

5 | EFL Assessment in Indonesia: National Exams and Quality Education

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THE INDONESIAN SETTING

Testing, including testing of English, especially when it is a high-stake one and administered in a large-scale format like the Indonesian national examination would have not only academic ramification but also social impacts on the society at large. Therefore, social dimensions existing in the Indonesian setting need to be looked at and taken into serious consideration as the impacts of testing could be felt in the lives of the people as a whole. In this respect, it has been well concluded by McNamara and Roever (2006) that “language testing has a real impact on real people’s lives, and we cannot cease our theoretical analyses at the point where the test score is computed (p. 8).” Hence, in order to provide an overall picture of the contextual aspects in Indonesia as regards the teaching and testing of English in the country, the following pieces of information are briefly put forward covering the status of English, how it is offered at schools and with what methods of teaching, what teacher preparation and training is available, how policies are made and implemented at the national and local settings including textbook matters, innovative undertakings and use of ICT, and finally how public media available could contribute to students’ English proficiency through better and more exposure to English.

English in Indonesia

English Status

English is considered the first foreign language, meaning that English on the whole is not used as a medium of instruction at any level of

education but only taught as a compulsory subject at the lower and upper secondary schools and an optional subject at the university level. However, since the enactment of Education Law No 20/2003, each province/district is required to establish a school in each stratum, i.e. primary, junior high and senior high with an international standard, indicated among others by the use of English as a medium of instruction for a number of selected subject matters. We begin to teach English mandatorily at the junior high school level (beginning Grade 7), but it has also been introduced as an option at selected elementary schools, grades 5 and 6. According to the statistic issued by the Ministry of National Education, in the academic year 2007-2008, over 15 million students studying at junior and general secondary schools plus vocational secondary schools throughout the country are learning English. English is a required subject in junior and senior high schools. Thus, English is offered for six years at a stretch. There are 26,277 junior high schools with 8,614,306 students; 10,239 general senior high schools with 3,758,893 students; and 6,746 vocational senior high schools with 2,738,962 students. At the end of year 9 and 12, students' English achievement is assessed through the national examination, which in the testing packages includes English.

English Offerings

English is taught 4 lessons a week at most junior high schools; each lesson lasts for 45 minutes. At the senior high school, English is taught 4 lessons a week in year 1 and 2, and in year 3, 5 lessons in a week in the natural science study stream, 7 lessons a week in the social study stream, and 11 lessons a week in the language stream. English is commonly used as a medium of instruction only for classes/institutions in which English is taught; for example, some private institutions at the tertiary level for management use English as the medium of instruction for some of their courses. In schools with international standards, there could be more extra hours of English offered, plus use of English as the medium of instruction for selected subject matters. The fact that English offerings vary from one type of school to another has an impact on how English assessment is developed and administered. The difficulty level and coverage in the exams are determined by the intensity of instruction, i.e. by the number of hours English is offered.

English Models

British and American Englishes are the main models especially for pronunciation. British English used to be the only model of pronunciation; however, due to a wide exposure to American English through different media, English learners tend to acquire American English. The two models are reflected in some required textbooks of English. Other English varieties (Australian, Singaporean, Malaysian, Philippine) could also characterize types of Englishes offered and used dependent upon who teaches and where the school is located, i.e. being close to or far from the country in which a particular variety of English is predominantly used as a daily means for communication. In the assessment material both varieties of English are accommodated, especially in the listening section.

Teaching Methods

Up to 1968, Grammar Translation Methods had been prevalent in the teaching of English at Indonesian schools with some Direct Methods here and there also utilized before the official adoption of the Oral Approach in 1968. Beginning 1975 Oral/Audio-lingual Approach was adopted, and then replaced by the “Communicative” Approach in 1984, and finally “revised” to a different pedagogical label meaning-based approach in 1994. Genre-based approach began to be introduced prior to the introduction of the 2004 curriculum, which is currently referred to as one of the bases for the development of the so called school-based curriculum to be planned, developed and adopted by each of the schools. The school-based curriculum is to be developed with reference to the list of competencies introduced nationally by the Ministry of National Education. In the Indonesian language, the school-based curriculum is called *Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan* abbreviated into KTSP which literally means Education Unit Level Curriculum. Test items are to be developed on the basis of what is covered in the curriculum.

Textbook Matters

There used to be two types of textbooks—main textbooks and supplementary textbooks, the former commonly called package books generally made available to the school gratis by the Ministry of National Education, the latter published commonly by private publishers and selected locally by the school. Main textbooks used to be

published by the government-owned publisher, i.e. PT Balai Pustaka; however this practice is no longer true now. Textbooks could be written and published by any one; they are then submitted to the Ministerial Task Force for Textbook Evaluation whose assessment result is used by the Ministry to endorse use of the books as main or supplementary textbooks in a particular level of schooling. All these textbooks are then copyrighted by the Ministry of National Education. Each of the school is given freedom to choose whichever book already endorsed by the Ministry for whatever relevant subject matter. A new policy has now been adopted that is by making the endorsed textbooks available on line. Therefore, e-textbooks are now made available by the government and could be accessed through the Ministry of National Education websites by any one (students, parents, NGOs, publishing and printing companies, etc) and the books could also be printed and sold to the students by any interested individuals, community organizations, and or companies. For this purpose, the only regulation from the government is the highest price allowed for each of the books available on line if it is to be sold to the public. In August 2008, 287 titles of e-books were officially launched by President of the Republic of Indonesia, and these e-books could be downloaded by any one from anywhere in the country, for free.

Policies

All educational matters used to be basically controlled and supervised by the central government. We used to have the so called national curriculum or core curriculum for each level of education, from primary school up to the university. However, after the decentralization and autonomy policy was introduced a few years ago, plenty of adequate room for each region and school to develop, determine and implement their own local policies, budgets, regulations, and local contents in their own curricula has been made available. Now, with the stipulation of Regional Autonomy Law in which power and authority of governance in almost all aspects of life including education are to be handed over to the district government, educational policies, budgets, regulations and curricula are to be planned, developed and implemented basically by the local government. The school-based curriculum is the current version of the curriculum to be developed in each school, which could be on the

basis of the 1994 curriculum, the 2004 curriculum, and the list of competencies generated by the Ministry of National Education. English instruction in schools, for example, is still under the control and supervision of the government (central and local) in the form of expected engagement to the list of competencies for English offered at a school. Private non-school or non-formal institutions have more freedom to plan and develop their English courses, usually determined by the private institutions or foundations concerned. It is very common that the greatest impetus for changes in policies in English teaching especially comes from the teachers colleges offering English education. As parents and students now begin to be better aware of the role of English in the competitive global era, many parents especially in towns and cities would send their children to schools in which English is more intensively and professionally offered.

Innovative Efforts

The following efforts and practices could be listed as innovative undertakings:

- Pilot Project for Improvement of the Teaching of English covering method/approach, materials, and teachers' language proficiency carried out by Language Teacher Training and Development Center, Directorate General of Primary and Secondary Education, Ministry of National Education;
- use of locally available sources such as local legends, folklores, animals, tourist resorts, plants, industries etc in developing EFL teaching materials and creating classroom activities;
- teachers-of-the-same-subject-matter networking in the form of semi-formal/informal conferences and gatherings conducted by regional/ local Association of Teachers of the Same Subject in which high school teachers of the same subject, including teachers of English, would sit together, share their experiences and try to find solutions to problems and difficulties they have encountered in their teaching activities that could cover problems in methodology as well as in English proficiency itself;

- use of TV broadcasts in very few schools in big cities as supplementary teaching-learning activities through TVE (Television for Education) organized by the Ministry of National Education and use of the cyberspace technology have been realized in improving their students' competence in English;
- improvement of teachers' competence through in-service and on-service trainings conducted by the World-Bank-Supported Enhancement of Teachers' Performance Project and also USAID-Funded Project at the national, provincial and district levels through a cascading type of training bringing about among others national and provincial master teachers;
- distance education courses for EFL teachers offered by the Indonesia Open University.

Use of Technology

Use of technology such as the language lab and computer used to be introduced in a relatively very small number of schools as we concentrated our efforts and energy more on improving teachers' competence and helping the teachers teach in a more professional fashion. However, now e-Learning is being introduced, implemented and encouraged in the form of distance-learning modes, interactive broadcasts on Education-TV, and on-line learning. These efforts are carried out especially to enhance and expand access to national education. Education-TV was first launched in 2004 to specifically broadcast education-related programs including teaching-learning programs relevant to school curricula. In addition, national education networks were initiated in 2003 utilized by Ministry of National Education for administrative purposes, teaching learning materials, and education and policy information sharing. Until 2008, instruments and related equipment for access to Education-TV abbreviated into TVE had been made available by the government for junior high schools throughout the country including 80,275 TV sets, 33,679 units of DVD players, 17,412 units of TVRO (parabolic antenna), 2,515 units of power generators, and 50 units of solar power generators. Education TV is supported by 50 local and cable TV stations throughout the country

(Gani, 2008). To enhance use of ICT in education, different kinds of trainings for National Education Networks have been held involving ICT managers and developers, senior technicians, network node technicians, senior teacher trainers, master trainers, and teachers representing affiliations of same-subject-matter teachers.

Use of English in the Future

Taking into account the current Indonesian population and its growth, the number of users of English by the year 2010 is likely to be approximately between 13—18% of the total population, a rough estimate on the basis of the Indonesian population (42.3 million) having completed at least senior high school education (Statistical Year Book of Indonesia 2008). Our current population is approximately 228.5 million. If we use the annual population growth rate of 1.36%, in 2010 we could reach the total population of approximately 234.7 million; and therefore the users of English using the above percentage estimate would be approximately between 30.5-42.2 million. The uses of English would primarily be in the fields of education (especially higher education), trade, tourism, commerce and industry. The intra-national use of English will grow because of the increased intensity of our people's involvement with international enterprises doing business and more educational cooperation with universities and institutions that are interested in investing their money and expertise in our country. In the same way, the inter-national use of English will also grow as a consequence of and follow-up to all the English-requiring activities indicated above.

Media in English

There used to be only a few English newspapers such as Jakarta Post, Jakarta Time and a very limited number of English news magazines, published mostly in the capital city of Jakarta addressed generally to expatriates, businessmen, and university academics. Currently there are quite a few media in English available to be accessed by anyone including those who are interested in improving their English while gaining latest information on new issues in the community and abroad. Internet news media include Indonesia Headline at www.indonesiaheadlines.com and Viva News at www.en.vivanews.com. Tempo magazine also publishes the English version weekly and could also

be accessed at www.tempointeractive.com. In addition, there are also several newspapers issued daily in Jakarta such as Jakarta Globe, Jakarta News and Jakarta Post and they respectively could be accessed at www.thejakartaglobe.com, www.jakartanews.net, and www.thejakartapost.com. Some TV stations also broadcast news in English on a regular basis like TVRI and Metro TV; and Education TV (TVE) broadcasts supplementary English programs for school students. The above media are some of the sources from which test materials are developed.

ENGLISH IN THE NATIONAL EXAMS

The historical scenario of the teaching of English as a foreign language in Indonesia has been laid out in a relatively short period of time with very little change as regards curricular allocation and instructional practices in school and with some indication of somewhat 'major' change at the macro-level of language-policy by keeping in line with the development of approaches to language teaching elsewhere. In formal schooling, in the earlier part of our country's educational development since independence up to the 1960s, English had officially been included in the lower secondary school curriculum with 4 credit hours and in the upper secondary school with 3 credit hours, adopting in most instructional modes grammar translation methods. The same time allocation can be seen in the 1975 school curriculum—4 hours at the lower secondary school and 3 hours on the average at the upper secondary school (in the upper secondary school language stream, English was offered 6 hours on the average), with audio-lingual and grammar-based instructional practices widely implemented. The 1984 curriculum still emphasizing language components and aspects as keys to language-skill development has opted for the communicative approach with some obstacles in its implementation. Beginning the early 2000s, discourse- and genre-based approaches were introduced to the teaching of English with more emphasis on the productive skills that should be enhanced on the students learning English at schools.

National exams are administered in the Indonesian schooling system as a means of nationally assessing students' learning achievement at the

end of each educational institution level (junior high and senior high). These exams could provide information on learning achievement of every individual student throughout the country and on successes and failures of teaching learning endeavors at the school, district or municipality, and provincial levels on the basis of the already set-up national standards. Results of the exams up until 2007 had been used simply for passing criteria and school completion certification. Therefore within the framework of achieving quality education beginning the fiscal year 2007, the government began to make use of the results of the exams for improvement of teaching learning activities in particular and for upliftment of educational quality throughout the country in general.

In the national examination for Junior and Senior Secondary Schools, English has always been included as a subject to be taken by all students. English used to be offered as one of the three subjects tested in the national examination, accompanying the Indonesian language and Mathematics. The latest national exams conducted this year 2009 covered four subjects for Junior High School: Indonesian, English, Mathematics, and Science; and 6 subjects for Senior High School: (Science Stream) Indonesian, English, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, and Biology; (Social Science Stream) Indonesian, English, Mathematics, Economics, Sociology, and Geography; (Language Stream) Indonesian, English, Mathematics, Literature, Anthropology, Foreign Language.

TEST DEVELOPMENT

The content of the national exam is developed on the basis of school leavers' competence standards for each of the subject matters included in the national examination. The standards are clearly spelled out in the Ministerial Regulation issued once every year ahead of the actual administration of the national examination. With respect to the subjects tested, including English, the Ministerial regulation covers two parts: competence standards and skills/abilities to be tested, the latter emanating from the former. Therefore, the regulation is some kind of a syllabus, "a public document, often much simplified, which indicates to test users what the test will contain" as differentiated by Alderson,

Clapham and Wall (1995) from specifications. Hence, this regulation is the basis for determining specs for selecting test items from testing banks established at EEC (Education Evaluation Centre). The following sub-sections provide a brief rundown of how test items are written, what principles are to follow in developing the test items, and how the items are selected.

Steps in Test Item Writing

Test items are basically developed under the authority of Education Evaluation Center (EEC) in the Ministry of National Education. Since the development of English examination instruments basically falls under the category of spec-driven testing, the first step taken is to set test item specification(s) containing specs which represents English teaching items and competencies expected to be gained by the English learners. This step is conducted at EEC by experienced English teachers accompanied by EEC staff. Afterwards the specification draft is carefully read and if necessary revised by the assigned EEC staff member.

The revised version of the specification is then sent to regional offices of education to be used for test item writing by selected trained test item writers, commonly well-experienced teachers in the region. This phase will take about a month to complete. The written test items are then sent back to EEC and reviewed by teachers or university lecturers who are experts in testing and teaching English. The reviewed test items are then assembled in a format that is ready for trialing. Trial tests are conducted in several provinces representing western, central and eastern parts of Indonesia consisting of schools with different ability levels: high, middle and low.

After the trials, all test items are analyzed using ITEMAN, part of the MicroCAT testing system, and BIGSTEPS, Rasch Measurement Computer Program. Each test item is then scrutinized to see its facility value and its discrimination index. Good test items are stored in item banks to be called upon when needed. Bad items are revised to be then trialled again. Before the time for the National Exam comes, specs and the proportions of the difficulty level of items are determined by National Education Standards Board. On the basis of these specs plus

test item facility values, a set of test items is assembled to come up with a final version of the English testing instrument. These specs are developed in reference to Ministerial Regulation on the National Exams. For the latest national exam in the academic year 2008-2009, competence standards covered only include listening and reading. In the listening section, testees are expected to understand the meaning of oral discourses in the form of short functional texts, conversations, narrative and descriptive monologues of daily nature such as narratives, recounts, news items, and reports. In the reading section, testees are expected to understand the meaning of written discourses in the form of narrative, descriptive and argumentative short functional texts and essays regarding daily life settings.

Tenets for Test Item Writing and Revision

According to EEC officials that have given information to me, in writing and revising test items, test writers and revision team members are expected to act in accordance with the following tenets:

1. The test item should match the indicator meant as its reference. If the indicator says that testees are expected to be able to understand a particular notice, then the test item should put forward a notice as its stem, and the question must test specifically testees' understanding of the notice.
2. The options must be homogeneous and logical. The options should be homogeneous in the sense that they contain parts all of the same kind, e.g. if one option is adjectival, then all other options must be adjectival as well. They should be also logical, in the sense that for example if the occurrence in the stem took place in the past, the verb form then must be in the past tense form. Basically, each option should fit equally well into the stem.
3. There should be one and only one correct answer. Test writers should stay away from having an option functioning as a distractor which contains any likelihood of being true or even half true in relation to the stem.
4. The stem must be concise, lucid, and firm. The stem should

be short and to the point. They should also be clear and simple and at the same time it should be firm in delivering its meaning.

5. The stem and options should contain necessary statements only. Any irrelevant phrases and sentences should be avoided, excluded from the test item.
6. The stem should not contain elements that could function as clues to the correct answer. What is included in the stem should not be rewritten as part of the correct option.
7. The stem should not contain statements with double negatives. Test writers are to avoid for example use of *not* together with *except*, *not* in the same sentence/phrase with *nothing* or *no one*.
8. Figures, graphs, tables, diagrams and the like must be clear and functional. Figures, graphs, tables and diagrams must be clearly printed and their parts can be easily read and identified. They should also function in providing information needed by testees to respond to the questions. If they are not functional, they should be discarded.
9. Options must be relatively equal to one another in length. Relatively similar lengths of all the options are expected to equally attract testees in responding to the question in the test item. Each option should not be noticeably longer or shorter than any other option.
10. Options should not contain such a statement as “all answers above are wrong” or “all answers above are true.” Such options would take the place of options which could fit the slot and increase the challenging nature of the test item.
11. Options in the form of numbers or time periods must be chronologically sequenced. Numbers should be sequenced from smallest to biggest or vice versa. In the same way, time-based occurrences should be arranged from earliest to most current or vice versa.
12. The test item should not be dependent on the preceding or succeeding test items. Each test item should be developed as an independent item so that it could be randomly selected on the basis of its specification.

13. An option should not repeat the same words or phrases taken precisely from the stem. This should be taken into consideration to avoid having the correct alternative standing out from the rest of the options.

Test Item Selection

In selecting English test items for the national exam, specifications are first determined and then on the basis of the specifications, test items are selected from EEC bank of English test items by taking into account their item facility and discriminability. As a rule, the index of difficulty of test items selected is determined as requested by National Education Standards Board, which is in charge of the administration and analysis of the national examination. The common proportion of test items in terms of their facility values asked by the National Education Standards Board includes 20% difficult test items, 30% fair test items, and 50% easy test items. Then several final versions of English test instruments are assembled in accordance with the request from the National Education Standards Board.

EXAMS FOR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

In the academic year 2008/2009 the National Agency for Education Standard held the national exam on 20-24 April 2009 for senior high schools and on 27-30 April 2009 for junior high schools. Examinees consisted of 1,517,013 general secondary school students, 706,832 vocational secondary school students, and 3,437,117 junior high school students. As indicated in the government regulation number 19/2005, the national examination results are to be used to map program or school quality, as the basis for selection for entry to a higher level of educational institutions, and to help teachers and school administrators in improving teaching-learning activities in their classes.

The results of the exams are expected to be utilized by school headmasters, teachers, supervisors, heads of provincial/district/ municipality education offices, as well as policy and decision makers at the national level as an instrument in responding to the following questions:

- Are education programs already properly and appropriately developed for a particular school level?
- Are school facilities for learning already adequate to gain learners' utmost learning achievement?
- Are teaching methodologies suggested in teacher guides befitting?
- Are measuring instruments to assess students' learning achievement already valid and reliable?
- Is quality of education evenly spread throughout the country?

With respect to quality assurance, the Agency for Education Quality Assurance, in Indonesian we call it *Lembaga Penjamin Mutu Pendidikan*, has the tasks among others to carry out quality assurance measures at the provincial levels covering primary and high schools on the basis of the policy set up by the Minister of National Education. In its program implementation, this agency has to cooperate with other relevant institutions and agencies within the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) and Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA) especially in developing programs to uplift the quality of schools in general and of evaluation system and its assessing instruments. School profiles could be used as a reference in setting up every measure developed for quality improvement in education by among others making use effectively of the results of national examinations.

Nationwide, passing percentages in our national examinations have been relatively very high. In the last three years each has been above 90%. However, law and regulation breaking instances before and during the examinations have been found in some places, which could jeopardize the validity and the fairness of the examination results. To alleviate breaches and infliction of bruises on the exams i.e. to boost the validity and objectivity of the exams, since 2006, the Agency for Education National Standard as the examination implementing agency has set up independent monitoring teams at the provincial, district/municipality, and school settings whose tasks are to monitor all activities taking place before, during and after the examinations. Even since 2007 a tougher regulation has been reenacted in the form of Standard Operating Procedures for preparation, administration and

evaluation of the examinations.

As indicated above, the national exams in Indonesia are conducted among others to improve teaching learning practices in the classrooms within the framework of uplifting the quality of education as whole in the national system of education in the country. Results of the exams are to be utilized for that purpose. There are four interrelated components to be taken into consideration in using tests for making decisions and taking action in improving educational practices and programs: (a) who uses the test; (b) what information the test should provide; (c) why, or for what purpose, the test is being used; and (d) what consequences the test should have (Norris, 2000).

The prime users of the results of the national examination are certainly teachers. But of course school students, their families, school headmasters, curriculum developers, and university admission officers could also become users of such information. As to coverage, the English assessment in the national exam includes selected competencies as listed in the 1994 and 2004 curricula plus the introduced list of competencies to be adopted at any school-based curriculum. The national assessment is intended as well to provide policy and decision makers at all levels with information on how well their students in their territory perform as compared to their peers in other territories in the country. Healthy competition to reach better achievement is expected to take place at all strata: individual, institutional, district as well as provincial. The impact of the national assessment can be seen in the forms of teachers' earnest deed in assisting their students and school masters' assiduous commitment in organizing different academic programs and activities in their schools. In short, the examination results are expected to have some practical effects on the schools' programs, both academic and administrative aspects, as put forward by Kiely and Dickins (2005) that "we need to consider, in addition to the conventional links between evaluation and recommendations for program development, links between evaluation and management" (p.15).

Education Evaluation Center (EEC) has made an orchestrated effort together with National Education Standards Board to assist all stakeholders of education with information regarding the results of the national examination in order for them to be able to make well-

organized and well-planned improvement in the quality of education at schools. The results of the analyses were then assembled in the form of a software package with a data-base format. There are four folders in which information regarding the national exams could be accessed - statistics, rankings or levels of achievement, testees' mastery, and graphs from three different layers/types of school units - junior high school, senior high school, and vocational secondary school.

Teachers, school headmasters, parents, students and any one concerned with the national exam could very easily get information from a compact-disk containing the software package of the national examination report, developed by EEC and the National Education Standards Board. The statistics contain rich information on how well students in a particular school, district, or province performed in the national examination. The software package also provides information regarding levels of achievement by ranking schools through out the country on the basis of a particular subject tested or on the basis of the total score.

Skills assessed could be scrutinized in terms of proportion of testees who could do well on a particular skill as represented by a particular item in the test instrument. Teachers, students, and school headmaster could easily compare how the testees in their constituent perform on a particular test item with how other testees nationally perform on that same item. Graphs could also be generated by the software package comparing performances among schools in a district and among districts in a province. Bench marking activities among schools within the same region could then be held on the basis of this piece of information.

DISCUSSION

Through analyses of test results, we could set up new plans and begin programs that could improve quality of education as a whole. The national examination does not only deal with test administration. It is a mechanism of assessing how much of change the school has made in their students. What Norris (2000) noted was indeed true:

Language assessment, then, is much more than simply giving a language test; it is the entire process of test use. Indeed, the ultimate goal of language assessment is to use tests to better inform us on the decisions we make and the actions we take in language education (p. 18).

As indicated above, teachers are among the education stakeholders who are most concerned with the national examination. The heaviest responsibility is on their shoulder. When the students take the exam, it is the accountability of the teacher which is being most seriously tested. Therefore, no wonder teachers need to know the results of the post-examination analyses. To make the story short, the end result of all these is the necessity of teacher quality improvement. We have learned from experience that improvement of teacher quality would require not only the capacity of the teacher in terms of his mastery of the subject to teach and of the methodology of teaching but also his commitment to the profession, one of the prerequisites to it is the teacher's welfare. As a matter of fact, teacher support and welfare in the Indonesian context have been commonly conceded as still beyond what is humanly expected.

This inapt degree of welfare has been publicly acknowledged as a triggering factor for the curtailment of teachers' social status and of recognition in the society, which in turn brings about the plummeting of their commitment to their own profession. Although doubt has been cast here and there regarding teacher welfare as an effective point of departure for improving education in our country, I believe that improving teacher welfare would be worth an effort and that it would have a snow-balling effect on the improvement in all aspects related to preservice and inservice education of teachers. The simple logic behind all these arguments is that when teacher support and welfare are pleasing, the teaching profession as a whole would become an attractive profession so that it could appeal better candidates into it and as a consequence it could lift up and better synergize the teaching learning activities that take place in teacher education institutions. Teachers would be synergized to seriously see why their students did not perform well in particular testing items as indicated by the software package above.

In this respect no exception applies for English teacher education, meaning that when we intend to improve the teaching of English in our schools, make the teaching of English profession attractive first, by among others lifting up teacher welfare, so that English teacher education programs could attract the cream of the crop from high school graduates. In the current regional autonomy era, this particular problem is especially to be faced by the regional governments, the district (*kabupaten*). When the regional government is committed to education, it will automatically commit itself to developing (incl. financing) education in its area by making every effort and utilizing every resource available in its district. In short, commitment from all parties is the key issue in improving education as “education is too important to be left to educators alone.”

English that is expected to become a tool for the students’ development in science, technology and arts could only be enhanced by the realization of English across the curriculum, an expectation which would need support from both human and non-human resources. As mentioned above, a teacher of English in Indonesia at the junior high school has to handle at least 155 students on the average, and at the senior high school 150 students. However, English across the curriculum could be put into reality only when non-English teachers have sufficient English proficiency themselves to encourage their students in grasping their materials printed in English.

In the same token, English across the curriculum could be materialized only when school libraries and other types of resources were available in the school. When this new set up for the curriculum implementation is linked to the enactment of Regional Autonomy Law (RAL), it would require different types of prerequisite efforts with orchestrated planning and development in the school setting and its community. RAL has been adopted to enhance implementation of democratic principles, attract more social participation in the country’s development efforts, establish justice and equality, and take more benefit out of any existing regional potentials and varieties. The last goal, i.e. taking more benefit from regional potentials and varieties, is very closely related to the question of how we can make use of the potentials in the region to enrich and develop the implementation of the curriculum.

As to the teaching of English, regional potentials with their entailing needs and necessities should be taken into consideration in developing teaching materials and in creating classroom activities. For example, teaching materials consisting of descriptions and pictures of tourist resorts should be developed when English is taught in a region in which tourism plays a significant role in the region's economic development. Classroom activities should also then be created and developed in such a way that tourism is adequately reflected. However, when differences and varieties are acknowledged, then they could entail changes in the planning and development of testing instruments. The idea of empowering regional expert teachers to develop their own testing instrument in its entirety has been around. Regional centers of educational evaluation and assessment will soon be established in provinces. Who would be in charge of running this complex task? Then, higher and better education and professional training for teachers and specifically for language testing developers are then become a *sine qua non*.

We have also learnt from RAL that regional autonomy implies the importance of taking into consideration the people's needs and necessities in the region on the basis of their own will and aspiration in accordance with the existing rules and regulations. When we organize activities in the classroom, the will and aspiration of the people involved, i.e. the teacher and students, should be utilized in a synergic fashion. In the case of the teaching of English, the synergy could be maintained by adhering ourselves to the basic principles and concepts of Competency-Based English curriculum. The principles of material presentation based on Competency-Based Curriculum are still maintained in the current policy of the teaching of English in the form of the list of competencies to be adopted in each school's curriculum. The principles to be adopted and used as guidelines in English teaching and learning are as follows.

1. Knowing what to do. Knowing of what is being done maintains interest on the part of both the teacher and the students.
2. Integration of the language skills. The whole is not a collection of the parts. By teaching linguistic forms and

language skills each in isolation, we cannot guarantee that our students will automatically learn the English language as a linguistic and communicative entity.

3. Learning a language is learning how to communicate. As we want to assist our students to become effective participants in real-life communication in its truest sense, we teachers need to help them in any way that motivates them to work with the language i.e., to attempt to communicate in the language which may be encouraged from the very beginning.
4. Significance of meaningfulness in teaching. Learning activities would be meaningful for the students if they are related to the students' needs, experience, interests, values, and prospects.
5. Learning by doing. The students would be successful in learning a language when they are given appropriate opportunities to use the language by carrying different types of language activities.
6. Learning through trial and error. We do not mean to discard accuracy in its entirety but we do not value accuracy as the only primary goal in the teaching of English. Fluency and acceptable language is our primary goal in which accuracy is judged not in the abstract but in context.

Another set of issues related to the importance of use of examination results is increasing exposure to English in the Indonesian setting, how we take ample benefit out of this situation and what implication it carries for EFL testing development and administration. It has been mentioned above that English is a required subject in both junior and senior high schools, and there is an estimate of increasing number of users of English in the near future, that is, between 30-40 million, plus expansive use of new technologies. All these social and environmental dimensions should be taken into consideration in planning and setting the existing and upcoming English teaching modalities, including how testing administration is planned and conducted.

CONCLUSION

It is true that an examination should not be merely set up as a testing activity. An examination assesses and evaluates comprehensively what has taken place in the teaching-learning process. Therefore it is just logical to say that an examination should bring about a positive backwash effect on the entirety of the educational endeavour. It has to have a real impact on real people's lives, as underlined by McNamara and Roeber (2006), and the follow-up measures should not be disturbed or halted when the computation of the test scores has been completed. In this respect, the Ministry of National Education in Indonesia through its Education Evaluation Centre and National Education Standards Board has been on the right track in its step to invigorate all stakeholders of education in order for them to take every benefit out of the national examination, among others by utilizing the data base that contains analytical results of the examination. However, quality in education cannot be improved by examinations alone. Everyone concerned should step further to assess how other contributing factors in the schooling system function effectively and efficiently in improving the quality of education in its truest sense. Therefore, it is then a prerequisite that the national standards of education covering the standards for content, processes, exit competencies, teachers, facilities and equipment, management, and educational assessment and evaluation be fulfilled.

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