Are Islamic Boarding Schools Ready? The Use of the Computer-Based Test in the National Exam Policy for English Subject

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Abstract
The question of “Are Islamic boarding schools ready for using the computer-based test in the national exam policy? is interesting and challenging. Looking at the various conditions of Islamic boarding schools throughout Indonesia, the use of the computer-based test in the national exam policy for English subject is challenging for santris and ustazd (teachers). It is challenging because Islamic boarding schools are characteristically underprivileged and santris live in disadvantaged conditions under firm rules. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the use of the computer based test in the national examination for English subject at Islamic boarding schools. In this paper, I will discuss about the characteristics of English examination, the national examination policy in Indonesia, the national examination with computer based test, and the national examination in Islamic boarding school, and whether Islamic boarding schools are ready for using the computer-based test in the national exam policy for English subject.

Keywords: Islamic boarding schools, computer-based test, in the national exam policy, English subject

Introduction
The national examination is one of the educational evaluation activities to evaluate the students’ learning achievement by assessing and measuring based on the achievement of...
graduation competency standard nationally. Also, the national examination is as the instruments of educational evaluation to map the educational quality problems to set the national educational policy in Indonesia. In the academic year of 2014/2015, there is a new national examination policy which can be held with two mechanisms, the national examination with paper based test (PBT) and computer based test (CBT). The differences of both mechanisms are only about their technical aspects in implementing the exam including the reduplication and distribution of the NE questions by government and in processing the NE questions by students. The mechanism of the national examination with paper based test is similar with the previous years. For the Computer Based Test, the reduplication and distribution of the NE questions were processed through using the computers directly by students.

The national examination with the computer based test is one of the alternatives to handle the weaknesses of the national examination with the paper based test. The national examination with the paper based test has some weaknesses including difficulties to make various questions, the question forms are limited, more papers and more cost in reduplicating, and more time in processing the result. However, the national examination with computer based test is applied to reduce the cost in the NE such as in reduplicating and distributing the NE questions. The Indonesian Government started the tryout of the national examination with computer based test for junior high school level in the two Indonesia’s schools in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur. Also, the tryout tests had been done in several schools by using the CBT and PBT. The results showed the test with computer based test was possible to be applied in Indonesia. But, it needs to be well-prepared in all hardware, software, and brainware aspects. Additionally, some studies have been conducted about the use of the computer – based test and paper – based test in the national examination particularly for English subject. For example, studies done by Mukminin, Haryanto, Makmur, Failasofah, Fajaryani, Thabran, and Suyadi (2013) and Mukminin, Lestari, Afifah, Rahmadani, and Hendra (2017) found some facts about the national examination with paper based test in some senior high schools in Jambi. The findings of study indicated the negative perspectives on the practices and accuracy of the NSE policy. In these studies, English teachers found that the national examination policy was inadequate, improper, and inaccurate in assessing the students’ ability because this test only did in one time and also it ignored the gaps among schools in terms of socio economic status. This study showed that the teachers and students had less motivation to teach and learn English. It happened because they felt stressed and under pressured to face the NSE.

With regards to the national examination with CBT, it has applied in several schools in Indonesia. However, it still has some crucial problems that have to be evaluated by the government before the policy of national examination with the CBT will be applied in all the junior and high schools throughout Indonesia as the use of computer based test and paper based test at Islamic boarding schools has not been conducted yet. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the use of the computer and paper based tests in the national examination for English subject at Islamic boarding schools. In this paper, I will discuss about the characteristics of English examination, the national examination policy in Indonesia, the national examination with computer based test, and the national examination in Islamic boarding school, and whether Islamic boarding schools are ready for using the computer-based test in the national exam policy for English subject.
Discussion

The characteristics of English examination

English exam is an evaluation that is applied to know someone’s ability. English exam is an assessment intended to measure ability, knowledge, skill, and aptitude of someone in English. English is one of the subjects tested in the exam, especially for the senior high school students. This subject might be regarded as a complicated matter faced by the students, because it is a foreign language instead of the first or second language for most students in Indonesia. Besides, it comprises four skills having bunches of sub-skills that the students need to master, although, there is no speaking test in the national examination. As a consequence, a good English assessment is required. Language assessment has many principles which must be considered in order to support it as the best and the most suitable assessment for the students because language assessment becomes a base in analyzing the national examination (Sabrina, 2016).

There are some models of English examination that is usually used to know students’ English ability. First is a language aptitude test, that is a test to predict the someone’s success before learning a foreign language (English). For example, Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT) or Pimsleur Language Aptitude Battery (PLAB). Second is a proficiency test. The purpose is to know someone’s proficiency. For example, Test of English as a foreign Language (TOEFL) that is used to measure the language skills or International Language Testing System (IELTS) which is a proficiency test that is developed by England and Australia, Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) is a test to measure the English ability to International Communication. Third is a placement test, that is a test to place someone in certain level of language ability. This test is usually used by English course institution to ensure the material that is suitable for that students skills. Fourth is a diagnostic test, that is a test to diagnose the aspect of a certain language. This test also has a purpose to measure the achievement of learning objectives. For example is in the final semester test and national examination.

In Indonesia, English examination is to measure students’ English competence nationally (Fiktorius, 2013). So, in the national examination, English becomes one of important subjects to be assessed. In 1985, the national examination had four core subjects: mathematics, science, Indonesian Language, and English. For English subject, in spite of several changes in Indonesian curriculum, reading has been a dominant skill to be tested. On the basis of reading passages, language components including vocabulary and grammar are tested. In senior high school, listening is also tested but not in junior high school (Aziz, 2011). English subject is one of the important subjects in the senior and junior high school curriculum and it receives a lot of attention from society as a foreign language. Besides, it is taught as a compulsory subject to the students at primary school up to the university level.

In senior high school, the objectives of learning English subject are to develop the verbal or writing communication competence, to achieve information literacy level, to be aware of the importance of English to compete with the world community, and also to develop the comprehension of learners about the relationship between language and culture. Therefore, students can give information to one another and communicate to people from other countries if they comprehend the international language, English. Based on the Departemen Pendidikan Nasional (Depdiknas, 2006), there are four competences in English subject that students should master, they are:
There are two sections in the English national examination. The first is the listening section consisting of 4 parts including pictures, question-response, short conversation, and short talks. The second is the reading section consisting of 3 parts including incomplete dialogues/sentences, error recognition, and reading comprehension.

### Table 1. Four competences in English subject

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Competences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>Students can comprehend the meaning of spoken texts in recount, narrative, procedure, descriptive, news item, report, analytical exposition, hortatory exposition, spoof, explanation, discussion, and reviews from in daily life. Then, students can comprehend the meaning of transactional and interpersonal conversation in the context of daily life such as greeting/parting, agreeing/offering/inviting/, and accepting/refusing promise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>Students can express and respond the meaning of short functional texts and monolog verbally in daily life in form of recount, narrative, procedure, descriptive, news item, report, analytical exposition, hortatory exposition, spoof, explanation, discussion, and review.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Students can comprehend and respond the meaning of written texts in recount, narrative, procedure, descriptive, news item, report, analytical exposition, hortatory exposition, spoof, explanation, discussion, and reviews from in daily life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Students can express the meaning of short functional texts and monolog by writing the form of recount, narrative, procedure, descriptive, news item, report, analytical exposition, hortatory exposition, spoof, explanation, discussion, and reviews from in daily life.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The national examination policy in Indonesia

The English national examination (ENE) is an evaluation that is implemented by the Indonesian government. According to Badan Standar Nasional Pendidikan (BPNS as cited in Mardapi & Kartowagiran, 2009), the national examination is an activity that measures and assesses the students competence. The national examination is applied in order to improve the quality of the national education and it is supported by the Government Regulation Number 19 year 2005 on the National Standards of Education (Sukyadi & Mardiani, 2011). The national examination is the process in a formal test on a certain course which tests someone’s knowledge. In addition, the national examination is a test which is implemented by the central government after the process of teaching and learning and it is applied to measure and assess the students’ proficiency nationally (the Regulation of the Minister of Education, 2005). The national examination is a form of a national scale evaluation as a part of the education world and it is used as the national achievement standards.

National exam is a standard evaluation system of the national education quality and equality of education levels between regions conducted by the Centre for Educational Assessment, Ministry of National Education in Indonesia based on the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 Year 2003. The national exam is organized to measure achievement levels of learners in competency unit of the basic education and secondary education as a result of the learning process according to the graduate competency standards. Besides, the national exam is also used to map the level of student achievement in the educational unit. One of the efforts to realize the quality education needed a reliable assessment system.

The national examination (NE) has a function as a quality control to education in all areas in Indonesia, either in cities or rural areas. The subjects tested are to assess the student’s achievement; to assess the education quality in national, provincial, and school or Islamic school levels. In short, the government holds the national examination in order to make the quality of education in Indonesia well. The national examination as the standardized testing has long been the dominant feature in the education system in the Republic of Indonesia. Syahril (2007) explains that in the period of 1965-1971 Ujian Negara (State exam) was
practiced for almost all subjects for students at the end of each of the school level, elementary, middle school and high school. Although, a non standardized testing policy was approved for the next seven years, where schools were given the authority to design and hold the final exam based on the guidelines from the central government, in 1980 Indonesia went back to the centralized exam system. The Evaluasi Belajar Tahap Akhir Nasional (the national final learning evaluation), commonly shortened as EBTANAS, was implemented for twenty-one years. Starting from the year of 2003, a new form of the nation-wide standardized exam was called Ujian Akhir Nasional (the national final examination), popular with the acronym UAN was introduced. The subjects tested were Bahasa, English, and Math. It was up to the schools and provinces to decide whether or not they required students to take final tests on other subjects. UAN itself was kept to be done until 2004.

Under the new cabinet in 2005, the new Ministry of Education still decided to conduct a similar form of test, which was given a new name, Ujian Nasional (national examination), shortened as UN. Despite heavy criticisms for the previous UAN, the national examination still uses the same format, testing three subjects, Math, Bahasa and English to students at the end of their senior year in middle schools and high schools. Every year, all student who is sitting in level 6 for elementary school, level 9 for junior high school, and level 12 for senior high school in Indonesia facing the national examination to passing the graduation level. Then the ministry of education added 3 subjects more for senior high school level become 6 subjects; Mathematics, Bahasa Indonesia, English, Physic, Chemistry and Biology for science scope, and Geography, History for Social scope.

From 2011 to 2013, the average value of the standard national exams was 5.5. The government used the formula of graduation criteria by combining the score result of national examination and the score result of each national examination subject, by percentage was 60% for the score of national examination and 40% for the score of school. In 2013, it was a start for junior high school level, the students concentrated in four days to pass the Indonesian language, Mathematical, English language, and Natural science test. Also for senior high school level, subjects tested appropriate with their scope, either science or social program. In those years, the programs of national examinational in Indonesia conducted in paper based test. Since 2015, the government decided to move to use computer based test to conduct the exam in every level; junior, senior ,and vocational high school. It means, in computer sytem students will not do that exam in on-line while students used the computer that already exist in their school. Up to 2104, the national examination still created a controversies, so that the Ministry of Education and Culture gave his responses by changing the National Examination policy. Based on the new NE policy, the students’ graduation would be entirely under the schools authority. The requirement of students’ graduation based on the students’ academic achievements. Started from 2015, the national examination used as a basis to map the quality of education in Indonesia; to consider the selection objective of the next levels of education; to plan some corrective action and schemes to improve the education quality in schools and district levels (Saukah & Cahyono, 2015).

Previously until 2015, the national examination was used to determine students graduation. There were many pros and cons about the implementation of the national examination from various parties such as teachers, schools, political elites, parents, even students. Some of them said that the national examination often made the students get depressed, especially for those who failed. However, the national examination was still applied by the government as one of the requirements for the students to graduate. The
national examination was enough if it is done only in schools because the teachers are the ones who know the development and the growth of the students (Mardapi & Kartowagiran, 2009). On the other hand, the pros encourage the implementation of the national examination since it can increase the education qualities. It means that the national examination can make a good standard for education, boost the teachers to have a better teaching method, and help the government in making the qualified mapping.

But, in 2017 the government made a new regulation that the national examination still hold in high schools level in Indonesia and for the students’ graduation is determined by each schools. The national examination was not used as a requisite for students’ graduation anymore but now the result of national examination was used by government to map the schools in Indonesia and become an evaluation for the government to repair and improve the quality of educational system in Indonesia by implementing the concept of Ujian Sekolah Berstandar Nasional (USBN).

The national examination with computer based test

Based on the rule of BSNP 0031/BNSP/III/2015 about the standard operational procedure of the holding the national examination for the academic year of 2014/2015, the national examination with computer based test is measuring and assessing activities of the graduation competency standard achievement for junior, senior, and vocational high school students nationally includes the particular subjects that use computer system in their techniques. Based on the UU Sisdiknas No. 20 tahun 2003, the objectives of the national examination were to assess the achievement of the graduation competency standard nationally in particular subjects in terms of the educational national standard achievement. The national examination is one of the evaluation instruments for students’ learning that is used to measure the level of students’ competency achievement for some particular subjects. There is a change of PP No. 13 year 2015 about the educational national standard with the content about wiping out in point C that is the national examination did not become the students’ graduation measure or educational units. In addition, there is a new system that is the national examination with computer based test or NE CBT in year 2015. This is based on the PBSN No. 0031/P/BNSP/III/2015 about the standard operational procedures of the national examination for the academic year 2014/2015. So, the holding of the national examination 2014/2015 could be held with 2 mechanisms, those are the national examination with paper based test (PBT) and computer based test (CBT). But, in 2015 the policy of the national examination with computer based test was still in tryout and its holding only for the piloting schools.

The implementation of the national examination cbt policy focuses on 5 aspects. First, there is the implementation of vision and mission of the national examination with computer based test. Second, the implementation of piloting schools of the national examination with computer based test should consider the regulation. Third, there should be a determination, organization, and development of the human resources in implementing the national examination with computer based test. Fourth, there should be the infrastructure management for school in implementing the national examination with computer based test. Fifth, there should be the implementation steps of the national examination with computer based test that is appropriate with the Standard Operational Procedures.
The national examination in Islamic boarding school

Islamic boarding school is a place where santri (students) study. Islamic boarding school is a place for santri (students) to live and spend their time to study and to build the Islamic morals. The word of pesantren comes from “santri” that means someone who wants to get the Islamic knowledge. In general, pesantren refers to a place where students spend most their time living and acquiring knowledge (Nawawi, 2006). Pesantren or Boarding School has already existed. The educational sistem of Pesantren not only focused on religious aspect.s but only focused students’ character buildings. The educational models in Pesantren are Paripurna models, it is because all students activities since they wake up until they sleep are controled by their teachers. They also follow many subjects in their schools.

Modern Islamic boarding schools usually have learning sistem like the other public schools. It has a curriculum that does not teach about the religious knowledge only, but also the general knowledge. So, there are many Islamic boarding schools that combine between the national curriculum and boarding school curriculum, and extracurricular activities which exist in schools in general (Zakiyah, et al., 2010).

Generally, all pesantrens have the same vision and mission, that is mastering of religious knowledge and Islamic character buildings. The problem is that today students have many duties, they not only master the religious materials but also they must master the general knowledge that is incompatible with their education specialists. The students must follow the national examination. If they do not pass, so they will have a negative impact on the future or if they do not join the national examination, they could not continue their future education.

In fact, back to the vission and mission of Islamic boarding school, it is not at all related to general sciences. They have a lot of the burdens or duties of religious materials. General knowledge is important, but not all the subjects should be mastered by them. But today, because there are so many Islamic Modern Schools in Indonesia, it makes the educacional sistem in pesantren grows up. Many pesantrens require their students to take the national exam as as prerequisite to continue their education to higher level. And also in 2017, there are some Islamic Boarding Schools that will start to implement the national examination with the computer based test.

Islamic boarding school is a educational institution that has its own characteristics which are different from other educational intitutions. As an educational institution that has been developing in Indonesia, pesantren successfully build and develop the religious life (Nugroho, 2016). Islamic boarding school is one of the educational institutions that has become part of the national education system based on UU No. 20/2003. Islamic boarding school is one of the educational institutions that holds the teaching - learning processes to guide, nurture, and develop the potential of students to achieve the national education goals. As an institution, pesantren or Islamic boarding school has its own characteristics, this is as an institution that is identic with the Islamic institution and it is the native education institution in Indonesia that has a dormitory for the students or santri.

Like public schools in Indonesia, students in pesantren or Islamic boarding schools also follow the national examination in every year. Although there are some pesantrens that do not follow the national examination like the traditional pesantrens. In a modern pesantren, the national examination is not a prerequisite to determine the students’ graduation. The students’ graduation is measured by all subjects in that school or pesantren, not only for the subjects that is tested in national examination. So, the process of students’ character buildings and attitude (affective) also become one of important prerequisites for students’ graduation.
(Sholihin, 2016). To reduce the students’ stress in facing national examination, teachers in Pesantren give tutoring routinely and also the students are advised by teachers to do independent learning.

Are Islamic boarding schools ready for using the computer-based test in the national exam policy?

The question of “Are Islamic boarding schools ready for using the computer-based test in the national exam policy? is interesting and challenging because the present-day typical Indonesian pesantren comprises a “pondok” (a boarding school) (Dhofier, 1982) and a madrasah (a day school) (Zuhdi, 2006). Students in pesantren are called “santris.” They normally memorize the Quran, the Prophet’s traditions (hadith), and Arabic classical texts or “yellow books” (kitab kuning) and spend 24 hours a day in their pondok doing religious and other activities (Dhofier, 1982; Buang, 2007). Furthermore, a pesantren is similar to a community with a complex, in which santris and ustazd (teachers) eat, sleep, learn, and generally interact throughout the day (Blanchard, 2006; Buang, 2007; Srimulyani, 2007).

Looking at the various conditions of Islamic boarding schools throughout Indonesia, the use of the computer-based test in the national exam policy for English subject is challenging for santris and ustazd (teachers). It is challenging because pesantren with their Islamic boarding schools are characteristically underprivileged and santris live in underprivileged conditions under strict rules (Dhofier, 1982). These kinds of characteristics will become obstacles for santris and ustazd (teachers) to involve in the national exam, especially for the English subject. Among the challenges are lacks of quality educational facilities and of quality teachers.

Lack of quality educational facilities in Islamic boarding schools will inhibit not only the quality of education in pesantren, but also will handicap the implementation of the use of the computer-based test in the national exam policy for English subject. The Indonesian government should cooperate with local key actors at different levels for in addressing the issue of lack of educational facilities. Lack of their involvement will influence the implementation of the use of the computer-based test in the national exam policy for English subject and will influence to improve the facilities in pesantren. More importantly, lack of their specific policy interventions will make Islamic boarding schools neglected.

In addition, lacks of quality teachers will influence the implementation of the use of the computer-based test in the national exam policy for English subject because santris and ustazd (teachers) normally learn the Quran, the Prophet’s traditions (hadith), and Arabic classical texts or “yellow books” (kitab kuning) and devote their days in their pondok doing religious and other doings (Dhofier, 1982; Buang, 2007). English subject may be learned at modern Islamic boarding schools, but it may not be learned at traditional Islamic boarding schools. In the meantime, teachers at traditional Islamic boarding schools may not have ability to teach English while the exam policy will be applied to all schools throughout Indonesia.

Lacks of quality educational facilities and of quality teachers will become challenging issues for the implementation of the use of the computer-based test in the national exam policy for English subject. The question now is not about readiness of Islamic boarding schools for using the computer-based test in the national exam policy, but the question: Is the government ready for helping Islamic boarding schools to improve their quality educational facilities and of quality teachers to support the implementation of the use of the computer-based test in the national exam policy for English subject?
Conclusion

There are various conditions of Islamic boarding schools throughout Indonesia. Both modern Islamic boarding schools and traditional Islamic boarding schools have their own characteristics, strengths, and weaknesses. The use of the computer-based test in the national exam policy for English subject either for modern Islamic boarding schools or for traditional Islamic boarding schools is challenging. The Indonesian government should cooperate with local key actors at different levels for in addressing the issues of lacks of quality educational facilities and of quality teachers. Failure to deal with these issues may result in failure for helping students in both modern Islamic boarding schools and traditional Islamic boarding schools to develop their potential and their educational career as our future generation.

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