

A description of required NAPLEX preparation courses among US pharmacy programs

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Background

North American Pharmacist Licensure Examination (NAPLEX)

- One of the final assessments that pharmacy graduates must pass before being able to practice¹
- Many factors can impact success:¹⁻³

Program characteristics

Public institutions

Class sizes ≥ 100

Student skills

Presentation skills

Ability to answer critical thinking questions

External factors

NAPLEX blueprint modification

Standard setting by NABP

NAPLEX Preparation Programs

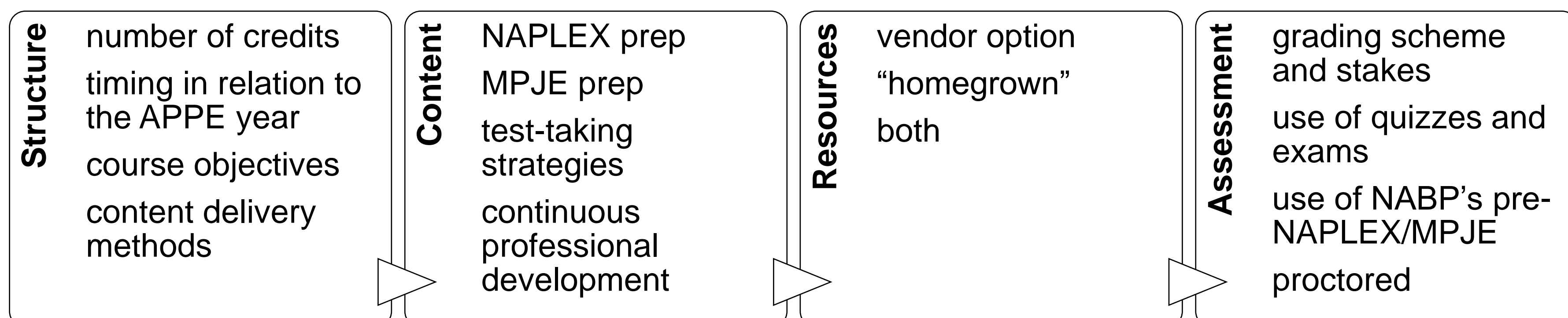
- Given the decline in pass rates nationally over the past few years, **programs are making significant investments of time and money in NAPLEX preparation.**
- Programs may be “teaching to the test”⁴ by administering diagnostic tests to track student knowledge progression⁵ or purchasing NAPLEX prep courses or books from external vendors⁶⁻⁷
- However, it is uncertain whether they positively impact pass rates⁴; some have posited that questions in the books may not follow best practices⁸
- Even remediating students to address NAPLEX readiness is not necessarily effective⁹

Objective

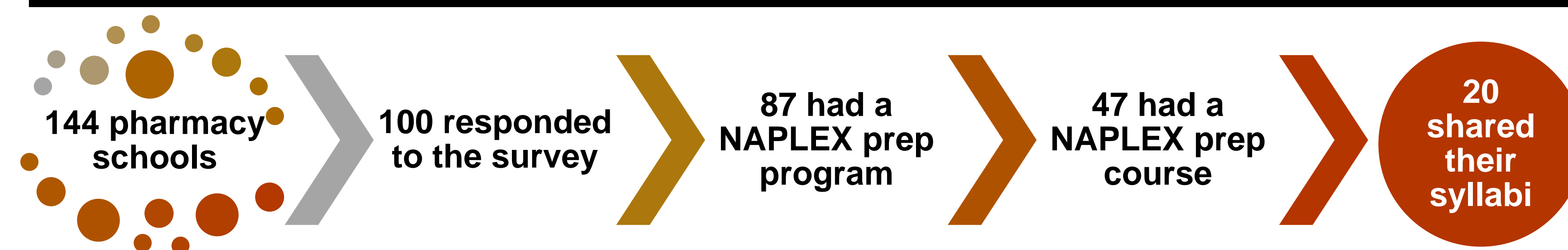
To characterize the structure and content of required NAPLEX preparation courses.

Methods

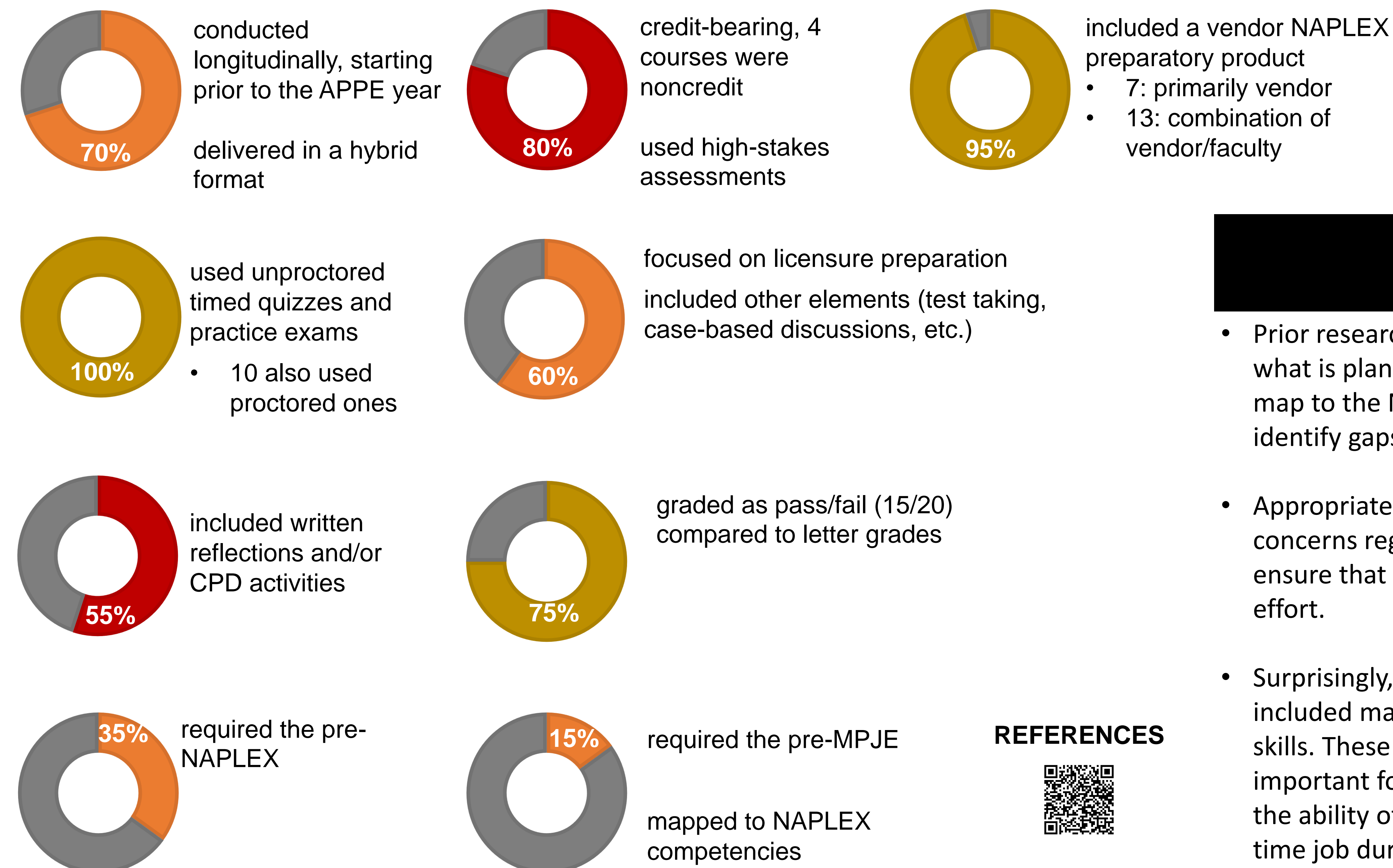
A survey on NAPLEX preparation practices was developed and distributed to a national panel of respondents from all ACPE-accredited pharmacy schools. NAPLEX/MPJE prep course syllabi were collected. These were reviewed and summarized in a data collection table that identified four elements:



Results



NAPLEX PREP COURSES, BY THE NUMBERS



Characteristic	Respondent Data (N=20)			National Data (N=144)		
	Private N	Public N	Total N	Private N	Public N	Total N
0-6 program		1	1	7	2	9
Midwest				2		2
Northeast		1	1	5	2	7
3-year accelerated	3		3	17	2	19
Midwest				2		2
Northeast				2		2
South	3		3	7	1	8
West				6	1	7
4-year program	8	8	16	50	67	117
Midwest	3	1	4	9	19	28
Northeast	3	1	4	11	5	16
South	2	4	6	18	30	48
West		2	2	9	13	22
International				1		1
Combination Program (3-year and 4-year)				1		1
Northeast				1		1
Grand Total	11	9	20	73	71	144

Implications

- Prior research has found utility in curricular mapping to ensure the intended curriculum (i.e., what is planned) is actually what is learned. Surprisingly, most syllabi in this study did not map to the NAPLEX competencies despite their stated purpose. Mapping would help to identify gaps and ensure a more comprehensive prep course.
- Appropriately, most NAPLEX preparation courses awarded credit. Given recent academy-wide concerns regarding curricular overload and faculty and student workload, it is important to ensure that students earn credit hours and faculty are acknowledged for their teaching effort.
- Surprisingly, NAPLEX preparation courses were not just about passing the NAPLEX and included many other concepts such as professional identity formation and job preparation skills. These skills may not be explicitly taught in the experiential curriculum yet are important for pharmacy graduates to be successful. This could raise some concerns about the ability of students to manage didactic learning while often having the equivalent of a full-time job during APPE rotations.

REFERENCES

