**Conclusion**

This study has aimed at providing insights into the concerns of in-service teachers in regards to the washback of the NEAT in order to better understand issues that may have influenced its demise, and outline possible directions that may facilitate high-stakes testing changes in the future.

There is a common agreement amongst educators that it is imperative for high-stakes tests in South Korea to include genuine productive skill assessment in order to foster overall communicative competence in learners. If high-stakes tests continue to exclude genuine productive skill assessment, teachers and learners have little need to develop speaking and writing skills, resulting in an ongoing productive deficiency amongst learners. Although the objectives of the NEAT are well–intentioned, theoretically sound, and a push in the right direction, teachers in this study tended to hold negative perspectives.

The negative perspectives expressed in this study seem to arise from many years of washback from previous testing periods that has resulted in the obstruction of a clear and unbiased view of the directions of the new testing system. This obstructed view is unlikely to be unique to teachers and may be found in additional stakeholders as well (i.e. parents and students), however further research must be conducted to provide insight into this. Additionally, these phenomena are unlikely to be unique to the Korean context as all individuals are influenced by hangover effects of one kind or another; it is human nature for our current outlook and beliefs to be influenced by our pasts. However, what is important is for stakeholders in any context as well as agents of change to be aware of those effects and understand how they may be influencing their outlook.

In order to address this issue, it is imperative to work on fostering mindsets that can work in the present but are open to, and directed towards, the future. It may take respected experts in the field (i.e. professors, researchers, teachers) to take steps to advocate changes more publicly, or for the agents of change to use experts to disseminate information that will shift paradigms positively towards future directions. If hangover effects are ignored, stakeholders will continue to look at things through the lens of the past and new directions will continue to be met with scrutiny.

Although this study has focused on the Korean context, its implications may be far-reaching. The NEAT was, and may still be an exciting option for the future of English education in Korea. However, the findings of this study highlight that the implementation of future testing systems, must be handled with care. The initiation of blind policy changes has resulted in the possible waste of 42.5 billion won (about US $41 million) on the development of the NEAT (Jung & Jung, 2014). In order to avoid similar circumstances in language learning contexts worldwide, when changes are to be implemented, whether it is in testing, curriculum, policies or other areas, it is important to consider how these changes will affect stakeholders prior to implementation in order to alleviate their concerns, gain their support, and preemptively resolve possible pitfalls. If stakeholders are not convinced that the benefits of change will outweigh the costs, negative perspectives will persist. This is likely to result in the demise of possible positive directions forward, as has occurred in South Korea with the downfall of the NEAT.