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Demand for Reintroduction of NEAT: Corresponding to Key Competencies in Korea

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The purpose of this study is to analyze the needs to reintroduce NEAT (National English Ability Test) which suspended in 2014. NEAT policy research has begun in 2007, and implemented as a preliminary test for two years whose final purpose was to replace the CSAT in order for English learners in Korea to enhance English communicative abilities. As the current educational environment changes such as Criterion Referenced Assessment and Achievement Standard-based Assessment, this study analyzes the relevance of the educational environment with NEAT reintroduction, and examines the rationale for reintroduction of NEAT. In order to accomplish the purpose of this study, the background of the introduction and cessation of the NEAT policy were analyzed through the literature review and previous research, then this study suggested the necessity of NEAT reintroduction based on the change of current education environment, Thus this study also discussed the ways in which the test could be developed and settled in the future. The results of this study provided the rationale of NEAT reintroduction, which will lead to English classroom change through the wash-back effect of the English evaluation system to teaching-learning procedure with the several elements; the change of educational environment such as Criterion Referenced Assessment of CSAT and introduction of Achievement Standard Assessment (ASA) absolute evaluation in secondary school, result of needs analysis at the time of NEAT introduction and implementation, technical development, and the accountability of Ministry of Education.

[NEAT/National English Ability Test/key competencies/national curriculum/English assessment/English curriculum]

Ⅰ. INTRODUCTION

In support of the changes in the educational environment in Korea, including the recent absolute evaluation, there has been a media report that this educational environment will lead

to changes in classroom instruction in Korea (Kim, 2017). In the media, the English language curriculum in Korea has been centered on listening and reading classes, which does not operate properly in speaking and writing classes offered in the national curriculum. Therefore, there is a need to improve practical English skills. The reason for this phenomenon is the lack of connection of the curriculum with college entrance examination, which requires the change of education policy. It predicted that speaking and writing, which were actually difficult to apply in performance evaluation in English class time at present time, will become the core of English education by introducing the English absolute evaluation system.

It is clear that the educational environment is changing in Korea. In addition to the absolute evaluation of College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT) in English subject area that are of interest to the media, the evaluation methodology to determine the high school achievement grades has been changed to Achievement Standard Assessment (ASA), and the national curriculum has also been shifted for the improvement of English communication capacity and creativity centered on core competencies.

However, it is necessary to have an awareness of the question of whether the improvement of communication ability of students can be expected with the change of CSAT absolute evaluation system. It should be pointed out that in this changing process, the teacher′s role is essential. It is clear that English teachers must deal with the four functions of English, reading and listening, and speaking and writing according to the national curriculum, and to improve English learner’s communication capacity which is one of the four core competencies in 2015 revised national English curriculum.

However, learners' goals are to get good grades in college entrance exams, while college entrance exams focus on reading and listening instead of speaking and writing. In this situation, the teacher wants to teach English speaking and writing that the students do not want. It needs to be questioned whether the teaching and learning of speaking and writing can be expected in their classroom. It is common knowledge that many English educators and scholars are very negative about this expectation. In other words, since the evaluation of the four functions of English in the university entrance examination is ignored, with the system changing from the relative evaluation to the absolute evaluation, Korean English learners are not expected to actively participate in English speaking and writing classes. This question should be seriously considered.

There was an important historical examination in relation to university entrance examination assessment system. It was National English Ability Test (NEAT) which expected to play a role as Korea's representative English ability assessment tool. This test was stopped at the same time as the change of the political regime in 2014. The cessation of the test was decided just two years after the preliminary test was implemented, and 7 years after the test development was researched.

As the research on the introduction of NEAT started, the government explained the

background of NEAT introduction as two reasons; the improvement of speaking and writing communication ability, and reduction of learning burden of students. The main reason for announcement of the test suspension in 2014 was the concern about the possibility of increasing private education expenses. However, it may have been a policy decision based on certain research results, but it was difficult to find a clear ground for the people to understand the reason of NEAT policy cessation.

In the present situation where various educational environments are changing, we need to go back to the first time when the NEAT was introduced, and to reconsider the necessity of the NEAT reintroduction. This study investigates what kind of support could be provided to meet the change of the educational environment that is happening now. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to analyze the necessity of NEAT reintroduction in connection to the current educational environment, and to provide implications for the reintroduction of NEAT through the analysis of previous research.

In order to accomplish this goal, this study first examined the background of the introduction of NEAT and the reason for its abolition through policy and academic research. Based on the current educational environment changes, this study will discuss how the test can be developed and settled in the future in a desirable direction.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter examines the background of the introduction of the NEAT, the major evaluation methods and contents of NEAT, and then analyzes the reasons why the NEAT policy was suspended, focusing on the literature and media contents.

1. Background of NEAT Introduction

The most well documented reasons for introducing the NEAT are found in the research report by Korea Institute of Curriculum and Evaluation (KICE), which is responsible for the research and implementation of the test. The NEAT development report (KICE, 2011) describes the reason as aiming to improve English expressive ability of English learners in Korea. One of the core competencies required for future Korean students who are living in the globalization and information age is the ability to communicate using English as an international language. In order to be competitive in the international society, the report explains that the importance of English speaking and writing skills must be emphasized.

Second, if NEAT was developed and applied, the government expected the wash-back effect. In other words, when the English listening area was included historically in the College Scholastic Ability Test, it naturally led to the activation of the listening instruction at

the school site, and eventually the listening ability of the students was improved. Without improving the current evaluation contents of English, it is difficult to expect improvement of English expression ability. Therefore, the NEAT effect is expected to lead to the improvements in English expression ability such as speaking and writing of English learners in Korea (KICE, 2011).

Third, it was intended to reduce dependence on overseas English proficiency tests. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology announced that it decided to reduce the reliance on overseas English tests (TOEIC, TOEFL, etc.) and develop and introduce the national English proficiency test (MEST, 2008).

Fourth, it intended to reduce the private education expenses of English learners. Unlike the expectation that students who have completed regular education courses will receive good grades, the university entrance exam was mainly focused on English grammar and reading comprehension, and the English class naturally linked to it which has also been linked to a burden on private education expenses. Therefore, the test was intended to be focusing on practical English of speaking and writing, which will reduce the burden of students and parents (MEST, 2008).

2. General Guidelines of NEAT

In July 2007, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) established a basic plan for the introduction of the NEAT and launched the development of the test at the Korea Institute of Curriculum and Evaluation (KICE, 2011). In 2008 and 2009, it continues to expand the test to large-scale candidates by implementing two nationwide tests. Through this systematic study, the test was expected to contribute to the development of English education in Korea; the main purpose of NEAT development and implementation was to induce changes in English education in Korea.

KICE has developed the following development guidelines to minimize the burden of learners and reduce private education expenses. NEAT Grade 2 and Grade 3 were developed for the third grade students of high school and used as formal national test data such as college entrance examination. Grade 2 and Grade 3, which were supposed to be used as college admissions data, are required to have different levels of English proficiency depending on the characteristics of the university departments such as sciences or language literature. The level of achievement is based on the achievement level of the current CSAT at that time. The Level 3 focuses on daily life language ability.

The decision to replace the English test in the SAT was based on a comprehensive review of opinion gathering through public survey and the recognition of the test's credibility. From 2012 CSAT, it was decided to selectively reflect the results of the NEAT score to CSAT. The test method was Internet Based Testing (IBT), and it was designed to help large scale

candidates to simultaneously access to the NEAT system, and to reliably perform the evaluation by eliminating the technological obstacles. The test stabilization methodology was studied to optimize the test site environment considering the testing situation of more than 50,000 people nationwide at a time.

In addition to improving the communication skills of English learners in Korea, another major wash-back effect was being expected; the improvement of English teacher profession, which was included as one of the main guidelines for NEAT operations.

3. Background of NEAT Cessation

Announcement was made by the MOE in August 2013 that NEAT would not be linked to university examinations. It was expected that a credible English test will be developed and implemented, then, finally replace the college scholastic ability test. Unlike the expectations, an announcement was made in August 2013 (MOE, 2013b), which includes the plan to simplify the college admission system, meaning that NEAT would not be continued. In 2014, the IBT system that was developed in the past was also dismantled. As next stage, the question items in the NEAT system have been made available freely and selectively at any school.

As a result of this announcement in 2007 (KICE, 2011) when the NEAT study was started, the NEAT was stopped in seven years. Although the NEAT research started in 2007, it was the year of 2012 that the national test was started to be implemented to the actual examination using the developed question items and the IBT system nation-wide.

As mentioned above, the reason for introducing NEAT is that the grammar and reading-oriented English class prevents the improvement of communication skills of English learners in Korea. Thus, it was known that the English test in the CSAT at the time was the main factor that induces to this unreasonable curriculum application.

But why the government decided to suddenly stop the NEAT after investing seven years for NEAT research and development? It should be noted with regard to this matter that the Ministry of Education in 2013 announced the results of the MOE (2013a) investigation on NEAT system pointing out the issue of IBT system, and subsequently announced that NEAT would not be linked with the university entrance examination. According the MOE, the reason for this was that it considers the possibility of increasing private education expenses as mentioned above.

However, according to a study by Kim and Kwon (2014), it was premature to conclude that the introduction of NEAT was a cause of increasing private education expenses. Of course, some researches of national research institutes (ex, KICE, 2011) also expressed concern about private education expenses. However, the decision seems to be depending on the government′s concern of the burdensome educational policy developed by the previous

regime. In short, the justified reasons for stopping NEAT are summarized as two: IBT system and the possibility of increasing the private education expenses.

On another level, Chae (2015), who analyzed the reasons of abandonment of the NEAT with the Time Lapse Approach, points out that policy decision was the result of unprepared educational environment. In other words, speaking and writing education are both burdensome for English teachers and students in the process of teaching and learning at school, and it should have taken time for sufficient preparation. The lack of teacher training to improve English teacher profession has also raised opposition opinion from teachers.

In particular, active involvement of students in the speaking and writing area teaching-learning process is essential in connection of core competencies such as communication competency using English. Despite this, it is not easy that the competency-based teaching-learning environment is supported by the current educational system due to factors such as the number of students per class. These factors led to the negative formation of public opinion that the government's policy to reduce private education expenses by inducing communication skills through practical English would eventually lead to an increase in private education expenses.

Chae (2015) pointed out the main reasons for stopping the NEAT system as unpreparedness. He argued that the desirable wash-back effect (Nunan, 2003) expected by NEAT introduction was not accomplished because of the unpreparedness of the test stake-holders caused by the hasty policy makers.

III. THE CHANGE OF EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

This chapter examines the direction of educational policy that has been or will be implemented in 2017 and in the near future, and how this changes in educational environment will affect NEAT reintroduction. The relevant changes in the educational environment in relation to the reintroduction of NEAT are as follows: first, the transition to Criterion Referenced Assessment (CRA) of CSAT, second, the Achievement Standard Assessment (ASA) system related to students' academic achievement in secondary school, third, the rapidly changing Information and Communication Technology (ICT), and forth, the national curriculum focused on key competencies.

1. The Policy of CSAT (College Scholastic Ability Test)

The biggest change in the College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT), where high school freshmen take college entrance examination in 2015, is that the evaluation method of the English language area changes from relative evaluation to absolute evaluation. The previous

evaluation system of the Korean SAT was based on the relative order of the students by their academic scores, causing infinite competition among the students, and there were side effects such as excessive learning over the range and level of the national curriculum.

In order to solve these side effects, the high school freshman in the year of 2015 are supposed to take an absolute evaluation in the English language area in the 2018 academic year, following the subject of Korean History. Its purpose is to prevent learners from overheating competition and reduce private education expenses, as the Ministry of Education (2014) stated. According to the results of the survey conducted by the Ministry of Education (2014), 60.4% of respondents answered "(very) meaningful" about the introduction of absolute evaluation in order to solve the problems of the current CSAT. When absolute evaluation is introduced, 58.5% of respondents answered that " (very) meaningful " about the prospect that an unnecessary learning burden on students will be reduced. When the absolute evaluation is introduced to the English CSAT, the school English class is also removed from the searching the correct answer and heading to the communicative teaching-learning style (MOE, 2015b), which is expected to be a turning point in the future.

Studies on the introduction of the absolute English test showed that the learning burden of the learners would be reduced and private education costs would be reduced, and that the change in the classroom instruction in the school would improve practical English communication ability as a core competency in national curriculum. For example, Choi and Choi (2016), who surveyed the perception of middle school teachers about introducing the absolute test for CSAT, showed that 10 teachers who participated in the qualitative research responded that frequent policy changes did not always bring positive results. However, they pointed out that the previous research in their study have also shown that the introduction of absolute assessment improves learners' ability to communicate in English, reduces over-heat competition, and consequently reduces private education costs.

2. The Policy of Achievement Standards-based Assessment (ASA)

The Achievement Standards-based Assessment (ASA) is a system that evaluates the achievement level of each individual student according to the achievement standards and evaluation criteria set in the curriculum. The MEST (2011) emphasized that ASA has the advantage of knowing precisely what the student knows and how much he knows, not the relative sequence of the students in the grade.

Park and Kim (2016) suggested that the ASA aimed to revitalize the secondary education in which creativity and character education are realized by avoiding excessive competition among students and maximizing the potential of students. In order to support this advantage, the ASA was introduced from the first year of 2012 for the middle and high school especially in the specialized subjects. Now, extensive research and support projects have been carried

out including understanding and recognizing the achievement assessment system, monitoring the operation status, developing materials for each subject, training teachers, and consulting on-site support (Park, & Kim, 2016).

During the ASA support project, the Ministry of Education (2013a) originally planned to announce the adoption of the ASA test scores in the CSAT in the second half of 2015, but delayed until 2018. The study by Bae and Shin (2016) on the phenomenon that the ASA was delayed suggested that it was due to the difficulties of the school to reflect the test scores of ASA to the CSAT directly. The study also shows the teachers' expectation about the ASA.

Regarding the difficulties, it was found that the teachers have the greatest difficulty in setting the achievement standards and achievement level. After the introduction of the ASA, 70% of the teachers answered that there was no change in the teaching methods and evaluation methods. However, 85% of the teachers who participated in the study preferred the achievement evaluation system rather than the relative evaluation, and that the achievement standard setting helped to select the contents of education appropriate to their students (Bae & Shin, 2016).

In contrast to studies of this positive change, Park and Kim (2016) found that most of the participants considered the sequencing of achievement levels to be appropriate at least in actual situation of secondary school, mainly because the ASA was not applied to CSAT. Although it is not necessary for students to be ordered by their scores, it is pointed out that the selection data for entering the upper secondary school requires a sequential score, so that a lot of effort was put into ordering the grades of all students which was at a similar rate to Norm Referenced Assessment (p. 476).

However, in a study by Bae and Shin (2016), it is worth noting that the results of the questionnaire survey pointed out some changes in the English teaching environment created by ASA (p. 624). It was suggested that the biggest change of the teaching-learning procedure was studying four functions such as speaking and writing from just focusing on reading and grammar which is emphasized by 2015 revised national curriculum as core competencies. It was found in the study that the teachers were trying various teaching methods to lead the lesson for four function learning. Another change was shown as the students' learning burden being reduced, and the following changes were the fact that the ASA led to active class participation and cooperative atmosphere (p. 625).

3. Technological Issue

During NEAT research and development, and the preliminary test implementation, the Ministry of Education conducted an investigation on NEAT and provided it to the media as follows (Lee, 2013). The MOE checked the management status of test management in general, and found that several parts of the NEAT test data (examination number, answer,

etc.) were deleted by test administrator without appropriate procedure. It was also found that there was an system error in which one answer could not be seen on the computer screen, and that 9 additional users were given additional input time after the test time finished.

In other words, although the evaluator recognized the possibility of the system disability just before the start of the second reading test, he decided to proceed with the test without solving the disability because of the protection of the rest of the students. The point is that there is a technical problem that does not show the checked answers during the NEAT test hours, which leads to distrust across the whole IBT system later on.

Of course, since NEAT is an IBT-based test, the technical problem should be recognized as very important, but it should be pointed out that the problem occurred only one year since the preliminary test was started. As reported by KICE research, the institution tried to construct the IBT system in order to supplement the technical defects of the NEAT for large-scale candidates as follows.

First, the NEAT based on the IBT is conducted by computer manipulation. Therefore, the factors affecting the evaluation resulting from the use of the computer are investigated in order for the newly implemented IBT functions to be used conveniently and usefully by students. The institution also analyzed the IBT implementation environment for the items suitable for the IBT system and also analyzed the characteristics and conditions of the evaluation items based on the IBT technology.

In spite of the early stage of implementation, KICE conducted an in-depth interview about the usefulness of the IBT function with twenty-seven students who answered the questionnaire, and about the usefulness of the IBT function in the reading area with the 8,000 students who took the beta test. It was found that the system was generally useful in terms of IBT function. That is, in that early stage of implementation, several technical deficiencies have been pointed out, but the IBT function has been continuously upgraded through these error correction processes (KICE, 2012, p.3).

After this process, the institution was planning to apply the IBT-based computer test to national level academic achievement for elementary and secondary school students. NEAT, which is designed and implemented on the basis of Cloud System (CS), was planned to play an important role in expansion and activation of SMART education. It can generate student′s interest by utilizing the system, and various materials suitable for teaching and learning needs can be developed in digital textbooks and online reading programs. The institution was also preparing for the introduction of the latest smart devices that can be freely accessed and utilized in a self-directed and sophisticated manner regardless of time and space.

Given that NEAT's technology was in a state of full potential, considering that it had plans to apply for national achievement testing, it was unreasonable to believe that the NEAT was stopped due to technical problems of the IBT system. Technology is a crucial part in the NEAT, therefore there was a need to develop an automated scoring system. With regard to

this technology, several studies propose a system for the automatic grading of English writing (Kim & Lee, 2007), automated scoring system such as ′effective method in the development of an automated English-speaking testing system using automated English essay evaluation′ (Lee & Ryu, 2013, p. 193), and in the field of automatic pronunciation measurement, a device that can automatically measure pronunciation accuracy of English speech produced by Korean learners of English was found in the study by Chung, Jang, and Yun (2006).

In addition, research on the automatic essay scoring program has been conducted. For example, the study by Choi and Seong (2006) provided basic data for developing essay scoring computer programs that were already applicable to foreign countries. After comparing and analyzing C-rater, SEAR, E-rater, and IntelliMetric programs among the scoring computer programs, it proposes development direction.

In particular, Choi and Seong (2006) have made a very positive judgment on the degree of application of the automatic scoring program in Korea. There are many fields in Korea that require essay scoring computer programs. In elementary school, it can be used for essay type performance evaluation and writing education. In middle and high school, it also can be used for essay type performance evaluation, writing education and essay education. Moreover, this system can be used for online evaluation of cyber campuses in universities. In corporate training courses, online essay evaluation system can be used in cyber training, and in technology-based continuing education programs, students′ performance can be scored by essay scoring computer program (p. 157).

Considering the fact that technological aspects are rapidly developed in the fourth revolutionary era, automated rating system reliability is enhanced, and TTS (Text to Speech) or STT (Speech to Text) technologies are also being developed, the NEAT can use these system combining with a Cloud System. TOEIC speaking and writing test is currently conducted using the Internet-based test (IBT) method (YBM News, 2017). When a test paper is transmitted to ETS Certification Center, the test-takers will take the test by recording a voice on the computer in a speaking test or entering a sentence in writing test. Thus, the examinee's answer can be evaluated in a more efficient and standardized way, and the feedback can also be provided.

4. Future Direction to National English Curriculum Based on Key Competences

Although the 2015 curriculum has many characteristics, the most emphasized is that the curriculum is centered on core competencies. As for the concept of core competency, Jin (2016) pointed out that the concept of core competency has recently begun to be discussed. The definitions, components, characteristics, teaching methods, and methods of measurement are still in the early stages of inquiry, and it is a widely accepted concept. However, the basic concept of core competency includes essential key-words in education and human resources

development in the global society such as the basic attitude, personality, and ability necessary for people to live in a changing society. Therefore, global societies are paying attention to core competencies in OECD, UNESCO, and other advanced countries (Jin, 2016, p. 4).

Since 1997, the OECD has begun the DeSeCo (Definition and Selection of Competence) project, which in 2000 provided core competencies (OECD, 2005). In Korea, the 2015 Revised National Curriculum also states that it is a core competency-based curriculum (KICE, 2015).

The six core competencies are presented in the 2015 curriculum such as self-management competency, knowledge and information processing competency, creative and convergent thinking competency, aesthetic emotional competence, communicative competence, and community competence. The curriculum also suggested how these competencies can be improved in each subject (Ministry of Education, 2015a).

The 2015 revised curriculum emphasizes core competencies, and it shows the direction of improving core competency-enhancing curriculum by extracting core competency elements from the existing curriculum structure and content in each subject including English teaching.

Park (2016) called self-directed learning competence, creative and comprehensive thinking competence as an element of core competency in English education. In KICE (2015), core competencies of English subject are classified into 'English communication capacity,' 'self-management capacity,' 'community capability,' and 'knowledge information processing capacity,' so that core competencies are linked to the character and goals of English language curriculum. The core competencies should be applied to teaching and learning methods and evaluation. In KICE (2016a, 2016b), the core competencies of the English language department are set more specifically as follows.

First, 'English communication ability' is the ability to communicate in English in everyday life and various situations. It includes English comprehension ability and English expressive ability. Second, 'Self-management competency' is the capacity of the learner to continue self-directed learning based on interest in English. It also includes the motivation for English learning, confidence building, learning strategies, and self-evaluation.

Third, 'community competence' is the ability to participate in solving the problems that the community is facing by paying attention to the life of the community. As pointed out by Chang (2012) it can be achieved by sharing its values and attitudes as members of the local, national and global communities. This competence includes recognition of cultural identity, consideration of others or caring attitudes, and language and cultural diversity. Fourth, 'knowledge and information processing competence' is the ability to appropriately utilize them expressed in English in information-based society and requires capacities such as information gathering and analyzing ability, media utilization ability, and information ethics (KICE, 2016a, p. 44).

In summary, the key words with regards to the core competencies presented in the 2015

curriculum are creative, convergence, communication, knowledge and information processing, self-management, and community competence. In contrast to conventional grammar translation and reading comprehension courses, these key words are used in communication and expressive skills such as speaking and writing in a teaching and learning process in which students themselves actively and voluntarily participate, and performance process-oriented evaluation. These competencies requires the changes in terms of English teaching-learning methodology.

IV. RATIONALE OF REINTRODUCTION OF NEAT

Through the chapter Ⅰ, Ⅱ, and Ⅲ, several research areas were analyzed as to why the NEAT has been developed, what process it has been made, and why it has been discontinued, and educational environmental changes and issues such as the introduction of the change of CSAT, the introduction of ASA, and the changing direction of future curriculum. In this chapter, the rationale for the reintroduction of NEAT will be reviewed.

1. Meeting the Needs Analysis

It is already three years since the NEAT was stopped, and it seems that teachers, students, or English education researchers have not already believed in the government's commitment to reintroducing NEAT. Therefore, it is hard to find a study on NEAT other than an individual study (e.g., Chae, 2015) in which the reason for stopping NEAT was researched. Therefore, since there is no research on the needs analysis for NEAT reintroduction at present, the research on the needs analysis results of which the NEAT was introduced and developed will be shown in this chapter.

NEAT was preliminarily enforced in 2012. One year earlier, in 2011, NEAT research and development agency, KICE, conducted a survey with elementary and secondary school English teachers, The study was mainly focused on the English speaking and writing area, and showed the following results (KICE, 2011).

First, in responding to the question "Do you think that the introduction of the NEAT, including the speaking and writing areas, will positively influence students' ability to speak and write English?" The percentage of respondents "Yes," was 48.7% for elementary school, 72.3% for middle school, and 68.5% for high school. This result shows the reality of the current English classroom centering on reading and grammar due to the influence of college entrance examination and shows the expectation of the change of classroom instruction for English communication ability in teaching and learning process when NEAT is introduced. In the same study, the results of the survey with parents on the use of NEAT as a substitute

test for college entrance examination were as follows. In responding to the question, "If it is decided to replace the CSAT with NEAT starting from 2015?" The parents of 64.4% of elementary school, 56.7% of middle school, and 51.6% of high school responded positively.

In other words, parents in elementary school are more likely approved to the question item than middle school, and those in middle school approved to have a higher proportion than high school parents who are burdened with preparations for speaking and writing due to the higher influence of the college entrance examination. The percentage of respondents agreeing with the NEAT introduction as a substitute for CSAT was generally high (KICE, 2011, p. 96).

The results of a survey on the need for NEAT entrance exam substitution policies by teachers' speaking and writing abilities are also interesting. In the case of teachers who recognized their ability to speak English at the lowest level, 72.7% answered 'yes' and 27.3% answered 'no' to whether they voted for NEAT. 71.4% of respondents of those with the highest level answered 'yes' and 28.6% answered 'no'. In the case of writing, 80.0% of those with having low English ability answered 'yes' and 20.0% opposed to 'replacing CSAT with NEAT'. In the case of teachers who recognized the best, 68.4% answered 'yes' and 31.6% said 'no' (KICE, 2011, p. 258) Therefore, it was found based on the results of the study that their expectation for improvement of speaking and writing ability of practical English is high by replacing CSAT with NEAT introduction.

In addition, Kim (2012), who studied secondary school teachers' perceptions of the NEAT test itself, found that NEAT was rated as highly positively except a certain area. This study conducted with middle school teachers and analyzed the results based on the five evaluation principles of English evaluation; the perception of validity, reliability, authenticity, practicality, and wash-back effect.

First, most of the teachers (90%) responded that NEAT had a high level of validity, the main reason of which is that students will have the opportunity to express their thoughts and opinions, and the test has the functions to evaluate various aspects of student's abilities.

Second, as contrasted with the evaluation of the validity of the NEAT, only 4 teachers thought that reliability was high, and all the other teachers (93%) were low. The level of reliability was regarded as skeptical because the NEAT needs thousands of raters who also require high level training in a short period. They assessed that improving the reliability of rating is a shortcut to successful NEAT system stabilization.

Third, most teachers rated the authenticity of the test as high (93%), and the most important reason was that direct evaluation was introduced in speaking and writing. Fourth, as can be easily predicted by the nature of NEAT, the participating teachers (97%) evaluated the practicality of the test very low, and the representative reason was that it required tens of thousands of raters' training and it would take a long time to score all speaking and writing items of all test-takers.

Fourth, 94% of teachers responded positively to the question whether NEAT will have a

positive wash-back effect on students learning. The main reason is that the test will provide students with opportunities of using practical English suitable for practical situation, which lead them to become a true English user (p. 215).

To summarize Kim's (2012) study, in 2012, the first year of NEAT implementation, teachers assessed the validity and authenticity, and the effect of wash-back effect of the test very positively, but responded very negatively the reliability and the practicality of the raters. In other words, it is necessary to introduce NEAT, but reliability and practicality should be improved by constructing effective rating system.

2. Meeting the Environmental Change

The changes in the educational environment with regard to the reintroduction of NEAT can be summarized in the four ways. First, the university entrance examination method is transformed into an absolute evaluation, or criterion referenced assessment. Second, secondary school student’s achievement is converted to an absolute evaluation called the Achievement Standards-based Assessment (ASA). Third, rapid changing process in the IBT infrastructure and automatic scoring system is ongoing, and fourth, the direction of the curriculum has been transformed into core competency including the ability to communicate in English, such as speaking and writing.

Especially in Korea, it is very urgent to introduce speaking and writing test to the university entrance examination system because the wash-back effect of the CSAT on the curriculum management and the learner's interest is very crucial. Conversion to absolute evaluation of CSAT and secondary school grading system to ASA is at the core of changes in English education environment in Korea at present. These changes lead to the strengthening of public education through changes in curriculum management, and ultimately becoming the solution for the concern about increasing the private education expenses (Choi & Choi, 2016; KICE, 2014; MOE, 2014, 2015a). Especially, according to the results of these researches, it should be pointed out that the introduction of absolute evaluation improves the ability of learners to communicate in English, and 85% of respondents in the research survey preferred the ASA rather than the relative evaluation (Bae & Shin, 2016).

The decline in private education expenses due to absolute assessment and the introduction of the ASA will weaken the cause of the NEAT suspension in the past government and thus reinforce the rationale of NEAT reintroduction. Of course, we cannot predict that the two absolute evaluations will surely reduce private tutoring, but many studies show that criterion referenced evaluation leads to a decrease in private tutoring because the evaluation method does not accept setting a line by students’ grade. Moreover, according to the results of research, it has been highly expected that there is a clear effect of enhancing communication ability of English four functions. With this rationale, apart from the issue of increasing or

decreasing of private education expenses, reintroduction of NEAT should be considered as essential.

Regarding technical issues, there has been an investigation into the IBT system and a public opinion has emerged that no technical deficiencies should occur in national testing (Lee, 2013). However, the reason for delaying the reintroduction of NEAT in Korea, which is known as an IT powerhouse, will not be persuasive. Of course, CSAT is a high-stake examination to high school student, so we should try to build a complete IBT system. We have enough periods for building the stabilized system because three years have already passed after the NEAT has stopped during the period we have seen highly rapid development of technology.

We are already in the era of Artificial Intelligence (AI), thus, we will be able to solve the technical problems sufficiently. In Korea, the relative technology has already been established for several years such as automatic scoring system (Kim & Lee, 2007), speech automatic system construction (Lee & Ryu, 2013) and automatic essay program in Choi and Seong (2006). As IBT related research has been carried out, a safer IBT system can be fully expected.

As shown in the changes in the curriculum based on the above core competencies (Jin, 2016; KICE, 2015, 2016a; MOE, 2015b; Park, 2016), creative, convergence, English communication, knowledge and information processing, self-management, and community competence are selected as key-words in this era. In order to strengthen such core competencies, there is a need for process- centered evaluation in which the learner participates actively in teaching and learning, and in the process of performing English communication. It is a common sense that English teachers and students will not develop their English communication skills without being motivated in their speaking and writing areas. This fact has already been proved in the history of English education in Korea.

In addition, it is difficult to improve creativity with centering on conventional grammar learning and reading comprehension without speaking and writing which are centering on divergent thinking as a basic foundation for building a creative process in which English learners themselves think about the structure of words and texts, and organize their own contents (Kim, 2007). Therefore, it is necessary to re-introduce NEAT in order to meet the change of educational environment centering on core competencies.

3. Meeting the Accountability of MOE

In Korea, the responsibility for the education of the government, MOE, is to develop and apply the curriculum and to support the application of the curriculum effectively. Even if a perfect curriculum is developed, if the teachers and students of the school do not operate according to the curriculum, but run it in a partial manner, the purpose or the intent of the

developed curriculum will be unclear.

Of course, it is not to say that the autonomy of teachers should not be guaranteed. In order for the teacher to run the curriculum autonomously, students should be motivated to follow the teacher's curriculum. It is essential that both the teachers and students are motivated with each other. This motivation is not fully guaranteed even if they are trained to be in accordance with the purpose and nature of the developed curriculum, and be provided by physical resources and administrative or financial support.

Foreign language evaluation is also a kind of educational evaluation. As pointed out by Lee (2012), it is desirable to teach learners towards a set of teaching goals, and to assess how well the learners have achieved learning contents in accordance with their intentions and educational goals (p. 169). The evaluation can be said to be a function of clarifying the goal of the lesson, promoting the development of the learner, and examining the academic achievement level. One of the main goals of the English language education presented in the National English Curriculum is that it improves communication skills for four language functions such as English speaking and writing and reading and listening. In order to achieve these educational objectives, it is obvious that the goal of the class should correspond to the teaching-learning process in school. However, it is a clear reality that the goal of teaching English in the national curriculum is different from that in the classroom. It is also well known that these discrepancies stem from the gap between the domains in the university entrance examination and those in the curriculum.

The proportion of evaluations in the operation of curriculum in Korea is very high. Finocchiaro (1965) points out the following important factors regarding the relationship between curriculum operation and evaluation in the school classroom. First, why the evaluation should be made as a purpose. Second, what should be evaluated as the evaluation object, and how to evaluate it as an evaluation methodology? According to the national curriculum, English teachers are trying to evaluate students' expressive ability such as speaking and writing for the purpose of fostering communication skills of four functions of English. However, it should not be less considered that the purpose of the evaluation, the domains to be evaluated, and the evaluation method are very closely related to the wash-back effect of evaluation. As McNamara (2000) pointed out, the wash-back effect refers to the influence of evaluation tools on teaching and learning, which is influenced by the way the curriculum is operated and the teaching methods are applied. As a simple example, as Heo and Yoon (2004) found that after listening comprehension was added to CSAT in Korea, teaching and learning of listening lessons in classroom were strengthened and learners' listening ability was also improved. These researchers are concerned about the wash-back effect on "the children who have the infinite potential of spoken ability do not try to speak in English when entering high school. Among various reasons for this phenomenon are teacher competence and curriculum operation, the main reason can be found in the relationship

between curriculum and evaluation (p. 202).

It is clear that, in order to enhance the communication skills of English learners in Korea, the MOE has to develop a quality curriculum and to support the application of the curriculum. Moreover, what the government should keep in mind is that the most important thing to realize the intention of national curriculum for students and teachers is to sincerely consider the wash-back effect.

V. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The purpose of this study is to demand for the need to reintroduce NEAT suspended in 2014 in order to meet the current educational environment changes, and to discuss the implications for preparations of NEAT system.

In order to accomplish the purpose of this study, the background of the introduction of NEAT was analyzed through the literature review and previous research, and the necessity of NEAT reintroduction was suggested following the change of current education environment. Then this study discusses the ways in which the test can be developed and settled in the future.

The results of this study are as follows. First, the background of the NEAT suspension announced by the government is that the application of speaking and writing tests is likely to induce increasing private education expenses. However, there are a number of studies on whether the introduction of speaking and writing is a cause of private education expenses in the long term. Many studies suggested that they do not agree with this view. Furthermore, some studies pointed out that the changes in the educational environment are beginning to reduce private tutoring. For example, the absolute evaluation of CSAT and the introduction of ASA absolute assessment in secondary school assessments will contribute to this phenomenon.

The transition of CSAT refers to a criterion referenced assessment in which a student' grade is corresponding to the degree of their own achievement, changing from the norm referenced assessment according to the norm in the relative evaluation of the student's grade order. The ASA also has the advantage of knowing precisely what the student knows and how much he knows, not the relative sequence of the students. The effect of the reduction of private tutoring expenses due to the introduction of CSAT and ASA cannot be assured until the testing systems are actually implemented. However, several studies that have examined public perceptions of these tests have reported that the introduction of these tests will have a significant effect on reducing private tutoring costs, since learners' learning burdens are likely to be at least less than they currently are.

Second, the results of the study on the technical aspect and the change of curriculum are as

follows. The reason for the government's decision to suspend the NEAT was not explicitly a technical issue. However, when investigating the actual conditions of the IBT system and reporting the public's concerns about it, MOE might have concerns about the technical problems of the IBT system, and of course, there is a possibility that this will become an public issue. However, at that time, IBT upgrading work based on the Cloud System was underway, and it is not convincing to say that NEAT cannot be implemented due to technical problems in IT powers like Korea. In addition, considering the fact that in Korea, the automatic scoring system for the speaking test and the writing essay writing item scoring system are being studied, it is considered that the re-introduction of NEAT is sufficiently possible in the technical part.

Third, curriculum is changing toward core competencies internationally. Key words of core competence in English subject are English communication ability and creativity. At least, it is a common sense that there are limitations in developing these two core competencies with focusing on grammar and reading comprehension. In addition, it is impossible to induce the teaching-learning activities centered on student participation, which is the core of the 2015 curriculum, without speaking and writing performance in classroom. The process-based evaluation in which the evaluation is conducted during communication process itself is also on the same line. Therefore, changing the curriculum centering on international core competencies will be an important rationale for introducing NEAT.

Fourth, the educational responsibility of the government or MOE is sufficient justification for the reintroduction of NEAT. The government has an accountability to develop curriculum and to support the developed curriculum to be applied to its purpose. Support for appropriate application of the revised curriculum is the most important support policy in order to encourage teachers and students to apply the revised curriculum autonomously, rather than simply conveying knowledge about curriculum through teacher training courses. The induction of autonomous application of the curriculum should take into account the wash-back effect on the curriculum of evaluation. English language curriculum scholars and English language assessment scholars say that evaluation methodology in the real world like Korea is a shortcut to improving classroom instruction. Therefore, NEAT re-introduction should be considered to fulfill the government's responsibility for education. MOE should seriously consider whether it can postpone the responsibility of strengthening public education with the excuse of private education expenses.

Fifth, the educational policy of the government should respond to the demands of the people. There is no current demand research study because the government did not discuss reintroduction of this test after the NEAT was suspended, but many studies at the time of NEAT introduction and implementation revealed that the test implementation was positively evaluated by students, teachers, and parents. In particular, students and their parents were highly supportive of NEAT implementation, and the research was based on the expectation

that grammar and reading-oriented English education would be transformed into the improvement of communication skills of practical English. Therefore, in order to meet the needs of the public, the government should seriously consider the reintroduction of NEAT.

The rationale for the re-introduction of NEAT is summarized as follows: the reduction of private education expenses due to the introduction of CSAT absolute evaluation and the ASA of secondary school evaluation; the change of educational paradigm centered on core competencies; the technological development of IT sector, and government's accountability of reflecting the demands of the public.

Based on these results, the following points should be considered before reintroduction of NEAT. Several studies on NEAT's most important considerations before and after the introduction of NEAT and during the preliminary implementation have raised the question of reliability and practicality of the scoring or rating. Basically speaking and writing in English are essay type tests, not multiple choice questions. Thus, since the same answer may appear differently depending on the rater, their rating ability and inter-rater reliability may become the key issue. In addition, the issue of practicality should be taken into consideration, such as the time it takes to score, as it is necessary to train tens of thousands of raters. In order to do this, it is necessary to consider the development of an automatic scoring system which has been carried out in a foreign test with a high confidence such as TOEFL or TOEIC.

Second, the role of English teachers becomes very important when NEAT is reintroduced. Not only will they be trained as English raters, they will be at the forefront of strengthening public education by improving classroom instruction which is also the most important reason of reintroducing NEAT. Therefore, the government should thoroughly analyze the teacher training program with regard to the NEAT so that the teachers can develop teacher profession about the grading standards, methods, and teaching methods. By doing so, the English assessment and teaching and learning process are both linked, and the core competence of English learners will be enhanced.

Third, the construction of IBT infrastructure and item bank should be stabilized in NEAT system. Unlike the current CSAT, NEAT has to be tested several times a year and many question items must be accumulated because it is a system that allows tens of thousands of candidates to take multiple examinations. Therefore, it is necessary to build up the item bank system like the TOEFL or TOEIC and at the same time check the technical problems of the last IBT in NEAT.

Fourth, the most important thing to consider when reintroducing NEAT is the step-by-step process, which is possible by abandoning hasty progress and hasty expectations for the very positive results. As mentioned above, the analysis of the causes of NEAT cessation suggests that there were not enough preparing periods for the test. Therefore, the time for replacing CSAT with NEAT should be decided slowly, while building the infrastructure of the school itself with sufficient preparation of the teacher's ability, and providing sufficient time for

students to prepare for the aging process.

The NEAT is not merely a test tool to replace CSAT. Instead, it aims at changing the teaching and learning process as described above, inducing changes in classroom instruction, and improving learners' ability to express in English. For this reason, this study examined the necessity and rationale of reintroduction of NEAT in various aspects and discussed the considerations for reintroducing NEAT. In the future, it is suggested that the discussion above will spread among the English education scholars, English education practitioners, and English education policy makers.

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Examples in: English
Applicable Language: English
Applicable Levels: Elementary/Secondary/College

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