



## What Do the EFL Pre-Service Teachers Say about Teacher Autonomy?

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### ABSTRACT

*This study delves into the exploration of EFL pre-service teachers' perceptions of teacher autonomy during field teaching practice, drawing on reflective insights from ten participants in the English Education Department. The qualitative investigation centers on the multifaceted concept of teacher autonomy, encompassing dimensions like professional development, freedom from external control in teaching, and the capacity for self-directed instructional approaches. Employing a thematic analysis method, the research underscores a prevalent positive inclination among pre-service teachers toward the application of teacher autonomy. Key themes identified include the influence of the public sphere, the pedagogical creative teaching process, organizational dynamics, proficiency in content curriculum knowledge, insights from students' reflections, and the promotion of learner autonomy. The study emphasizes implications for teacher educators and institutions, stressing the significance of the long-term development of pre-service teachers for the sustained success of educational programs. It advocates for a robust understanding of teacher autonomy among pre-service teachers and the provision of ongoing support to maintain motivation and efforts in exercising autonomy. While offering valuable insights, the study acknowledges limitations, notably the reliance on qualitative data from reflective accounts, necessitating caution in generalizing findings. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the nuanced relationship between teacher autonomy and professional development among pre-service teachers.*

**Keywords:** Field teaching practice; Pre-Service Teachers; Teacher Autonomy

## 1. Introduction

Recently, there has been a growing focus on education, particularly the teaching profession. Both in global research and politics, the role of teachers is now recognized as vital in ensuring effective schooling (Azhariah et al., 2023). Consequently, existing teacher training programs need to adapt and develop innovative learning environments. As Broadbent (2003) suggests, these programs should proactively empower individuals to reshape their personal, professional, and recreational lives. This involves fostering open-mindedness, nurturing creativity, promoting the value of lifelong learning, and encouraging the exploration of alternative teaching and learning approaches.

Teacher autonomy plays a crucial role in catering to learners' authentic needs and desires. It has been widely acknowledged that teacher autonomy significantly influences the development of learner autonomy in the context of foreign language

education. As suggested by Benson (2011), the enhancement of learner autonomy should be prioritized before focusing on enhancing teacher autonomy. Moreover, teacher development has been found to be self-reflective, contingent upon teachers' awareness of potential avenues for change and the factors influencing this process. Striking the right balance between top-down coordination and teacher autonomy is also important. These research studies examined how the promotion of teacher autonomy through lesson study is perceived by pre-service teachers. The aim of this study is to gather insights from pre-service teachers (Here after PsT) regarding their perception of promoting autonomy through lesson study. The information collected will provide a depiction of pre-service teachers' views on teacher autonomy, their perceptions of teachers as researchers, and how lesson study contributes to the promotion of teacher autonomy.

In the Indonesian educational context, research on teacher autonomy has been conducted specifically among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers (Cirocki & Anam, 2021). The findings of this study hold significant implications for school management teams in Indonesian secondary schools. Firstly, it is crucial to foster teacher autonomy by providing effective professional development opportunities. The study also highlighted that teacher expressed a need for increased support from the school in terms of teaching facilities and professional development. Others, such as Gökhan (2019), investigated learner autonomy among pre-service EFL teachers under a mixed-method study design. The findings demonstrated a significant change in the autonomy level of participants, specifically a dramatic change in their learning independence. Besides, it was found that being more aware of the self, taking charge of their own learning, and changing perspectives towards the notion of learning were the biggest gains of the process for the participants. The findings were discussed in line with the literature, and several suggestions were made on integrating autonomy practices into teacher education programs.

While there are multiple definitions of teacher autonomy, this study focuses on teacher autonomy development among pre-service teachers. Specifically, it explores the perceptions of teacher autonomy during field teaching practice, with the aim of enhancing pre-service teachers' ability to take ownership of their own learning in teaching. Through rigorous investigation, this study aims to reveal valuable insights related to pre-service educators and their knowledge. The expected outcome of this research is a comprehensive understanding of pre-service teachers' perspectives on teacher autonomy, particularly in the context of their classroom instruction during field teaching practice. This understanding can guide professors and universities in leveraging teacher autonomy within the teaching process to prepare future instructors (Tekin, 2016; Guo & Wang, 2021; Khotimah et al., 2023).

### **1.1. EFL Pre-service Teachers**

The term 'EFL pre-service teacher' refers to individuals in the field of training or education who have not yet entered a specific teaching position. EFL pre-service teachers have various responsibilities to fulfill as prospective educators. One such responsibility is acquiring pedagogical skills, including curriculum design and implementation, technology integration, and proficiency in the target language and its associated culture (Silva, 2022). To become proficient teachers, EFL pre-service teachers must enhance their ability to select appropriate teaching materials, deliver

content effectively, and employ sound teaching and management strategies (Sheridan, 2011; Iqbal et al., 2019). Furthermore, EFL pre-service teachers require a comprehensive understanding of language skills, culture, literature, language and linguistics, and psychology, in addition to pedagogy. In the context where English is taught as a foreign language, language proficiency, and effective communication skills are particularly important for EFL pre-service teachers. However, EFL pre-service teachers often encounter challenges and weaknesses in real teaching practicum situations. Farrell (2012) categorizes these challenges as lesson planning, lesson delivery, classroom management, and identity development, which vary depending on the unique classroom circumstances they encounter. To address these challenges, two approaches can be taken. First, thorough preparation can be conducted during the Second Language Teacher (SLT) stage, which includes incorporating reflection activities and assignments into specific subjects (Farrell, 2012).

In a study exploring pre-service teachers, several studies have focused on several aspects, such as a study investigating intercultural awareness during short-term international experiences; researchers discovered that participants developed a foundational cultural awareness. They were able to articulate cultural perspectives, particularly in relation to how students from their respective cultures learn in an English Language Teaching (ELT) classroom (Santoso et al., 2019). Another investigation focused on the challenges faced by a pre-service teacher using Google Docs for collaborative writing in a computer-assisted environment with eight Indonesian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. The study highlighted the hurdles encountered while implementing collaborative writing using Google Docs (Terry et al., 2021).

In other aspects, a content analysis of argumentative structure in pre-service teachers' writing, based on an adapted Toulmin's model, highlighted that data dominated the constituent elements of the argumentative structure. This study suggested that the findings could serve as a model for scaffolding pre-service teachers, providing them with essential knowledge for teaching argumentative writing (Nurfitriana et al., 2019). Besides, in one of the studies examining pre-service teachers' perceptions of learner autonomy, a study revealed that many assumed teachers should maintain a dominant role, focusing on exam-oriented activities. The research suggested a need for a shift in focus from exam results to the learning process, emphasizing progress and adopting student-centered methods (Iqbal et al., 2019).

In the context of a reflective teaching practicum, researchers found that reflective practice, combined with structured professional learning tasks, played a crucial role in stimulating pre-service teachers' professional development. This approach helped participants cultivate their teacher identity and agency (Hendriwanto, 2021). Lastly, in exploring pre-service teachers' perceptions of the peer assessment process in learning academic writing with artificial intelligence (AI), a study revealed that cognitive conflict during peer assessment facilitated by AI could enhance the process. The research suggested that AI has the potential to contribute to a successful peer assessment process in academic writing contexts, offering pedagogical implications for implementation (Rizqa et al., 2022).

Therefore, in EFL pre-service teacher education, these diverse studies underscore the multifaceted nature of teacher preparation. The investigations into

intercultural awareness, collaborative writing challenges, argumentative structure analysis, perceptions of learner autonomy, reflective teaching practicum, and the integration of artificial intelligence in peer assessment collectively reveal the complexity and richness of the pre-service teacher experience. The findings imply that a comprehensive understanding of EFL pre-service education requires attention to cultural sensitivity, technological challenges, pedagogical strategies, and teacher identity development. As educators strive to enhance the effectiveness of pre-service teacher training programs, these studies offer valuable insights and suggest avenues for further exploration in preparing well-rounded and adaptable educators for the dynamic field of English language teaching.

## **1.2. Teacher Autonomy**

The term learner autonomy was first coined in 1981 by Henri Holec, considered the father of learner autonomy, though John Dewey mentioned this concept for the first time in 1966. Since then, many scholars have discussed and debated the concept of learner and teacher autonomy. Among these are Henri Holec, Leni Dam, Phil Benson, Barbara Sinclair, David Little, etc. Then this term is also famous among teachers as a part of the classroom process (Hoxha & Tafani, 2015). Teachers often strongly desire autonomy in their profession, primarily due to their limited control over decision-making processes and curriculum (Strong & Yoshida, 2014). Autonomy encompasses self-governance and the freedom to direct one's own actions, which teachers highly value. The presence of autonomy in one's profession is closely linked to job satisfaction and the perception of professional status. Teacher autonomy is commonly associated with concepts of professional freedom and self-directed professional development (Grant et al., 2020). This can manifest as having the freedom to make professional decisions within the classroom, school, district, or in terms of professional development opportunities. Teacher autonomy is also closely intertwined with being a critically reflective teacher, engaging in teacher research and action research ((Gülşen & Atay, 2022). Autonomy is consistently recognized as one of teachers' most desired workplace conditions. Notably, autonomy significantly impacts teachers' perception of their professional status and job satisfaction (Orynbek et al., 2021).

To foster teacher autonomy, finding a balance between administrative coordination and individual autonomy is crucial. However, in practice, the challenges faced by career-change professionals are often overlooked by administrators and colleagues. These professionals may lack opportunities to develop a sense of belonging in their new profession, which can prevent the establishment of supportive relationships within an authentic teaching community. Prichard and Moore (2016) argue that collaboration between administrators and teachers can substitute for top-down coordination, and teachers may be more accepting of limited autonomy if they are involved in program-wide decision-making (Prichard & Moore, 2016). However, not all programs provide such decision-making opportunities. This results in varying collaborative decision-making across different programs (Brezicha et al., 2014). Furthermore, some schools have been found to have low levels of collaboration between administrators and teachers (Thoonen et al., 2011). In severe cases, a lack of teacher autonomy can lead to a diminished sense of professionalism among teachers.

Feelings of powerlessness may contribute to teacher anxiety and frustration (Mayer et al., 2013).

One significant aspect of teacher autonomy pertains to the need for learners to receive assistance in order to take greater control over their own learning, particularly when they have previously experienced predominantly teacher-directed approaches. Teacher education programs should offer opportunities for teachers to engage in autonomy-oriented learning experiences and support learners' autonomy. Breen and Mann (1997) identified several crucial factors for promoting students' autonomous learning: (1) the attributes that teachers contribute to their relationship with students, (2) self-awareness as a learner, (3) belief in each student's learning potential and trust in their capacity to assert autonomy, and (4) the desire to foster learner autonomy. Teachers play a crucial role in assisting learners in transforming their beliefs towards becoming autonomous learners. Their support is vital in promoting the development of students' autonomous learning (Breen, M.P., Mann, 1997).

### **1.3. Concepts of Teacher Autonomy**

According to research, teacher autonomy encompasses multiple concepts and is not limited to professional development or pedagogical skills alone. Strong and Yoshida (2014) identify several elements contributing to teacher autonomy. The first element is operational autonomy, which includes aspects such as curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, student behavior, classroom environment, and professional development. The second element is decision-making autonomy, allowing teachers to exercise choice and self-determination in crucial matters related to their responsibilities. The third element is freedom from demands or pressure imposed by other teachers and administration, providing autonomy in work processes and curriculum delivery. The fourth element pertains to controlling classroom responsibilities (Strong & Yoshida, 2014). These definitions reflect the widely used understanding of 'teacher autonomy' in educational contexts. Teacher autonomy involves being responsible for one's teaching, engaging in continuous reflection, exercising high levels of affective and cognitive control over the teaching process, and exploring the freedom it entails. Teacher autonomy can be summarized as a multidimensional capacity encompassing independent decision-making based on students' needs and interests, professional competence, self-regulation, and freedom from externally imposed agendas. Teachers' willingness, motivation, and confidence in making choices are crucial to achieving teacher autonomy.

Teacher autonomy encompasses two interrelated domains in the classroom: the domain of teaching and the domain of teacher learning. However, conceptualizing teacher autonomy can be challenging due to its complex nature. Achieving autonomy for teachers involves considering various factors, including socio-cultural elements, public spheres (educational policy, public opinion), organizational dynamics (institutional policies and relations), and personal factors (motivation, capacity, and willingness to exert efforts for autonomy). It is important to assess the extent to which teachers have freedom from control by public spheres, capacity for autonomous pedagogy, and self-directedness in teaching matters to realize teacher autonomy. The public sphere serves as a space where citizens unite to share information, engage in debates and discussions, and deliberate on common concerns such as constructing teacher autonomy. Organizational dynamics involve continuously strengthening

resources and enhancing employee performance, promoting organizational learning, improving business practices, and strategic management. Creative pedagogy emphasizes the role of creativity in successful learning, teaching learners how to learn creatively and become creators of their own future. Content knowledge refers to the factual information, concepts, theories, and principles taught and learned in specific academic courses, distinguishing it from other skills students acquire in school, such as reading, writing, or researching.

Defining teacher autonomy can be complex as it encompasses various aspects. Researchers have examined characteristics and reasons for teacher autonomy, explored the relationship between learner and teacher autonomy, and investigated approaches to developing teacher autonomy (Kong, 2022). Smith (2003) proposed a multidimensional view of teacher autonomy, highlighting two distinct yet interconnected domains: the domain of teaching and the domain of teacher-learning (Smith, 2003). This expanded understanding of teacher autonomy integrates both teacher autonomy and teacher-learner autonomy. Drawing on the diverse definitions and interpretations of teacher autonomy, Huang (2005) suggested a comprehensive definition that captures its essence as teachers' willingness, capacity, and freedom to take control of their teaching and learning (Huang, 2005). This definition aligns closely with Benson's (2011) concise definition of learner autonomy.

## **2. Method**

This study employed qualitative methods, specifically a descriptive qualitative research design (Yin, 2016), to explore the perceptions of EFL pre-service teachers regarding teacher autonomy during their field teaching practice of English as a foreign language at a university in Indonesia. The participants consisted of three pre-service teachers undergoing field teaching practice in the English Education Department at IAIN Kendari during the six semesters of 2019/2020. Data collection was carried out through multiple methods. Firstly, participants were asked to provide written reflections using a Google form, which included a set of questions and blank spaces related to their responsibility and involvement in building students' cognitive attitude as teachers about the lesson in learning, what is the strategy in developing and increasing students' awareness and promoting students' self-learning. Secondly, ten participants submitted their responses and reflections within ten days. Thirdly, three participants out of ten who filled out the reflection but needed more detailed clarification about several things that are the focus of this study were selected to participate in interviews conducted via a WhatsApp group to gather more detailed information. The interview questions were adapted from Xiao & Yang (2019) research about self-regulated learning and formative assessment. Once all the data were collected, the researchers coded the data using Microsoft Excel to facilitate the analysis process (Xiao & Yang, 2019).

In this study, written reflections were used as a method to gather pre-service teachers' perceptions of teacher autonomy during their field teaching practice. Written reflection is a structured template with specific questions and blank spaces where participants can respond (Barkhuizen, 2014). The researchers employed thematic analysis as the qualitative data analysis approach ((Kiger & Varpio, 2020; (Perera, 2023). The researcher analyzed the data derived from the participant's responses in the written reflections they filled out. Data collection commenced using a Google form

after the participants completed the reflection questions. The researchers then distributed the reflection questions via WhatsApp and requested the participants to fill them out. In coding, the researcher used thematic coding (thematic analysis). Thematic coding is a way to analyze data to identify patterns or find themes through research data. The themes used concern Professional Development, Freedom from Control over their Teaching, and A Capacity for self-directed Teaching based on the concept of teacher autonomy. Researchers read and categorize pre-service teachers' reflections using three colors and labels. For the notes, the researcher used the abbreviation PS in the table to indicate the meaning of Pre-service Responses. Some of the colours employed for themes in coding the data included (1) Red for Professional Development, (2) Yellow for Freedom from Control over their Teaching, and (3) Green for A Capacity for self-directed Teaching.

### 3. Findings and Discussion

#### 3.1. Teacher Professional Development

Teacher Professional Development (TPD) involves the cultivation of a teacher's professional demeanor toward students during classroom instruction, specifically focusing on fostering this attitude from the early stages of their teaching journey. It aims to establish a professional mindset essential for effective teaching by emphasizing the importance of developing a positive and dedicated approach towards students right from the outset of their careers.

##### 3.1.1. Content curriculum knowledge

The participants have sufficient curriculum knowledge during the teaching practice. Participant PsT1 and Pst 10 are aware of the teaching preparation, in which there is a need to have "preparation of materials such as lesson plans, materials, and learning media". Teaching preparation is part of the teacher's responsibility. Sufficient preparation will ensure the success of the teaching and learning process. PsT3 indicated, "The form of my responsibility as a teacher at the beginning of learning is to have good preparation, such as understanding the material that I will teach so that I can explain the material well to students. Then prepare a lesson plan so that when teaching can be directed well". This responsibility seems integrated into the preparation of the teacher during the class as stated by Pst 4 and Pst 9 that "I always prepare my teaching materials well and thoroughly along with the media that I will use in class. I also try to control the class as much as possible to make my students comfortable studying with me in class. As a teacher, I am firm but can also provide positive energy for them so that there is no tension when studying."

Related to the responses above, the pre-service teacher makes a content curriculum at the beginning of learning from PsT 1, PsT 3, PsT 4, PsT 9, and PsT 10 that always prepares teaching materials well. That way, they can see many views about the model for explaining the related material and various ways to convey related material more simply to students. That way, students can more easily respond to what she conveys in class. On the other hand, she tries to control the class as much as possible to make her students comfortable studying with her.

##### 3.1.2. Pedagogical Creative Teaching Process

The participants' reflection writings included several direct quotations that shed light on the pedagogical creative teaching process and the development of

teacher professionalism. The researcher utilized written reflection to explore EFL pre-service teachers' cognitive attitudes in their teaching practices. Ten participants engaged in the reflection process, providing valuable insights. In line with this, PsT 2 and PsT 6 emphasized the significance of the pedagogical creative teaching process by highlighting the importance of reviewing teaching materials (RTM) as a teacher.

*"My form of responsibility as a teacher to students at the beginning of learning is to review my lesson plans that I have prepared in order to avoid things that may not be useful and in the end my learning can be effective." (PsT2)*

On the other hand, PsT 2 Responses that she reviewed the teaching materials before applying them in the classroom. She does it almost every time she does a lesson. The benefits she feels are that her activities are directed, the material she brings is well conveyed and the time she uses can be managed well. That is why the RPP that she prepared was not arbitrary. A week before, she had prepared and reorganized it until a day/two days before it would be implemented.

In my opinion, PsT 7 states that a teacher's pedagogical creative teaching process encourages students' Motivations (ESM) to follow that.

*"The form of responsibility that I do as a teacher is to encourage students to want to be involved in learning, for example giving motivational messages, or giving ice breakers that can raise their enthusiasm for learning." (PsT 7)*

Consequently, according to PsT 7, establishing a strong connection between teachers and students is essential in the pedagogical creative teaching process. She emphasized the importance of motivating students to enhance their enthusiasm for learning within the classroom. Recognizing that students may not be overwhelmed with numerous tasks, she stressed the need for teachers to provide strong motivation to engage students in the learning process actively. To achieve this, she advocated exploring innovative strategies and incorporating icebreakers to encourage students and ensure a successful learning experience.

### *3.1.3. Organizational Dynamic*

Regarding the exploration of organizational dynamics concept in fostering teacher professionalism, Pre-service teachers participated in the reflective exercise, providing valuable insights by learning by Praying (PsT1). Based on their reflections, it was evident that organizational dynamics played a crucial role in the development of EFL pre-service teachers. Their statement *"The form of my responsibility as a teacher is, I instruct my students to pray and also attend students to give religious values and also as a disciplined attitude." (PsT 6, PsT 5)*, highlights their perspectives on organizational dynamics.

PsT1, PsT5, and PsT6 expressed their views on organizational dynamics in relation to their role as teachers. They emphasized the importance of directing students to pray as a fundamental aspect of their teaching practice. They believe initiating prayer is a valuable starting point for students to acquire knowledge. Furthermore, they consider it essential to instill disciplinary values in students through prayer, as it is a primary responsibility of teachers to nurture these values within the classroom setting. In line with the opinion, PsT 5 states that for the organizational dynamic, teacher Preparing Student's Readiness (PTR) follows that.

*"Checking students' readiness in learning and classroom neatness is very important because it can help students to concentrate more in the learning process." (PsT 5)*

In Preparing Students Readiness, PsT 5 Revealed that checking students' preparation is necessary for students' readiness to learn. PsT 5 really looks at the condition of students in receiving and also obtaining material so that it will have a good impact on the learning process that is carried out. This is in line with the opinion PsT 2 and PsT 9, which states that the organizational dynamic as a teacher is Making question to critical thinking (CT) following that:

*"I will ask light questions to stimulate their understanding. In building students' cognitive attitudes, I like to ask questions that make students think critically. In addition, I also show a cognitive attitude through my behavior in class so that my students can see it directly because most of them will see their teacher as a good example for them." (PsT 2)*

*"I build a critical thinking attitude through the questions I give them" (PsT 9)*

In relation to stimulating students' critical thinking, PsT2 and PsT9 shared their approaches. They engage students in cognitive attitudes by posing thought-provoking questions assessing their understanding of the material. By asking these questions, they aim to foster critical thinking skills among their students. Furthermore, PsT2 and PsT9 also exemplify cognitive attitudes through their behavior in the classroom, serving as positive role models for their students. They believe that students perceive their teachers as exemplars, and by demonstrating cognitive attitudes themselves, they hope to inspire their students to adopt similar attitudes.

### **3.2. Freedom From Control Over Their Teaching**

This section focused on freedom from control over their teaching in the classroom during field teaching practice. The process was perceived by the participants based on their reflection data analysis. Through the coding results, several categorizations for the discussion of this section have been determined.

#### *3.2.1. Public Sphere*

The public sphere is one of the most important aspects a teacher must have in teaching. Hence, the public sphere constructs the teacher's autonomy as a form of freedom from control over their teaching in the classroom during field teaching practice. As stated by PsT 1 that for the public sphere to construct teacher autonomy is Giving Activity (GA), and Adjust the Condition of the Autonomy Learning Process (ACALP) *"A teacher in building autonomy in the public space in a variety of ways can provide many activities and show our interest in what has been built and also how to adjust conditions regarding how the book is free to give our opinion regarding the autonomous learning process"*. With the statement, the Pre-service teachers showed that to construct teacher autonomy; they should have provided many activities, shown interest, and adjusted the conditions regarding the autonomous process.

This aligns with the statement that for the public sphere to construct teacher autonomy is Active Contribution (AC). Attractively they stated that *"We must show that we can make an active contribution and show efforts in public that we are teachers who are dedicated to learning (PsT 2),"* then, *"I always involve students in active thinking and also show that my students are autonomous students (PsT 4)"* otherwise,

*“Though in the context of a public space, many things we can do is to be actively involved and also contribute actively (PsT 8)” more, “Work hard in the sense that we can move actively in the process of building (PsT 9)”, “The teacher is someone who must be active in every learning process and will show it in public spaces” (PsT 10)*

In the public sphere, the Pre-service teachers showed that to construct their autonomy, they should make an active contribution because of the process of guiding and involving dedicated actions in the public sphere.

### **3.3. A Capacity for Self-Directed Teaching**

This section addressed several barriers the pre-service teacher faces during field teaching practice. In determining the initiatives, they take in their classrooms, teachers must be able to apply reflective and self-managing processes to their teaching (Gülşen & Atay, 2022). Several sub-themes emerged from the results of data analysis to clarify in detail the findings in this section.

#### *3.3.1. Teacher Reflections*

Reflection plays a vital role in helping students establish meaningful connections, leading to a profound comprehension of the subject matter and a deeper understanding of themselves as learners. Through reflection, students can derive significance from their learning experiences by considering not only what they are learning but also how and why they engage in the learning process. In the context of pre-service teacher education, reflection was incorporated into learning activities to encourage students' introspection. Consequently, at the conclusion of each lesson, pre-service teachers facilitated opportunities for students to reflect upon the learning outcomes they encountered in the classroom.

In PsT 1, as stated, *“I asked students what they thought of today's class as interesting or boring.”* It is categorized as asking students to reflect on an interesting and tedious class, students conclude the material. In this technical case, students write on paper and then collect it from the researcher. This can change student behavior for the next class because they have conveyed their complaints.

The opinion of PsT 2 and PsT 5 states that making students reflect in the class, asking students to reflect, evaluate (SRE) and think to understand the material (TIUM) follow that.

*“I identify my learning success as well as for students to analyze their understanding. This reflection act teaches students to think and evaluate themselves and teaches students what, how, and why to reflect so that there is development in students.” (PsT 2)*

*“Starting from asking if they are comfortable with my teaching method, whether they are easy to understand and remember the material given, what should they do after knowing their shortcomings, especially in learning English.” (PsT 5)*

PsT 2 demonstrated the significance of students engaging in reflection, evaluation, and critical thinking regarding their understanding of the material. She emphasized that conducting reflection activities with students at the end of the lesson was a key objective in her teaching practice. This approach yielded benefits for both herself as a teacher, as it allowed her to assess the effectiveness of her instruction, and for the students, as it facilitated their analysis and comprehension of the subject matter.

The data further revealed that PsT 5 consistently engaged in reflective practices to foster students' increased understanding of the materials and create a comfortable learning environment in the classroom. This is in line with the opinion PsT 3, which states that to make students reflect in the class, ask students to reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of class (SRAD) follow that.

*“At the end of the lesson, I always reflect by asking students about the learning that I do in class. In this reflection they explain the advantages and disadvantages of what I do in class.” (PsT 3)*

In these responses to PsT 3, ask students to reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of class. In this case, he wants to perceive the advantages and disadvantages of the process he teaches in the classroom. This reflection process is very helpful for him to improve so that the teaching process goes well because of the student's reflection.

### 3.3.2. Promoting Learner Autonomy

Encouraging learner autonomy is essential in education, as it empowers individuals to take ownership of their own learning. It involves making informed decisions, being aware of learning processes, and exercising control over one's learning journey through reflective practices (Gülşen and Atay (2022)). Pre-service teachers actively promote learner autonomy by employing various direct and indirect strategies. They strive to optimize their teaching methods inside and outside the classroom, ensuring learners are empowered to take charge of their learning experiences. In line with the opinion, PsT 3 states that for Promoting learner autonomy in teaching, giving a solution to learn outside (GSLs) follows that.

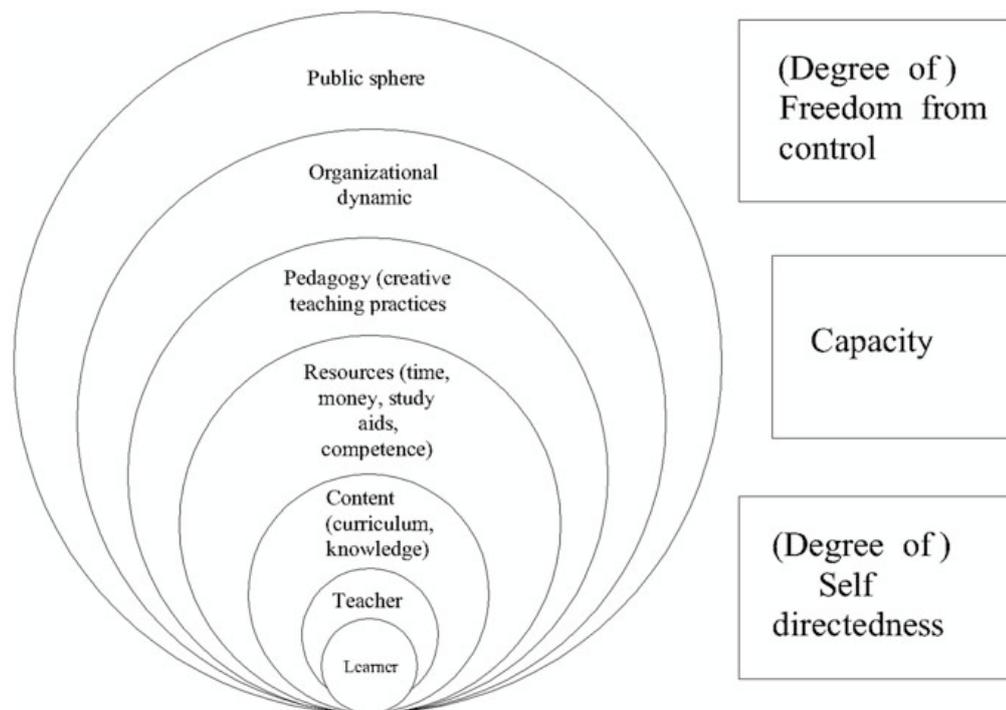
*“What I do is ask questions at the beginning of the lesson about what they have learned and learned outside of class. For students who do not answer, they will be given advice and given a solution on how to learn and ask questions tomorrow.” (PsT 3)*

PsT 3 emphasized the importance of promoting student self-learning and fostering learner autonomy. To achieve this, she believes in providing guidance and encouragement to students to motivate them to take their studies seriously. Each student is given equal opportunities and receives advice on how to study independently at home. By offering this support, PsT 3 aims to empower students to become self-directed learners and take responsibility for their own academic progress. The illustration of this point can be seen in the Figure.

This study provides a comprehensive exploration of the concept of teacher autonomy within the context of professional development. The findings highlight the significance of organizational dynamics in shaping teacher autonomy. Pre-service teachers exhibit organizational dynamics by incorporating prayer as a starting point for learning, promoting critical thinking skills, and providing opportunities for students to engage with learning materials. These practices contribute to the development of teacher autonomy. Furthermore, the study recognizes the impact of institutions in shaping student attitudes and character through various interventions that influence values, character development, and critical thinking abilities. Regarding content curriculum knowledge, pre-service teachers demonstrate their teaching proficiency by employing diverse learning media, such as videos and pictures, and reviewing teaching materials in their classrooms. However, it is important to note that

the concept of school autonomy in Europe has introduced new responsibilities for teachers, sometimes resulting in reduced individual autonomy. The need for cooperation in curriculum development at the school level may limit teachers' independent decision-making in their classrooms.

The pre-service teachers demonstrated their pedagogical creativity and dynamic approach by utilizing teaching strategies, methods, and collaborative brainstorming to support students in their learning journey. In line with the concept of "swim or sink together" from Johnson & Johnson (2018) cooperative learning approach, they emphasized that when teachers and students work together, they can overcome challenges and achieve success in the pursuit of knowledge (Johnson & Johnson, 2018). This highlights the importance of co-constructed pedagogies that foster the simultaneous development of teacher and learner autonomy. However, the research findings indicate that the limited availability of professional development opportunities significantly hindered the growth and progress of the pre-service teachers. Their development was greatly constrained due to limited access to such opportunities.



**Figure.** Result from Findings

Due to their dissatisfaction with the current working environment, all pre-service teachers expressed a strong desire for access to alternative communities of practice that would allow them to align their values and beliefs with their professional development. It was indicated by the statement of PsT 8 that "As a reflection of what pre-service teachers also undertake to build their professionalism, I frequently advise students to study independently at home or visit social media, like Instagram, which has English learning content like *Kampung Inggris*, language centers, English Vit, etc. Unlike the other two Pre-service teacher participants, their primary focus was on attaining professional titles, which necessitated conforming to the specific teaching requirements in their classrooms. This approach aimed to enhance their capacity for

professional action and ultimately improve student learning outcomes (Biesta et al., 2015). However, these developments also contradict, as they involve a trade-off between decreased autonomy and heightened expectations for teacher professionalism.

The research findings indicate that language teachers often face limitations restricting their ability to provide learners with greater autonomy in the learning process. However, in the public sphere, pre-service teachers argue for the importance of constructing autonomy through active contribution, creative activities, and a genuine commitment to developing autonomy. They strive to demonstrate their dedication and prove themselves as capable and exemplary teachers, aligning with the direction of autonomous teachers. Further, Dikilitaş and Mumford (2019) suggest that teachers who lack necessary support are more likely to misunderstand curriculum guidelines and implement regulations superficially. This emphasizes that teacher autonomy encompasses interdependence and interconnectedness in their practice (Dikilitaş & Mumford, 2019).

Autonomy, encompassing both learners and teachers, can be defined as the ability to develop as self-determined individuals who are socially responsible and critically aware participants in educational environments (McLennan et al., 2017; Vieira, 2020). It is grounded in the belief that education is a means for personal empowerment and societal transformation (Vieira, 2020). This study provides insights into Pre-service Teachers' perceptions of Teacher Autonomy across various dimensions, including self-development, the public sphere, organizational dynamics, the pedagogical creative teaching process, content curriculum knowledge, students' reflections, and promoting learning. By exploring these aspects, this research offers a comprehensive understanding of the scope of teacher autonomy during field teaching practice, addressing complex issues that have not been extensively studied before.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Based on the findings of EFL pre-service teachers' perceptions of teacher autonomy during field teaching practice, several key conclusions can be drawn from this study. Overall, most Pre-service Teachers exhibited positive perceptions of teacher autonomy, as evidenced by their application of reflective data analysis. The core themes from the research findings shed light on interpreting the data analysis results. The first theme, Teacher Professional Development, highlights the importance of fostering a professional attitude among teachers towards their students during field teaching practice. This theme encompasses three sub-themes: (a) Content Curriculum Knowledge, (b) Pedagogical Creative Teaching Process, and (c) Organizational dynamics. The second theme, Freedom from Control Over their Teaching, identifies three dimensions of control over language learning: learning management, cognitive processes, and learning content. The concept of control within teacher autonomy remains somewhat ambiguous in the existing literature. This theme includes the following sub-themes: (a) Public Sphere, (b) Pedagogical Creative Teaching Knowledge, (c) Curriculum Content Knowledge, and (d) Organizational dynamic. The final theme, A Capacity for Self-Directed Teaching, encompasses two sub-themes: (a) Student Reflection and (b) Promoting Learner Autonomy. The process of reflecting on students' learning experiences, encouraging them to reflect on both engaging and challenging classroom activities, and drawing conclusions from the material are all

integral parts of this theme. Additionally, the achievements of teachers in facilitating comfortable and comprehensive learning environments are highlighted. The participants put forth various arguments and actions warrant further discussion in promoting learner autonomy.

This study provides valuable insights into the perspectives and practices of teacher autonomy among EFL Pre-service Teachers during field teaching practice. It highlights the importance of professional development, freedom from control, and the capacity for self-directed teaching. However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of the study.

One limitation is the restricted scope of the research, as it relies solely on qualitative data analysis from Pre-service teachers' reflections. While these reflections offer valuable insights, further verification through quantitative data measurement methodologies would enhance the study's validity. For example, one finding suggests that teacher autonomy alone may not be sufficient to bring about changes in professional development for Pre-service teachers. It indicates the need for openness and other factors to facilitate increased professional development. The researcher's interpretation of the findings is limited to what was expressed by the participants, without conducting extensive testing to demonstrate the impact of applying teacher autonomy.

As such, future researchers should consider addressing these limitations by incorporating quantitative data measurement methods to complement the qualitative findings. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between teacher autonomy and professional development among Pre-service teachers.

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