asking for a connection between two quite abstract concepts, and thus allowing for more elaborate answers was deemed beneficial. Thus, interviews were chosen as they could allow interviewees to reflect freely and the interviewer to ask appropriate follow-up questions.

Another benefit to using mixed methods is that this approach can provide higher validity. Using both quantitative and qualitative data gathering methods allows for a better triangulation of findings; results can be corroborated (Mackey & Gass, 2016, pp. 278-279). During the analysis of the questionnaire data, interesting results could be noted and later focused on during the interviews, which allows for a deeper understanding of the results in the questionnaire.

A questionnaire was chosen for the first stage of data collection for a multitude of reasons. The most important reason was that it is a relatively easy way to gather a large amount of relevant data, because it is quite easy to distribute (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010). Furthermore,

the closed items of a questionnaire generate data that can easily be interpreted and analysed (Oppenheim, 1992)

The questionnaire needed to be constructed carefully to avoid any biases in the respondents' answers. If a teacher thinks that the questionnaire is looking for any signs of them having a fixed mindset, it is possible that the teacher provides a response that reflects a growth mindset, even if their answers then do not reflect their actual beliefs, because they might think this is the socially correct answer (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010). In order to battle this bias and to make the questionnaire seem more neutral, and less transparent, items about mindset were mixed with items about general attitudes and common practices around the national tests, and carefully worded to not seem biased in any direction. Some of these items are unrelated to the research questions, and their results are thus not included in the discussion but can be found in Appendix C. Furthermore, the heading of the questionnaire was chosen to be as neutral and free of loaded words as possible, and simply called "Thoughts About National Tests"².

The items in the questionnaire were formatted in different ways in order to make it as compact as possible. Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010) suggest that questionnaires should aim to take no more than 30 minutes to complete. Therefore, the aim was to make the questionnaire short, but still generate as much relevant data as possible. In order to achieve this, a mix between Likert scale items, which are quick to complete, and open-ended items, which are more time consuming but enables respondents to elaborate their answers, was deemed appropriate. Consequently, the questionnaire followed a structure of a few Likert scale items, on a scale of one to six, followed by an open-ended item where they could choose to motivate their answers. The six step Likert scale was chosen to avoid a neutral option. The complete questionnaire can be found in Appendix A.

² Tankar om Nationella Prov

Two methods for distribution were used. Firstly, information about the questionnaire and the link to it was posted in two Facebook groups for teachers called *Nätverk för lärare i engelska* and *Lärarnas Kunskapsbank*, with 6.1k and 15.8k members respectively. Although this is a convenient way to distribute the questionnaire, there is no way to know if the people who see the link are actually teachers. To battle this, the first item of the questionnaire asks if the respondent has taught either of the courses English 5 or 6 in the last five years. If this question was answered with a no, no more items were displayed. Secondly, emails were sent to 60 upper-secondary schools distributed throughout Sweden. These schools were intentionally diverse in terms of size, geographical placement, programs offered, and a mix between private and public. However, despite the diversity of schools the link was sent to, there is no way to know if the people who actually responded represent a diverse group of teacher or not, as all answers were anonymous. In the end, 32 responses to the questionnaire were collected.

Because there is a limit to how much information participants share in questionnaires, semi-structured interviews were conducted to deepen the understanding of the findings in the questionnaire. In semi-structured interviews the interviewer has an idea of the desired outcome, but not a predetermined list of questions that are held to strictly (Nunan, 1992, p. 149). One advantage of the semi-structured interview, as opposed to the unstructured, or structured one, is that it allows the interviewer and interviewee to be flexible (p. 150) which can be useful if unexpected information comes up in the interview that the interviewer did not prepare for. The semi-structured approach allows for spending more time on that topic.

The structure of the interviews was guided by a short list of fixed prompts that provided the main topics of discussion. Each prompt contained a few questions about one topic and were intentionally vague so that the interviewee could choose what aspect of the topic they wanted to talk about. The interviewer then steered the conversation towards the research

questions by asking relevant follow-up questions. Thus, both the interviewee and the interviewer held some power over the conversation.

The prompts were created by analysing the collected responses from the questionnaire to find any items where further clarification was needed. Three such cases were identified. The first one was an item on the Likert scale where responses were quite evenly distributed. In the second case, answers to some items seemed to contradict each other. The third unclarity was identified in the part of the questionnaire about what the reason could be for students performing better or worse than expected on the national tests. There, some of the respondents did not seem to agree with any of the options provided, which could suggest that they have a different explanation. The items where these situations were identified were rephrased into prompts starting with “Please tell me about...”³ and accompanied by some questions on the same topic. The complete interview guide can be found in Appendix B.

One limitation to the interviews could be found in the first interview prompt about the whether or not the national tests can measure students’ actual English ability. Since no clarification about what ‘English’ is referring to was made, it is possible that the interviewed teachers interpreted the question to be about the subject of English, and not the English language, as intended. Although the two definitions of English do overlap in some sense, they are not the same, and proficiency in one does not equal proficiency in the other.

The interviews were piloted twice, and a few changes were made as a result. Firstly, it was evident that a few ‘warm-up question’ were needed to make the interviewees feel comfortable. As a result of this, three short questions about their careers as teachers were added. Secondly, the pilot-interviewees struggled to answer some of the questions because they were a bit too broad. To avoid this, those questions were changed to be a bit more specific. Lastly, on the suggestion of one of the pilot interviewees, a short description of what kind of answers

³ Berätta gärna om...

were wanted was added. This made it clearer for the interviewee that their thoughts and opinions were in focus, and not what they do to keep in line with the steering documents. Despite these changes, some of the same problems were still present during the interviews.

The Interviewees were a convenience sample, as they volunteered through the questionnaire. They did this through one of the last items which allowed the respondents to volunteer to be interviewed. In total, 5 teachers were interviewed. Because the interviewees volunteered, there is a possible bias in their opinions of the national tests, since it is possible that teachers with strong opinions are more likely to volunteer.

Even though little personal information about the interviewees were collected, the information that was collected suggest some variation in experience. Interviewee A had been working for about two and a half years as a teacher, B for 14 years, C for eight years in Sweden but had some experience teaching abroad, D for 32 years, and E for almost two years. This provided a broad range of experience.

3.2 Data Analysis

The analysis process involved two different approaches. For the closed items of the questionnaire, conclusions and interpretations were made by compiling them into diverging stacked bar charts using Microsoft Excel (version 16.43). For the open-ended items and the interviews, content analysis was used.

The content analysis followed an inductive qualitative structure. Generally, content analysis is an approach where data is coded and categorised in order to find patterns, and a qualitative and inductive approach to it finds the patterns and categories in the text by carefully examining the data (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). This approach seemed particularly appropriate for the current study's set of data since the focus of this study is to find patterns in opinions and attitudes which are not known beforehand.

The content analysis was carried out in three steps. Firstly, the interview data was prepared by transcribing the interviews. The transcription can be found in Appendix D. Secondly, themes and categories were identified and used to colour code the transcribed interviews. The themes and categories were firstly based on the research questions, and then inductively developed based on the different types of answers given. Because the coding of the transcriptions was carried out by a single person, checking the coding for consistency was an essential step (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009), and was done systematically throughout the coding process. Lastly, conclusions from the findings were drawn (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009), and are presented in the results and discussion part of this paper.

4. Results and Discussion

In this section, the results corresponding to each research question will be presented and discussed separately. Firstly, however, a short overview of general attitudes toward the national tests will be provided. Then, each aspect of the findings will be discussed individually, along with more detailed results from both the questionnaire and the interviews.

4.1 General Attitudes Towards the National Tests

The first, open-ended item in the questionnaire asked for the respondents' general attitude towards the national tests in English. Even though this is not necessarily relevant to the research questions, the responses should be kept in mind as it is possible that the general attitudes towards the tests influence the attitudes towards specific aspects of them. Out of the 30 answers, 19 only mention positive aspects and attitudes towards them, and nine mention both positive and negative aspects. Two respondents only mentioned negative aspects.

Because the question did not specify what type of answer was wanted, the format of the responses varied. Some responses were quite short, such as the three respondents who only wrote "positive"⁴, and others provided a longer and more elaborate answer, mentioning specific aspects they liked or disliked about the tests. Each aspect mentioned along with the number of respondents who mentioned this aspect is provided in Table 1. Although general attitudes were not asked for during the interviews, most interviewees did share their general opinion at some point. Interviewee C explicitly states that she likes the tests, and provides a list of reasons, such as the fact that they promote equal assessment and provide a safety for both teachers and students in that the grade is 'right'. Interviewee D shares that she really likes the

⁴ Positiv

Table 1. Aspects of attitudes towards the national tests mentioned

Aspect mentioned	<i>n</i>
They promote “equal assessment” ⁵ .	7
They provide good grounds for assessment.	6
They are well constructed.	5
They are a good reference for what different grade levels mean.	4
The burden of grading the tests is heavy.	3
They do not take everything into account.	2
They are unnecessarily stressful for the students.	1
They are constructed so that non-native Swedish speakers are disadvantaged.	1

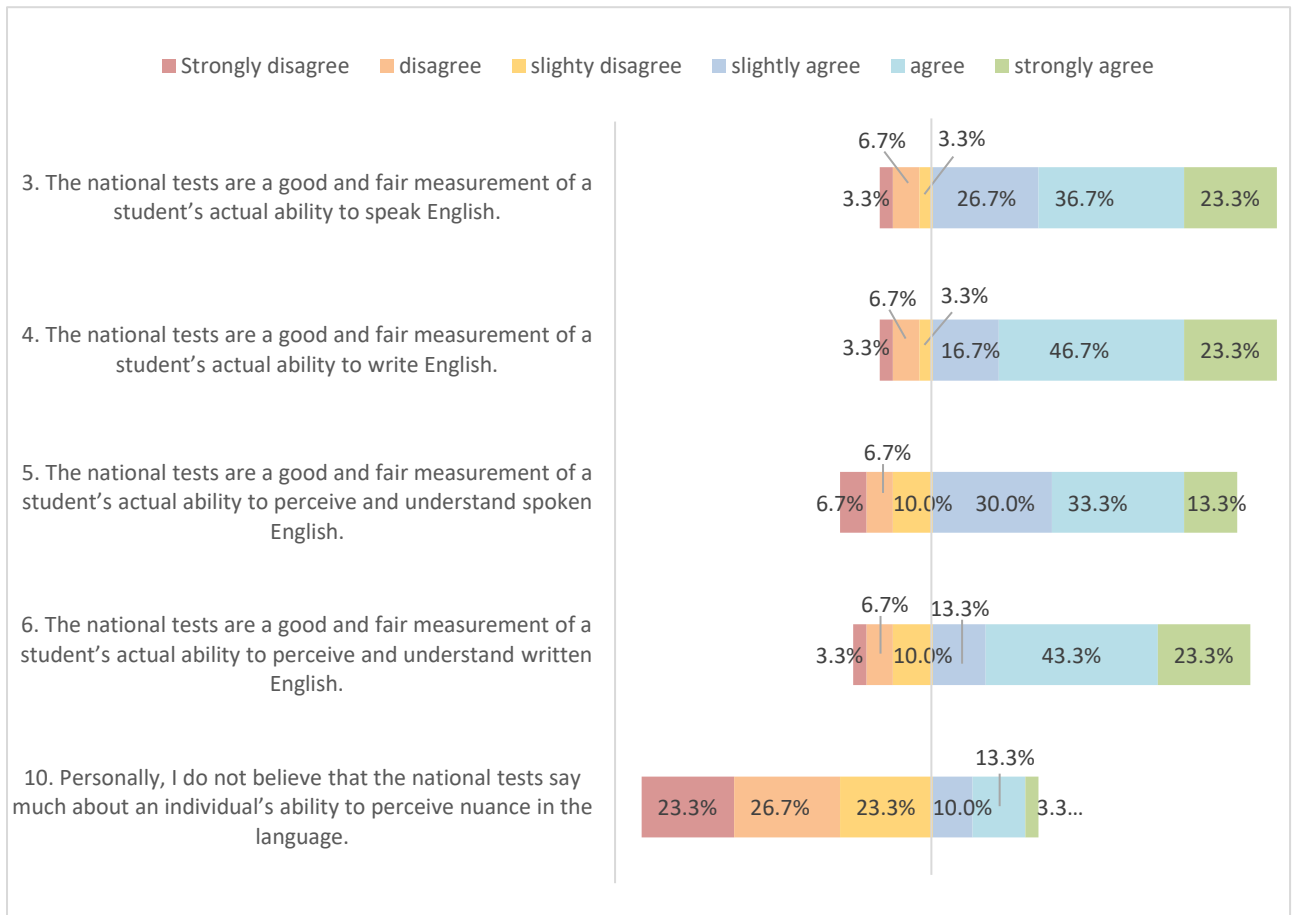
tests, and at one point she even mentions that she would like national tests for English 7 as well as 5 and 6. Interviewee E is the only one who makes it clear from the beginning that she finds them problematic, the main reason for this being that they are a summative form of assessment when the Swedish school system is supposed to be formative. Although both interviewee A and B seem to be positive towards the tests, they do not explicitly say this.

4.2 The First Research Question

Five items in the questionnaire were constructed in correlation to the first research question ‘What are some teachers' attitudes towards the ability of the national tests in English to measure students' proficiency?’. These were placed in the first section of the questionnaire and are on the Likert scale. Figure 1 shows the results from these five items in the form of a diverted stacked bar chart. The middle of the scale is aligned so that it is easy to compare the negative and positive halves of the scale.

⁵ Likvärdig bedömning

Figure 1. The experienced validity of the national tests



From the diagram it is clear that the respondents generally think that the tests valid. The attitudes are the most positive towards the writing and speaking part, and although still positive, they are clearly less positive towards the listening and reading parts. Some of the 14 answers to the corresponding open-ended question can provide some nuance to these items.

The most commonly mentioned aspect in the responses is that some students are stressed and/or nervous before and during the tests, which can hinder their performance ($n=7$). This stress aspect seems to be something most teachers are aware of, as it is mentioned by multiple respondents in several parts of the questionnaire and was also talked about in all of the interviews. One respondent said that “the tests generally put a lot of pressure on the students

leading to them perhaps performing worse”⁶, and another said that “They think that the national tests are life and death”⁷.

Five respondents made it clear that one test cannot take every aspect into account. One teacher explained this by responding that “...[The national tests] provide good grounds for assessment, but it is also ONE test, that some students can have difficulty with because of something that has nothing to do with their actual ability...”⁸. Another responded that “It is impossible to test all abilities in a complete and nuanced way”⁹, which another respondent seems to agree with. Similarly, interviewee E talked about this aspect in relation to receptive skills:

What is it to know English or what is it [...] to have reading comprehension? Is it only to read a text and then answer very specific questions or is it for example also that you read a novel and then are able to [...] discuss the different characters.¹⁰ (Interviewee E)

Furthermore, some respondents simply wrote that the tests could be better, or that they do not think they should determine the entire grade. Lastly, although it does not necessarily influence the validity of the tests, many mentioned that the national tests provide good and broad grounds for assessment and are a good benchmark for them as teachers to know what level of language correspond to what grade ($n=6$). Several interviewees talk about this in relation to grade inflation.

Closely related to the idea of using the tests as a benchmark is the fact that the national tests make the grading criteria clearer, something that was mentioned in both the questionnaire and the interviews. The fact that this aspect is present throughout both the questionnaire and

⁶ ... proven generellt sätter en väldig press på eleverna vilket gör att de kanske presterar sämre.

⁷ De tror att NP är på liv eller död.

⁸ ... [Nationella proven] är ett bra underlag för bedömning, men det är också ETT prov, som vissa elever kan ha svårt för på grund av ngt som inte har med faktisk förmåga att göra...

⁹ Det är omöjligt att testa alla förmågor på ett komplett nyanserat sätt.

¹⁰ vad är det att kunna engelska eller vad är det [...] att ha läsförståelse? Är det enbart att läsa en text och sen så besvara väldigt specifika frågor, eller är det till exempel också att du läser en roman och sedan kan [...] diskutera kring dom olika karaktärerna

the interviews could suggest that this is one of the biggest contributing factors to the teachers' positive attitude towards the tests. The grading criteria for language courses are notoriously vague (Gustafsson & Erickson, 2018). As one respondent pointed out in the open-ended question, the national tests help the teachers to “get a concrete idea of what the wording of the grading criteria actually mean (what is an elaborated and nuanced text really? And where does the line between when a text is relatively clear and clear go?) which otherwise can be hard to assess”¹¹. Several of the interviewees talked about this aspect of the national tests in their interviews. Interviewee A explained that since she is quite new to teaching, she uses the national tests as a reference for what her assessment should be like. Interviewee C said that “It is a good help when grading [...] because there are clear and distinct guidelines for [...] what the criteria are”¹². Perhaps the positivity is a product of the fact that the tests provide clear and distinct guidelines for one of the trickiest parts of being a language teacher in Sweden: grading. If that is the case, clearer guidelines for grading in general could have the same effect.

One thing that is interesting to note is that some of the interviewees talked about the tests in a way that could suggest that because they need to rely on them so much, they have to believe that they are a good and fair assessment of English abilities. This was especially clear when it comes to interviewee A who responded to the first prompt by saying “I have the view that the national tests [...] test what I am supposed to test during the year, and because of that, I rely on that the results do say something about the student's... complete [...] mostly communicative ability in English”¹³. Because she relies on them, any critical thinking towards

¹¹ ...få en konkret uppfattning om vad betygskriteriernas formuleringar faktiskt innebär (vad är egentligen en utvecklad och nyanserad text? Och var går gränsen mellan när en texten är relativt tydlig och tydlig?) vilket annars kan vara svårt att bedöma.

¹² Det är en bra hjälp vid betygssättning [...] för att det finns så klara tydliga riktlinjer för [...] var olika gränser går...

¹³ Jag har en uppfattning om att nationella proven [...] testar det jag ska testa under årets lopp, och därför förlitar jag mig ganska mycket på att dom resultaten säger någonting om elevens... fullständiga [...] främst kommunikativa förmåga i engelska.

their ability to test language proficiency would be contradictory. This thinking could be present in a lot of teachers, which then further would explain part of the positive attitudes towards the tests. In order to make such claims, however, further research into this topic is needed.

Another possible reason behind the positive attitudes towards the tests can be found in the response from interviewee C. She first reflected on the fact that since the tests do not necessarily test what the teacher has focused on during the course, they might not test what the course has been about. She continues by saying that despite this they do test “What the state wants you to know... and in that case you have to hope that [...] they are made in a way that makes them good tests for what is a reasonable level of knowledge in the language...”¹⁴. This view indicates a trust in the system that perhaps is needed in order to feel comfortable working as a teacher in a highly regulated educational system. Perhaps some teachers choose to trust the system and the tests because it is more comfortable? Although we cannot know if this is what interviewee C meant, further research into teacher attitudes towards the national tests could attempt to investigate whether or not this is true for some Swedish teachers of English.

Although all interviewees had quite long answers to the first prompt, two of them only left short comments related to the first research question, saying that they think the tests are good. One of them, Interviewee D, summarises her view by saying “I think they are more fair than if I would try to make a corresponding test myself”¹⁵. When follow-up questions were asked, both interviewees simply repeated that they think the tests are good.

Interviewee E was the only one who was negative towards how the national tests are used. She points out that the national tests are a summative assessment situation, and that “everything else in the Swedish school is supposed to be very formative, that you are supposed to look at it as a process...”¹⁶. Later in the interview, she says that even though she especially

¹⁴ ...vad staten vill att man ska kunna... och då får man väl hoppas att [...] man gör dom på ett sätt som gör dom till bra test för vad som är en vettig kunskapsnivå i språket...

¹⁵ jag tycker att dom blir mer rättvisa än om jag skulle försökt göra motsvarande prov själv.

¹⁶ allting annat i den svenska skolan ska vara väldigt formativt, man ska se på det som en process...

appreciates the student-examples provided together with the instructions for how to correct the tests, she wishes that the tests were not meant to influence the grades as much. She would like them to mostly be there as a tool for her as a teacher to compare her grading with some national standard in order to battle grade inflation.

In summary, most of the asked teachers do seem to think that the national tests are valid. However, when given the chance to elaborate, some comment on the fact that they do not take every aspect into account, for example, students who are stressed, and some skills that are hard to measure. Furthermore, some chose to elaborate on factors that do not necessarily relate to fairness, but those answers provide some insight to reasons behind the generally positive attitude, such as the fact that the test clarifies some aspects of grading that can otherwise be tricky.

4.3 The Second Research Question

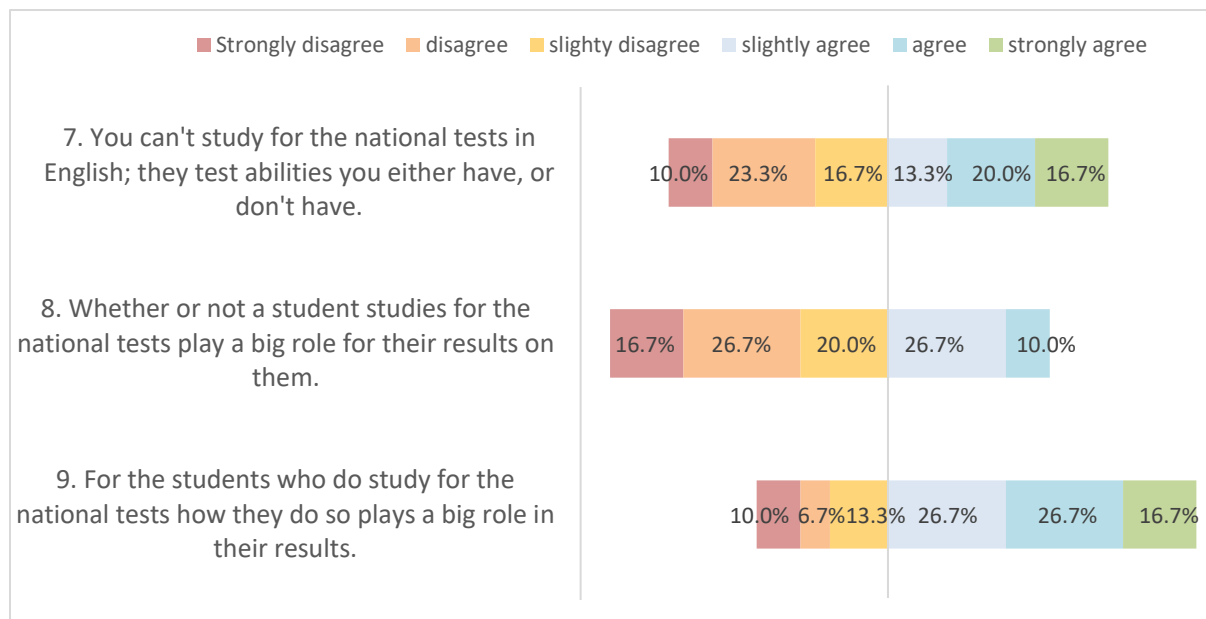
The second research question “How do some teachers’ attitudes towards their students’ abilities relate to their attitudes towards the students’ results on the national tests?”, was approached in two different ways: the commonly heard assumption that you cannot study for the national tests, and to ask about the way teachers use the results from the national tests in their grading, specifically where the results do not agree with the teachers’ previous assessment of the student. In this section, the results corresponding to the two approaches will be presented and discussed separately.

4.3.1 Can you study for the national tests?

The results from these items, as seen in Figure 2, especially item seven, are quite evenly distributed along the scale, with several respondents on both ends of the scale. This makes it hard to draw any conclusions. Thus, we can turn to the responses from the corresponding

optional open-ended question, as well as the interviews in order to gain additional insight to why the responses are not in agreement.

Figure 2. The experienced effectiveness of preparations



What should be noted is that despite the fact that all interviewed teachers seem to agree with each other about whether or not you can study for the national tests when you look at their elaborated answers, their initial short answer to the question “Can you study for the national tests?” were quite different. Interviewee A began her answer by saying that it is hard to do. Similarly, interviewee B initially offers a clear “no”. Interviewee C, however, answers with a “Both yes and no...¹⁷” while both Interviewee D and E begin their answers by saying that it is possible. One explanation for the initial disagreement probably lies in the ambiguity of the concept of studying for a test, which some of the interviewees address by saying that it depends on what you mean by ‘studying for a test’. This could explain the evenly distributed answers to the questionnaire items.

¹⁷ Både ja och nej...

Three themes of how you can study for the national tests were identified in the interviews and the corresponding open-ended question in the questionnaire. One theme mentioned by all interviewees and three of the five who left comments in the questionnaire is the idea that you can study for the national tests by practicing on old tests. Additionally, two respondents and two interviewees suggest that you can practice skills that are similar to the ones being tested, for example, you can learn how to structure a text, or read similar types of text as the ones that come on the test. Lastly, the idea that you can study for the test by improving your English abilities in general was mentioned in the questionnaire ($n=2$) and during four of the interviews. One comment in the questionnaire does point out, however, that language skills take time to develop.

This view, that improving language is a long and hard process, was commented on by interviewee B:

My personal view is that the best way to learn a language is to read it because then you can see how it should be written you see how the words are spelled... But to say that to students [...] that they should sit and read books and texts in English to possibly raise their grade half a step... That is not productive, you take the knowledge you have from the beginning... and you just test them, really.¹⁸ (Interviewee B)

When asked if he thought about it in that way during the year the course goes on for too, he responds with a “yeah...”¹⁹ and goes on to explain that “English 5 is kind of mostly a check that you know the language...”²⁰. Even though he provided some suggestions of how language

¹⁸ min personliga uppfattning det bästa sättet att ta till sig ett språk är att läsa det för då liksom ser du hur det ska vara skrivet du ser hur orden stavas ... men att säga det till elever [...] att dom ska sitta och läsa böcker och texter på engelska för att liksom möjligtvis kanske komma upp ett halvt snäpp i nationella ... det ger ingenting det liksom man tar dom kunskaperna man har från början... och det är liksom man bara testat dom egentligen

¹⁹ Aa...

²⁰ ... engelska 5 är ju mer liksom en check att man har koll på språket...

learning can be done, these quotes do suggest the view that language skills are mostly static: a fixed mindset.

Interviewee B also comments on some of the limitations to how well you can prepare for the national tests, in a way that could suggest that they influence his mindset. When talking about the possibility to prepare for the national tests, Interviewee B said: "... I do not have any lessons only about idioms for example... usually there is always some idiom on the national tests... but there are so many"²¹. This suggests that he does not think it is worth teaching idioms, because there are too many to make sure that the ones he would teach come on the national tests. In this way, the national tests seem to directly influence his mindset to be more fixed about his students' abilities. As mentioned in the previous research, this type of focus on results over learning can affect students' mindset to be more fixed.

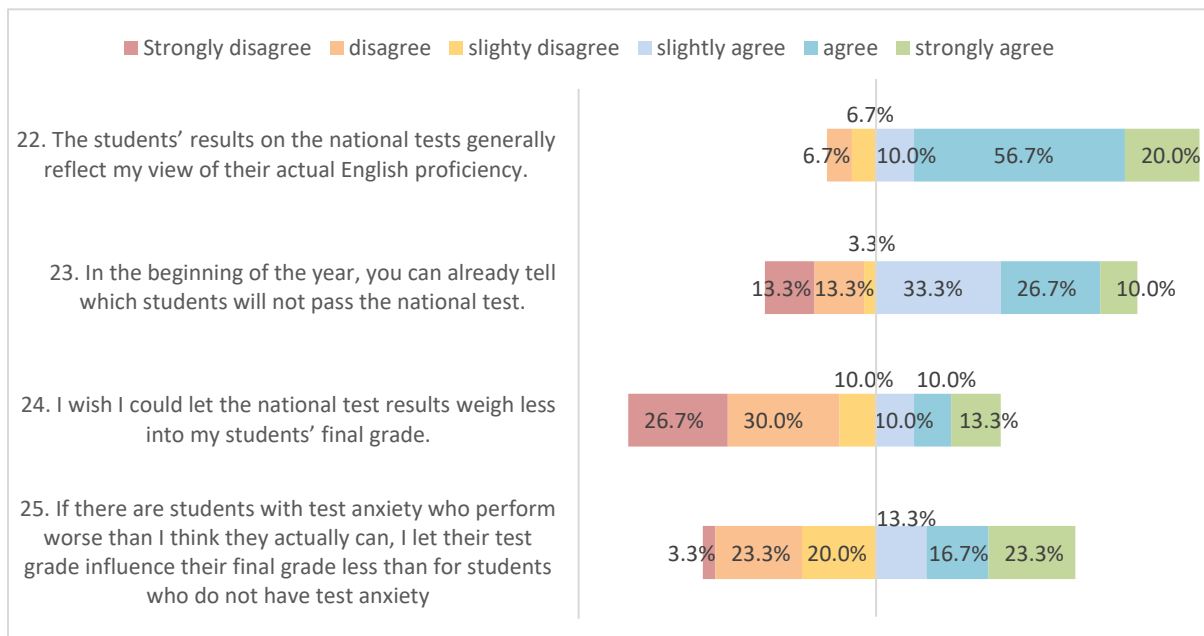
4.3.2 Unexpected test results

Figure 3 shows views of abilities related to test grades. Even though the results from item 23 could be interpreted as though these teachers have a fixed mindset, that is not necessarily the case. Although it is true that teachers who agree with item 23 leave no room for an entire year of improvement, it is important to be aware of the fact that this view does not necessarily reflect a fixed mindset. It could be the case that the teachers in question do believe that improvements can happen, but their experience tells them that this rarely happens. This view is confirmed by Interviewee D, the teacher with the longest teaching experience of the ones interviewed. She shares her view when asked if her experience is that students usually improve a lot in their English skills during the year:

²¹ ... jag har liksom inga [...] rena lektioner mot idiomer till exempel... det brukar alltid komma nån nåt talesätt på nationella prov [...] men det finns ju så många...

No, I do not think I have ever thought that I have a student who you think that it seems to be an E, and then they have ended up with an A, like I have never experienced that... but then it probably depends a lot on what type of students you have. There is a difference there.²² (Interviewee D)

Figure 3. Views of abilities related to test grades



The 18 respondents who answered yes to item 26 (see Figure 4) were allowed access to the Likert scale items in Figure 5. Even though some of the asked teachers seem to agree with item 27, none of the interviewed teachers gave this as a possible explanation as to why some students perform worse on the national tests than expected. Instead, the interviewed teachers claimed that this usually happens to students who for some reason could not perform to their normal ability that day, for example because of test anxiety, or because they did not sleep the night

²² Nej, jag har nog inte tänkt att jag har haft en elev som börjat och man tycker att det verkar vara E, och så har dom slutat på A, liksom det har jag inte varit med om... sen beror det nog också till stor del vad man har för storts elever. Det är ju skillnad där.

before. Further research is needed in order to understand the discrepancy between the interviews and this item.

Figure 4. Occurrence of surprisingly low results

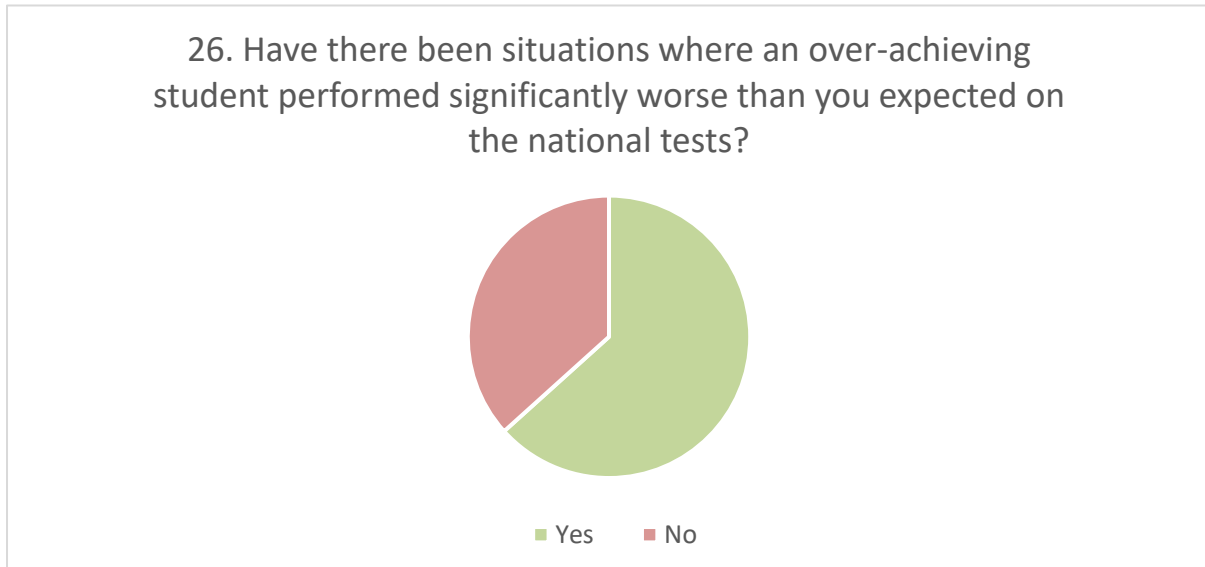
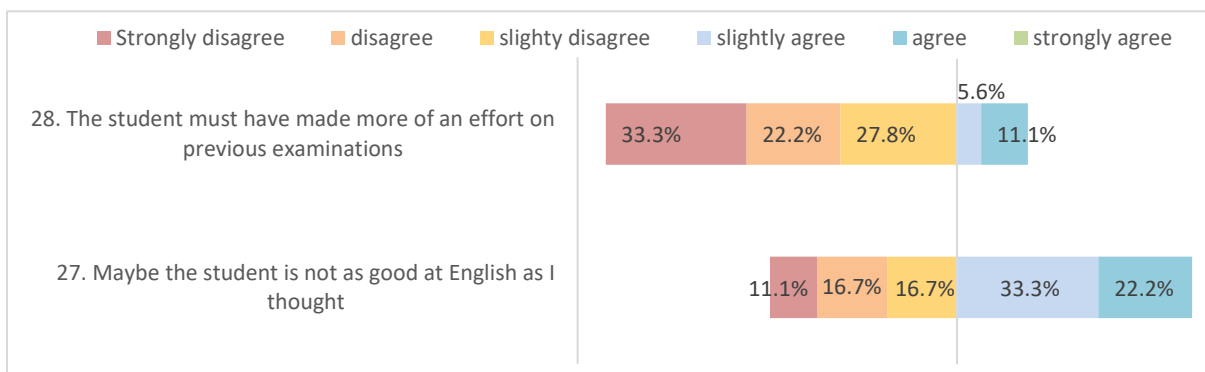


Figure 5. Possible reasons for underachieving students



The 14 respondents who answered yes to item 29 (see Figure 6) were allowed access to the items in Figure 7. What is not clear through these questionnaire items is the most common reason for some students performing better than expected according to the interviewed teachers: the national tests are the first time during the course these students make an effort. The four interviewees who discussed this issue all agreed on this. Some of the teachers claim it has to do with laziness, while others suggest it could have to do with mental illness.

Figure 6. Occurrence of surprisingly high results

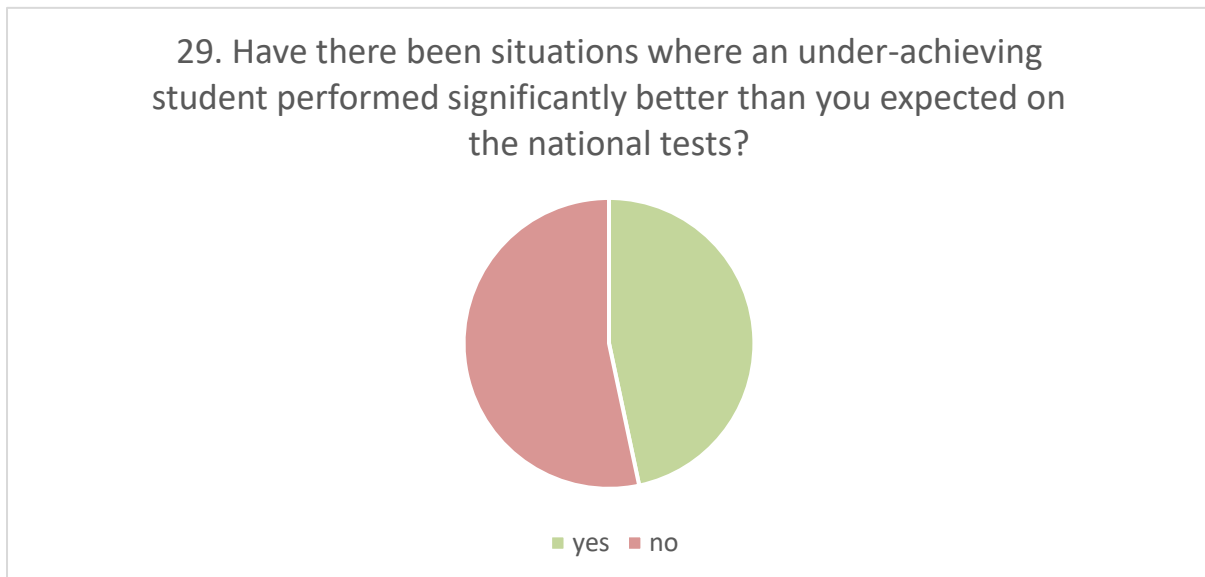
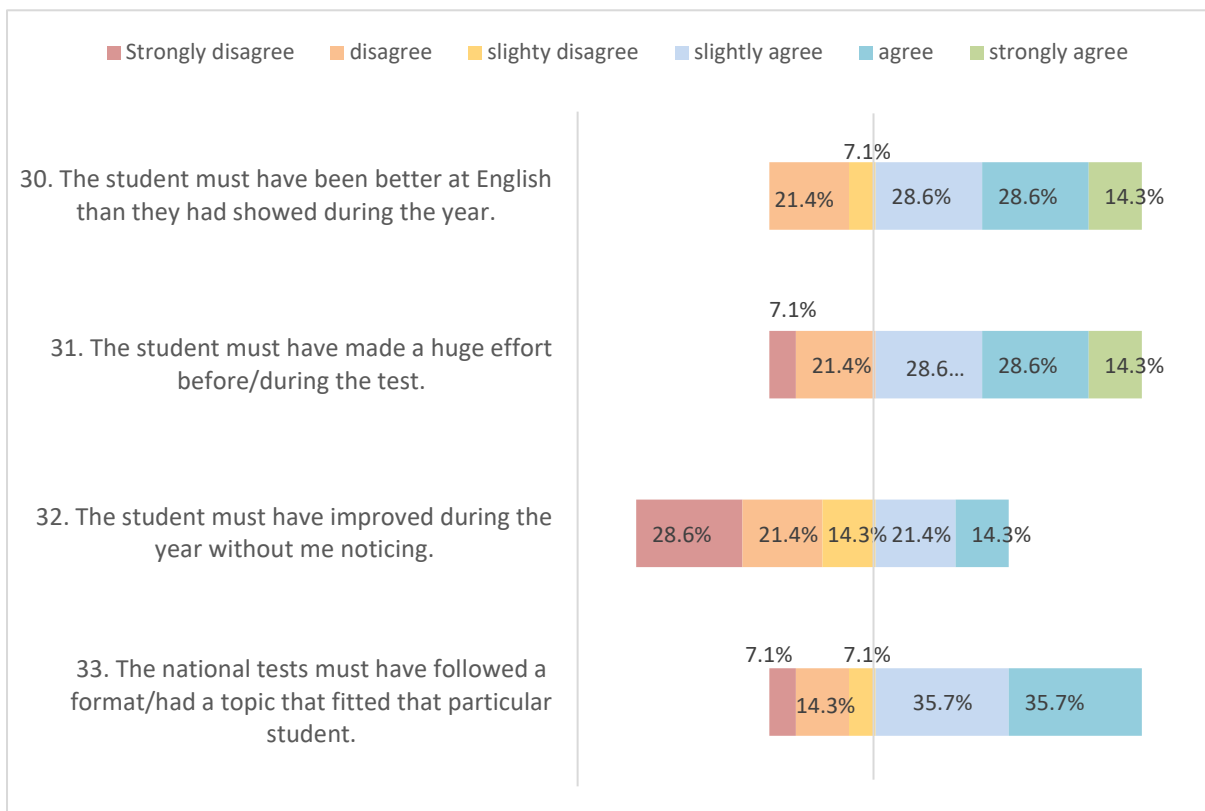


Figure 7. Possible reasons for overachieving students



When the interviewees were asked if they think that perhaps the student performs better than expected because their English proficiency improved during the year, they all denied this

possibility. Although it is possible that this claim comes from a fixed mindset, it is important to keep in mind that this is not necessarily the case. Once again, it is possible that these teachers do believe improvements can happen, but that their experience with students who perform better than expected on the national tests tells them that improvements are usually not the reason.

In conclusion, even though some results point towards the possibility that the national tests influence the asked teachers towards a more fixed mindset about their students' English abilities, we cannot claim with certainty that this is the case. Firstly, some teachers seem to hold the view that learning language is a slow and laborious process. Possibly related to this is the results showing that the asked teachers generally do not believe that students improve much during the year. Whether or not this is the case is relevant for further research to investigate, as students improving their English probably is one large reason for educating students in English in the first place.

5. Conclusion

This study has looked into the relationship between the national tests in English and teachers' mindset. This was done by collecting answers through a questionnaire as well as interviewing teachers, and then analysing the responses. The results showed that most teachers believe that the national tests are a valid assessment of students' abilities, with some exceptions for students with some reason for not performing to the best of their abilities in this testing situation. Furthermore, teachers seem to believe that improving language skills is hard and takes time, which could be the result of a fixed mindset, or simply a conclusion they have drawn from their teaching experience. Lastly, it can be concluded that some teachers and their attitude towards their students' abilities seem to be affected by the national tests, and thus it is important to continue researching this relationship.

Although teachers did claim to believe that the tests do measure students' actual ability well, it is possible that their fondness for the tests due to other factors influences their view of them in this aspect. Many teachers seem to like the national tests for the help they provide in grading by clarifying the criteria and that they provide broad grounds for assessment. The fact that teachers bring these seemingly unrelated factors up when asked about the tests' validity could suggest that they let their view of the tests in one aspect influence their view of them in another (i.e., the Halo Effect, Thorndike, 1920). It is therefore relevant for future research to investigate if this is the case.

The findings from this study should be considered by both policymakers and educators for several reasons. Firstly, no matter where the teachers' view that learning language is a slow process is coming from, it is important that further research is conducted into the effectiveness of the English courses in upper-secondary school. Due to the large amounts of tax money being spent on education, it is essential that it has an effect on students' language ability proportional to the economic cost of it. Secondly, if teachers, and thus students by extension, are influenced

by the national tests to have a more fixed mindset, this could have severe consequences for the future of education in Sweden. Thusly, it is important for teachers to be aware of the possibility that the tests have this effect in order to battle it.

Finally, even though the national tests are helpful in some ways, it is important not to lose sight of the heart of education: that students improve their academic abilities. Education where students do not learn is a waste of both time and money. It is therefore my hope that the field of research continues to investigate how the national tests affect teachers' and students' attitudes towards English education.

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Appendix A

The complete questionnaire.

Tankar om Nationella Prov

Följande enkät handlar om de nationella proven i Engelska 5 och 6 på gymnasiet. Det tar ca 10-20 minuter att fylla i. Tack för att du tar dig tiden att medverka!

Om du har frågor eller funderingar kring någon fråga kan du nå mig på:

julia.hornegard@baverman.se

0704866169

1. Jag undervisar eller har undervisat Engelska 5 och/eller 6 på gymnasiet under de senaste 5 åren. (Ja/nej)
(om nej, inga fler frågor)

2. Vad är din generella inställning till de nationella proven? (frisvarsruta)

Likert 1-6, 1: Håller inte med alls., 6: Håller med fullständigt.

3. Nationella proven i engelska är ett bra och rättvist mått på en elevs faktiska förmåga att tala engelska.

4. Nationella proven i engelska är ett bra och rättvist mått på en elevs faktiska förmåga att skriva engelska.

5. Nationella proven i engelska är ett bra och rättvist mått på en elevs faktiska förmåga att uppfatta och förstå talad engelska.

6. Nationella proven i engelska är ett bra och rättvist mått på en elevs faktiska förmåga att uppfatta och förstå skriven engelska.

7. Det går inte att plugga inför nationella proven i Engelska; de mäter förmågor som man antingen har eller inte har.

8. Det spelar stor roll för en elevs resultat på nationella proven om de pluggar inför dem eller inte.

9. För elever som pluggar inför nationella proven spelar det stor roll för deras resultat *hur* de förbereder sig.

10. Personligen tror jag inte att nationella provens resultat säger så mycket om en individs förmåga att förstå nyanser i språket.

11. Kommentarer till de svar du angivit ovan: (frisvarsruta)

12. Brukar du lägga undervisningstid på att specifikt förbereda eleverna inför nationella proven? (Ja/Nej)

Om ja:

13. Vilka typer av aktiviteter inkluderar denna förberedande undervisning?

- Öva på gamla nationella prov (Hörförståelsedelen)
- Öva på gamla nationella prov (Skrivdelen)
- Öva på gamla nationella prov (Läsförståelsedelen)
- Öva på gamla nationella prov (Muntliga delen)
- Vi pratar om strategier för att göra bra ifrån sig under provet.
- Vi pratar om vilka saker som är extra viktiga att fokusera på under just nationella proven baserat på hur rättningen brukar gå till.
- Vi övar på specifika förmågor som är bra att kunna inför nationella proven som jag annars inte skulle lägga så mycket tid på.
- Annat (vad?)

14. Ungefär hur mycket tid i klassrummet läggs på dessa förberedelser? (frisvarsruta)

15. Finns det områden du skulle velat ha tid att undervisa som du behöver hoppa över till förmån för att förbereda eleverna inför nationella proven? (Ja/nej)

isf:

16. Om du svarade "Ja" på förra frågan: Vad för områden skulle du ha velat undervisa som du nu inte har tid för på grund av de nationella proven? (frisvarsruta)

Likert 1-6, 1: Håller inte med alls., 6: Håller med fullständigt.

17. Tiden jag lägger på att förbereda elever inför nationella proven skulle bidra mer till elevernas engelska om den istället använts till vanlig undervisning.

18. Jag tror att eleverna skulle göra bättre ifrån sig på proven om jag la mer tid på aktiviteter som endast är avsedda för att förbereda dem inför dem.

19. Jag upplever att mina elever kan mer Engelska än vad nationella proven visar.
20. För att elevernas provresultat ska matcha deras faktiska förmåga behöver de specifika provförberedelser.
21. Kommentarer till de svar du angivit ovan: (frisvarsruta)

Likert 1-6, 1: Håller inte med alls., 6: Håller med fullständigt.

22. Elevernas resultat på nationella proven brukar generellt sett reflektera min upplevelse av deras faktiska förmåga inom ämnet engelska.
23. Redan i början av läsåret förstår man vilka elever som inte kommer att klara nationella proven.
25. Jag önskar att jag kunde låta nationella provens resultat väga mindre tungt vid betygssättning.
25. Om det finns elever med mycket provångest som presterat sämre än jag egentligen tror de förmår så låter jag deras provbetyg väga mindre tungt vid betygssättning än för elever som inte har provångest.

26. Har det funnits situationer där du haft en högpresterande elev som fick betydligt sämre resultat på NP än du trodde att den skulle få? (ja/nej)

isf:

Likert 1-6, 1: Håller inte med alls., 6: Håller med fullständigt.

Hur väl stämmer dessa påståenden överens med din *initiala* reaktion?

27. Eleven kanske inte är så bra på engelska som jag trodde.
28. Eleven måste ha ansträngt sig mer på tidigare uppgifter än på NP.

29. Har det funnits situationer där en lågpresterande elev fått ett betydligt högre resultat på NP än du trodde den skulle få? (ja/nej)

isf:

Likert 1-6, 1: Håller inte med alls., 6: Håller med fullständigt.

Hur sannolikt tror du det är att följande påståenden stämmer för den eleven ?

30. Eleven har varit bättre på engelska än hen visat under terminen.

31. Eleven måste ha ansträngt sig hårt innan/under provet.

32. Eleven måste ha blivit bättre under året, utan att jag la märke till det.

33. Nationella proven måste vara på ett format/handla om ett ämne som passar just den eleven.

34. Kommentarer till de svar du angivit ovan: (frisvarsruta)

35. Om du kan tänka dig att ställa upp på en kort (ca 15 minuter) digital intervju, för att prata mer om dina tankar kring nationella prov, så fyll i din mail eller telefonnummer nedan.

Intervjuerna kommer att anonymiseras.

36. Tack för din medverkan. Om du vill få en sammanfattning av resultaten från enkäten skickad till dig när den är klar kan du fylla i en emailadress nedan:

Appendix B

The interview guide.

Jag tänkte att vi kunde börja med lite frågor om din tid som lärare.

Hur länge har du jobbat som lärare?

Har du undervisat i Engelska på gymnasiet under alla de åren?

men hur många gånger har du varit med och genomfört NP?

Berätta gärna hur du tänker kring nationella provens förmåga att mäta en elevs faktiska nivå av engelska. Går det? Vad tycker du krävs för att få en tydlig bild av en elevs förmåga i allmänhet? (Be om exempel)

Berätta gärna mer om hur du tänker kring huruvida det går att plugga inför nationella proven eller inte. Hur kan man göra det? (Be om exempel)

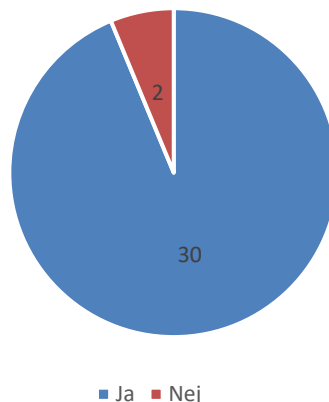
Berätta mer om hur du tänker kring elever som presterat lägre eller högre på nationella prov än tidigare. Hur brukar du hantera det i din bedömning? Vad innebär det för elevens betyg? Ändras din syn på eleven och dennes kunskaper? Om du inte varit med om det, kan du spekulera lite om hur du tror att du skulle tänka? (Be om exempel)

Har du någon avslutande aspekt om nationella proven som vi inte rört vid, som du vill att vi pratar om?

Appendix C

All of the data collected through the questionnaire.

1. Jag undervisar eller har undervisat Engelska 5 och/eller 6 på gymnasiet under de senaste 5 åren.



2. Vad är din generella inställning till de nationella proven?

Positiv

Jag tycker ofta de är bra utformade och använder de som en måttstock på att elevernas kunskaper överensstämmer med mina tidigare bedömningar.

Överlag anser jag att proven är ett bra tillfälle för eleverna att visa sina förmågor. Det ger också mig och mina kollegor en möjlighet till sambedömning. Detta tycker jag är viktigt för en likvärdig bedömning. Sedan finns det absolut saker med proven som kan förbättras.

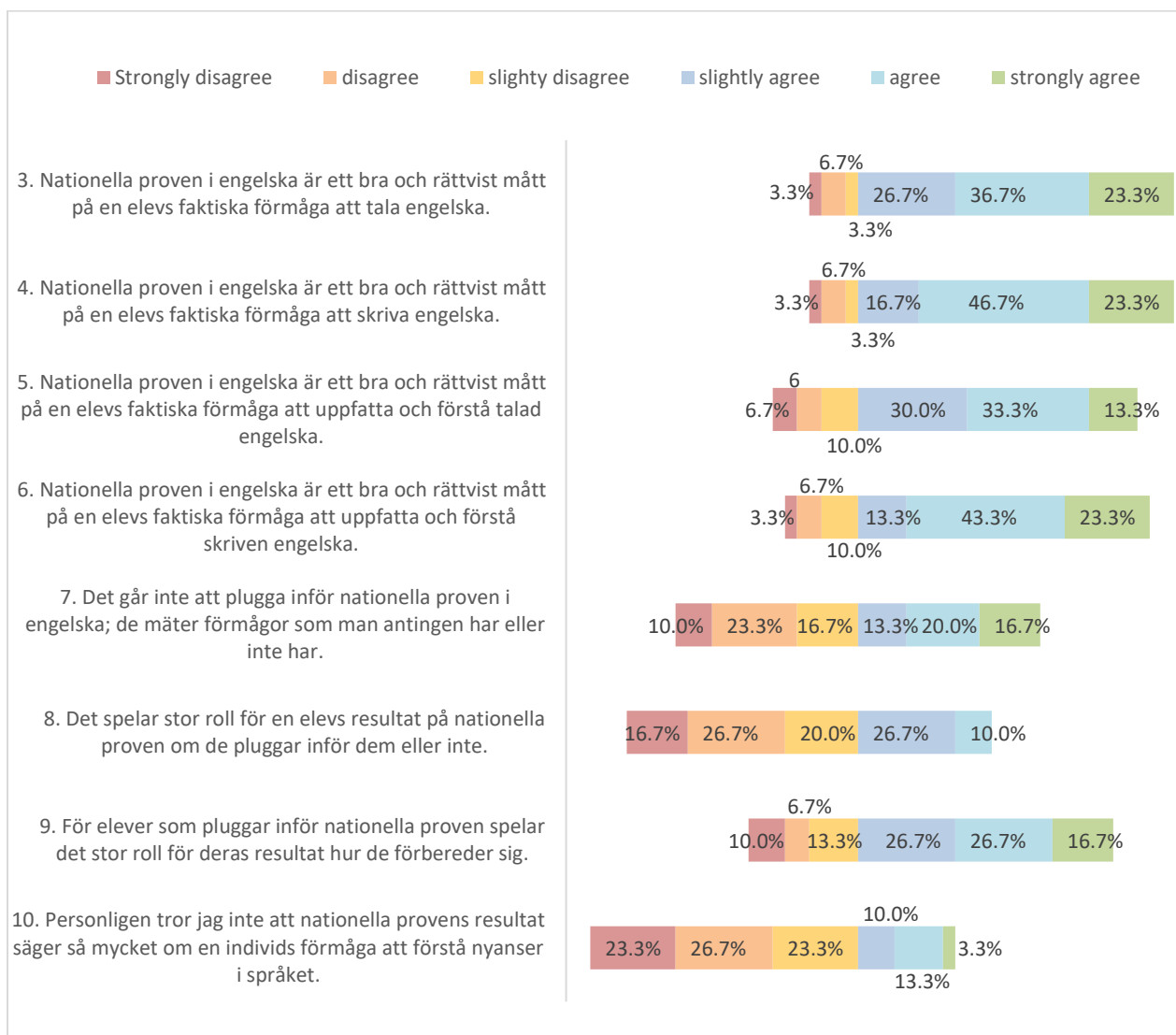
Bra

Generellt är min inställning positiv, då de nationella proven är vårt främsta verktyg för likvärdighet nationellt. Det är även beprövade prov vilket gör dem pålitligare än många andra prov.

<p>De är ett bra verktyg för att säkerställa att all undervisning i hela Sverige når upp till ett visst mått, d.v.s. det ökar likvärdigheten. Däremot så finns det ett flertal faktorer som påverkar resultatet, och det är omöjligt att ha allt detta i åtanke vid slutbedömningen.</p>
<p>Rättningsbördan är tung men jag ser nyttan med prov som en del av ett bedömningsunderlag.</p>
<p>De är välgjorda och tillförlitliga och nödvändiga för bedömningen</p>
<p>De är bra särskilt läs- och hör-delen,</p>
<p>Bra, ger en övergripande bild över elevens kunskaper.</p>
<p>Positivt. Bra som underlag inför bedömning.</p>
<p>Jag tycker att de bidrar till att säkerställa en likvärdig bedömning</p>
<p>Jag tycker konceptet är bra men utförandet som det är nu är mindre bra</p>
<p>Mycket arbete i förberedelse</p>
<p>Bra komplement i undervisningen</p>
<p>bra att ha</p>
<p>Positiv, jag anser att de är viktiga</p>
<p>Känns generellt som ett bra underlag för bedömning, men som en oerhört stor arbetsbörda.</p>

<p>Att det finns både för- och nackdelar. Det är skönt med en norm och hjälp med likvärdigheten men samtidigt är det skrämmande för många elever och de har svårt att inte göra det till något stort.</p>
<p>Sätter onödig stress och press på eleverna. Finns andra sätt att se elevers kunskaper.</p>
<p>Positiv</p>
<p>Jag vill ha kvar dem.</p>
<p>Bra kvitto på sina egna omdömen</p>
<p>Att det är en skön avstämning som främst är till för att kontrollera att undervisningen håller måttet</p>
<p>Positivt</p>
<p>Jag tycker generellt sett att de är bra, dock kan det bli något problematiskt då proven tillmätas mycket stor vikt, större än uppgifter som kanske bättre representerar elevernas kunskaper. Även om det i slutändan är upp till mig vilket betyg jag sätter så visar ju Skolverket genom att publicera vilka skolor där det skiljer sig mellan slutbetyg och prov att det ska vara samma i så stor utsträckning som möjligt.</p>
<p>Jag tycker att det är fantastiskt bra med de nationella proven! Det är den enda chansen vi har till likvärdig bedömning inom den svenska skolan.</p>
<p>Positivt.</p>
<p>Bra att få en nationell referenspunkt, svårare för elever som inte har svenska som modersmål</p>

Jag tycker de är tidskrävande, uråldriga och omständiga. Men samtidigt är det skönt att ha någon sorts måttstock att mäta elevprestationer mot.



11. Här kan du ange eventuella kommentarer till de svar du angivit ovan.

Min erfarenhet på 8 år säger mig att eleverna presterar generellt högt på speaking jämfört med bedömningsstödet, på en nivå i linje med tidigare prestationer på writing men ett betygssteg lägre på receptiveskillsproven.

De Nationella Proven bör ses som en mätstång för huruvida jag som lärare ger mina elever en bred och allsidig undervisning. När det kommer till slutbedömning bör de dock inte vara avgörande, utan snarare som ett komplement för att se om min uppfattning om en viss elev har bekräftats eller inte.

Jag anser att nationella kan vara ett bra bänkmärke men proven generellt sätter en väldig press på eleverna vilket gör att de kanske presterar sämre. De långa provtiderna gör det också jobbigt för de som har svårt att fokusera eller t.ex. har adhd. Jag tycker att np läggs på en piedestal som det som ska avgöra betyget. Jag tycker snarare man ska se detsom ett bedömningsmoment som läraren inte behöver sätta ihop själv

NP ger en mer objektiv och rättvisande bild av eleven jämfört med den egna.

Igen, det är ett bra underlag för bedömning, men det är också ETT prov, som vissa elever kan ha svårt för på grund av ngt som inte har med faktisk förmåga att göra, vilket är viktigt för lärare att komma ihåg.

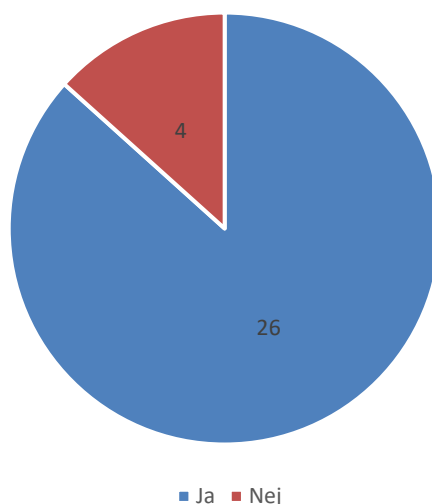
Det är ett bra mått men kan inte vara det enda då det inte tar hänsyn till exempelvis om man haft en enskild dålig dag eller om man har provstress etc. Dessutom tycker jag att hör- och läsförståelse inte brukar stämma lika bra överens med det betyg eleven brukar få på uppgifter, på samma sätt som proven som testar elevernas produktion. Reception blir svårt att fullt ut få till på ett så pass mätbart sätt som ska resultera i en siffra. Det blir heller inte lika verklighetsanpassad som vid exempelvis bokläsning och boksamtal eller när eleverna får skriva en bokanalys. Man får inte möjlighet att utveckla kring hur karaktärer kan uppfattas eller symbolism etc utan det märks att proven är utformade för att vara mätbara, vilket inte betygskriterierna och skolans syfte är i samma utsträckning - de är mer processinriktade.

Det är omöjligt att testa alla förmågor på ett komplett nyanserat sätt. Man måste också givetvis räkna in elevens nerver inför ett sådant (som de ofta uppfattar) "formellt" prov. Dock anser jag att resultatet oftare än inte stämmer bra överens med mina tidigare bedömningar. Som relativt nyexaminerad lärare (har jobbat 2,5 år nästan) tycker jag att det är ett jättebra tillfälle att utmana mina egna förmågor när det kommer till att bedöma texter. Min skola brukar ha sambedömning och diskutera uppsatserna vilket är oerhört givande.

Jag tycker att nationella provet ger en bra inblick i elevernas kunskaper i förhållande till snittet och vad som förväntas i kurserna. Proven och bedömningsanvisningarna ger en trygghet i min bedömning av elevernas kunskaper och ger mig något att förhålla mig till för en mer likvärdig bedömning. Sedan tycker jag absolut inte att proven inte kan förbättras

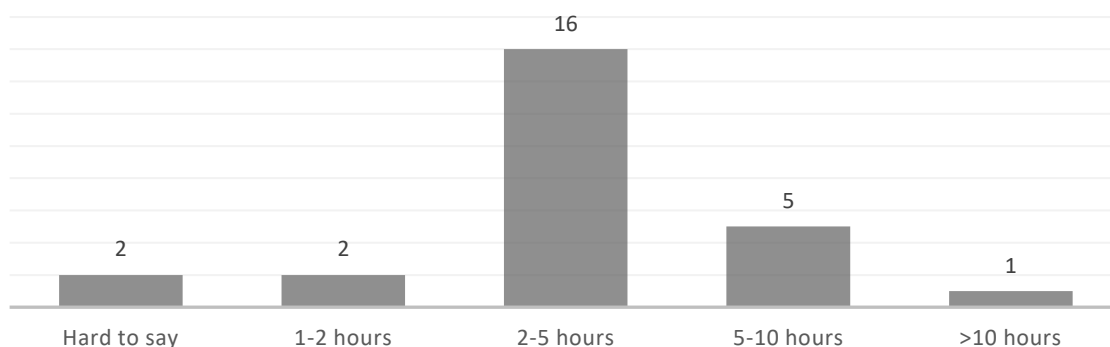
<p>eller att bedömningsanvisningarna ibland är väldigt generösa och röriga, men det är ändå skönt med ett snitt att förhålla sig till vid bedömning och senare betygssättning.</p>
<p>Tror det beror mycket på hur en elev klarar provsituationen. Vissa kan bli så nervösa.</p>
<p>Förberedelse hjälper elever att inte få panik under test gång, men inte mycket mer.</p>
<p>Jag har lite svårt att förhålla mig till att "plugga till nationella prov". Pluggar man engelska ökar man förmågan och bör därmed prestera bättre på proven då de kan handla om allt möjligt och kräver en generell ökad förståelse av engelska.</p>
<p>Elever kan plugga till provet i den mån att de kan få förbereda sig på att författa liknande texttyper, öva sig på att strukturera på en text eller få träffa på liknande uppgifter som det är under NP, men det är inte önskvärt att rikta in hela engelskkursen på NP utan det borde utgöra ett komplement - en möjlighet för mig som lärare att säkra min bedömnings likvärdighet och få en konkret uppfattning om vad betygskriteriernas formuleringar faktiskt innebär (vad är egentligen en utvecklad och nyanserad text? Och var går gränsen mellan när en texten är relativt tydlig och tydlig?) vilket annars kan vara svårt att bedöma. Lärare är bra på att rangordna olika elevers kunskaper, men om man jobbar på en skola där snittet ligger betydligt högre eller lägre än genomsnittet finns det en stor risk att man rangordnar och kategoriserar eleverna utifrån en jämförelse mellan de egna eleverna, snarare än gentemot de vagt formulerade kunskapskraven.</p>
<p>Elever kan absolut plugga inför nationella provet, men det förmågor och kunskaper inom ett dynamiskt språk som tar tid att utveckla. Eleven kan inte plugga som inför ett prov i ett stoffämne såsom samhällsorienterande ämnen, men det går absolut att arbeta under en längre tid med förberedelser som gör eleven mer bekväm med provsituationen. Jag lägger ofta in övningar från nationella proven under läsåret, inte bara direkt inför proven de sista veckorna, för att eleverna ska bekanta sig med hur nationella provet är utformat och eventuella fallgropar som de kan råka ut för (t.ex. i läsförståelse och hörförståelse där proven ofta är luriga och lägger ut falska ledtrådar som eleverna ska försöka sålla bort).</p>
<p>"Plugga till proven" skulle kunnat definieras. Man kan "plugga" på många sätt. Visst, det finns kanske inte något material att läsa in sig på, med ord osv, men man kan plugga på hur man skriver en uppsats, eller plugga på tidigare läs-test för att förstå strukturen i proven. Det upplever jag gör stor skillnad för elevernas resultat.</p>

12. Brukar du lägga undervisningstid på att specifikt förbereda eleverna inför nationella proven?

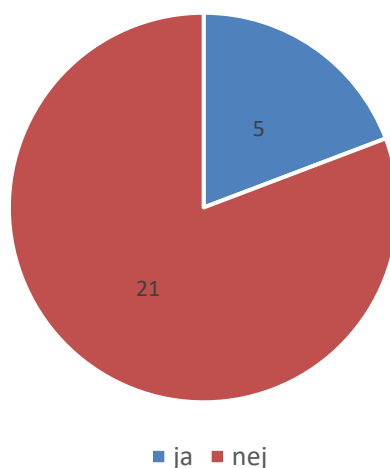


13. Vilka typer av aktiviteter inkluderar denna förberedande undervisning?	Antal
Öva på gamla nationella prov (Hörförståelsedelen)	26
Öva på gamla nationella prov (Skrivdelen)	20
Öva på gamla nationella prov (Läsförståelsedelen)	26
Öva på gamla nationella prov (Muntliga delen)	22
Vi pratar om strategier för att göra bra ifrån sig under provet.	23
Vi pratar om vilka saker som är extra viktiga att fokusera på under just nationella proven baserat på hur rättningen brukar gå till	12
Vi övar på specifika förmågor som är bra att kunna inför nationella proven som jag annars inte skulle lägga så mycket tid på.	5
Ibland måste jag träna elever med läs problem, hur man gör under prov där deras läs svårigheter har inte tillräckligt tagits handsyn till av skolverket.	1

14. Ungefär hur mycket tid i klassrummet läggs på dessa förberedelser?



15. Finns det områden du skulle velat ha tid att undervisa som du behöver hoppa över till förmån för att förbereda eleverna inför nationella proven?



16. Om du svarade "Ja" på förra frågan: Vad för områden skulle du ha velat undervisa som du nu inte har tid för på grund av de nationella proven?

Generellt alla områden. Jag kanske inte kan gå lika djupt in i olika ämnen.

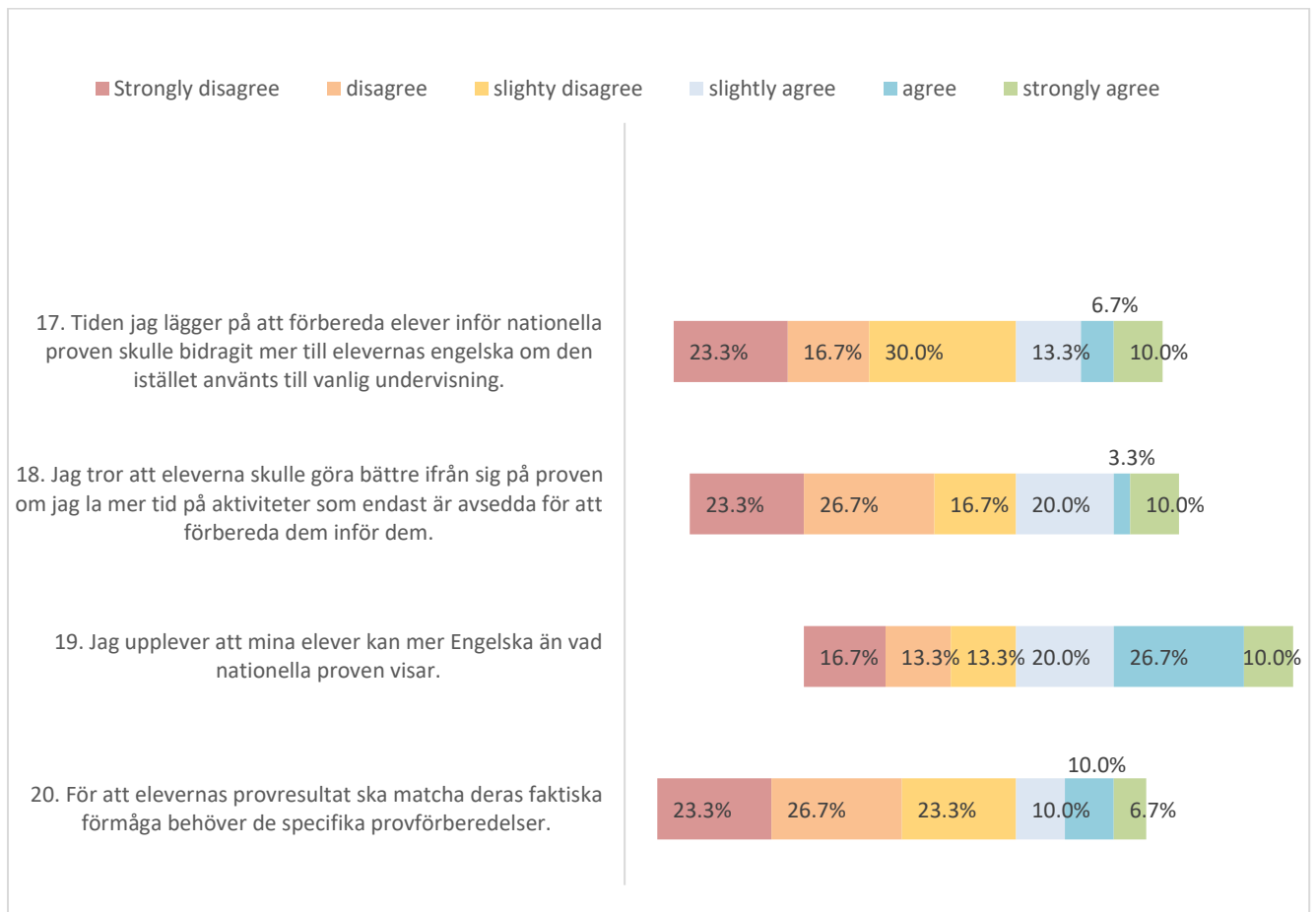
Det blir en prioritering utifrån elevens behov.

Där finns bedömnings nivå som B och D som man aldrig lämna på individuallt uppgift i skolan. Det här inte förnyat sig med olika betygssystem.

Det är framförallt metoder som är tidskrävande

I engelska 6, vilket har ett mer specificerat stoff, kan det bli svårt att hänga med t.ex. litteraturhistoria på ett meningsfullt sätt där litteraturen faktiskt får stå i centrum. Jag hade velat ha mer tid till att läsa klassiker och utdrag ur klassiker, vilket blir svårt när stora delar av stoffet måste läggas på höstterminen för att hinna med förberedelser och rättning (lektioner som då faller bort) under vårterminen.

Svarade inte "Ja" men: det är snarare tvärtom - jag kunde lägga mer tid på att förbereda för proven men gör det inte då jag upplever att det finns andra förmågor som är viktigare på ett yrkesprogram



21. Här kan du ange eventuella kommentarer till de svar du angivit ovan.

Angående frågan om de kan mer än vad proven visar så beror det helt på. Det kan vara så att en elev av olika anledningar inte presterar på sin normala nivå. Det kan vara något som hänt som gör att eleven inte kan fokusera på provet och därmed inte visar vad hen egentligen kan. Sedan finns det såklart också elever som inte klarar av den här typen av prov och behöver anpassningar av olika slag.

Förstod inte den första frågan. Upplever att vissa elever kan bli så påverkade av att det är NP att de gör sämre ifrån sig än vanligt. De tror att NP är på liv eller död.

De behöver veta hur provet är utformat, samt strategier för att hinna med uppgifterna inom tidsramarna.

Jag tycker inte man kan avgöra en elevs förmågor utifrån ett provtillfälle. Betyget beror på så mycket mer. Även om eleverna hade kunnat göra bättre ifrån sig om de fick specifika provförberedelser så hade det tagit tid från undervisning som kan hjälpa dem att utvecklas. Under provförberedelser lär de sig bara ytligt inför prov och sen glömmer de.

Vi förbereder elever oftast för att de och deras föräldrar förväntar detta. Förberedelse ofta är bara stärkelsen av att eleven har fått ett rättvist betyg, och inte något särskilt formative bedömning. Elever brukar få nästan samma resultat i både fall.

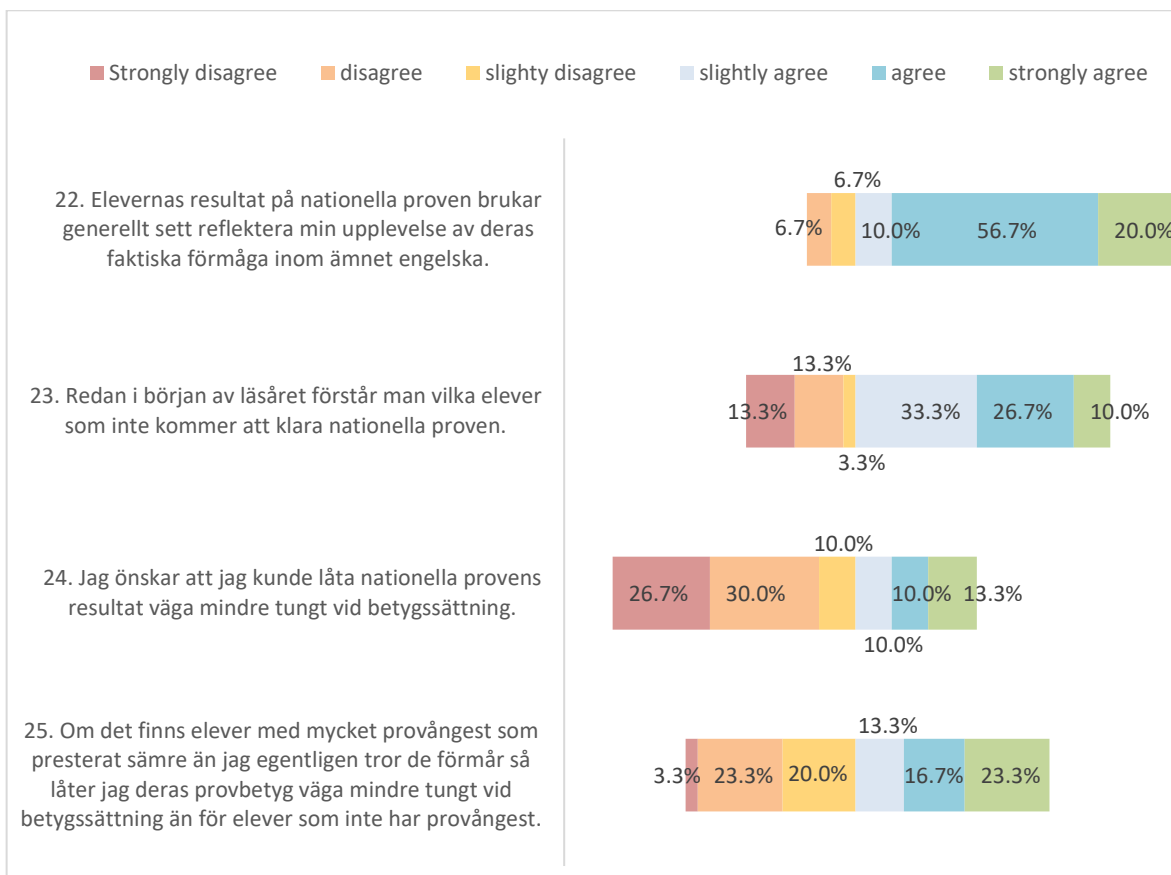
Ofta vad gäller elever med svårigheter, som t.ex. språkstörningar och dyslexi känns inte nationella provet särskilt rättvist vad gäller att faktiskt spegla deras förmåga.

Jag upplever att det kan vara givande att prata om studieteknik, att förhålla sig till proven. Elevernas nervositet påverkar resultatet så det kan man också försöka förbereda dem i.

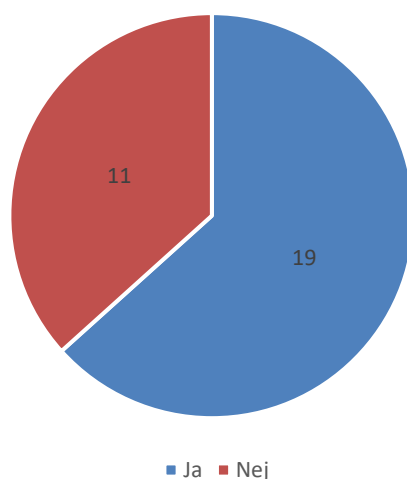
Förberedelser så till vida att de behöver veta hur de ser ut och vad de går ut på. Annars ser jag inte som att tex vår skrivträning under året bara har fokus på NP. De behöver dock veta vad de faktiskt ska testas på för att det ska vara meningsfullt.

Jag förbereder mina elever väl och jag tycker att resultaten oftast är lika de jag kommer fram till. Det finns undantag.....

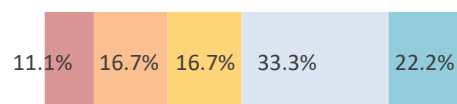
Det är svårt att besvara din enkät då de frågor du ställer har inte bara ett ja eller nej svar. Jag ser det som att ALLT vi gör under läsåret bidrar till elevernas resultat på NP. I engelska 6 ingår det att läsa texter tillsammans medan man i engelska 5 inte gör det osv.



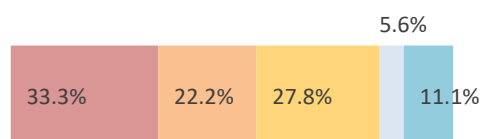
26. Har det funnits situationer där du haft en högpresterande elev som fick betydligt sämre resultat på NP än du trodde att den skulle få?



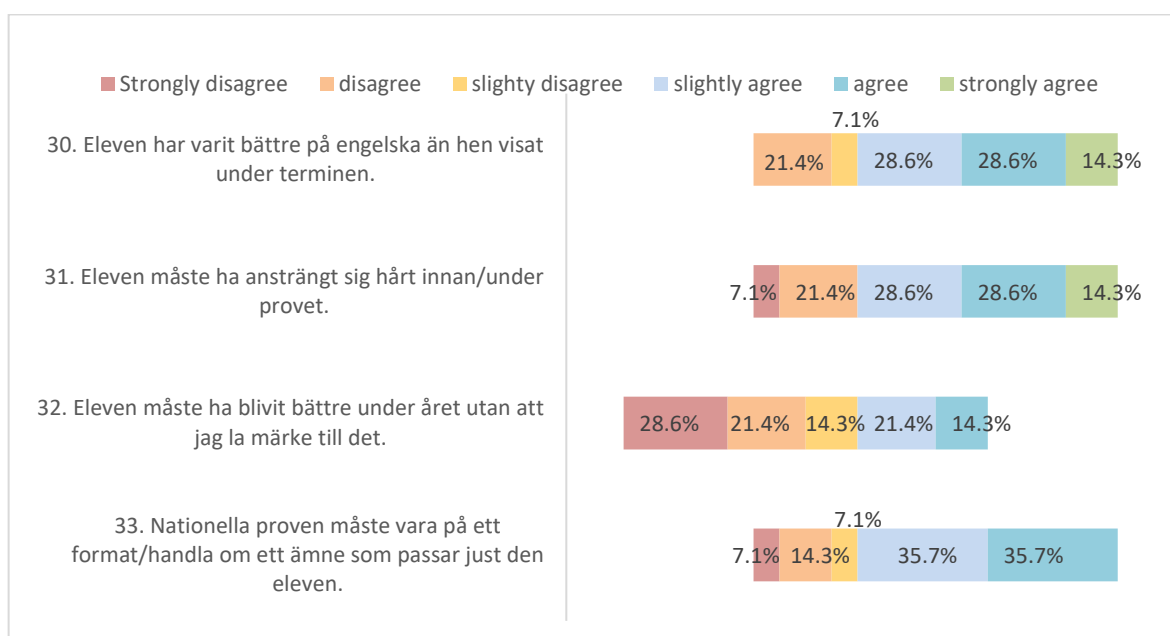
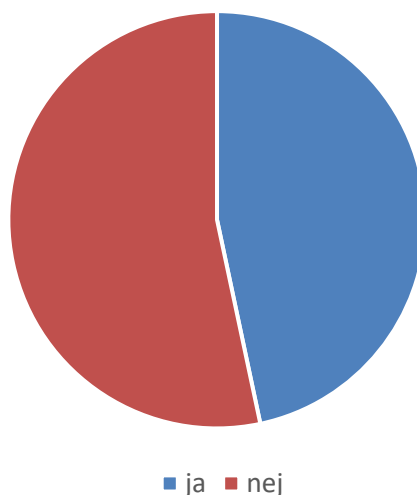
27. Eleven kanske inte är så bra på engelska som jag trodde.



28. Eleven måste ha ansträngt sig mer på tidigare uppgifter än på NP.



29. Har det funnits situationer där en lågpresterande elev fått ett betydligt högre resultat på NP än du trodde den skulle få?



34. Här kan du ange eventuella kommentarer till de svar du givit.

Det har hänt att vissa elever har presterat lite bättre eller lite sämre än vad jag trodde, men det har aldrig handlat om flera betygssteg. Ofta har det också bara handlat om ett prov och inte att eleven genomgående har presterat sämre eller bättre.

Jag har enbart haft NP en gång, men upplevde då att flera presterade sämre än vad jag väntade.

Om en elev presterar höger på nationella prov, då är det ofta elever som har svårt att göra saker i klassrummet eller för hemläxa. Jag tycker, över huvudtaget, at NP är gammaldags, är krångligt med bedömning, sätter eleverna i en komparativt miljö. Där skulle, ju, bli markering för olika betyg, men varför där måste vara ännu fler än vanligt är en tråkig mysterium. Det är stressigt, och tar hur mycket tid som helst att administrera och rätta (särskilt den tid som tars för över 30 elever att göra muntligt prov när man är ensam i klassrummet). Varför kan man inte har 3 betyg: underkänd, godkänd och välgodkänd - såsom universitet.

Det är vanligt att det skiljer ett betygssteg. Det finns elever som presterar bättre på NP än i ordinarie uppgifter.

Det finns annat som kan störa en elev under ett specifikt prov, jag har tex haft elever med sjukdomar som kan ställa till det. I vissa fall har NP räddat elever med dålig närvaro tex

Appendix D

[Excluded in public version]