Autonomy practiced by English Primary School Teachers to Develop Teaching Professionalism

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Abstract. Teachers' autonomy allows teachers to be in charge of their teaching, from preparing syllabuses, teaching materials, and evaluation. For elementary school teachers, this autonomy is essential since this level of education is fundamental to the lifelong learning process. Teachers' autonomy can also be a form of professional action that leads to professional development. Hence, this study aims at identifying teachers' perceptions about teachers' autonomy, finding out what they have implemented in promoting teachers' autonomy, and acknowledging their awareness of the importance of teachers' autonomy. This study employed qualitative research and case studies as its framework. Online questionnaires were distributed to elementary school teachers of public and private schools, and interviews were conducted to follow up on the answers obtained from the questionnaires. The results suggest that teachers' autonomy was driven by the teachers' needs for personal and professional development. It was also revealed that the participants had practiced the five dimensions of autonomy-supportive practices, namely organizational and procedural autonomy, rationale and relevance, responsiveness, feedback, and cognitive autonomy support. Additionally, they also believe that the practice of teachers' autonomy will be optimal with the support of the managerial system, be it the school, the stakeholders, or the government.

Keywords: English teacher, teachers' autonomy, teacher perception, teacher professionalism

INTRODUCTION ~ Teachers' autonomy is known as the ability to manage one's own teaching and environment. It is a well-known truth that teachers' attitudes, practices, beliefs, and autonomy are extremely important for understanding and improving educational processes since they play a substantial impact in teachers' decision-making processes. There are numerous different conceptions of teachers' autonomy that have been established and broadened over time. Despite the fact that numerous experts have given their interpretations of the term, there is still no consensus. Given the fact that numerous studies have been undertaken to explore it, a more in-depth examination of the term and its dimensions is still required. The study conducted by Buğra & Atay (2017) presented a number of definitions of teachers' autonomy through the teachers' perspectives, using abundant data from teachers' self-reports that are both parallel to and beyond the literature. The teachers addressed the term from different perspectives, including not only definitions but also analogies. Some view autonomy as freedom from intervention or supervision, and some view it as the ability to

develop and complete work outside of the classroom. While the majority of teachers have a broad view of the subject, a few have opinions on the term even if they do not consider themselves fully autonomous teachers. Therefore, the analysis of teachers' autonomy through teachers' perceptions and practices becomes an important consideration that affects teachers' performance and productivity at school.

Prior studies concerning teacher autonomy have been conducted. Gabryś-Barker (2017) involved a group of EFL preservice teachers to acknowledge their perceptions of teacher autonomy as a concept, as well as the elements that influence these beliefs and the limitations and restraints on teacher autonomy. It was discovered that being aware of these viewpoints can help improve training programs in educational institutions that deal with foreign language teacher education. This idea is in line with Han (2017)) who suggests that initial teacher training plays a determining role in the future of teacher autonomy since teachers' pedagogical styles are influenced by how they were taught, whether traditional or innovative.

A number of studies were conducted employing pre-service teachers as subjects, like Cabugsa (2022) who assembled a team of 61 pre-service English instructors who had varying levels of English language learning autonomy, gender, number of languages spoken, and first language. It was revealed that participants are rather autonomous in their English language learning. Gender, the number of languages spoken, and first language were proven to have no significant impact on English language learning autonomy, therefore English teachers are no longer required to create customized instructions and exercises. Ramadhan (2020) also investigated the perception of pre-service teachers on their autonomy in transformational teaching using four factors, namely emotions (whether or not the teacher is allowed to show their emotion), motivation (internal and external factors), classroom management (setting up in-class rules), and transformation (the freedom to choose the school to teach, to perform transformational leadership, etc.). It was found that autonomy was mostly performed in classroom management.

Regardless of the practiced autonomy by teachers around the globe, according to a study by Dincer (2019), due to a centralized education system, Turkish teachers have the lowest level of professional freedom in the education system, resulting in students' lowest level of English proficiency among many countries. He also investigated the relationship between teacher autonomy and job satisfaction and discovered that autonomy was unrelated to job satisfaction.

Lastly, a study conducted by Cirocki & Anam (2021) measured perceptions of teacher autonomy of Indonesian secondary school teachers. The findings indicated that teachers' sense of autonomy in key areas of their work was found to be relatively high. Teachers possess sufficient control over teaching methodology, instructional materials, course content,

assessment, and, lesson preparation. However, they expressed dismay at being excluded from the school curriculum decision-making process.

From previous studies, none of them have applied dimensions of teacher autonomy with detailed indicators to measure the level of autonomy performed in the classroom. This study also focused on English primary school teachers, which gives great importance since primary school is an educational level that serves as the foundation of further and higher education the success of this level of education will greatly contribute to the next level.

Through this present study, it is expected that teachers, particularly English primary school teachers in Indonesia become more aware of the importance of teachers' autonomy and practice more autonomy-supported activities considering its benefit and potential, both for students as it facilitates students' diverse needs, and for teachers as it supports their personal and professional development.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Concept of Teacher Autonomy

The word 'autonomy' is derived from the Greek word 'autonomous', which is 'auto' meaning "self" and 'nomos' meaning "rule or law" (Merriam-Webster, 2002). Sinclair (1995, cited in Abdu, 2019) defines autonomy as the ability to make your own decisions about what to do rather than being influenced by someone else or told what to do. Autonomy can also be described as the capacity to take the responsibility for, or control over your activities (Sehrawat, 2014).

Benard (1995) defines autonomy as owning a sense of self-identity and the ability to act freely and exercise some authority over one's environment, as well as a sense of task mastery, internal locus of control, and self-efficacy. It is also referred to as the ability to take charge of, accept responsibility for, or exert control over one's teaching. It entails the following abilities and attitudes that individuals hold and can develop to varying extents: the ability to develop certain skills for oneself as a teacher, the tendency to criticize oneself, self-observation, self-development, self-awareness of his teaching, continuous reflection, sustainable development, self-control taking responsibility for his learners, being open to change through collaboration with others, questioning oneself in a particular position, improving oneself to keep up with the times, and making up for his limitation as a teacher.

Conceptual literature on teachers' autonomy shows a variety of definitions. Teachers' autonomy is defined by Little (1995) as the ability of teachers to conduct self-directed teaching. Following that, academics have attempted to establish the definition of autonomy from many perspectives. An explicit definition of teachers' autonomy is provided by Aoki (2000), claiming that it entails the ability, freedom, and/or responsibility to make decisions about one's teaching. Teachers' autonomy, according to Smith (2000), is the capability to develop necessary

competencies, knowledge, and attitudes as a teacher while working with others. Furthermore, according to Benson (2001), teachers' autonomy can be viewed as both a right to freedom from control (and the ability to exercise that right) and real freedom from control.

Furthermore, Huang (2005) states that teachers' autonomy refers to teachers' willingness, ability, and independence to direct their teaching and learning. Higher authorities should not interfere too much with teachers' work so that they can do their job without fear. In terms of working towards a definition, a statement of Hoyle and John (1995) seems like a strong starting point; 'a positive sort of autonomy refers to a teacher's ability to create a personal pedagogy that strikes a balance between personality, training, experience, and the needs of the particular educational setting.'

Nonetheless, any definition of autonomy, according to Allwright (1999), should consider the importance of creating a democratic classroom and communication environment while also acknowledging the many limitations of democratic classroom behavior and practice, such as what is not negotiable between teachers and students or between students themselves.

Teachers' Autonomy in Decision-Making and Control Practices
The starting point for this conceptualization is Ingersoll's (1996) work on power distribution and control in schools has contributed to the conceptualization of teachers' autonomy as it relates to teachers' decision-making capacity and how their decisions are influenced. Ingersoll's (1996) work explores the amount of authority and autonomy provided to teachers and its relation to school functioning. He is interested in power distribution and conflict within the school organization. He believes that individuals who make the most critical decisions inside an organization have the most authority. As a result, teachers' autonomy is defined as a teacher's control over critical decisions affecting the processes, content, character, and evaluation of their daily job.

In his early work, Ingersoll (1996) noted that teachers are frequently held accountable for the pedagogical and social aspects of their work, as well as their students' learning, wellbeing, and socialization. High degrees of responsibility, on the other hand, does not always imply that teachers have command over critical aspects of their profession. Therefore, according to Ingersoll (2009), it is necessary to analyze how and by whom autonomy is managed in order to grasp the essence of teachers' autonomy. Teachers may perform under a prescriptive curriculum that places strict limits on pedagogical decisions, although school-level policy and national legislation may provide them substantial leeway in other areas of their job, such as social issues. Different actors can impose power over teachers. Some aspects of a teacher's job may be reviewed on a regular basis by school management or an external inspector. Inspections may have less influence on teachers' decision-making in some cases; however, other external inspections may have a significant impact on instructors' performance. It's critical

to recognize the various elements of teachers' autonomy in order to capture such nuances in research.

Dimensions of Teachers' Autonomy

Sinclair et al. (2000) describe the characteristics of teachers' autonomy in two dimensions: self-directed action or development, and freedom from external control. Teachers who act on their initiative are not guaranteed to learn from their experiences. Because, while their professional autonomy development could be regarded as a sort of professional action, action and autonomy development are not always equivalent. When teachers practice their autonomy, a distinction must be established between the ability and/or willingness to engage in self-direction and actual self-directed activity.

On the other hand, Ingersoll (2009) emphasizes the three primary areas of teachers' work where critical decisions are made: educational, administrative, and social issues. He argues that teachers' autonomy is mostly practiced in the classroom through instructional decisions such as choosing educational topics and approaches. Textbook selection, the development of a local school curriculum, and other school-wide decisions, on the other hand, are matters in which teachers have a limited role. Ingersoll (2009) adds that administrative decisions like teachers' timetables, class sizes, student tracking, and resource allocation are nearly entirely made at the managerial level, although teachers' control over social concerns is more flexible. Teachers have traditionally made decisions on student discipline in the classroom, but their capacity to exclude children from the classroom and their power over behavioral rules are not as explicit. Many researchers agree that teachers' complex and varied work requires them to be more autonomous in some areas than in others, and other scholars have defined teachers' autonomy as being practiced in distinct areas or domains.

Furthermore, according to Wilches (2007), there are four domains: teachers' influence over learning objectives, methods, content, and materials, as well as social matters like student behavior procedures, are all included in the teaching and assessment domain. Teachers' implementations, interpretations, and rephrasing of the curriculum are addressed in the curriculum development domain. The third domain is the school domain, it involves decisions made by teachers in administrative functions such as budgeting, work schedule, and class composition. The fourth and final domain is dealing with teachers' professional development, and it addresses not only teachers' opportunities to participate in professional growth, but also their opportunities to select the educational material, as well as when and where it will be implemented.

Lastly, Rogat et al. (2014) devised a five-dimensional coding protocol to analyze teachers' autonomy-supportive practices. *Organizational autonomy support* is in effect when teachers involve students in decisions about classroom structure, such as the order of group

presentation, and the members of each group. On the contrary, when teachers deprive the students of the opportunities for making decisions about processes, resources, and forms and instead exercise power, they may hinder organizational and procedural autonomy. *Rationale and relevance*, are identified when teachers connected curriculum, objectives, and abilities to students' aims, values, and interests. Teachers deliver rationale by describing the aim of a class and the value of the knowledge and/or skills taught. Teachers foster relevance by relating lessons to students' interests, daily lives, and a bigger issue or context. *Responsiveness* is demonstrated when teachers reply to inquiries, give feedback or build on student ideas. As a result, when a teacher ignores or dismisses student contributions, instruction is classified as nonresponsive. *Feedback,* particularly the positive one, is viewed as facilitating autonomy when teachers see improvement or better understanding (Reeve & Jang, 2006). When teachers delivered criticism or critical comments on students' participation, this would be considered negative feedback. Maintaining the transparency of curricular activities, eliciting students' ideas and supporting arguments, and encouraging student replies are all examples of *cognitive autonomy support*. This means teachers limit cognitive autonomy when they are closing a curriculum task, limiting opportunities for student discussion, reducing the cognitive demand of a task, or using low-level questions focused on practice and recall.

Beliefs and Practices in Implementing Autonomous Teaching

Along with the idea that teachers' autonomy is vital for the development of teacher professionalism, permitting autonomy and empowering teachers is emphasized as a good place to start when trying to solve existing school problems. An imperative step for administrators is to evaluate teachers' autonomy regularly.

According to Hall & Hord (1987), understanding the methods and behaviors of their teachers is the main concern for school principals. Blase & Kirby (1991) found that teachers' autonomy was a key component of successful schools. To develop this critical element to its maximum potential, educators must have a fundamental understanding of the levels of autonomy in their institutions. The various challenges to autonomy, on the other hand, make a precise measurement of the construct challenging. Personal interactions and informal polls are examples of this type of data collection, and they can help create a more complete picture of teachers' autonomy in ELT. Teachers and administrators might then collaborate to identify specific areas where teachers' autonomy is lacking or withheld based on the results of these evaluations. Despite conditions outside their control, administrators have a significant impact on teachers' autonomy. Although classroom management is the domain of teachers' autonomy, administrators have major control over school curriculum, finances, and professional development (Gawlik, 2005). Teachers in many schools have limited or no decision-making authority in these areas. Autonomy in these areas appears to be reliant on administrators sharing decision-making authority over school operations. The autonomy of the

teachers and principal appears to be complementary components of an inverse relationship: the more power the principal has means the control the teacher is granted with (Gawlik, 2005).

Broadening Conceptualization of Autonomy

Stefanou et al. (2004) suggest that cognitive autonomy support within a taxonomy of three types of support can be used to improve the understanding of autonomy. *Organizational autonomy support* includes opportunities for control over environmental operations such as establishing classroom rules, negotiating work deadlines, and selecting members of the group. Accountability over the learning form and outcomes is part of *procedural autonomy support*. Teachers promote student autonomy by allowing them to select media and tools (e.g., a chart or a video) as well as the method of presenting their answers. *Cognitive autonomy support,* on the other hand, entails giving students control over their thoughts, ideas, and learning. In this setting, students are encouraged to construct theories and solution approaches, defend and justify their viewpoints, and assess others' and their contributions.

Teaching Professionalism

According to Tichenor & Tichenor (2005), the meaning of "professional teacher" at its most basic level refers to a person who is paid to teach. It can also apply to teachers who represent the greatest in their field and set the highest standard for best practice on a higher level. Kramer (2003) argues that the most important aspects of teacher professionalism can be distributed into three categories: attitude, behavior, and communication. These three broad categories span a wide range of behaviors and characteristics that teachers should exhibit in their professional lives, from being on time and dressed well to mastering learning theories and clearly communicating with colleagues, parents, and students Kramer (2003). Furthermore, Cruickshank & Haefele (2001) define "excellent teachers" in terms of analytic, dutiful, knowledgeable, introspective, and respected qualities.

Sockett (1993) offers a broad view of the moral foundations of teacher professionalism. He defines professionalism as the way members integrate their commitments with their knowledge and competence in the context of collegiality, as well as their contractual and ethical relationships with clients. He identifies five major aspects of professionalism for teachers using composite descriptions of idealized teachers in three classrooms: character, commitment to change and continuous improvement, subject knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, obligations, and working relationships beyond the classroom.

Personal traits such as patience, persistence, courage, and respect for children are examples of a teacher's character. Sockett (1993) states that we often miss the value of character by focusing on teaching performance. However, he argues that the character of the individual teacher and the act of teaching are inextricably linked. In terms of commitment to change and continuous improvement, since students in classrooms are never duplicates of those who

have gone before, Sockett (1993) says that going all out to respond to change is unavoidable for a professional if teaching is to be good. Teachers who demonstrate this tendency are always seeking means to improve their practice and adapt to their students' distinctive requirements.

Professional teachers must also possess a depth of knowledge and understanding of the subject matter they teach, as well as pedagogical knowledge and teaching skills. Sockett (1993) accurately distinguishes these two dimensions of professionalism; one may have a strong grasp of topic knowledge but lack the pedagogical knowledge and abilities necessary to teach students. To put it another way, teachers must be competent at the "hows" of teachings, such as curriculum delivery, questioning, and classroom management. It is believed that modern education prioritizes the pedagogical aspect of professionalism over and above the other categories.

Sockett's typology of teacher professionalism concludes with obligations and working relationships beyond the classroom. This wide category encompasses qualities that enable teachers to collaborate with their coworkers, parents, and the general public. He adds that teachers in public schools must be able to excel in the demands of collaboration with other professionals, collaborative leadership, and a larger role within the school.

In addition, according to Creasy (2015), 22 different Specialized Professional Associations (SPAs) believe professionalism and the formation of professional dispositions are vital; practically all of them have at least one criterion addressing "professionalism." Since the term is tricky to define, thus SPAs have developed their definitions to match the needs of their particular discipline. Most of these definitions agree in teacher education literature that a professional exhibits behaviors that reflect the profession's knowledge and skills.

Although professionalism is multifaceted thus it is difficult to define, Brehm et al. (2006) argue that professionalism can be classified into three categories: professional parameters, professional behaviors, and professional responsibilities. Professional parameters focus on the legal and ethical issues that a professional must follow, such as educational and instructional laws at the local, state, and federal levels, or the Code of Professional Conduct delineated by state boards of education or SPAs. Professional behaviors include establishing appropriate interactions with students, parents, and colleagues, performing professional appearance and attitudes, and punctuality. Meanwhile, a teacher's professional responsibilities include displaying accountability to the profession, school system, students, and community. Taking an active role in one's professional association, volunteering for school or community duties, and attending school events are all examples of professional responsibility.

Furthermore, in terms of professional responsibility, The Framework for Teaching should be considered when discussing professionalism in teacher preparation programs (Danielson, 2013). The Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) standards are aligned with this set of research-based components of education. In Domain 4, entitled Professional Responsibilities are sets of subdomains, namely Reflecting on Teaching; Maintaining Accurate Records; Communicating with Families; Participating in the Professional Community; Growing and Developing Professionally; and Showing Professionalism. In Student Teaching Handbook (2015), under Slippery Rock University, Framework for Teaching, Domain 4 Professional Responsibilities, these components are further broken down into indicators of the fulfilment of professional responsibilities, with the following modifications of Danielson's indicators:

Domain 4: Professional Responsibility

Components:

4a: Reflecting on Teaching
- articulates an understanding of lessons' goals and objectives
- states the strengths and weaknesses of lessons based on data
- analyzes students' participation in terms of content comprehension
- encourages participation from diverse student populations
- writes reflections about lessons and refines subsequent instruction
- accepts feedback and implements recommendations
- develops written plans for improvement

4b: Maintaining Accurate Records
- records and updates the results of students' assignments
- collects information about students' progress in a systematic manner
- analyzes the performance of students with diverse learning styles
- maintains records of non-instructional activities

4c: Communicating with Families
- maintains confidentiality in all situations/settings
- communicates positive information and concerns to parents/caregivers
- engages family members/caregivers in the instructional program

4d: Working in and Contributing to the School and District
- establishes rapport with members of diverse populations
- seeks assistance from other professionals concerning teaching and learning
- participates in school-related activities

4e: Growing and Developing Professionally

□ participates in student teaching seminars and other required university events

□ attends all required school and district professional development programs

□ shows evidence of participation in at least one professional organization

□ integrates information from professional publications into daily instruction

□ articulates a philosophy of education that includes critical self-reflection

□ assesses personal cultural perspective and its influence on interactions with others

4f: Showing Professionalism

□ attends promptly and regularly

□ dresses professionally in the school setting

□ practices personal hygiene and neat grooming

□ completes schedules, assignments, and other paperwork on time

□ completes work in the manner prescribed by the university and/or the school district

□ complies with school and class rules

□ uses relevant codes of ethics for the teaching profession

□ follows proper procedures for reporting students' welfare and safety

□ acts responsibly regarding school and personal property

□ challenges stereotypical attitudes

□ ensures that all students receive an equitable opportunity to succeed.

Regardless of the fact that these indicators/descriptors do not create a universally agreed definition of professionalism in teacher education programs, it is critical for the faculty of teacher education programs to agree on the dispositions/characteristics that will be used to evaluate teacher applicants. Teacher candidates will develop their definitions based on these factors in order to meet the standards established for them.

METHOD

Research Design

Since the qualitative approach offers an in-depth investigation of a topic, this study employs qualitative research and a case study as its framework to seek out answers to the research questions. Qualitative research is multimethod and takes an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject. This implies qualitative researchers look at objects in their natural habitats, aiming to understand or interpret events in terms of the meanings assigned to them. Case studies, personal experience, introspective, life stories, interviews, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts are examples of empirical materials used in qualitative research (Iphofen & Tolich, 2019). For this reason, this study used qualitative research methods to collect data in order to find out about the teachers' self-perceived beliefs and practices about teachers' autonomy.

A case study as one of the empirical materials used in qualitative research is used as the design of this study. Case studies are also helpful, according to Yin (2018), if the inquiries require a detailed and in-depth account of a social phenomenon. Moreover, Nisbet & Watt (1978) suggest that due to its depth, even a practical example can give the researcher a complete picture of interaction. The goal of a case study is to delve deeply into and investigate intensively the various phenomena that make up the unit's life cycle in order to make generalizations about the larger population to which that unit belongs (Cohen et al., 2002). It concentrates on a single entity, such as a single person, group, organization, or program (Ary et al., 2010).

Participants

Purposive sampling as a type of non-probability sampling was used to select participants for this study. The criterion for this sampling was that all of the teachers were EFL instructors with varying educational backgrounds and years of teaching experience in various environments. As a result, eight English primary school teachers with varying demographics (age and gender), and teaching experiences were selected, as described in the following details.

The participants of this study involved eight English teachers from both private and public elementary schools in Bandung, with ages ranging from 18-25 (12.5%), 26-30 (25%), 31-35 950%), and >36 (12.5%). In terms of respondent's teaching experience, 12.5% had been teaching for more than 10 years, 37.5% had been teaching for 5-10 years, 25% had been teaching for 1-5 years, and 25% had been teaching for less than a year.

Data Collection

This study was conducted in January 2022, the whole process took approximately two months. The data were gathered and collected through two phases, namely questionnaire and interview. The questionnaire was used to identify teachers' self-perceived beliefs, practices, experiences, and views in regard to teachers' autonomy. A written questionnaire involved demographic info applied. Autonomy-supported teaching practices by Rogat et al. (2014) were used as references in developing the questionnaire. Following that, to further examine the primary data and develop themes, a focused interview was conducted.

RESULTS

Observed Autonomy-supportive Practices

In accordance with Rogat et al. (2014), observed autonomy-supportive practices were divided into five dimensions, namely organizational and procedural autonomy, rationale and relevance, responsiveness, feedback, and cognitive autonomy. The processed data obtained from the questionnaires and interviews are presented below:

Table 1. Organizational and Procedural Autonomy

Teaching Practices	Participants' Response
Seating arrangements	37.5%
Classroom participation in establishing rules; setting due dates for assignments; selecting the group	75%
Display work in an individual manner (format; color); discussing students' preferences; material handling; selecting materials for class projects	37.5%
Deciding the order of group discussion	25%
Selecting partners	37.5%
Deciding whether or not to use color to signify model revision	37.5%
Choosing an activity after completing a task	25%

From Table 1 it can be inferred that in terms of organizational and procedural autonomy, participating in establishing classroom rules appeared to be the most practiced autonomy done by the respondent teachers, amounting to 75%. Seating arrangements, selecting partners and deciding whether or not to use color to signify model revision followed by as much as 37.5%. Coming next, deciding the order of group discussion and providing choices of activity after completing assigned work come last by as much as 25% of the total respondents.

Table 2. Rationale and Relevance

Teaching Practices	Participants' Response
Informing the students about the benefits of the tasks, e.g. "So, after this class, you will be able to..."	75%
Introducing a driving topic or other context to contextualize unit content. e.g. "What do you have in mind when you hear the word family?"	62.5%
Connecting concepts to everyday experiences, e.g. "Look at this picture of a restaurant. Where have we seen something like that before?"	75%
Revisiting connections to relevant context, e.g. "Yesterday we talked about animal habitats, and today we will talk about animal body parts because those who live on land have different body parts than those who live in the sea.."	75%
Emphasizing the interestingness and relevance of examples when representing a material, e.g. "Do you know that these colors are the seven colors of the rainbow?"	75%
Using students' examples to build toward key lesson points, e.g. "Yes, that's right, Adit. Dolphins are mammals, so they breathe with lungs."	62.5%

Introducing lesson coherence to prior lessons, e.g. "Last week, we discussed farm animals, and today we will discuss how farm animals benefit people."	62.5%

In the perspective of rationale and relevance, as presented in Table 2, the majority of respondents, exactly 75%, practiced informing the students about the benefits of the tasks, connecting concepts to everyday experiences, revisiting connections to relevant context, and emphasizing interestingness and relevance of examples when presenting the material. 62.5% of them practiced introducing a driving topic or other context to contextualize unit content, using students' examples to build toward key lesson points, and Introducing lesson coherence to prior lessons.

Table 3. Responsiveness

Teaching Practices	Participants' Response
Giving appreciation/praise for students' responses, e.g. "Yes, you have a good point", "You're right, it was the third one"	87.5%
Giving full attention to the student's speech, supported by verbal or nonverbal signals, e.g. nodding, keeping eye contact, "That's a very good example, Lisa."	87.5%
Restating students' points prior to the teacher's elaboration, e.g. "As what Kirana said, we add -s to plural nouns."	62.5%
Asking for clarification and extension from students to ensure teacher's understanding, e.g. "Did you say there are twelve months in a year?"	62.5%
Using students' own words and ideas in answers and when elaborating on students' views, e.g. "As Andra said, the story tells us about the greedy bear."	62.5%
Drawing on students' ideas in content representation and making key lesson points, e.g. "Do you remember when Alea said that being kind is important? That is what we will learn from today's story."	62.5%
Reintegrating Ss' ideas and explanations in the discussion, e.g. "Jena said that it's going to be interesting to write your ideas in ending the story. I believe you have a lot of ideas in your mind too."	50%
Encouraging peer responsiveness, "Randi, you can ask Nena's opinion about her favorite character from the story."	37.5%

Table 3 presents that when it comes to responsiveness, 87.5% of the total respondents gave appreciation/praise for students' responses, and gave full attention to the student's speech, supported by verbal or nonverbal signals. Additionally, 62.5% of them restated students' points prior to the teacher's elaboration, asked for clarification and extension from students to ensure understanding, and used students' own words and ideas in answers and when elaborating on students' views. Moreover, 50% of them reintegrated students' ideas and explanations in discussions. Appeared to be the least, 37.5% of them practiced encouraging peer responsiveness.

Table 4. Feedback

Teaching Practices	Participants' Response
Encouraging students to achieve learning goals, e.g. "Almost," "You're close," "You can do it!"	100%
Acknowledging new contributions and developing ideas; Students' ideas that advance the class discussion, e.g. "That's a very good point, Arga. Now class, what do you think of Arga's opinion?"	87.5%
Combining informational feedback with a task focus, as well as the possibility of improvement, e.g. "Elephant' and 'eleven' are pronounced differently. Please be more careful."	62.5%
Conveying expectations prior to the task, e.g. "I believe all of you can match the picture with the right vocabulary"	62.5%
Giving feedback for the entire class on skill and conceptual development over the course of the unit, e.g. "So, today we have discussed how the rainbow is formed. Remember that without the sunlight, it won't happen."	50%

Table 4 shows that regarding feedback, all respondents (100%) made sure to encourage students to achieve the learning goal. Acknowledging new contributions and developing ideas or students' ideas that advance the class discussion followed as the most practiced by as much as 87.5%, while 62.5% of them practiced combining informational feedback with a task focus, and conveying expectations before the task.

Table 5. Cognitive Autonomy

Teaching Practices	Participants' Response
Evaluating students' errors and ideas	50%
Setting personal goals and adjusting them with interests	50%
Allocating time to listen to the students and asking questions when necessary	62.5%

Giving explicit explanation on how tasks will help the students develop	62.5%
Providing tasks that stimulate students' critical thinking	75%
Facilitating discussion between students by asking them to respond to each other	62.5%
Making students' ideas the focus of classroom discussion	75%
Guiding students to help them think, elaborate, clarifying their ideas	87.5%
Encouraging students to develop self-assessment criteria	12.5%
Creating rubrics for students to self-evaluate using assessment criteria	12.5%
Encouraging fellow teachers to tell the rationale for using certain assessment criteria	50%

In the matter of cognitive autonomy, as presented in Table 5, guiding students to help them think, elaborate, clarifying their ideas appeared to be the most practiced autonomy, performed by 87.5% of the total respondents. Providing tasks that stimulate students' critical thinking and making students' ideas the focus of classroom discussion followed as they were practiced by 75% of the total respondents. Next, 62.5% of the allocated time to listening to the students and asking questions when necessary, giving an explicit explanation on how tasks will help the students develop, and facilitating discussion between students by asking them to respond to each other. Furthermore, 50% of them evaluated students' errors and ideas, and set personal goals while adjusting them to interests. A small percentage, exactly 12.5% of the total respondents, encouraged students to develop self-assessment criteria and created rubrics for students to self-evaluate using these assessment criteria.

Respondents' Perceptions and Awareness of Teacher Autonomy

According to the data obtained from questionnaires regarding respondents' perspectives of teachers' autonomy, 62.5% strongly agreed that teachers' autonomy plays an instrumental role in ensuring a learning environment that meets students' diverse needs, while the rest 37.5% simply agreed. A respondent emphasized that teaching English to the primary student is really important for the following reason:

> "Teaching English to primary students is really important as in this stage students' ability in literacy is still developing. Building the students' interest in learning English is essential so the students are exposed more to the language. It will help them to be confident to use English in their daily life." (EN, 2022)

Facilitating students' diverse needs is possible with teachers' autonomy as teachers are granted rights to innovate, create, of modifying materials. For example, reading authoritative and descriptive multimodal books bores gifted students. They require texts that are logical, informative, and engaging (Gül & Costu, 2021).

Meanwhile, in terms of personal and professional development, 62.5% of respondents strongly agreed that teachers' autonomy is driven by the need for personal and professional development, while the rest 37.5% simply agreed. From the perspective of innovation, 62.5% of respondents strongly agreed that teachers should have the freedom to make innovations in classroom activities, while the remaining 37.5% simply agreed.

In addition, coinciding with the current COVID-19 pandemic, respondents believed that with autonomy, the teacher would feel more confident in the virtual learning environment, as evidenced by 50% of them who strongly agreed, and the remaining 50% who agreed with this notion. Regarding this matter, a respondent stated in the interview that there was an adjustment made in the curriculum to accommodate a better learning process during the pandemic. It was called the emergency curriculum, described in the following excerpt:

> "The pandemic has given us chances or opportunities to learn about modification in the curriculum. We do now have three different curriculums. One of them is the emergency curriculum. So we do have core competencies, a lot of core competencies in the regular time but we are allowed to pick the essential ones. Later on, when we have to deal with the curriculum report or the report card at the end of the semester, there will be an adjustment to the core competencies. So basically, the teachers' autonomy here is to pick up the essential materials or core competencies for the students to be applied and it may be different from one school to another." (AN, 2022)

When it comes to addressing students' needs, respondents believed that teachers' autonomy is necessary to respond to their student's needs, interests & motivation and individualize their approach, as evidenced by 62.5% of them who strongly agreed, and the remaining 37.5% who agreed with this notion. An excerpt from one of the respondents below supported the idea:

> "For me, teaching English to primary school students is so much fun! I can approach the subject with many interesting sources such as nursery rhymes, stories, folklore, etc. The students also tend to be active and appreciative of classroom activities or teaching media that I've prepared. However, my biggest challenge is how to accommodate students' learning needs due to their gap in English skills since some of my students have English prior skills, and some of them are completely new to English. I always have to find interesting ways to explain things so it's still interesting for all." (WH, 2022)

Apparently, respondents believed that teachers' autonomy should go beyond their classroom since they believed that the teacher should have the right to propose teaching-related policies to be implemented in the school, as evidenced by 87.5% of them who strongly agreed with this idea while the rest 12.5% simply agreed. This finding was also supported by a statement of one of the respondents:

> "I believe that the good implementation of some basic theories on teaching, such as teachers' autonomy, will be fully beneficial to both students and teachers if the school system applied is supporting. We can't deny that the role of the teacher relies on the wide range of school systems in which the teacher should follow. The freedom of the teacher to develop their professional teaching skill will be helped if the system allows them to implement many creative and better ways of teaching." (TJ, 2022)

Fortunately, it appears that teachers' autonomy will have more support from the government since a new curriculum has been introduced to be implemented at least in the following academic year (2022-2023), called the prototype curriculum. In this particular curriculum, according to a respondent, teachers have authority as well as prerogatives to develop the quality of learning in virtual or regular classes that they conduct.

> "Curriculum prototype is the kind of curriculum that emphasizes the autonomy of teachers to expand or to develop learning experience for students according to their perception or point of view on what best education is." (AN, 2022)

DISCUSSION

Following a descriptive study, it was obtained that all respondents have practiced teachers' autonomy to a certain extent, covering different dimensions such as organizational and procedural autonomy, rationale and relevance, responsiveness, feedback, and cognitive autonomy. This was possible since they had the potential, willingness, and support system to do so, in line with Aoki (2000) who suggests that teachers' autonomy entails the ability, freedom, and/or responsibility to make decisions about one's teaching.

Regarding organizational and procedural autonomy, respondents involved their students in the decision-making process in the classroom related to classroom organization, such as deciding seating arrangements, making classroom rules, selecting partners, etc. This practice is in agreement with Stefanou et al. (2004) when teachers provide students with opportunities for making classroom related and were operationalized in ways explained in previous studies. Additionally, according to Furtak & Kunter (2012), a reform-oriented classroom is intrinsically more rewarding for students than traditional, controlling classrooms, and so leads to better student learning.

With reference to rationale and relevance, the respondent teachers conveyed the benefits, values, and purposes of assigned tasks to the students, while maintaining their interest through making connections and relevance to their daily life. This practice supported Rogat et al. (2014) who argue that teachers provide relevance by relating to students' interests, everyday lives, and a bigger issue or context, and they establish rationale by explaining a lesson's goal and utility of lesson content and/or abilities. This practice is encouraged to be conducted since teaching strategies that connect with students' real-life experiences and interests while also encouraging cross-cultural understanding are linked to improved academic achievement (Byrd, 2016).

In terms of responsiveness, respondent teachers reacted to students' work or performances through praises, thorough attention, encouragement, etc. These happen to be indicators of responsiveness by Bozack et al. (2008); Reeve & Jang (2006)which included active listening and responding to students. These forms of responsiveness play a significant role in teacher-

student relationships since they can make students feel encouraged, cared for, and properly challenged (McHugh et al., 2012).

When it comes to feedback, all respondent teachers encouraged their students to achieve learning goals, while also recognizing their contributions and ideas as the potential for improvement. In other words, they used their autonomy to facilitate students to improve through positive feedback, harmonious with Reeve and Jang (2006) who view positive feedback as facilitating autonomy when teachers see improvement or better understanding. This approach is backed up by Hmelo-Silver et al. (2007), who claim that feedback, particularly informational feedback, can serve to guide the development of ideas and skills, it can be done by asking guiding questions that foster application, connection, and synthesis.

Lastly, in the perspective of cognitive autonomy, an array of practices was performed by the respondents, from conducting evaluations, setting personal goals, giving an explicit explanation, stimulating students' critical thinking, and so on. At the same time, they also manage to maintain openness by involving the students in developing assessment criteria and transforming these criteria into rubrics for self-evaluation. These practices were observed by Rogat et al. (2014), who suggest that teacher practices promote cognitive autonomy by keeping curriculum tasks open, prompting students' subject ideas and reasons, and encouraging a variety of answers among students. This is also in line with Hopmann (2015) who stated that teachers' autonomy also includes the freedom to choose the best possible 'process of performance assessment' in connection with Didaktik.

Here as aforementioned, all forms of autonomy-supported practices above are believed to benefit students and teachers in a way that they can address the students' diverse needs while at the same time supporting teachers' personal and professional development. Therefore, it is suggested that English primary school teachers make optimal use of their autonomy through innovation in classroom activities.

CONCLUSION

Autonomy enables teachers to manage their classes to meet student's diverse needs. In addition, its practices are believed to be in accordance with teachers' personal and professional developments. As the results suggest, teachers perceived themselves to have a fair amount of autonomy, particularly when it comes to organizational, procedural, and cognitive autonomy. However, when it comes to managerial autonomy, they were still granted very limited access to the decision-making process regarding the school curriculum and teaching-related policies. Therefore, it is recommended that the practice of teachers' autonomy should get optimal support from the managerial system, be it the school, the stakeholders, or the government.

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