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## High-Stakes Testing and English Teachers' Role as Materials Developers: Insights from Vocational High Schools

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### Abstract

*The implementation of the National Examination (NE) in Indonesia in elementary to high schools is considered as high-stakes testing and affects the teachers' practice particularly in vocational settings. As material developers, English teachers in Vocational High Schools (VHS) are demanded to develop appropriate and suitable materials to meet the students' specific needs. The incompatibility of the NE materials prescribed by the government and the vocational students' needs put the teachers in a dilemma. The teachers should deal with the pressure of the NE and their roles as materials developers. This article tries to reveal how high-stakes testing impacts their roles as material developers particularly in the absence of specifically prescribed materials for VHS students. A case study design was used in this research with 31 participants of English teachers from nine state VHS in Pontianak, Indonesia. Data were collected through questionnaires and interviews. The result revealed that the role of teachers as materials developers somehow becomes diminishing because of the presence of the NE as high-stakes testing in the learning process, especially in VHS. This condition is detrimental to the teachers' professional development since their roles as materials developers are limited and even under-developed. With the cancellation of NE by the end of this year, it is expected that the teachers are able to play their roles as materials developers and conduct evaluations based on the students' specific expertise.*

**Keywords:** High-stake testing, teachers' roles, vocational high school.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

High-stakes testing can affect the whole elements which include education practitioners, students, and parents in all aspects. The test carries important consequences for students to determine their career success (Marchant, 2004, p. 2) and the result of the test also determines whether students are eligible to enroll in higher education (Cholis & Rizqi, 2018). National Examination (NE) is considered as high-stakes testing because it is decided to be one of the considerations as a basis for decision making about students' graduation and consideration for higher education admission (Furaidah & Widiati, 2015; Saukah & Cahyono, 2015). The purpose of NE is to standardize the students' qualifications in education (Sutari, 2017). The result becomes a standard of the schools' performance based on the students' scores and the level of the students' success. Sloane and Kelly (2003) argued that high-stakes testing will motivate students to study harder and give them a clearer signal to focus on certain materials. Those pressures make students more competitive. The importance of NE results makes the teachers focus on how they make the students comprehend the materials.

Subsequently, the high-stakes testing tends to psychologically influence the teachers and students in the term of anxiety and fear of facing the result (Furaidah & Widiati, 2015). Moreover, the NE created a negative effect on the term of the integrity of some schools in Indonesia (Sukah & Cahyono, 2015). The existence of the NE is expected to be able to motivate the teachers and students to achieve a high score to raise the schools' performance (Wright, 2002). Ulfa and Bania (2019) argued that motivation is an influential factor in the teaching and learning process. In reality, the NE might cause negative backwash on the implementation of the curriculum and materials in the learning process. Au (2007) stated that the teachers tend to narrow their materials and focus on teaching to the test. Even though nowadays the NE is not the only factor to determine the students' graduation, the teachers are still responsible to make the students pass the NE standard. This is in line with parents' worries for the final score since it will be used to enroll in higher education.

Teachers as the direct practitioners in the learning process might have a dilemma in facing the condition. As professional educators who are required to possess the four basic competencies, teachers hold an important role related to the learning activities in classrooms. The priority of the students' outcome in passing the NE might influence the learning materials. The teachers tend to narrow the materials and focus on how the students answer the questions. As English becomes one of the subjects tested in the NE, vocational English teachers become hesitant about choosing between NE materials and specific materials based on students' needs. Ashadi and Rice (2016) pointed out that the NE makes the teachers narrow the focus of the curriculum and to a certain extent limits their access to professional learning opportunities.

Recently, in the year 2020, the Minister of Education and Culture released a statement concerning the abolition of the National Examination (NE). This examination is considered the biggest assessment in the Indonesian education system. In his statement, the role of NE as the final assessment is replaced with Minimum Competency Assessment and Character Survey which focused on literacy and numeracy skill. In the Circular of the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic Indonesia Number 01 of 2020 on the Policy of Learning Freedom to Determine Student Graduation and New Student Admission for Academic Year of

2020/2021, it is stated that the students' graduation is determined by the teachers in the form of the school examination. This condition initiates a good movement to support the goals of Vocational High Schools (VHS) which have been neglected lately. A study conducted by [Sagli \(2017\)](#) found that the existence of NE was not in line with the purpose of VHS by focusing on general materials while every student is required to focus on the specific materials based on certain majors. From the pedagogical perspective, the main concern of the vocational teachers is the teaching methods and the relevant materials ([Salmani-Nodoushan, 2020](#)).

In the context of VHS, the absence of specific materials for vocational students and the existence of the NE with general materials become the main consideration for vocational English teachers. Vocationally, they are required to prepare the students to meet the demand of job markets based on their students' qualifications to work in a certain field. The vocational students have to learn English by using appropriate materials related to their major to achieve better English competency ([Erfiani et al., 2019](#)). At the same time, these teachers are required to prepare the students to pass the NE which contains general materials like other high schools. The schools need to prepare students with life skills, knowledge, and flexible potential in any social change ([Ashadi, 2015](#)). [Ashadi and Rice \(2016\)](#) showed that VHS teachers, like other high school teachers, tend to give more attention to the NE passing rate. Moreover, with the status of English as an adaptive subject in VHS, the teachers are considered as a second layer contributor in any VHS success.

It is clearly stated in the government regulation Number 02 of 1990 on Secondary Education which implies that Vocational Education should focus on the development of the students' skills in the specific field. Therefore, English teachers in VHS should prepare the students with appropriate materials to produce students with specific skills and knowledge related to the workplace and to help them develop their professional behavior. This policy directs the teachers' objective in preparing the materials for teaching English in vocational education.

In such a dilemma, it is interesting to see how VHS teachers make sense of their different roles in their pedagogical practice. This article tries to reveal how high-stakes testing impacts their roles as materials developers particularly in the absence of specifically prescribed materials for VHS students. Built on a larger study that initially examines teachers' sense-making, this article explores the existing pros and cons around the impact of high-stakes testing and pinpoint the gap in the literature. Elaboration on how to achieve the research goals is presented briefly covering the design, setting and participants, instrument, analysis, and trustworthiness. The result of the analysis is organized around the research questions to facilitate comprehension and then discussed in breadth and depth to shed light on the novelties that the issues have raised. Finally, this article draws a thorough conclusion reflecting its intersection with pedagogical theories, practices, and policies.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 High-Stakes Testing**

[Marchant \(2004\)](#) defined high-stakes testing as an examination tool that carries serious consequences for students or educators. In the educational term, "high-stakes"

means that the result that is used to determine punishments, or reward, or compensation (Ritt, 2016, p. 5). Moreover, Great School Partnership (2014) argued high-stakes testing is any test used to make the important decision about students, teachers, and schools for the purpose of liability to assure that students are enrolled in effective schools and meet effective teachers. In high-stake testing, a test is generally used as the basis to make an important decision about students' futures (Afrianto, 2009). A test becomes high stakes when the outcomes are used to make decisions about promotion, admissions, graduation, and salaries (Jones & Ennes, 2018).

The high-stakes testing was selected as an assessment tool as a way to look at students' outcomes, measure the schools' improvement, and determine the schools' progress in achieving the goals (Fitzgerald, 2015). In the Indonesian context, National Examination is considered as high-stakes testing because the result will impact the students' future. The final score of NE will be used as one of the requirements to enroll in higher education. The higher score will put the students in easiness in choosing the school since, in the last few years, new student registration in Indonesia applied for the schools based on the zoning program.

### *2.1.1 The impact of a high-stakes testing*

High-stakes testing tends to psychologically influence the students and teachers as they perceive the consequence of the test (Furaidah & Widiati, 2015). Furthermore, Au (2007) found out that high-stakes testing could encourage curricular alignment to the tests themselves. The adjustment of the learning materials turns into one of the positive impacts of the existence of high-stakes testing as the final evaluation. Moreover, high-stakes testing has led to an increase of student-centered pedagogy and content knowledge integration. Also, Sloane and Kelly (2003) proposed some possible impacts of high-stakes testing on the student as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Possible impacts of high-stakes testing (Sloane & Kelly, 2003, p. 14).

<b>Positive Impacts</b>	<b>Negative Impacts</b>
Provide students with clearer information about their own knowledge and skills.	Frustrate students and discourage them from trying.
Motivate students to work harder in school.	Make students feel competitive.
Send clearer signals to students about what to study for assessments.	Cause students to devalue grades and school assessment.
Help students associate and align personal effort with rewards.	Create teachers' segregation among those of different subjects and grades.
Believed to drive teachers and students for academic achievement.	Limit certain teachers' access to professional opportunities.

Table 1 shows that the existence of the NE as high-stake testing anywhere around the world, including Indonesia, has varied impacts from different sides. On the positive side, the students will be able to attain wider information regarding knowledge and skills and it makes the students work harder to compete with others. Those activities lead them to learn and put their efforts to achieve the rewards. Whereas, the negative side appears with frustrated and exhausted students who need to face many kinds of materials from different subjects. Most students believed that the final score is more important than anything, so they will only focus on the score rather than the knowledge, skills, and attitudes as well as the process of learning itself. Furthermore,

high-stakes tests make teachers and parents pay more attention to students with learning problems (Furaidah & Widiati, 2015).

## 2.2 Teachers' Competence

Competences refer to what people are or should be able to do and the ability of someone to do something appropriately and adaptability (Bjarnadottir, 2005; Mulyani, 2017). Regarding the statement, the competencies can be identified as the capability to carry out the roles effectively. Thus, the competencies as the basic individual characteristic affect the way of thinking and manners of a person in problem solving. In the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia Number 16 of 2007 on Teachers' Basic Competence, a professional teacher should have four basic competencies integrated into their performance. They are pedagogical competence, personal competence, professional competence, and social competence. Those competencies require the teachers to have specific skills and knowledge in order to be able to strengthen their position as professional teachers.

The proposed competencies cover the whole important aspects related to language learning. Related to providing appropriate learning materials for the vocational students, the teachers as the material developers play an important role in making it in line with the students' needs. The teachers are demanded to provide the materials for general and specific purposes. Professional competencies proposed by the government are considered the most relevant to the needs of this study. It covers the aspect of developing the materials creatively and how the teachers master the materials broadly, especially vocational materials.

Also, regarding the existence of the NE and its incompatibility for VHS, vocational English teachers should be able to accommodate the students to prepare them to face the test. The teachers need to master the materials and appropriate teaching techniques. Besides, the teachers should have a good personality in order to build a good learning atmosphere to support and prepare the students to be ready for employment.

English teacher in VHS demanded to have qualified skills concerning the appropriate teaching style for vocational students and mastering the specific materials for certain majors. Teaching English for specific purposes focus not only on language performances in general but also on the specific materials related to students' future career (Akbar & Sulisty, 2018). Vocational English teachers should have the competencies to be able to recognize the ideal classroom activity by mastering both knowledge, language and content (Aniroh, 2009). The essential concept of teaching English in vocational schools is to teach English competence based on what is needed by the students for the workplace and professional context (Robinson, 1991) and vocational English teachers demanded to accomplished the competency by integrating the prescribed materials and specific materials.

## 3. METHOD

This study employed a case study design that aimed to find out the current condition of the vocational English teachers' competence in developing materials and to describe the obstacles faced by the teachers with the existence of NE. The research

participants were English teachers from nine state vocational schools in Pontianak, Indonesian, selected purposively. Lodico et al. (2010) pointed out that purposive sampling was to select persons who can provide rich and detailed information. A number of 31 vocational state English teachers consisting of 24 females and 7 males participated in the study.

**Table 2.** Characteristics of the participants.

Teacher	School	Gender	Employment status	Teaching experience (years)
SH	A	Female	Government teacher	25
PM	A	Female	Government teacher	17
LK	A	Female	Government teacher	14
ES	A	Male	Government teacher	29
FZ	B	Female	Government teacher	31
AN	B	Female	Honorary teacher	10
MS	C	Female	Government teacher	30
HBC	C	Male	Government teacher	29
UR	C	Female	Government teacher	14
EP	C	Female	Government teacher	9
EST	D	Female	Government teacher	22
EY	D	Female	Government teacher	14
FH	D	Female	Government teacher	25
KR	D	Male	Government teacher	8
LL	D	Female	Government teacher	9
MVM	D	Female	Government teacher	15
YR	D	Female	Honorary teacher	2
RL	E	Female	Government teacher	32
RA	E	Female	Government teacher	13
SD	E	Female	Government teacher	28
NE	E	Female	Government teacher	23
JM	E	Male	Honorary teacher	2
HD	F	Male	Government teacher	14
AS	F	Female	Government teacher	8
YL	G	Female	Government teacher	10
IS	G	Male	Government teacher	14
LA	G	Female	Government teacher	8
SSP	G	Female	Government teacher	20
ESS	H	Female	Government teacher	8
ZK	H	Male	Honorary teacher	3
DR	I	Female	Government teacher	8

The data were collected through closed-ended questionnaires containing a rating scale form for each section and semi-structured interviews. All participants received paper-based questionnaires that measured their level of knowledge related to their belief, knowledge, and experience in dealing with the existence of the NE in VHS. Furthermore, five of these participants were further selected for face-to-face interviews to gain deeper insights related to how they play their different roles as English teachers in vocational schools. All the interviews were audio-recorded, and then later transcribed.

The questionnaire designed for this research was validated by two experts prior to distribution. The validation consists of face validity which includes the feasibility, readability, consistency of style and formatting, and the clarity of the language used (Taherdoost, 2016), and the content validity covering grammar, clarity, the

unambiguity of items, words spelling, sentence structure, font size, and the structure in terms of construction and format (Oluwatayo, 2012).

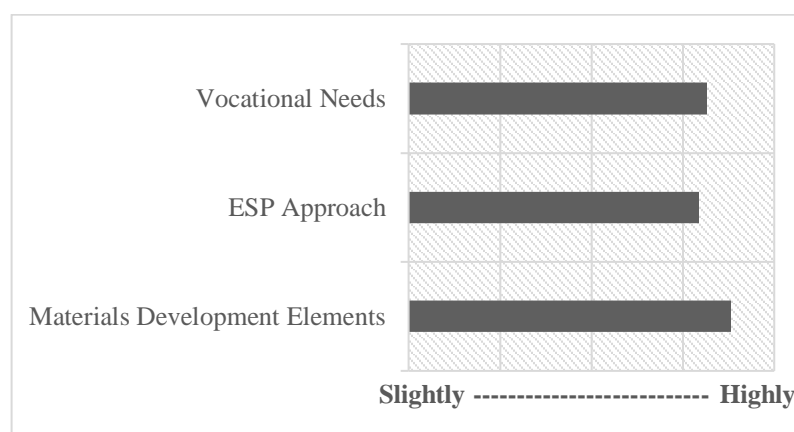
Furthermore, the data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed and described in the form of tables, figures, and classified to add the richness of the information. Meanwhile, the data from the interviews were transcribed, coded thematically, interpreted, and elaborated into an in-depth explanation (Creswell, 2009). The results of the analyzed data were elaborated into some points in the following section.

## 4. RESULTS

This section presents the results of the study from the data sources: questionnaires and interviews with the vocational English teachers. These include the vocational English teachers' level of knowledge as materials developers, the existence of the NE and its consideration as high-stakes testing, and vocational English teachers' roles.

### 4.1 Vocational English Teachers' Level of Competence

The result of the questionnaire was analyzed to retrieve the data on vocational English teachers' level of competence related to the knowledge of material development, ESP approach, and vocational needs. The questionnaire consists of 21 statements and is measured by a Likert-like scale that includes: agree, neutral, and disagree.



**Figure 1.** Vocational English teachers' perception of their knowledge.

The first bar shows the result of the vocational English teachers' knowledge of material development elements. The result focused on the basic knowledge about material developments and it reflects the vocational English teachers' key expertise to develop the materials for the students. It revealed that most of the vocational English teachers possessed a high level of knowledge about materials developments. The result indicates the vocational English teachers were aware of their responsibility as material developers by understanding the principles and the procedures of material developments.

The next bar focus on the vocational English teachers' knowledge of the ESP approach. The result reflects that most of the vocational English teachers had a high competence regarding the knowledge of the ESP approach. The majority of the teachers believed that ESP is the most suitable approach because it has specific goals and purposes in line with the vocational schools' needs. The teachers also agreed that teaching English in VHS needs a specific approach to meet their goals and purposes.

The last bar shows the result of the vocational English teachers' knowledge of the vocational needs. Most of the statements are intended to measure the teachers' perception of their knowledge and ability in providing specific materials for vocational students. This section also focuses on how the vocational English teachers reflect their level in mastering materials and how it gives an impact on the learning process in VHS. The result showed that vocational English teachers had a high level of understanding of the knowledge and had awareness regarding the specific needs of vocational students. The teachers believed that vocational students should learn the specific materials based on their major, but it seems impossible in the actual condition because of the existence of the NE as one of the final assessments for VHS.

## **4.2 National Examination as High-stakes Testing and Vocational English Teachers' Roles**

The findings here are related to the vocational English teachers' perception of the NE and their roles as material developers. Data were collected through interviews with five teachers. It was aimed to gain more insight into their awareness of the existence of the NE and its consideration as high-stakes testing and how it affected the learning process in VHS.

### *4.2.1 The obstacles faced by vocational English teachers*

As vocational English teachers, they were not able to develop and provide specific materials too often. Besides their focus was to pass the standard of the NE, the other arising problems are the low-ability of vocational students and lacking time. All of the teachers confirmed that most of the vocational students in Pontianak are categorized as low levels of ability. This problem becomes one of the obstacles to the teachers to add other materials, even if it is related to their majors. In the excerpts, T refers to Teachers.

*"The problem is, the students cannot achieve it (the current materials) because they lack the vocabulary."* – T3

*"It is difficult because the students' interest is low in English. If they cannot master the basic knowledge, how can I give them additional materials?"* – T2

*"The students in this school can be categorized as low achievers of English."* – T4

*"The students still feel difficult to understand basic tenses; even they did not know about the difference between V1 and V3."* – T5

The excerpts also revealed that the teachers seemed to face the problems of limited time to focus on specific materials while their time in class is mostly used for teaching the basic materials and repeating the materials to pass the NE. If they focus



on developing and giving some specific materials, it becomes hard for them to cover the main materials in the NE. In the actual condition, the teachers should deal with the pressure of the existence of the NE by focusing on general materials even though they were not compatible with the goals of VHS.

Besides, the existence of the NE has become one of the teachers' distractions in providing appropriate materials for vocational students. Some of the teachers also said that their obligation is not only teaching but also planning, guiding, assessing, and evaluating. The teachers should deal with limited time and apply effective ways to help the students increase their ability. After all, the vocational English teachers believed that the materials for vocational students should be specific to meet the purpose of the schools. They also consider that the government should provide them with specific materials or change the policy about the NE for VHS. The existence of NE is believed to diminish the teachers' roles as material developers.

#### 4.2.2 *The incompatibility of prescribed materials and vocational needs*

Related to the incompatibility of prescribed materials for teaching English in VHS, all teachers argued that materials provided by the government are considered too general for vocational needs. The teachers stated that they should follow the syllabus and materials provided by the government. The prescribed materials are in the form of a handbook and it was the same handbooks for general high schools. Thus, the other problem revealed that those materials were intended to fulfill the NE materials and were not related to the students' majors. The students from the general school and the vocational school have the same materials for the NE. As stated before, the NE was considered as high-stakes testing, and so the teachers have to make sure that their students will be able to pass it even though the materials were not related to their specific majors.

*"In my opinion, the materials given by the government for VHS are too general. There are four majors in this school, but sometimes the materials given by the government only cover one of them, such as the hospitality major. The materials are not suitable for other majors. Accounting students should learn about how to handle the guest, while the materials are more suitable for other majors. So, the materials are still inappropriate and not specific."* – T1

*"Every major should have its specific materials, but in fact, the general materials do not cover all majors. It should be specific for each major, in line with the students' future jobs."* – T2

Each school has a different purpose and goal related to the learning process. Based on those differences, both of the students also have different needs for materials. This statement is supported by the teacher's argument about the inappropriateness of the prescribed materials for vocational students.

*"The materials given by the government are the materials for the NE, it is not the materials based on students' majors."* – T3

To conclude, the teachers alleged that VHS students need specific materials to achieve their learning goals. The materials used for vocational students should be appropriate and suitable for their particular majors and be more practical. Since the importance of the NE's result is to determine the students' graduation, the teachers, and the schools' performance, the incompatibility of the materials used becomes a

problem. The existence of the NE with general materials is considered one of the biggest problems faced by vocational English teachers.

#### *4.2.3 The incongruity of national examination form with vocational purposes*

Since the existence of the NE is considered as high-stakes testing, the school program and the teachers' teaching-learning processes were focused on how the students could pass the standard of the NE. The students' scores of the NE become one of the main points of consideration of the teachers' and schools' achievement in producing better graduation. The fact that the NE's purpose is to attain the score is contrary to the purpose of VHS which aimed at producing students with practical skills. It has become a dilemma for the vocational English teachers in choosing the materials for the students. The important result of the NE put the teachers' focus in the first place, despite the incompatibility of the materials with vocational purposes.

*"The point of my teaching process is to teach the materials for National Examination, and I need to reach it". – T1*

*"I personally focus on materials for the NE because, in the end, we need to reach the NE goals". – T1*

*"If I miss or omit the materials, I am afraid that the students cannot pass the NE". – T2*

*"I was surprised at the latest USBN [Ujian Sekolah Berbasis Nasional or National-Based School Examination] because there are so many reading texts. The ability of SHS [Senior High School] and VHS [Vocational High School] students are different. I think that VHS students should learn speaking more". – T3*

The vocational English teachers clearly stated that the existence of the NE was not compatible with the VHS program. Therefore, the process and the materials of the NE focused on the general materials and theories only, while the vocational students need more specific materials and practical skills.

*"The students should master speaking skills because it will be very important in their workplace". – T3*

*"Vocational students need the materials which can support the students' communication ability and their basic knowledge about their majors". – T5*

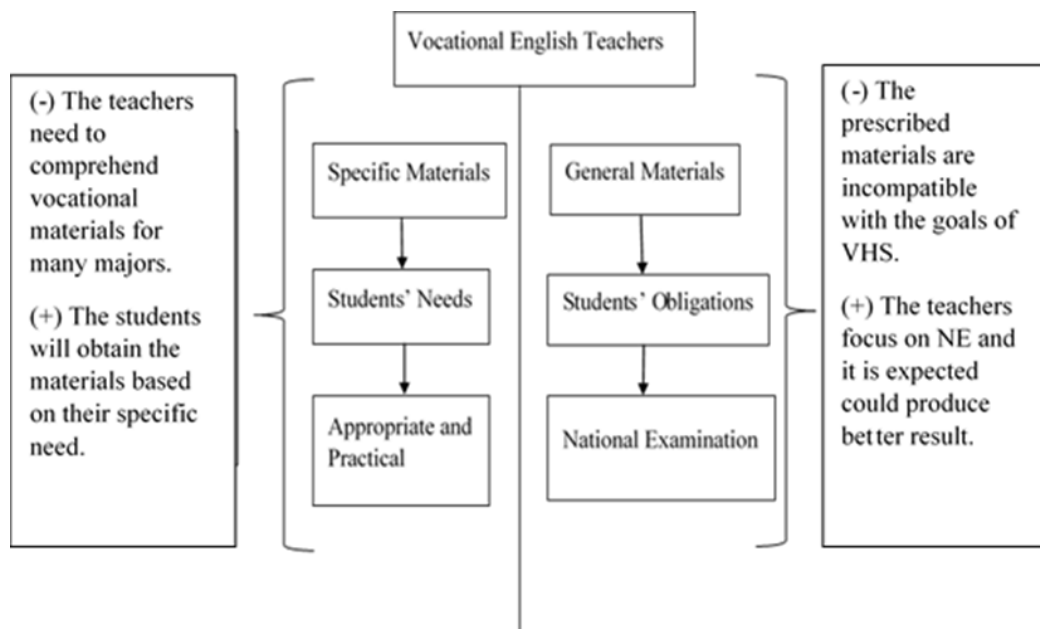
The purpose of the VHS was not supported by the existence of the NE. For vocational teachers, the NE still becomes one of the distractions to give specific materials for the students. The teachers could not play their roles as material developers who have the freedom to plan, design, and evaluate their teaching material to meet the needs of their students. The teachers agreed that their main focus on the teaching-learning process is to pass and reach a good result for the NE, even though they believed that materials were not related to the vocational students' needs.

## 5. DISCUSSION

This section discusses the findings of the research and their relations with the theories of some relevant studies. It also describes the main point of the research about how impactful the NE is as high-stakes testing to teachers' roles in vocational schools.

### 5.1 The NE Influence on Vocational School Pedagogy

In the actual condition, the vocational English teachers are not able to play their roles as materials developers because of the existence of the NE as high-stakes testing. The teachers have to deal with the high pressure of high-stakes testing as a consequence of lacking autonomy as teachers (Crocco & Costigan, 2007). They are also demanded to teach based on the materials for the NE even though the materials are not appropriate with VHS. In addition, Wright and Choi (2005) found that high-stake testing has decreased the morale and career satisfaction of the teachers. They argued that high-stake testing has not improved the education of the students. The teaching-learning process focuses on how to raise the students' scores only. The success of the NE might give pressure on the teachers and the school principals as the result will represent the quality of the schools. Students' achievements in the NE become one of the benchmarks for the public to judge the quality of the school performance.



**Figure 2.** The dilemma of using specific or general materials based on the findings of this research.

Recently, the issue of the incompatibility of the materials for vocational students has already become one of the problems that should be solved by the teachers. The teachers should deal with both the students' specific needs and the demand for the NE as their final examination. In this condition, the teachers perhaps should neglect one of them, and the possible measure is ignoring the fact that vocational students need appropriate and practical materials as the NE still holds a significant aspect to achieve.

In the latest Circular Letter issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture Number 01 of 2020 about the future policy to determine the students' graduation, one of the regulations to determine the students' graduation is work assessment. This program is suitable for the VHS program because the teachers will evaluate the students based on their particular expertise.

## **5.2 Vocational English Teachers' Roles Related to NE**

The result showed that the teachers are aware of their job obligation and they have realized their roles as materials developers; they could not do more because of the existence of the NE. The prescribed materials are the only source of the NE. In Indonesian education, the NE has become the standard of the students' outcomes as stated by Law Number 20 of 2003 and it holds an important part in the final assessment of graduation for the whole teaching-learning activities and considered high-stakes testing. [Sagli \(2017\)](#) found that vocational teachers had some trouble in implementing vocational programs when they are getting close to the examination period. It was in the same case wherein in Indonesia, the NE is determined as a curriculum goal.

This condition becomes a threat for most teachers and students even if the NE nowadays is not the only way to determine students' graduation. In addition, [Mürer \(2015, in Sagli 2017\)](#) pointed out that the different focus will put the students at a disadvantage and force the teachers to prepare both materials, while it needs more time to complete. Based on the condition, the teachers should focus on the syllabus prescribed by the government even if the materials are not suitable for vocational students. The curriculum between VHS and the regular high school is the same ([Purwanti, 2018](#)) and so they have the same materials for the examination. The vocational teachers tend to focus on how to increase the students' ability to pass the NE standard within a limited time.

[Brown \(2007, p. 214\)](#) suggested five roles of language teachers, namely: controller, director, manager, facilitator, and resourcer. From these suggested roles, one of them that is related to materials is the manager. A teacher should prepare the lesson plans, modules, and courses for every meeting. This activity includes preparing the learning materials for the students. [Farani and Winarni \(2018\)](#) found that the teachers' role as material developers is sustainable. The teachers should sustainably improve their materials used to maintain the quality of the teaching process. It happens because the existence of the teachers in the classroom is irreplaceable. The teachers as the main source for the students to obtain knowledge affect the process and the outcome of the teaching-learning.

Teaching materials hold an essential role in EFL teaching and learning ([Rondón & Vera, 2016](#)). The materials that are implemented in the learning process should represent the students' knowledge and their needs in the future. VHS in Indonesia has to compromise with the general materials and it is not in line with the goals of the school. Besides, the teachers need to support their students by adapting or developing materials to fulfill the students' specific needs ([Başal & Education, 2013](#)) and effective instructional materials in language teaching are shaped by the teachers ([Richards, 2006](#)).

The vocational teachers have to make sure there is a gap between prescribed materials and supplementary materials. Even though the teachers have the competence and awareness of these problems, they are not able to solve them because of some

factors explained above. This condition diminishes the teachers' roles as material developers. They are not able to manage their roles properly, yet, they have to focus on how to deliver the materials for the NE.

### 5.3 The Ideal Condition for Vocational High School

In the actual condition, there is an incompatibility of the current approach with the existence of the NE. Recently, Indonesian education applied a Competency-Based Curriculum which aimed to make students more competent through the acquisition of competencies and further development of the newly acquired ones (Barman & Konwar, 2011). This aim is not in line with the purpose of the NE itself. Therefore, the NE's purpose is to standardize the students' qualifications for education (Sutari, 2017).

The results of this study indicate that the teachers focused on the prescribed materials based on the syllabus in the NE materials. In their limited time, the teachers work harder to make sure the students could pass the NE because it still becomes a part to determine the students' graduation. Additionally, in some conditions, the result of the NE becomes the main score to assess teachers' ability for the whole learning process. It makes most of the teachers emphasize the NE's materials as their standard. In addition, a study conducted by Retnawati et al. (2016) found that vocational high school teachers had not fully understood the assessment system. The assessment should be conducted to measure the students' learning achievement. Despite applying the appropriate assessment for vocational students, the teachers tend to focus on the NE only.

This condition was contrary to the prescribed teachers' basic competence as stated by some experts. The existence of the NE is considered to divert the entire process of learning. The teachers could not put themselves well as the materials developers. The high demand for a better result in the NE from the principal, parents, and the relevant education authorities put the teachers in a difficult situation. However, even though the teachers confirmed that they were aware of their roles as material developers (Brown, 2001) and the steps and principles of materials development proposed by Tomlinson and Masuhara (2017), they still could not meet such demands because of the pressure to succeed the NE.

Some of the teachers in this study stated that they are lacking the time to compile and develop the materials, but the government already prepared some programs to help them to increase their competence. There are 'Teachers Professional Development' and 'Teachers Professionalism Training Program' which are held as the guidance for the teachers to promote their competence especially related to materials development. These programs are expected to help teachers in the practice of developing materials.

The theories may be interesting but what happened, in reality, is the most important. As material developers, the English teachers in Pontianak vocational schools obviously find some difficulties in developing the materials to adjust the students' needs. It can even be said that one of the teachers' roles does not work properly due to the impact of high-stakes testing. It is in contrast to Tomlinson's (2016) understanding of teachers as material developers who constantly adapt, replace, supplement, and evaluate the materials to be implemented in classrooms.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The role of teachers as materials developers somehow becomes diminishing because of the presence of the NE as high-stakes testing in the learning process, especially in VHS. The incompatibility of the NE materials with the students' needs has caused VHS teachers to choose between the NE and the appropriate materials for vocational schools. They tend to select the former as it will contribute directly to the growth of the schools where they work as adaptive subject teachers. This condition is detrimental to the teachers' professional development since their roles as material developers are limited and even under-developed.

Although, in the latest policy, the Minister of Education and Culture decided to cancel the implementation of the NE in all schools including VHS due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the possible effect on teachers' roles and practices remains unseen. This decision is believed to bring VHS to produce better qualified and skilled graduates because the schools focus on productive skills and the teachers can provide them with specific materials based on their majors. This brings implications on how teacher education colleges/institutions/universities should prepare English teachers particularly by considering their employability in VHS settings.

Despite the recent condition, it is highly recommended for the authorities to reconsider the existence of the NE as one of the evaluation elements in vocational school and it is suggested for the other researchers could wider the research to obtain more accurate data.

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