

## UJIAN NASIONAL DI INDONESIA DAN IMPLIKASINYA TERHADAP PEMBELAJARAN BAHASA INGGRIS

<sup>1</sup>Ali Saukah, <sup>2</sup>Agus Eko Cahyono

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Negeri Malang, <sup>2</sup>Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University of Malang  
<sup>1</sup>alisaukah@yahoo.com, <sup>2</sup>cahyonoaguseko@gmail.com

### Abstrak

Perubahan fungsi Ujian Nasional (UN) dari “high-stakes testing” menjadi “low-stakes testing” mendorong penulis untuk melakukan penelitian eksploratif terhadap persamaan dan perbedaan UN dalam fungsinya yang berbeda dengan mengkaji dampaknya pada proses belajar-mengajar mata pelajaran Bahasa Inggris. Penulis mengkaji bagaimana para guru mengajar Bahasa Inggris dalam mempersiapkan para siswa menghadapi UN sebelum dan setelah ada perubahan kebijakan. Penelitian eksploratif ini dilaksanakan dengan mewawancarai enam guru bahasa Inggris dari tiga sekolah yang mutunya berbeda-beda. Wawancara terhadap para guru dilakukan menjelang pelaksanaan UN 2015. Penelitian ini dilengkapi dengan data sekunder berupa hasil UN 2015 yang memperkuat temuan penelitian. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa sekolah yang mutunya lebih rendah cenderung lebih banyak terpengaruh oleh perubahan status UN daripada sekolah yang mutunya lebih tinggi dalam hal mempersiapkan para siswanya menghadapi UN. Hasil analisis data sekunder, rendahnya aspek kejujuran dalam UN, menunjukkan UN masih dianggap sebagai “high-stakes testing”.

**Kata kunci:** *tes beresiko tinggi, tes beresiko rendah, ujian nasional, bahasa inggris*

## NATIONAL EXAM IN INDONESIA AND ITS IMPLICATIONS TO THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF ENGLISH

<sup>1</sup>Ali Saukah, <sup>2</sup>Agus Eko Cahyono

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Negeri Malang, <sup>2</sup>Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University of Malang  
<sup>1</sup>alisaukah@yahoo.com, <sup>2</sup>cahyonoaguseko@gmail.com

### Abstract

The change of the status of the National Exam (NE) from high-stakes testing to low-stakes testing inspired the researchers to explore its effects on the teaching and learning of English. This qualitative exploratory study tried to investigate how English teachers taught their students to prepare NE at senior high schools in two different functions by involving six English teachers from three schools varying in the quality in terms of the schools' demography, academic achievement, and facilities. The study was also strengthened by a set of secondary data from the results of the NE in 2015. The result of study involving the six teachers shows that the higher the quality of the schools the less they are affected by the change of the functions of the NE. The result of the analysis involving the secondary data shows that in spite of the change of its function, the NE tends to remain a high-stakes testing.

**Keywords:** *High-Stake Testing, Low-Stake Testing, National Exam, English*

## **Introduction**

The implementation of National Exam (NE) in Indonesia was considered as a high-stake testing leading to phenomena labelled as washback effects, especially because its result was used as a basis to make decisions about the students' graduation at high schools. It has generated positive and negative washback effects which have created controversies between those who were in favor of and those who were against NE. In a study conducted by Mardiani (2012, p.362) it is revealed that those who were in favor of NE considered that NE would be able to improve the quality of education; whereas those who were against NE argued that the NE has created injustice and anxiety among the students, and that NE only focused on cognitive aspects and ignored the affective and the psycho-motoric aspect of educational objectives.

The question to be raised is whether the positive effects outperform the negative effects or vice versa; or both are equal. Efforts should be given to minimize the negative effects and maximize the positive effects after a study has revealed the facts. Alderson & Wall (1993) and Brown (2004), and supported by Volante (2004) state that the negative washback may lead to the teaching of narrow curriculum which restricts students' other academic achievement, i.e. speaking and writing skills, which are not being tested in NE in Indonesia. A meta-synthesis study conducted by Au (2007) involving 49 research studies found that high-stake tests have a tremendous impact towards the practices of curriculum of teaching and learning: most of the them lead to narrowing the curriculum and the use of teacher-centered pedagogy, but some lead to the focus on the competences required in the curriculum and the use of student-centered pedagogies, depending on the kinds of test items developed for the tests. A study by Mardapi et al. (2004) found that the positive effects of NE in Indonesia outperformed its negative effects as perceived by the respondents.

The government policy towards the implementation of NE in Indonesia brought about negative impacts for students in local and National level when the result of NE was used as a basis to make decisions about the students' graduation. Up to 2014, the NE created controversies in terms of its negative effects, especially in the integrity of the schools in implementing the NE and the students in doing the NE. Apparently, the Ministry of Education and Culture responded to the phenomena by changing the policy from using the result of the NE as the basis to make decisions about the students' decisions to dropping this function (Peraturan Pemerintah, 2015).

According to the new policy, the students' graduation will be entirely under the authority of schools based on the students' academic achievements at schools. Beginning in the year 2015, the NE is used as a basis to (1) map out the quality of education of instructional programs and/or schools throughout the nation, (2) consider selection purposes for the next levels of education, and (3) plan some corrective actions and funding schemes to support the improvement of the quality of education at schools and district levels.

In response to the significant change of the policy of the Ministry of Education and Culture in the implementation of the NE, the present study is trying to investigate the effects of the change of the policy on the teaching of English, especially in preparing the students for the NE. In addition, this study is conducted to explore any differences in the ways the English teachers teach English in preparing the students for the NE when it was still used as a basis to make decisions about the students' graduation, which was then considered as a high-stakes testing (up to the 2014 NE implementation) and when the result of the NE was not used as a basis to make decisions for the students' graduation, which was then considered as a low-stakes testing (in the 2015 NE implementation). The result of the present study may also indicate whether the change of the policy

affects the status of the NE, remaining as a high-stakes testing, or becoming a low-stakes testing.

**Research Method**

This qualitative exploratory study involved six teachers of English from three senior high schools of different qualities in

terms of demography and achievements of the schools, as well as the facilities available at the schools, as shown in Table 1. Four teachers got the bachelor’s degree in English Language Education and the other two got master’s degree in the same field. Their experience in teaching English ranges from 10 to 30 years.

Tabel 1. Characteristics of School Settings

Aspects Determining	School A (High-Achieving School)	School B (Low-Achieving School)	School C (Low-Achieving School)
Quality of School	(High-Achieving School)	(Low-Achieving School)	(Low-Achieving School)
Status	Government	Private	PrivateVocational
Accreditation	A	not accredited	not accredited
Number of Teachers	63 teachers	9 teachers	45 teachers
Number of Students	1203 students	32 students	308 students
Number of Classes	71 classes	6 classes	20 classes
Other Aspects	Established in 1950, the 2nd ranked/best school in Malang	Established in 1975	Established in 2003

The data were collected from all the six subjects by employing a semi-structured interview technique, each participant is interviewed one time between 30 and 60 minutes to investigate the ways they teach English to prepare the NE in the 2015 implementation and in the years before that. The results of the interviews were analyzed and summarized to answer the research questions.

In addition to that, secondary data obtained from the results of the 2015 NE implementation reported by the Ministry of Education and Culture were also analyzed to strengthen the quality of the findings of the present study, especially in addressing the effects of the 2015 NE implementation on the integrity of the schools in implementing the 2015 exam and the students in doing the tests. The result of analyzing the secondary data can serve as evidence to answer the question whether the effects of the NE in the new policy on their integrity remain the same. The answer to this question can be discussed leading to the answer to the question whether the NE in the new policy is still considered as a high-stake testing or not.

**Results**

The presentation of the results of the present study will include how the English

teachers (1) organize the time to prepare their students for the NE (time arrangement), (2) the teaching materials and strategies, (3) the medium of instruction, and (4) the other teaching and learning activities. They will be organized into two sections: before 2015 NE implementation when the result of the NE was still used as a basis to make decisions about the students’ graduation, and in 2015 NE implementation when it was not used as a basis to make such decisions anymore.

**Time Arrangement to Prepare for the NE Implementations before the Year 2015**

All the teachers agreed that, actually, preparation for the NE consumed a lot of time. Table 1 presents their responses to the question; “How long do the schools and the teachers need to prepare for the National Examination?” and “Do you think it is enough to prepare everything?”

In preparing the students to face the NE, four teachers said that the preparation started in the beginning of the first semester of the third grade, but more intensively in the second semester, and about three to four months before the NE. They agreed that the amount of time was too short, they needed more time. Below are the responses from those four teachers in the same school

and the other two teachers from different schools.

Table 2. Duration of Preparation for the NE

School A	School B	School C
From the first semester of the third grade	From the early semester of first grade	From the early semester of first grade

T1: “The preparation begins when they are in the third grade, but more intensively, it starts in the second semester. I think it is still not enough, because there are a lot of things that should be prepared.”

T2: “We need about three to four months before the examination. It is still not enough, because it seems that we have to summarize and review all the materials from the first grade.”

Teacher Three (T3), Teacher Four (T4), Teacher Five (T5), and Teacher Six (T6) agreed that the preparation actually started when the students entered the first year of senior high school because the materials would be taken from the first year materials. However, the preparation was done more intensively when the second semester started. Below is the response from Teacher Three and Teacher Four.

T3: “NE preparation starts from the third grade, there is extra learning course after school”

T4: “Students start having NE preparation since third grade, besides, they also join private course outside school”

T5: “It actually starts when the students were in the first year, but more intensively, the preparation starts when they were in the

third year”

T6: “It starts in the beginning of the semester until the day of the examination. It is still not enough, because we have to review the material that had been taught in grade 10 and 11.”

They have started preparing their students for NE in the first semester of the first year because they consider that students should understand and learn NE materials from earlier time to get the best score for their NE. Whereas English teachers in a school with better quality are not worried too much of their students’ preparation because they have good learning motivation as well as good understanding toward NE materials indicated by their English skills they have learnt since the first year.

Teaching Materials and Strategies to Prepare for the NE Implementations before the Year 2015

The teachers said that the area of English language skills focused determined by the competency standard of graduation (*Standar Kompetensi Lulusan*) set for the NE included reading and listening. So the preparation process was more focused on reading and listening. Table 2 presents their responses to the following question; “What language skills and areas are emphasized in the preparation process? or “Do the teachers emphasize every language skill and its component—reading, listening, speaking, writing, grammar, and vocab—or just emphasize on one or two skills?”

Table 3. Teaching Materials and Strategy

School A	School B	School C
Regular class: based on curriculum (all the skills).  Class after school: More reading and listening exercises, textbooks, text types (genre), supplementary materials, NE past papers, commercial books for NE preparation, test taking strategies, developing communicative competence	Regular class: based on curriculum and mixed with materials for NE  Class after school: More text types, commercial books for NE preparation, reading texts, listening practice, NE past papers, practicing the test, questions and answers, test taking strategies, NE try out	Regular class & Class after school: More textbooks, supplementary materials from the internet, few are based on curriculum, explanation, questions and answers, teaching to the test from NE past papers, listening practice, reading practice, exercise more on NE format, test taking strategies, NE try out

Teacher One said that the focus of the teaching depended on what would be measured in the NE, which were focused on reading and listening. Because, between the two skills, more test items measured reading, the preparation was more focused on the reading as shown on the response from Teacher One below.

T1: "The focus is on listening and reading. However, as there are more test items on reading section than listening, so the preparation is more focused on reading."

Teacher Two said that she focused on vocabulary, because to be able to answer the questions in the NE, the students needed a good vocabulary understanding as shown by her response below.

T2: "The readings that we are learning could be one of the questions in the NE, so the focus is on vocabulary."

Teacher Three said that in this preparation process, he also focused on kinds of expression as shown from his response below.

T3: "For the NE, we focused on reading and kinds of expression."

Teacher Four added that the other two skills, speaking and writing, were also taught but in less portion. These two skills were used for practice examination such as interview and story-telling, delivering speech and some dialogues. Below is the response from Teacher Four.

T4: "We focus on listening and reading. But, we also teach the other skills, because there is performance test in the English Subject."

Teachers focused more on listening and reading because the English NE Competency Standards of Graduate (*Standar Kompetensi Lulusan*) was focussed on listening and reading as shown below.

T5: "In the regular class, 50% of materials are focused on materials for NE preparation, since class after school is not adequate; which include enrichment materials of the NE exercises in the previous years, more on reading."

T6: "Lessons in the third grade in both regular class and class after school are

focused on materials for NE preparation since class after school does not run well; students have low motivation in learning during the class after school."

English teachers in school B and C think that their students should have more time to learn NE materials. Therefore, they tend to narrow the curriculum to teach to the test by giving test-taking strategies to prepare for the NE, and by making the students be familiar with the NE items. On the other hand, English Teachers at School A, which is considered to better in the quality than other two schools, especially in terms of the students input, teach English according to the curriculum, covering all the four language skills. They think that students are independent learners and have their own learning styles. They think that teaching English according to the curriculum will provide the students with any of language skills to be covered in the NE test items.

The Medium of Instruction to Prepare for the NE Implementations before the Year 2015

Based on the responses given by the teachers related to the question; "What is the medium of instruction used in the preparation process?", it was found that there were differences in the medium of instruction among the schools in delivering the lessons as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. The Medium of Instruction

School A	School B	School C
English is mostly used as a medium of instruction	English is rarely used as a medium of instruction	English is quite rarely used as a medium of instruction, mostly in Indonesian

Teacher One said that in the preparation process she used more English than Indonesian; it was around 70% in English and 30% in Indonesian. Meanwhile, Teacher Two said that 60% was in English and 40% was in Indonesian. When the students found it difficult to understand the meaning

of certain materials, teachers would explain them in Indonesian. Below are the responses from Teacher One and Teacher Two.

T1: "Here, we focus in English, so the medium of instruction is about 70% in English and 30% in Indonesian."

T2: "Just in general, the medium of instruction is 60% in English and 40% in Indonesian; we focus on vocabulary and spoken language."

Teacher Three said that she often used different media of instruction in different proportions, sometimes 60% in English and 40% in Indonesian, and in other times 50% in English and 50% in Indonesian. They depended on whether students find problems in undersating the lessons or not. Below is the response from Teacher Three.

T3: "I usually teach using English as the medium of instruction about 60% and about 40% in Indonesian, or sometimes 50% in English and 50% in Indonesian. When things seem too hard for the students to understand when it is in English, I use Indonesian."

Considering that his students were not as good as the other students from other schools, Teacher Four used 40% in English and 60% in Indonesian as the medium of instruction. When his students found it difficult to understand the meaning of certain vocabulary items, Teacher Four explained using Indonesian. According to him, because the English Section of the NE requires mastery of vocabulary, and translation is the most effective teaching-learning strategy. In addition, Teacher Five and Teacher Six tend to use less English than Indonesian as the medium of instruction for almost the same reason. Below are the responses from Teacher Four, Teacher Five, and Teacher Six.

T4: "I used Indonesian for about 60% and English for about 40% because I tried to develop the students' ability to answer questions which were mostly about vocabulary."

T5: "I used English as the medium of instruction for about 20-30%, no more than

that since half of the students did not understand if I used English."

T6: "Little by little I used English in explaining lesson. My focus was on students' understanding related to grammar and vocabulary usage"

#### Other Teaching and Learning Activities for the NE Implementations before the Year 2015

All teachers involved in this study agreed that National Examination would cause the students to be very nervous. So, the teachers tried to insert some fresh and fun activities to reduce the level of the students' stress. They reported the other teaching and learning activities based on the following questions: "Are there any other teaching and learning activities?" and "How important do you think those activities are?" The result of interviewing the English teachers from the three different senior high schools can be shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Other teaching and learning activities

School A	School B	School C
Story telling, listening to English music, watching movies in English, studying in language laboratory	Listening to English music, watching movies in English	Listening to English music, language games

To reduce the students' boredom, teachers used other teaching learning activities such as story telling, watching movies or listening to music in English. They realized that students needed something fun and fresh so that they could not get easily fed up with the materials, and hopefully being involved in such activities, the students could reduce their stress level. They believed that some fun activities such as watching movies and listening to some songs are effective relaxation medium. When the students were involved in an activity such as watching movies, the teachers hoped that the students could find the movies motivating. Also, there were follow

up activities after watching the movies. Teachers gave assignment related to the movies, such as by asking the students to modify the ending parts of the movies. Below are the responses from all teachers.

T1: "The other activities were inserted to reduce boredom because the stress level is rising as the NE is coming"

T2: "There must be boredom. I'm afraid the students would not get the materials well. So I would do some relaxation."

T3: "Not only watching movie, but there should be something to be learnt. Maybe students shall make their own movie's ending. Or, by listening to music, students also could learn grammar and vocab."

T4: "In facing the NE, we prepare the students intensively. In order to reduce the boredom, sometimes we send them to the LAB."

T5: "In the high intensity of students' learning activity, they need fun learning activity such as listening to music or watching film in English, then recording some new vocabularies."

T6: "To reduce tiresome in learning English, I usually bring tape/laptop and turn on English songs or sometimes I give them language games"

#### Time Arrangement to Prepare for the 2015 NE Implementation

Apparently, the change of NE status which can be considered to become a low-stake testing, or more appropriately a lower-stake testing, affects the non-favourite schools more than the favorite ones, in terms of the start in preparing NE, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Time Arrangement

School A	School B	School C
From the first semester of the third grade	From the first semester of the third grade	From the first semester of the third grade

Here are the responses of the English teachers relating to the duration of the teaching and learning activities to prepare their students for the 2015 NE.

T1: "Even though NE does not affect the students' graduation, it does not decrease students' learning motivation, learning habit to start class after school in the beginning of third grade has been a learning style from year to year"

T2: "The change of current status of NE does not discourage schools, teachers, and students to keep enthusiastic for NE preparation"

T3: "NE preparation is similar as the previous years. Students are still enthusiastic to join class after school and study hard to get the best score from NE for entering university without tests"

T4: "School is working harder for NE preparation because there is a need to compete with other schools in Indonesia. Besides, this year, school is appointed by government education institution to carry out online National examination, the first time for such an application"

Those four teachers emphasized that the change of NE status does not affect at all to the students to keep studying hard for NE. The same as the previous years, NE preparation in the form of extra class after school starts in the first semester of the third grade. It is different from those from less favourite schools as stated by Teacher Five from School B and Teacher Six from School C.

T5: "NE preparation started from the first grade for the previous years, but in line with the change of NE status, the school starts the NE preparation in the third grade"

T6: "The teachers think that it will be wasting a lot of time if the NE preparation, that is just to teach to the test (test coaching), starts from the first semester. Therefore, the preparation starts from third grade with the new policy of the NE"

#### Teaching Materials and Strategies to Prepare for the 2015 NE Implementation

Pertaining to the current status of NE, most schools have the same style in preparing NE. NE preparation is not done in the regular class, which is focused on the curriculum (teaching all the four English

language skills). The instructional activities for preparing the students to take the 2015 NE are carried out in the class after school

as extra-class activities. The teaching materials and strategies of three schools are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7. Teaching Materials and Strategies

School A	School B	School C
Regular class: based on the curriculum.	Regular class: based on the curriculum.	Regular class: based on the curriculum.
Class after school: More reading and listening exercises, textbooks, text types (genre), supplementary materials, NE past papers, commercial books for NE Preparation, test taking strategies, developing communicative competence.	Class after school: teaching to the test from NE past papers, listening practice, reading practice, NE “try out”.	Class after school: teaching to the test from NE past papers, listening practice, reading practice, NE “try out”.

The English teachers in both favourite and less favourite schools give different responses dealing with their teaching materials and strategy for NE preparation. The teachers at the favourite schools do not change the teaching materials and strategies in spite of the change of the NE function. However, the teachers at the less favourite schools, due to the change of NE status to be a lower-stake test, change the teaching strategies from teaching to the test to teaching according to the curriculum. Here are the teachers’ responses.

T1: “The change of NE status in 2015 does not affect the students’ learning activities, regular class keeps running based on curriculum by teaching all English skills integratively for prefinal exam and school final exam”

T2: “The portion of NE preparation in the extra-classes after school does not decrease. Students are also given knowledge on the strategy in doing test. Many of them join private course outside school and they get special tips and tricks to answer questions of the test quickly.”

T3: “The materials for NE preparation include enrichment of reading and listening exercises, knowledge on genre, NE test items of the previous NE or the prediction of NE test item for this year”

T4: “In the regular classes, we teach all the four language skills which can support their understanding on NE materials.”

T5: “School exam is regarded more important than NE because the result of the

school exam will determine the students’ graduation. Therefore, teaching in regular class returns to the curriculum, that is teaching the four English language skills, not test coaching anymore.”

T6: “In the previous years, regular class was used to teach NE preparation, it is now focused on teaching all the four language skills, not only on reading and listening exercises.”

The Medium of Instruction to Prepare for the 2015 NE Implementation

Currently, English teachers in school A mostly use English rather than Indonesian as a medium of instruction in teaching. Meanwhile, those teachers in less favourite schools such as Schools B and C use English and Indonesian as media of instruction equally which is different from the previous years; they rarely used English as the medium of instruction, as shown in Table 7.

Table 7. The Medium of Instruction

School A	School B	School C
English is mostly used as a medium of instruction	English and Indonesian are used as media of instruction in equal proportions	English and Indonesian are used as media of instruction in equal proportions

The summary in Table 7 is derived from the following responses from the teachers involved in this study.



T1: "In the pre-final (school) exam, students get speaking tes, interview or giving a speech in English, so I frequently explain lessons in English, more than 50%."

T2: "To me, the learning habit to explain lessons using English in the class will sharpen and improve students' language skills."

T3: "When teaching the first grade I use 40% of English in explaining lesson, 50% when teaching the second grade, and 60 to 70% when teaching the third grade."

T4: "I think students have been learning English for quite long even since they were in primary school, so when I explain the lessons in English, no obstacles occur."

T5: "Since the school final exam is considered important in line with the change of NE status, I get more enthusiastic in using English, now about 30-40% in explaining the lessons to students so they get accustomed to the vocabulary and pronunciation."

T6: "In pre-final (school) exam students will have a speaking test. To prepare the students, since the early semester of the third grade in the regular class, I use 30% of English in teaching, but sometimes I use translation in Indonesian."

Other Teaching and Learning Activities to Prepare for the 2015 NE Implementation

Third grade students have to take some sets of tests in the last semester of academic year and they need other kinds of learning activities to reduce the boredom. In spite of the change of the function of the 2015 NE, apparently teachers still need to use other teaching learning activities such as story telling, watching movies or listening to music in English as shown in Table 8. They realize that students still need something fun and fresh so that they will not get easily fed up with the materials, although the result of 2015 NE is not used as a basis to make decisions about the students' graduation. The teachers hope that such activities could reduce the stress level as a result of preparing for the tests.

Table 8. Other Teaching and Learning Activities

School A	School B	School C
Story telling, listening to music, watching movies, studying in language laboratory.	Listening to English music, watching movies in English, reading short stories.	Listening to English music, English language games, reading short stories.

Here are the responses from the English teachers involved in this study on other teaching and learning activities to support their students' motivation in preparing for the 2015 NE.

T1: "Learning in regular class is led to master all the four language skills. To support that, students are given systematic projects out of class in groups to analyze movies or short stories in English."

T2: "To reduce boredom of learning in the class, I often invite students to learn English in language laboratory to sharpen all the four language skills, not only listening."

T3: "In speaking, I assign my students to do some projects to have story telling from short stories that they have read or from movies in English that they have watched."

T4: "Fun learning becomes one of my strategies in teaching, that is to motivate students' interest in learning English; every other week we play music or watch movies in English to be analyzed by students."

T5: "To reduce the boredom of learning after class (teaching to the test) that is focused on exercises of NE preparation, in the regular class, we play music or watch films in English and I ask them to list new vocabulary items or develop their language skills."

T6: "I think the third grade students in the last semester have very tight schedule to face sets of tests carried out by the school. Therefore, I involve them in fun learning activities such as language games, listening to music, watching movies, and reading short stories."

By comparing the results of the analysis on the preparations for the NE before

and after the NE policy changes, some similarities and differences can be found about the ways the English teachers teach English for preparing the students for the NE when it was still used to make decisions about the students' graduation and after it is not used for such a decision anymore. The similarities are found in the favorite schools; the teachers there do not change the ways they teach in preparing the students for NE. The teachers at the schools believe that by teaching their students according to the curriculum, they have pr-

pared their students for any kinds of exam, school exam or national exam.

On the other hand, the differences are clearly found in the less favorite schools in response to the change of NE status to be a low-stake testing. Teachers at the schools change the ways to teach from teaching to the test (test coaching) to teaching according to the curriculum. Apparently, the students at the schools become less motivated to study harder for the NE because they know that the result of the 2015 NE is not used to determine their graduation anymore.

Table 9. Comparison between the 2015 NE and before 2015 NE Implementations

Aspects in preparing students for NE	School A (Favorite)	School B (Less Favorite)	School C (Less Favorite)
NE before 2015 (considered as high-stake testing)			
Time of Preparation	From the first semester of the third grade	From the early semester of first grade	From the early semester of first grade
Teaching Materials	Regular class: based on curriculum (4 language skills)  Class after school: More reading and listening exercises, textbooks, text types (genre), supplementary materials, NE past papers, commercial books for NE Preparation, test taking strategies, developing communicative competence	Regular class: based on curriculum and half mixed with materials for NE  Class after school: More text types, commercial books for NE preparation, reading texts, listening practice, NE past papers, practicing the test, questions and answers, test taking strategies, NE try out	Regular class & Class after school:  More textbooks, supplementary materials from the Internet, few are based on curriculum, explanation, questions and answers, teaching to the test from NE past papers, listening practice, reading practice, Exercise more on NE format, test taking strategies, NE try out
Medium of Instruction	English is mostly used as a medium of instruction	English is rarely used as a medium of instruction	English is quite rarely used as a medium of instruction, mostly in Indonesian
Other Teaching and Learning Activities	Story telling, listening to music, watching movies (analysis), studying in language laboratory	Listening to English music, watching movies in English	Listening to English music, English language games
NE in 2015 Implementation (considered as a low-stake testing)			
Duration of Preparation	From the first semester of the third grade	From the first semester of the third grade	From the first semester of the third grade
Teaching Materials	Regular class: based on curriculum (4 language skills)  Class after school: More reading and listening exercises, textbooks, text types (genre), supplementary materials, NE past papers, commercial books for NE Preparation, test taking strategies, developing communicative competence	Regular class: based on curriculum (4 language skills)  Class after school: teaching to the test from NE past papers, listening practice, reading practice, NE try out	Regular class: based on curriculum (4 language skills)  Class after school: teaching to the test from NE past papers, listening practice, reading practice, NE try out
Medium of Instruction	English is mostly used as a medium of instruction	English and Indonesian are equally used as media of instruction	English and Indonesian are used as media of instruction but more in Indonesian
Other Teaching and Learning Activities	Story telling, listening to music, watching movies to be analyzed, studying in language laboratory	Listening to English music, watching movies in English, reading short stories	Listening to English music, English language games, reading short stories

## The Effects of the NE Implementation on the Integrity of the Students

The result of the 2015 NE has been analyzed by the Center for Educational Evaluation of the Ministry of Education and Culture (2015a; 2015b) in terms of the integrity of the students in doing the exam and of the schools in implementing the 2015 exam. The result of the analysis can be used to investigate the effect of the 2015 NE on their integrity and whether the effect on their integrity changes as a result of the new policy of the current NE implementation. The data analyzed come from the following groups of schools: (1) Senior High School students of Natural Science Program, or *IPA*, (2) Senior High School students of Social Science Program, or *IPS*, (3) students of Vocational High Schools, (4) students from different geographical locations, (5) students of Junior High Schools, (6) students of private and government schools, and (7) students of Islamic Schools (or *Madrasah*).

The analysis results in the categorization of all test takers from all kinds of groups into four quadrants: (1) about 11% of all schools have high NE scores and high integrity index in NE (IINE), (2) about 17% of all schools have low NE scores but high IINE, (3) about 22% of all schools have low NE scores and low IINE, and (4) about 50% of all schools have high NE scores but low IINE. Most of the schools are in quadrant 4: high scores of NE but low integrity. It means that the honesty in doing the NE remains a serious problem even though NE is not used anymore to determine the students' graduation.

## Discussion

When the NE is considered to be a high-stake testing, teachers and schools have great attention in preparing the students for the NE. Even in some schools, particularly the less favorite schools start preparing their students for the NE very early when the students are in their first school year. Apparently, they are worried about their students' competencies to do

the test in the NE. The result of the study is in line with the result of the study done by Furaida (2012). Her study, trying to see what goes on in the teaching of English in the class, shows that teachers tend to teach by using drilling exercises and test coaching because they are not confident about their students' competencies.

Principally, teachers agree that to gain good preparation, they need extra time as indicated by the existence of extra-curricular classes after the regular class hours. The instructional activities involve more like drilling, practicing, and reviewing materials for NE. In addition, programs called "the NE try-out" are very commonly practiced by schools, even some local offices of education, or other stakeholders to monitor the students' progress in preparing for NE. The results of the "try-out" are used by the teachers to identify students' weaknesses in certain materials so that corrective actions or treatments can be done by the school teachers. The result of the present study is also in line with the result of a qualitative synthesis done by Au (2007) involving 49 such studies. According to the study, a high-stake testing has predominant effects on curriculum implementation; it tends to narrow "curricular contents into fragmented bits and pieces of knowledge to be learned for the sake of the tests themselves. Therefore, teachers are compelled to use more lecture-based teacher-centered pedagogies."

In the response to the finding on how English teachers teach their students to prepare NE when the status is as a high-stake test and a low-stake test, it seems that those high-achieving schools are not affected by the change of NE status from high to low-stake test and that those low-achieving schools are affected by the current NE status as low-stake test. It can be inferred that those high-achieving schools have high confidence that their students will be ready to take any tests if they teach them according to the curriculum as the right way of teaching.

Meanwhile, the low-achieving schools are highly affected by the current status of NE, the result of which is not used as a basis to determine student's graduation. There is a tendency to prepare NE since the earlier grades and also a tendency to teach to the test. Teachers at such schools tend to narrow curriculum by teaching materials measured in the NE and they put less attention to the others not measured in the NE. In the new policy of the NE, implemented in 2015, they return their way of teaching to stick to curriculum to cover all the four skills. Apparently, in the current status of the NE, the students are not really motivated anymore as indicated by the fact that they do not seriously join the extra-class activities to prepare for the NE after class or join private courses outside schools. Does it mean that the NE exam has changed its status from a high-stake testing to low-stake testing?

Based on the result of the analysis reported by the Ministry of Education and Culture, most of the schools involved in the 2015 NE implementation (about 50%) can be categorized as having low integrity in implementing the NE. The practice of cheating or dishonesty remains a serious problem. It may indicate that for most school personnel which may represent most students and other stake-holders the NE is still considered to be a high-stake testing. In spite of the change of the policy in terms of graduation decisions, the result of the NE is still used a basis to consider for selection purposes at the higher levels of education and a basis to map out the quality of education of the schools throughout Indonesia (Peraturan Pemerintah Nomor 13 Tahun 2015). In other words, to some extent, the NE with the new policy is still considered to be a high-stake testing.

## **Conclusion**

Teachers at favorite schools tend to remain the same in the way they teach English although the National Exam is not used for making decisions about student graduations anymore. Teachers at favorite

schools tend to teach English according to the curriculum in their regular classes in preparing their students for the National Exam. In addition, they also prepare their students, who are still highly motivated to study, for the National Exam in extra-curricular activities. On the other hand, the teachers at less favorite schools tend to change the way they prepare their students for the National Exam in the new policy because their students are not motivated anymore to study for the National Exam.

Apparently, the students think that the National Exam is not a high-stake testing anymore. However, the result of the analysis done by the Ministry of Education and Culture shows that the National Exam tends to be considered as still a high-stake testing as indicated by the low index of integrity in doing the test by the students and in implementing the NE by most schools.

The findings of the present study, as a qualitative exploratory study, imply that more in-depth and/or comprehensive studies should be conducted to investigate (1) possible relationships between the ways of preparing students for a high-stake testing and the levels of professionalism of the teachers, the quality of the schools, and (2) possible causal relationship between integrity of the schools in implementing and the students in taking a high-stake testing, and (3) what really makes an exam a high-stake testing.

## **References**

- Alderson, C. J., & Wall, D. (1993). Does washback exist? *Applied Linguistics*, 14 (2), 115-129.
- Au, W. (2007). High-Stakes Testing and Curricular Control: A Qualitative Metasynthesis. *Educational Researcher*, 36 (5), 258-267.
- Brown, D. H. (2004). *Language assessment principles and classroom practices*. Longman: Pearson Education.
- Furaidah, (2013). *The Teaching of English Preparing Students for High-stake National*

- Examination: a Washback Study*. Unpublished Dissertation. Malang: The Graduate Program of Universitas Negeri Malang.
- Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan (2015a). *Hasil Ujian Nasional SMP Tahun 2015*. Jakarta: Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan.
- Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan (2015b). *Pemanfaatan Hasil Ujiann Nasional 2015*. Jakarta: Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan.
- Mardapi, D., Wahab R., Wagiran B.K., Suharyanto, Murdiyanto, & Nuchron. (2004). *Dampak Ujian Akhir Nasional*. Laporan Penelitian. Yogyakarta: Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta.
- Mardiani, Ridha. (2012). *Positive Washback Effect of the English National Examination (ENE) on Students' Learning*. P 362-370. Proceedings of the 59th TEFLIN International Conference.
- Peraturan Pemerintah Nomor 13 Tahun 2015 Perubahan Kedua Atas Peraturan Pemerintah Nomor 19 Tahun 2005 Tentang Standar Nasional Pendidikan.
- Volante, L. 2004. Teaching to the test: what every educator and policy-maker should know". *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy*, No. 35, accessed on 1 February 2014 from <http://www.umanitoba.ca/publications/cjeap/articles/volante.html>.