

I am against any kind of use of student data to create league tables that compare and rank students in different schools for a number of reasons, the two most important are as follows:

1. Working at a school in a remote area of Australia with numerous socio-economic challenges, I would already know that there is no way our school is going to compete against the plush city schools with a wide range of resources and assistance. The fact that our struggling school is going to be somewhere near the end of the table is almost obvious, and we always do whatever we can to help these students. Publishing those league tables does nothing to help but just stigmatise the students and the community more, leading into a sense of desperation and despair for students, teachers and parents.

2. I came from an education system where the damaging effects of league tables and that kind of simplistic comparison is just so evident. In that system, league tables are created not only for a few subjects but the entire range of subjects studied both in primary and secondary schools. What happens in high schools is that there are the so called "elite" schools that want to continue to dominate the top positions in the tables. These schools no doubt have numerous support from the government in terms of equipment and so on. In their endeavours to continue to dominate the top positions, they overly focus on coaching their students to pass the tests. In my country we call it "spoon feeding" their students.

When these "high performing" students pick their courses for university entry, of course they pick the top and tough courses such as medicine, architecture, engineering and so on. And of course they do get into these courses because they do score high marks in their HSC exams due to the heavy coaching and spoon feeding they get.

The problem is, nearly all of them cannot last even the first semester in those tough courses because at university, there is no spoon feeding and everyone is by themselves. So what is the point of coaching students to perform highly in exams if they are not being prepared for the real challenges in life ahead?

If publication of student data in this way goes ahead in this country in this way, I fear there will be a point when data will not only be published for NAPLAN, but for the entire range of subjects being done in our schools, and this is scary.