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The applicability of the Neale Analysis of Reading Ability-second revised British edition (NARA II) in the South African context.

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ABSTRACT

Psychological tests are closely tied to the context in which they were designed. Within the South African context, the inequalities of apartheid played a major role in test development and use, and it relies on various international tests that may not be suitable to the context and on local tests that may not include all linguistic groups. There is a need for psychological tests that are in use to be reliable, valid and free from bias. Thus, this research examined the applicability of the Neale Analysis of Reading Ability-Second Revised British Edition (NARA II) in the South African context. Aspects of reliability, validity and bias were examined. A non-probability sample of 144 Grade Four first and second language learners attending one of four government schools in Gauteng were assessed on the NARA II. A non-probability sample of eight professionals (two teachers, one psychometrist, two educational psychologists, two speech therapists and one reading therapist and trainer) were interviewed for their views on the applicability of the NARA II. The research followed a mixed methods approach, namely a sequential explanatory strategy. The results demonstrated adequate internal consistency reliability, although this was lower than in the normative sample and other studies. Face validity and concurrent validity were adequate. The content validity of the NARA II was questionable within the South African context, suggesting it should be adapted for use in this country. Some evidence of bias based on gender, home language, population group, educational level of parents and the school learners attended was found. The qualitative data supported findings from the quantitative data. A thematic content analysis identified nine themes namely *Suitability of the NARA II to the South African context*, *Similarities between the NARA II and reading tasks in school*, *Differences between the NARA II and reading tasks in school*, *Comprehension skills*, *Assessment tools utilised for reading in South Africa*, *Learner errors on reading*, *Foundations of reading*, *Benefits* and *Affordability*. The overall conclusion is that adaptation of the NARA II and norming on the South African population be undertaken.