# THE PERCEPTIONS OF EFL INSTRUCTORS AND ADMINISTRATORS ON TEACHER AUTONOMY: A CASE STUDY

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Approval of the Graduate School of Social Sciences

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# ABSTRACT

THE PERCEPTIONS OF EFL INSTRUCTORS AND ADMINISTRATORS ON TEACHER AUTONOMY: A CASE STUDY

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This case study aimed to explore the perceptions of EFL instructors and administrators working at tertiary level in regard to the concept of "teacher autonomy" and to investigate to what extent the instructors were perceived to possess autonomy in their work context and desired autonomy over six domains, namely curriculum, instruction, assessment, professional development, classroom management, and institutional operations. The study also sought administrators' views on what the extent of teacher autonomy should be in each domain. For this purpose, an English preparatory program of a state university was chosen as the case and fifty Turkish EFL instructors and five administrators who worked at the program participated in the study. Data were gathered through questionnaires and semi-structured individual interviews.

The results suggested that EFL instructors perceived to possess a low level of autonomy in general, but nevertheless, they desired to have a higher degree of autonomy in all domains. In addition, administrators' views on the extent of teacher

autonomy differed across the six domains. Whereas they believed that the instructors should have autonomy over professional development and classroom management, they did not support the idea of giving teachers autonomy over assessment and institutional operations. Moreover, the findings revealed that both instructors and administrators held the opinion that teacher autonomy is vital for teachers and an effective instruction. By identifying some constraints on teacher autonomy, the participants also offered some suggestions to help to promote it. Thus, the study has important implications for EFL instructors, administrators, and teacher educators.

**Keywords:** Teacher autonomy, EFL instructors, Administrators, English preparatory program

# ÖZ

İNGİLİZCE OKUTMANLARININ VE OKUL YÖNETİCİLERİNİN ÖĞRETMEN ÖZERKLİĞİ ÜZERİNE ALGILARI: BİR DURUM ÇALIŞMASI

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Bu durum çalışması, İngilizce okutmanlarının ve okul yöneticilerinin öğretmen özerkliği kavramı üzerine düşüncelerini ve onların algılarına dayanarak, okutmanların çalıştıkları kurumda müfredat, öğretim, değerlendirme, mesleki gelişim, sınıf yönetimi ve kurumsal faaliyetler olarak adlandırılan altı alandaki özerklik düzeylerini ve yine bu alanlarda sahip olmak istedikleri özerklik düzeyini incelemeyi amaçlamıştır. Bu çalışma ayrıca yöneticilerin, bu alanlardaki öğretmen özerkliğinin ne ölçüde olması gerektiği konusundaki düşüncelerini de araştırmıştır. Araştırmada durum olarak bir devlet üniversitesinin İngilizce hazırlık programı seçilmiş ve bu kurumda çalışmakta olan 50 İngilizce okutmanı ve 5 yönetici çalışmaya katılmıştır. Veri, anketler ve yarı yapılandırılmış bireysel mülakatlar aracılığıyla toplanmıştır.

Araştırmanın sonuçları, İngilizce okutmanlarının özerklik seviyelerini genel olarak düşük olarak algıladıklarını, fakat aynı zamanda her bir alanda daha yüksek seviyede özerkliğe sahip olmak istediklerini göstermiştir. Ayrıca, okul yöneticilerinin öğretmen özerkliğinin ne ölçüde olması gerektiğine dair algıları belirtilen özerklik alanları

arasında farklılık göstermektedir. Yöneticiler öğretmenlerin mesleki gelişim ve sınıf yönetimi alanlarında özerkliğe sahip olmaları gerektiğini düşünürken, değerlendirme ve kurumsal faaliyetler alanlarında öğretmenlere özerklik verilmesini desteklememektedir. Bunların yanı sıra bulgular okutmanların ve yöneticilerin öğretmen özerkliğinin öğretmenler ve etkili bir eğitim-öğretim için çok önemli olduğunu düşündüklerini ortaya çıkarmıştır. Katılımcılar öğretmen özerkliğini kısıtlayan unsurları tanımlayarak, özerkliğin geliştirilmesini sağlayacak bazı önerilerde bulunmuşlardır. Bu nedenle, araştırma İngilizce öğretmenleri, okul yöneticileri ve İngilizce öğretmen yetiştirme programları için önemli öneriler sunmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Öğretmen özerkliği, İngilizce okutmanları, okul yöneticileri, İngilizce hazırlık programı

To teachers who have a passion for teaching

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| BALEAP | British Association of Lecturers in English for Academic Purposes |
| CEFR | Common European Framework of Reference |
| EFL | English as a Foreign Language |
| ELL | English Language and Literature |
| ELT | English Language Teaching |
| ESP | English for Specific Purposes |
| HE | Higher Education |
| MoNE | Ministry of National Education |
| Quest | Questionnaire |
| SFL | School of Foreign Languages |

# CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.0 Presentation

This chapter starts with the background to the study, which provides a brief account of the literature on teacher autonomy. It also offers a statement of the problem and explains the motives behind the study. In addition, the purpose of the study along with the research questions addressed in the study is presented, which is followed by the significance of the study. Lastly, the terms referred to in the study are explained.

## 1.1 Background to the Study

Teachers have a crucial impact on the quality of education offered to students as well as the success of a school, which makes it essential to explore how their effectiveness can be enhanced. One area that has been investigated to address this issue is teacher autonomy. It has been believed by some that empowering teachers by giving them more autonomy is a good starting point to solve the problems faced in today's schools (Wu, 2015) as teacher autonomy is a key to effective teaching (Sehrawat, 2014). In addition, teacher autonomy is of vital importance since it is linked with teachers' professional status (Pearson & Moomaw, 2005).

Given its importance, there is a need to define 'teacher autonomy' thoroughly. Teacher autonomy is not a new concept and the term has been widely used in connection with decentralization of schools, teacher decision-making, professional development, teacher professionalization, and teacher empowerment (Wilches, 2007). Despite the prevalent use of the term, no consensus has been reached over its meaning and diverse definitions and characteristics have been offered based on conceptualizations of researchers and practitioners.

In teacher education literature, teacher autonomy has mostly been referred to as professional freedom, power, and discretion of teachers (Anderson, 1987; Friedman, 1999; Webb, 2002). Pearson and Moomaw (2005) also referred to teacher autonomy as professional freedom suggesting that "if teachers are to be empowered and exalted as professionals, then like other professionals, teachers must have the freedom to prescribe the best treatment for their students as doctors/lawyers do for their patients/clients" (p.38). Besides, teacher autonomy has been regarded as a dimension of teacher empowerment and defined by Short (1994) as "teachers' beliefs that they can control certain aspects of their work life" (p. 490). Anderson (1987) claimed that teacher autonomy is limited within the classroom and when teachers step out of the classroom, their autonomy decreases. Likewise, Lasley and Galloway (1983) asserted that "lack of instructional autonomy serves as another deterrent to teacher professionalism. Teachers are often told what to teach, when to teach, and how to teach. They are not treated as professional decision-makers; they are managed like sub-professional technicians" (p.5). These assertions point to the understanding of teacher autonomy as freedom of teachers to control their work.

Teacher autonomy was introduced into foreign language education literature almost two decades ago when the idea that learner autonomy and teacher autonomy can be related and interdependent began to emerge (Smith and Erdoğan, 2008; Benson, 2011). The idea was developed by Little (1995) when he claimed, "learner autonomy and teacher autonomy are interdependent and the promotion of learner autonomy depends on the promotion of teacher autonomy" (p175). He stressed that

> Genuinely successful teachers have always been autonomous in the sense of having a strong sense of personal responsibility for their teaching, exercising via continuous reflection and analysis the highest degree of affective and cognitive control of the teaching process, and exploring the freedom that this confers (p.179).

After it started to be used in the field of foreign language education, the concept of teacher autonomy has been given new interpretations like "teacher's capacity to engage in self-directed teaching" (Little, 1995; Smith, 2003), "teachers' capacity for

self-directed professional development" (Smith, 2003; Benson & Huang, 2008; Graves, 2009), "ability and willingness to help learners take responsibility for their own learning" (Thavenius, 1999).

Due to its popularity in both teacher education and applied linguistics, many studies focused on teachers' views on the concept of teacher autonomy and the level of their autonomy (Pearson & Hall, 1993; Ingersoll, 1994; Friedman, 1999; Benson, 2010; Prichard & Moore, 2016). Besides, some researchers investigated the effects of action research, teacher collaboration, and teacher reflection on teachers' autonomy by conceptualizing teacher autonomy as a capacity for professional development (Wang & Zhang, 2014; Xu, 2015; Noormohammadi, 2014). Moreover, some studies aimed to find out the relationship between teacher autonomy and learner autonomy (Little, 1995; Smith & Erdoğan, 2008; Reinders & Balçıkanlı, 2011) and the connection between teacher autonomy and job satisfaction, motivation, and burnout (Pearson & Moomaw, 2005; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010; Javadi, 2014).

Research on teacher autonomy has revealed many benefits of teachers' possessing autonomy. First, autonomy increases teachers' work effectiveness (Ingersoll, 2007; Benson, 2010) and commitment to their work (Rosenholtz and Simpson, 1990). Moreover, when teachers have power to control their teaching, they become more motivated and more satisfied with their work (Kreis & Brockopp, 1986; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010; Emo, 2015). Autonomy also creates a more effective learning environment as teachers have the freedom to customize their teaching according to students' needs (White, 1992; Nelson & Miron, 2005; Özturk, 2011; Lin, 2014; Sehrawat, 2014). Furthermore, autonomous teachers can promote learner autonomy (Little, 1995).

Literature also indicates that teachers are constrained by such factors as school regulations, administration, centralized curriculum, national examinations, exam-oriented syllabi, and students' expectations and demands (Archbald & Porter, 1994; Crookes, 1997; Yıldırım, 2003; Ramos, 2006; Uğurlu & Qahramanova, 2016).

Teachers' autonomy is mostly limited to selecting teaching techniques and strategies and their autonomy over curriculum and school-wide decisions are declined (LaCoe, 2006). However, as "autonomy is a contextually-variable construct" (Benson, 2006, p.34), teachers' level of autonomy and desires for autonomy may differ depending on their work context. Considering the importance of teacher autonomy, it is worthwhile to investigate it in different contexts.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Being stimulated by the concept of 'teacher autonomy' and the advantages it offers, the researcher developed an interest in exploring teacher autonomy in Turkish higher education context focusing on English language teaching profession.

English has established itself as the language of research and publication, which has led it to be used as the language of instruction in many universities and institutes of learning (Flowerdew and Peocock, 2001 as cited in Tunç, 2010). According to Arık and Arık (2014), the role of English has been gaining more importance in higher education due to policy makers' desire to improve their national competitiveness, attract more international students, and prepare young generations to meet the demands of the global economy, which results in the internalization of higher education requiring the use of English as the medium of instruction in tertiary education. As a result, English is not only taught as a foreign language, but it has also become the medium of instruction in some higher institutions in many countries.

Turkey is one of the countries which aim to foster closer relations with other countries and increase its national competitiveness in academic and business environments and keep up with the technological developments (Kırkgöz, 2005; Başıbek et al., 2014). Universities in Turkey use only Turkish, only English, or both Turkish and English as its medium of instruction. However, as graduation from an English-medium university provides better job opportunities and additional prestige as English gives socially high status to individuals (Önalan, 2005, Başıbek et al, 2014), the popularity and the number of English-medium programs is increasing. In addition, the use of English in education

has been impelled by the fact that Turkey signed up for the Bologna Process, which aims to “create a borderless and democratic European Higher Education area” and “in some respects is a response to the international marketization of HE” (Coleman, 2006, p.3). Thus, nearly all private universities and most of the state universities provide obligatory English preparatory programs to prepare their students for their English-medium academic studies by providing them with language skills that are necessary to cope with their departmental courses (Tunç, 2010; Coşkun, 2013; Başıbek et al, 2014), and a large number of students are enrolled in these programs because they have inadequate levels of English (Kırkgöz, 2009). Thus, also a large number of English instructors are employed in these programs.

Due to the importance of these programs in the national context, it is quite essential to figure out the problems faced in these programs and to find ways to enhance their effectiveness by addressing these problems. A comprehensive study carried out by British Council in partnership with TEPAV (2015) of how courses of English are offered in 38 universities in Turkey revealed some problems encountered in preparatory schools. First, students enter these programs with low levels of English and poor motivation. Second, the curriculum for these programs does not meet students’ needs with regards to their specialist academic fields. Additionally, instructors do not have necessary skills in developing needs-based curriculum and adapting materials and activities to fit students’ academic fields. Furthermore, student-student interaction is not incorporated into the lessons adequately.

Taking into account that teacher autonomy can provide a new, different viewpoint in understanding and solving educational problems (Öztürk, 2011), the problems encountered in English preparatory programs can be understood better through the study of teacher autonomy in these contexts. Thus, to gain insight into the instructors’ work conditions and improve their effectiveness, instructors’ perceptions on teacher autonomy should be investigated as the beliefs and perspectives held by teachers are fundamental to the development of teacher autonomy.

Moreover, the studies on autonomy in the field of foreign language education in Turkey mostly focus on learner autonomy, but there is not a detailed study on teacher autonomy (Karabacak, 2014; Öztürk, 2011); therefore, there is a need to fill the gap in literature by adding to the knowledge of how EFL teachers and administrators view teacher autonomy.

### 1.3 Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of the present study is to investigate how EFL instructors and administrators working at tertiary level conceptualize teacher autonomy and characterize autonomous teachers. It also aims to find out the level of autonomy the instructors feel they have in their institution and that they would like to have in the following six dimensions: curriculum, instruction, assessment, professional development, classroom management, and institutional operations. Moreover, it investigates what administrators think the extent of teacher autonomy should be in these dimensions. Lastly, it attempts to gain insights into the factors that enhance and inhibit teacher autonomy. Based on these purposes, the study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How do EFL instructors and administrators working at an English preparatory program of a state university perceive the concept of teacher autonomy?
   1.1 How do the participants conceptualize the term “teacher autonomy”?
   1.2 What are the participants’ views on the characteristics of autonomous teachers?
   1.3 What are the participants’ views on the importance of teacher autonomy?
   1.4 What are the participants’ views on the factors that promote and inhibit teacher autonomy?
2. Based on EFL instructors’ and administrators’ perceptions, what is the level of autonomy the instructors possess in the following domains: a) curriculum, b) instruction, c) assessment, d) professional development, e) classroom management, f) institutional operations?

3. To what extent do EFL instructors wish to have autonomy in the following domains: a) curriculum, b) instruction, c) assessment, d) professional development, e) classroom management, f) institutional operations?
4. Based on the perceptions of administrators, to what extent should teachers have autonomy in the following domains: a) curriculum, b) instruction, c) assessment, d) professional development, e) classroom management, f) institutional operations?

In order to address these research questions, a case study approach was adopted and the English preparatory program of Karabuk University, a state university in Turkey, was chosen as the case. The data were collected from 50 EFL instructors as well as five administrators who worked in the institution during 2016-2017 Spring semester through both qualitative and quantitative data collection instruments.

### 1.4 Significance of the Study

There have been several studies examining teacher autonomy in Turkey; however, they are limited to primary and secondary education (Öztürk, 2011; Özkan, 2013, Karabacak, 2014; Üzüm & Karslı, 2013; Uğurlu & Qahramanova, 2016). Moreover, the research in the field of foreign language education mainly focuses on teacher autonomy as a professional attribute (Sert, 2007; Genç, 2007; Çakır & Balçıkanlı, 2012). Hence, different from these studies, this thesis explores the issue of teacher freedom as an element of teacher autonomy in higher education EFL context in Turkey. The main reason why teacher autonomy in tertiary level EFL context has been chosen as the area of research can be explained by a quote from Borg (2005):

> English language teaching in Turkish university preparatory schools is an important national activity. It is also one that is characterized by certain pressures which are created by the need to support large numbers of students whose goals in learning English are largely instrumental (i.e. to get into their faculties). Given these demands, it can be easy to lose sight of the needs of teachers (p. 7).

Based on this premise, exploring the needs of instructors who work in the preparatory programs is essential and given that "autonomy is considered a basic psychological

need" (Ryan & Deci, 2006, p. 1565), it becomes more important to research autonomy that individual teachers possess in their institution.

To this end, the case chosen for this study is the English preparatory program of a state university, which mainly serves students with inadequate levels of English to continue their studies in the departments whose medium of instruction is partially or completely English. The number of students attending this program is quite high, so is the number of instructors who work in the institution. Having similar characteristics with the other English preparatory schools in Turkey, the study of this case is believed to shed light on the issue of teacher autonomy in tertiary level EFL context. Offering an in-depth analysis of the context and the perceptions of EFL instructors and administrators working in that context, this study contributes to our understanding of the professional lives of EFL instructors working at tertiary level, the level of autonomy they perceive to possess and desire to possess, and the factors that impede their autonomy.

EFL instructors working at the tertiary level are expected to address students' needs in their academic context, promote students' autonomy and their critical thinking skills, and engage in continuous professional development through action research and reflection on their practices according to the the teacher competency framework developed by British Association of Lecturers in English for Academic Purposes (BALEAP, 2008). However, these competencies require teachers to have a certain degree of freedom to take control of their own teaching and to implement necessary changes in their classrooms. That being the case, the study investigates to what extent EFL instructors are free to make decisions regarding their teaching in the context studied; consequently, the study of the case illuminates whether the instructors are offered opportunities to display these competencies.

Apart from these contributions, this case study also provides an insight into the perceptions of Generation Y on teacher autonomy as the participant instructors are aged between 24 and 39, which indicates that they were born between 1977 and 1995. Rebore and Walmsley (2010) state that "The bulk of new generation teachers comes from what is known as Generation Y or the Millennials […] it is generally believed

that beginning teachers now, and for the next 10 or 15 years, are part of this generation" (p. ix); thus, it is considered important to gain insights into their perceptions to improve their work conditions and their effectiveness. Moreover, the study is valuable for exploring what Turkish millennial EFL instructors understand from the notion of teacher autonomy, which is conceptualized differently by practitioners as Frase and Sorenson (1992) suggest,

> What seems like autonomy to one teacher may seem like isolation to another. One teacher may view autonomy as a means to gain substantial freedom from interference or supervision, while another teacher may view it as the freedom to develop collegial relationships and accomplish tasks that extend beyond classrooms. Some teachers thrive on autonomy, whereas others perceive it as a means for principals to avoid their duties (as cited in Yu-hong & Ting, 2012, p. 1046).

In addition to the instructors, administrators' perceptions on teacher autonomy are also examined in the study, which can enrich our understanding of the concept and the practices implemented in the institution guided by the administrators' beliefs.

Lastly, by shedding light on the importance of teacher autonomy as well as the factors that might foster or limit teacher autonomy in language teaching, this study may guide us in seeking ways to promote autonomous actions and offer important implications for EFL teachers, administrators, and English language teaching programs.

### 1.5 Definition of Terms

The present case study examines teacher autonomy in several dimensions, namely curriculum, instruction, assessment, professional development, classroom management, and institutional operations. To clarify what these terms mean in the study, there is a need to define these concepts.

**Teacher autonomy:** The concept of teacher autonomy is defined differently by researchers and practitioners and there is no consensus over its meaning. It has been conceptualized as teachers' professional freedom (Street, 1988; Anderson, 1987; Short, 1994; Benson, 2000), teachers' capacity for self-directed teaching (Little, 1995;

Smith, 2003), teachers' capacity of self-directed professional growth (Smith, 2003; Benson & Huang, 2008; Graves, 2009) and teachers' capacity and willingness for promoting learner autonomy (Thavenius, 1999). In this thesis, the notion of teacher autonomy has been studied as teachers' freedom to take control of their teaching and to make decisions regarding their teaching.

**Curriculum:** In literature, there have been many attempts to define curriculum. In its broader sense, Moeller (2005) regards curriculum as a plan which "specifies the activities, assignments, and assessments to be used in achieving its goals" (p. 78.). In the narrower sense, it is considered as "the knowledge and skills in subject matter areas that teachers teach and students are supposed to learn" as well as the scope of content and sequence for learning (Pelegrino, 2006, p.2).

**Instruction:** Pelegrino (2006) refers to instruction as "methods of teaching as well as the learning activities used to help students master the content and objectives specified by a curriculum" (p. 2). He adds that instruction is carried out "by a variety of methods, sequences of activities and topic orders" (p.2). Instruction is "how curriculum is delivered to learners" (Sowell, 2005, p.5).

**Assessment**: LaCoe (2006) refers to assessment as "the processes by which teachers and/or schools measure student learning" (p.42). Moeller (2005) also states that assessment indicates to what extent curricular goals have been achieved by students.

**Professional development:** Guskey (2000) describes professional development as "those processes and activities designed to enhance the professional knowledge, skills and attitudes of educators so that they might, in turn, improve the learning of students" (p. 16). According to Ganser (2000), professional development includes both informal activities like reading professional publications and formal activities like in-service training, conferences and workshops.

**Classroom management:** Brophy (2006) defines classroom management as "actions taken to create and maintain a learning environment conducive to successful

instruction (arranging the physical environment, establishing rules and procedures, maintaining students' attention to lessons and engagement in activities)" (p.17). As can be understood from this description, classroom management does not only refer to classroom discipline but also to the arrangement of classroom environment.

**Institutional operations:** In this thesis, institutional operations refer to school-wide operations like budgeting, teacher meetings, and school policies regarding class timetables, class composition, and class size.

**Learner autonomy:** As teacher autonomy and learner autonomy are considered interrelated and interdependent, it is also necessary to define this concept. In Foreign language education, the concept was first defined by Holec (1981) as "the ability to take charge of one' learning" (as cited in Little 1991, p.7).

# CHAPTER 2

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.0 Presentation

This chapter recounts the literature reviewed to uncover and synthesize research on teacher autonomy. The literature review was guided by the research questions; thus, first, it provides information on the concept of teacher autonomy, the different definitions and dimensions of it. Next, it presents how autonomous teachers are characterized, which is followed by the benefits and drawbacks of teacher autonomy respectively. As teacher autonomy is believed to be related to learner autonomy, the relationship between the two is also explored. In addition, the constraints on teacher autonomy are identified. Lastly, some recent studies conducted on teacher autonomy in and out of Turkey are reported.

## 2.1 The Concept of Teacher Autonomy

Teacher autonomy is a widely-used term linked with decentralization of schools, quality of education, innovation, and theories like teacher decision-making, professional development, and empowerment (Wilches, 2007). In teacher education literature, it has been associated with professional freedom or the extent to which institutions and curriculum allow teacher discretion (Benson & Huang, 2008). In this sense, Street (1988) refers to teacher autonomy as "the independence teachers maintain in exercising discretion within their classrooms to make instructional decisions" (p. 4). Short (1994) regards autonomy as a dimension of empowerment referring to "teachers' beliefs that they can control certain aspects of their work life" such as curriculum, textbooks, scheduling, and instructional planning (490).

The concept of teacher autonomy has also gained interest in applied linguistics in the last two decades. Due to the increasing importance of learners' autonomy, the role of teachers and teaching has been reevaluated and the growing belief that learner autonomy and teacher autonomy are related and interdependent has motivated the use of the term in the field of foreign language education (Smith and Erdoğan, 2008; Benson, 2011). However, being a multifaceted concept, no consensus has been reached over the meaning of teacher autonomy and different conceptualizations of the term have been suggested. Based on Little's (1991) definition of autonomy as "a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action" (p. 4), Aoki (2002) described teacher autonomy as "the capacity, freedom, and/or responsibility to make choices concerning one's own teaching" (as cited in Yan, 2010, p.175)

Considering the definition offered by Aoki (2002), freedom is an essential aspect of teacher autonomy, which is supported by Benson (2000), who delineates teacher autonomy as freedom from control over teaching (as cited in Yan, 2010). Similarly, Short (1994) argues that the sense of freedom to make certain decisions is the hallmark of autonomy. Blasé and Kirby (2009) also claim that "teachers have certain freedom to determine their work processes". They maintain that teachers mostly have autonomy over their pedagogy and classroom operations. Brunetti (2001) also points out teachers' autonomy in the classroom by stating that teachers have "latitude to do what they think is the best in their classroom" (p.65).

Another important facet of teacher autonomy is control, which is manifested in the following definitions: teacher autonomy is "the perception that teachers have regarding whether they control themselves and their work environment" (Pearson & Moomaw, 2005, p. 41); "a capacity to control processes involved in teaching process" (Benson & Huang, 2008, p.429).

In their definition of teacher autonomy, Benson and Huang (2008) do not only refer to teachers' ability to control the teaching process, but also to their capacity to control their development as a teacher. As can be understood from this description, teacher

autonomy also denotes teachers' capacity for professional development. In this sense, Smith (2003) perceives teacher autonomy as "the ability to develop appropriate skills, knowledge, and attitudes for oneself as a teacher in cooperation with others" (p. 1). Likewise, Javadi (2014) believes that autonomy is "an ability or skill of teachers to develop their own teaching condition freely" (p.771). These representations are similar to the notion of teachers' autonomy as learners (Smith, 2000), which is defined clearly by Graves (2009) as "the capacity to take charge of and direct one's own learning and control over the content and processes of one's learning" (p.159). In addition to these, some researchers perceive teacher autonomy as the promotion of learner autonomy. To exemplify, Thavenius (1999) reports that teacher autonomy is the "ability and willingness to help learners take responsibility for their own learning" (p.160).

Smith (2003) argues that the concept of teacher autonomy cannot be reduced to one definition, but rather, it comprises several dimensions as summarized in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Dimensions of Teacher Autonomy (Smith & Erdoğan, 2008, p. 84-85)

| | |
|---|---|
| **In relation to professional action:** | |
| A. Self-directed professional action | i.e. 'Self-directed teaching' |
| B. Capacity for self-directed professional action | i.e. 'Teacher autonomy (capacity to self-direct one's teaching)' |
| C. Freedom from control over professional action | i.e. 'Teacher autonomy (freedom to self-direct one's teaching)' |
| **In relation to professional development:** | |
| D. Self-directed professional development | i.e. 'Self-directed teacher-learning' |
| E. Capacity for self-directed professional development | i.e. 'Teacher-learner autonomy (capacity to self-direct one's learning as a teacher)' |
| F. Freedom from control over professional development | i.e. 'Teacher-learner autonomy (freedom to self-direct one's learning as a teacher)' |

Teaching autonomy is believed not to be a single trait by many scholars. According to Pearson and Hall (1993), teacher autonomy is composed of two dimensions: general teaching autonomy, which deals with "issues regarding classroom standards of conduct and personal on-the-job discretion" and curricular autonomy referring to "issues concerning selection of materials and activities and instructional planning and sequencing". Similarly, Friedman (1999) identified four areas of teachers' work autonomy: (a) student teaching and assessment, (b) school mode of operating, (c) staff development, and (d) curriculum development. According to Friedman (1999), the dimension of student teaching and assessment is comprised of evaluation of student learning, establishing norms for student behavior, arranging classroom environment, and diverse teaching emphases on curriculum. School mode of operating includes determining school goals and vision, budgeting, school policies with regards to student admission and class composition. The domain of staff development refers to the content, time, and procedures of the in-service training of teachers, whereas curriculum development refers to introducing curricula and making changes on the curricula. Later, LaCoe (2006), Rudolph (2006), and O'Hara (2006) decomposed teacher autonomy into six dimensions: curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, professional development, student discipline, and classroom environment. All these dimensions of teacher autonomy were determined based on the research on what the profession of teaching involves.

## 2.2 Characteristics of Autonomous Teachers

As there is no consensus over the definition of teacher autonomy, there have been attempts to characterize it and some characteristics and behaviors of autonomous teachers have been suggested. First, Littlewood's (1996) definition of an autonomous person may help to understand the characteristics of an autonomous teacher. According to him, an autonomous person is someone "who has an independent capacity to make and carry out the choices which govern his or her actions" (p. 428). He maintains that this capacity requires both ability, which refers to knowledge and skills necessary to make choices, and willingness- the motivation and confidence- to

take responsibility for these choices. In addition, Ramos (2006) suggests that negotiation skills, ability to reflect on the teaching process, lifelong learning, and willingness to enhance learner autonomy are among the necessary traits of teacher autonomy. In addition, having institutional knowledge to address the restrictions on their teaching and eagerness to cope with these barriers appropriately by turning them into opportunities are essential for autonomous teachers.

Graves (2009) views teacher autonomy as the capacity for self-directed professional development. Accordingly, she describes five qualities of autonomous teachers: "the desire to learn, a robust sense of self, a capacity to reflect on one's practice in order to understand it and improve it, a capacity to collaborate/negotiate - with students, with colleagues, with others, and a capacity to act strategically" (p. 160).

Sehrawat (2014) also conceptualizes teacher autonomy as freedom of personal and professional development and characterizes autonomous teachers as the ones who try to seize opportunities all the time to advance in their career. They participate in workshops, generate innovative ideas, and devise methods and activities appropriate for the students' needs and skills. Consistent with this definition of teacher autonomy, Çubukçu (2016) also states that autonomous teachers know what to do as well as why to do it. They take responsibility for their students' learning and think about how to promote a constructivist classroom. They reflect critically on the curriculum prepared by specialists instead of accepting it as it is.

Thavenius (1999) relates teacher autonomy to the promotion of learner autonomy; therefore, according to her, autonomous teachers are eager to develop autonomy in their learners. To this end, they reflect on their role and their classroom activities, and they can make changes when necessary. They create opportunities for their students to take responsibility for their learning and discover their needs. They are independent enough to encourage their students to be independent learners.

To sum up, the common characteristics mentioned by the scholars are reflection on the teaching and learning process, desire for personal and professional development,

capacity for negotiation and collaboration with colleagues and students as well as the responsibility for promoting autonomy in their learners.

### 2.3 Teacher Autonomy: Mixed-blessings

In literature, empirical and theoretical studies conducted on teacher autonomy have revealed many benefits of teacher autonomy; however, too much autonomy has also been considered harmful.

#### 2.3.1 Benefits of Teacher Autonomy

Research has revealed several benefits of teacher autonomy such as work effectiveness, commitment, job satisfaction, teacher retention, and enhancement of student learning. First, teachers who are free from the constraints on their autonomy and involved in schoolwide and classroom decisions can carry out their jobs more diligently and effectively (Ingersoll, 2007; Benson, 2010; Varatharaj, Abdullah, & Ismail, 2015). This also increases teachers' commitment to their work and their motivation to implement the decisions due to their responsibility for those decisions as participants of decision-making process (Lin, 2014). Similarly, Rosenholtz and Simpson (1990) support that "teachers who feel greater autonomy and discretion will be more committed to their work and workplace" (p.244). Whitaker and Moses (1990) argue that including teachers in the decisions affecting their profession creates a sense of ownership in the work environment and as a result, promotes teachers' creativity and productivity since working on solutions to school problems allows them to "make better use of their capabilities" and "find meaning in their work" (p128-129).

In addition, teacher autonomy is thought be an influential factor on teachers' job satisfaction (Kreis & Brockopp, 1986; Walter & Glenn, 1986; Pearson & Moomaw, 2005; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010; Emo, 2015). Javadi (2014) noted that teachers who cannot control what and how they teach are annoyed by this situation, which results in dissatisfaction and lack of motivation toward their profession. Ingersoll (2003) and Tsang and Liu (2016) opined that disempowered teachers who are deprived of the

power to control the teaching process and unable to reject the duties they deprecate feel demoralized. Similarly, Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) claimed that autonomy is "one of the cornerstones of teacher motivation" (p.170); thus, the restriction of autonomy results in demoralization of teachers. White (1992) suggested that taking part in the decision-making process improves teacher morale and their self-esteem as they are encouraged to voice their opinions. On a related note, Pearson and Moomaw (2005) found that teachers who perceive they have control on their work have lower on-the-job stress.

As having autonomy increases teachers' job satisfaction and motivation while decreasing their work-related stress, it is also effective in attracting and retaining quality teachers (White, 1992). Brunetti (2001) conducted a study on the level of teacher satisfaction and the sources of this satisfaction, which revealed that classroom autonomy, "freedom and flexibility in the classroom" was one of the principal motivators that underlie teachers' decision to remain in teaching. Likewise, Guarino, Santibañez, and Daley (2006) found out that schools which granted more autonomy to teachers and provided administrative support had lower levels of teacher attrition and migration. Ingersoll (2003) also concurred that turnover rates are noticeably lower at schools where teachers have higher levels of control over instructional issues, curriculum, and social issues like disciplinary decisions.

Furthermore, teacher autonomy is essential for enhancement of student learning. As students have diverse needs, interests, and skills, each classroom has a unique environment and "what works for one group of students might not work well for other groups of students" (Nelson & Miron, 2005, p.7). It is the teachers who know their students best and can realize their individual learning needs. Thus, if they are given enough latitude, they can adapt the curriculum and improve their instruction by choosing more appropriate content and materials to the students' specific needs. In this way, they can ensure a successful learning environment (White, 1992; Nelson & Miron, 2005; Ozturk, 2011; Lin, 2014; Sehrawat, 2014; Prichard & Moore, 2016). Accordingly, to promote learner autonomy, it is of crucial importance for teachers to

be free and flexible to shape their education based on the learners' individual needs and interests (Little, 1995). Varantharaj et al. (2015) also corroborated this idea by stating that "an autonomous teacher is highly likely to produce an autonomous student who would be able to be independent learners and take control of their learning environment" (p.33).

To conclude, increasing teacher autonomy by involving teachers in the administrative issues enables teachers to gain more experience and confidence, develop a sense of responsibility, increase their commitment, efficiency, motivation and job satisfaction, and remove their boredom and frustration (Mualuko, Mukasa, & Judy, 2009; Olorunsola & Olayemi, 2011). This involvement also helps them have fewer problems with student misbehavior and gain respect from administrators, colleagues, and students (Ingersoll, 2007). Besides, it can improve the quality of the decisions and effectiveness of the organization since teachers can make the best and wisest decisions regarding students as they are the most knowledgeable about the students and their work (Shedd & Bacharach, 1991). Lastly, empowering teachers by having them participate in schoolwide and classroom decisions is vital for their professionalism and indirectly for the improvement of the school (Marks & Louis,1999).

### 2.3.2 Drawbacks of Teacher Autonomy

Though literature puts forward the virtues of teacher autonomy, it also reveals some problems associated with it. According to Anderson (1987), too much autonomy is harmful rather than helpful. To begin with, Pitt (2010) noted that teacher autonomy, which is referred to as what teachers do behind the closed doors of their classrooms, has an adverse consequence of abandoning teachers there. McLaughlin, Pfeifer, Swanson-Owens, and Yee (1986) mentioned the same problem: "The classroom door provides a measure of autonomy for teachers, but it also fosters isolation, limits feedback about performance, and promotes staleness" (p.423). Anderson (1987) clarified the problem of teacher isolation and limited feedback on performance by stating that as teachers work alone and no one knows what they do or achieve in their classrooms, "they feel isolated and unappreciated" (p. 361).

Teacher isolation along with too much autonomy may be an obstacle to school improvement. Brown (2000) asserts that "Too much autonomy may not be a good thing, especially if it leads to bad practices that deprive children of the learning experiences they deserve" (p.8). If an incapable or a novice teacher is given too much autonomy without any support, this may cause some problems since "A number of national studies and reports concluded that school problems are, to an important extent, a result of the inadequacies in the classroom performance of teachers'' (Ingersoll, 1994; p. 151). Sergiovanni (2001) also posits that in isolated settings, teachers may believe that seeking advice or assistance from colleagues is a sign of incompetence. In addition, teacher isolation is an impediment to their learning and professional growth as they naturally learn through trial and error, their professional development relies heavily on their ability to spot problems and come up with solutions in the absence of others' professional knowledge. Moreover, these teachers have few role models of good teaching; as a result, they mostly think of role models from their own student days instead of models among their contemporaries. Additionally, teachers can exercise their autonomy in a way that negatively affects student achievement. "Within its walls, teachers can deny some students access to the very conditions associated with learning: instruction, time, curriculum coverage, and opportunities for success" (Murphy, Hallinger, & Lotto, 1986 as cited in Zajano & Mitchell, 2001; p. 161). They may have lower expectations for themselves or their students, spend less time on lesson planning, make unclear explanations of the lesson objectives or materials, or engage in fewer interaction with students. Porter (1989) exemplifies this:

> In high school, students pressed by outside-of-school interests and teachers worn down by years of hard work and low pay sometimes strike a bargain to live and let live in as comfortable a classroom environment as can be manufactured; clear student achievement goals and hard academic standards are set aside" (p. 345).

Another drawback is that enhanced autonomy in school policies may not yield the desired results as teachers may not welcome more autonomy (Hong & Youngs, 2016). To illustrate, the study conducted by Prideaux (1985) revealed that most of the teachers

wanted to use a centralized curriculum as they thought it was difficult to reach consensus with other teachers on curriculum issues (as cited in Hong & Youngs, 2016).

Enhanced autonomy also distracts teachers from instructional issues by increasing their responsibilities beyond their specialized work (Nelson & Miron, 2005) and it requires negotiation and accountability for decisions (Marks & Louis, 1997); thus, it results in investment of more time and effort, heavier workload, and more stress (Wu, 2015). Lastly, as Anderson (1987) maintained, autonomy may not bring meaningful or long-lasting innovations in instructional practices because teachers, involved in school decisions, may exercise their veto power over the changes introduced at school.

### 2.4 Learner Autonomy and Teacher Autonomy

The concept of learner autonomy, which is also a widely-debated issue in language learning and teaching, was first defined by Holec (1981) as "the ability to take charge of one's learning", which means

> […] to have, and to hold, the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning, i.e.:
> - determining the objectives;
> - defining the contents and progressions;
> - selecting methods and techniques to be used;
> - monitoring the procedure of acquisition properly speaking (rhythm, time, place, etc.);
> - evaluating what has been acquired (as cited in Little, 1991, p.7).

According to Little (1991), learner autonomy refers to "a capacity - for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action. It presupposes, but also entails, that the learner will develop a particular kind of psychological relation to the process and content of his learning" (p. 4). Based on these definitions, Riasati and Mollaei (2014) list the characteristics of autonomous learners as "critical reflection and thinking, self-awareness, taking responsibility for own learning, working creatively with complex situations, and the ability to create own meanings and challenge ideas/theories" (p. 190).

Learner autonomy is a desirable goal in education and in especially foreign language learning, students cannot achieve proficiency through only classroom instruction; therefore, there is a need to foster learner autonomy (Benson & Huang, 2008). Little (1991) summarizes the benefits of the promotion of autonomy as follows:

- because the learner sets the agenda, learning should be more focused and more purposeful, and thus more effective both immediately and in the longer term;
- because responsibility for the learning process lies with the learner, the barriers between learning and living that are often found in traditional teacher-led educational structures should not arise;
- if there are no barriers between learning and living, learners should have little difficulty in transferring their capacity for autonomous behaviour to all other areas of their lives, and this should make them more useful members of society and more effective participants in the democratic process (p. 8).

Another benefit of learners' taking responsibility for their learning is that they can accomplish their goals, which consequently enables them to be more motivated and to have a positive attitude towards learning (Little, 1995). Moreover, as students cannot be equipped with all the skills and knowledge necessary in their lives, it is quite crucial to help them assume responsibility for their learning and collaborate with the teacher and other students in the process of setting goals for their learning, sharing information, and monitoring their progress (Nasri, Vahid Dastjerdy, Eslami Rasekh, & Amirian, 2015).

Developing learner autonomy is a process which involves both the learner and the teacher, thus, the teacher has a vital role in creating a learning environment which supports the development of autonomy (Çubukçu, 2016). With regards to the role of teacher, Knowles (1975) suggests that teachers should be consultant, facilitator, and helper, and Voller (1997) elaborates on these roles: "a facilitator who supports the processes of decision-making, a counselor who cares for the students' ongoing needs, and is a resource person whose knowledge and expertise are available to his learners when needed" (as cited in Nasri et al., 2015). Little (1995) also agrees with the role of teacher as a facilitator of the learning process and manager of resources.

It is crucial to understand the relationship between learner autonomy and teacher autonomy as Little (1995) asserts "learner autonomy and teacher autonomy are interdependent and the promotion of learner autonomy depends on the promotion of teacher autonomy" (p175). First, for teachers to be able to cultivate autonomy in their learners, they need to know what it means to be an autonomous learner and they need to learn autonomously themselves (Little, 2004; Smith & Erdoğan, 2008). Reinders and Balçıkanlı (2011) also believe that fostering autonomy depends on teachers' perceptions of autonomy and their experience in exercising it. In this regard, teachers need knowledge and guidance to gain insight into learner autonomy and teaching skills that can help learners to be autonomous. This connection between teacher and learner autonomy is mostly related to teacher-learner autonomy, which can be clearly understood from Little's suggestion (1995) that trainee teachers should be provided with the necessary skills to nurture autonomy in their prospective students and they should be given a first-hand experience of learner autonomy during their education. What is more, Smith (2001) explains the link between teacher and learner autonomy: "in order to engage students in autonomous and effective reflection on their own learning, teachers also need to constantly reflect on their own role in the classroom, monitoring the extent to which they constrain or scaffold students' thinking and behavior" (p. 6).

In addition, teacher autonomy in the sense of freedom from control over their teaching is necessary as Tort-Moloney (1997) urges, teachers should "become autonomous regarding curricular demands, pedagogical material and discourses, as well as in research, by being able to acknowledge the virtues and limitations of these areas" to develop learner autonomy (as cited in Phan, 2012). Castle (2004) also states that teachers should be granted autonomy to plan their teaching activities based on the students' needs, interests, and features to encourage learner autonomy (as cited in Öztürk, 2011). The study by Nasri et al. (2015) on Iranian EFL teachers' practices on learner autonomy revealed that the teachers held the opinion that to promote learner autonomy, they should be given more autonomy over choosing/creating the content, material, and tests. Aoki (1999) suggests involving students in the decision-making

process of an educational program (as cited in Nasri et al., 2015) and for this practice to be possible, teachers should have control over their professional actions themselves.

### 2.5 The Constraints on Teacher Autonomy

Teachers are mostly autonomous in their classrooms and they have control over their pedagogy and classroom management. Nevertheless, as Graves (2008) suggests, "the classroom is part of a larger set of contexts- the school, the community, the province, and the nation- that influence, constrain, or shape what happens in it" (as cited in Graves, 2009). In line with this idea, Lepine (2007) specifies four spheres which influence teacher autonomy in the USA. The outside sphere, called macro-political context, refers to the federal policy which determines "how the school will be held accountable for student achievement" and "what will happen to the schools which do not show adequate yearly progress" (p. 6). The next sphere is the state level influence on teacher autonomy. Consistent with the federal policies, the states determine their own accountability system by creating standardized testing and reporting student performance in it, which leads to a negative impact on teacher autonomy as teachers would have to make more efforts to raise test scores. Another sphere is the district level influence since districts are responsible for implementing a standard-based curriculum by matching the curriculum (what is taught in the classroom) to what is tested on the high-stakes exams. This places a limit on teachers' autonomy to make instructional decisions as the content, materials, pacing, and the delivery of instruction are all specified and controlled. The last sphere is the campus, where the teacher works. The organizational decisions made on the campus, the leadership style of administrators, and the campus demographics are the factors that influence teacher autonomy. To exemplify, if the school serves low-achieving students or socioeconomically disadvantaged students, this may put pressures on teachers to prepare them for high-stakes tests.

Supporting Lepine's claim, the policy factors (external to the school) like centralized curriculum control and national or state examinations are among the most frequently mentioned constraints on teacher autonomy in literature (Archbald & Porter, 1994;

Crookes, 1997; Yıldırım, 2003; Uğurlu & Qahramanova, 2016). Regarding this issue, Hargrove, Walker, Huber, Corrigan, and Moore (2004) found that teachers thought many important concepts are not taught simply because they are not included in the high-stakes tests. Teachers lack the freedom to teach the subjects they consider important, which causes them to feel frustrated (as cited in LaCoe, 2006). Furthermore, the curriculum control aiming at standardization and uniformity among students who are subject to the same education process inhibits teachers' creativity (Uğurlu & Qahramanova, 2016). Moreover, due to an exam-orientated syllabus, teachers spend most of their time preparing students for the tests; thus, they don't have time for non-examination related activities and they may not be able to personalize their teaching to respond to individual student needs (Smith, 2000; Sinclair, 2000 as cited in Yu-hong & Ting, 2012).

Mustafa and Cullingford (2008) investigated whether teachers had freedom to use a variety of teaching methods and found out that factors like dependency on the course book, lack of training, large class sizes, and heavy workload impede teachers' freedom. In a centralized educational system, having to cover excessive content in a short time by sticking to the textbook as the main source is a handicap for teachers in regard to varying their teaching methods.

Anderson (1987) highlights three factors that cause a decline in teacher autonomy: "1) state and district- supported uniform staff development programmes, 2) mandated classroom observations as part of teacher evaluation, and 3) calls for principals to assume the role of instructional leaders" (p.364). Wermke and Höstfält (2014) also mentions the role of school principals as administrators is a limitation on autonomy as "they control the output of their teachers as well as the resources that teachers have at their disposal for achieving set goals" (p.67).

Ramos (2006) also identifies some limitations to the enhancement of autonomy: fear of change, institutional constraints, and personal constraints. Firstly, as teachers may fear change, they may stick to their old practices or habits instead of trying new things. At the school level, regulations, curriculum, standardized practices, administrators'

demands, the differences among instructors who coordinate activities, as well as the need to please students, administrators, and even parents can restrict teachers' autonomy. Imposing excessive demands on teachers may leave little room for their reflection and preparation and little time for their professional growth. Lastly, the constraint might be personal, within the teacher. The teachers who are reluctant to invest their time, energy, and money into professional growth may choose to follow others rather than to lead. This is corroborated by Benson (2010), who suggests teacher autonomy also "depends on the interests and internal capacities of individual teachers" and "is related to individual biographies and identities, which influence both the capacity and desire to create spaces for autonomy and what teachers decide to do with them" (p.273).

Akbarpour-Tehrani and Mansor (2012) and Prichard and Moore (2016) addressed some barriers to teacher autonomy in the field of foreign language teaching. The number of the courses, the large number of students, class sections, following the same syllabus across the sections, being required to teach around the standardized exams, and top-down coordination may hinder teachers from creating and applying their own tasks and materials.

Lastly, socio-cultural factors may also limit teacher autonomy. To exemplify, in East Asian societies, where the relationships are based on hierarchy, teachers are expected to show respect and obedience to their leaders and questioning them may be understood as a sign of disrespect and challenge (Littlewood, 1999; Anderson, 1999 as cited in Yu-hong & Ting, 2012). Teaching in a society where teachers cannot voice their opinions is an obstacle to the development of autonomy.

### 2.6 Recent Studies on Teacher Autonomy in Education

Of the studies conducted on teacher autonomy, many focused on the concept of autonomy as freedom from control over teaching. Guided by the idea that autonomy is not a unitary concept, LaCoe (2006), Rudolph (2006), and O'Hara (2006) designed a teacher autonomy scale for their doctoral dissertations decomposing teacher

autonomy into six dimensions: curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, professional development, student discipline, and classroom environment. LaCoe (2006) investigated how teachers in the USA perceive their autonomy over these areas and found out that they possess the highest level of autonomy over classroom environment and pedagogy, whereas they have the lowest autonomy over curriculum. In general, teachers desire more autonomy than they possess. The study by Rudolph (2006) also revealed that elementary and secondary teachers perceived to have high levels of autonomy in general, but they noted less autonomy over curriculum than pedagogy or discipline. O'Hara (2006) found that many participants were satisfied with the level of autonomy they have and he focused on the motivations behind teachers' desire for autonomy. From the interviews that he held with teachers and school principals, the following themes emerged: motivation by self-interest, motivation by student interests, and stage of career or discipline. Teachers who consider teaching merely as a source of income are reluctant to broaden their skills and to accept constructive criticism and are described as motivated by self-interests, whereas the ones who are committed to their career, reflective, dedicated to student and personal learning, and who feel responsible for student achievement are labelled as motivated by student interests. Stage of career refers to years of experience while discipline refers to grade and subjects taught. Thus, teachers' desires for autonomy are associated with self-serving negative reasons and student-serving reasons. The study also concluded from teachers' lesson descriptions and their levels of interest in professional growth that "teacher autonomy, when left unchecked, can have a deleterious effect on student achievement" (p.118). In addition to these studies, in an attempt to find out the level of teachers in different schools in the USA, Boser and Hanna (2004) examined the 2011-2012 School Staffing Survey (SASS) and found out that 90% of the teachers had autonomy over selecting their teaching techniques whereas their autonomy over what to teach is declined.

Another study carried out in the USA by Webb (2002) focused on teachers' exercise of autonomy in a public elementary school in the state of Washington. The results of the study suggested that participant teachers exercised autonomy to change mandated

curriculum and assessment based on students' academic and emotional needs to enhance student achievement. Participants reported to benefit from their professional expertise, prior education, and teacher research in their exercise of autonomy.

In a study concerning Slovakian primary school teachers' views on their autonomy, Lepičnik Vodopivec (2016) aimed to examine how teachers understand the concept of teacher autonomy, how they estimate their autonomy, and what the factors are that hinder their autonomy. To begin with, most of the respondents regarded the concept of teacher autonomy as freedom and independence in their work, whereas some described it as professional qualification and having a good command of the contents and pedagogy. A few teachers also delineated it as responsibility, trust, and professionality. With regards to the level of their autonomy, all the participants reported to be autonomous or completely autonomous in selecting their methods and techniques in the classroom and in their relations with parents. The area in which the participants felt they have the least autonomy over was selection of textbooks, as the teachers do not decide on the textbook individually but collectively and the final choice is made by the head teacher with the consent of the Parents' Council. As for the barriers to autonomy, the participants rated the regulations in education as the most influential factor on their autonomy, followed by curriculum, and professional qualifications.

There have also been some studies which focused on the relationship between teacher autonomy and job satisfaction, motivation, and burnout. Pearson and Moomaw (2005) conducted such a study to explore the relationship between teacher autonomy and job stress, work satisfaction, empowerment, and professionalism. Data were collected from 171 participants, who were elementary, middle, and high school teachers through a questionnaire. One section of the questionnaire was composed of teaching autonomy scale (TAS) with 18 items measuring curriculum autonomy and general teaching autonomy, whereas the other section of the instrument was made up of items measuring on-the-job stress, work satisfaction, and empowerment. The results of the study demonstrated that as curriculum autonomy increased, on-the-job stress decreased; however, the correlation between teacher autonomy and job satisfaction

was weak. It was also found out that as general teacher autonomy increased, empowerment and professionalism did, too. In addition, job satisfaction, perceived empowerment, and professionalism were negatively correlated with on-the-job stress. As there was a strong relationship between perceived empowerment and professionalism, it can be suggested that "teachers who perceive themselves as empowered view their occupation as a true profession" (p. 47). Lastly, the results indicated that the autonomy levels of the teachers working in different levels (elementary, middle, and high school) were not different.

In line with the findings of Pearson and Moomaw (2005), Rudolph (2006) also suggested teacher autonomy over curriculum is not a major factor in teacher job satisfaction. Instead, teacher satisfaction is linked with internal and external factors like building relationship with students, working conditions, collegiality, and principal and colleague support.

On the other hand, another study carried out by Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2014) highlighted that teacher autonomy is positively related to job satisfaction and engagement, but through different processes for teachers who have low and high mastery expectations:

> Teachers with strong mastery expectations may perceive autonomy as an opportunity to teach according to their own values, to use their resources, to experiment with new practices, and to change practices according to the situation and to the students' needs. Through these processes, high autonomy may lead to greater engagement and job satisfaction. […] For teachers with low mastery expectations, autonomy may provide an opportunity to avoid challenges and to hide self-perceived deficits and shortcomings. This is a self-protective strategy that may increase engagement and job satisfaction and decrease emotional exhaustion in the short run (p.76).

These studies suggest that there might be a link between teachers' sense of autonomy and job satisfaction and motivation.

## 2.7 Recent Studies on Teacher Autonomy in Foreign Language Education

In the field of EFL, a few studies focusing on teacher autonomy as freedom from control have been carried out. Being one of them, Prichard and Moore's (2016) study aimed to identify the level of teacher autonomy, administrator-staff collaboration, and top-down coordination in 130 ESOL programs in the US. The results demonstrated that teachers who worked in university or college ESOL programs had higher levels of general autonomy than the ones who worked at a language institute, which may be linked to the fact that higher education values autonomy more. Pedagogy and lesson planning were the areas teachers had considerable autonomy; however, curricular autonomy was the lowest. In addition, administrator-staff collaboration was the most agreed-upon item, which suggests that teachers were involved in decision-making processes in most of the programs. Especially smaller programs allowed more collaborative decision-making. Besides, the most agreed-upon construct was top-down coordination in language institutes and programs where 300 or more students also reported a high level of coordination. As these programs have more class sections, lack of coordination may result in disarray.

Moreover, Benson (2010), who did a collective case study of four secondary school EFL teachers in Hong Kong, concluded that day-to-day decisions concerning classroom practice are mostly determined by "Scheme of Work", which does not only specify the content to be taught but also the pacing at which it will be covered. It prescribes what teachers should do by specifying content, materials, and tasks instead of determining what students should achieve. Therefore, in Hong Kong, teachers' independence in making decisions about teaching and learning are constrained by system-wide curriculum, syllabus for each grade, and public examinations. However, teachers interviewed reported that they created room for their autonomy by manipulating the tasks specified in Schemes of Work. They mostly use the spaces they produce to meet the students' needs, which they consider important based on their conceptions and experiences, rather than experimenting with innovative ideas.

Many studies conducted on teacher autonomy in EFL focus on teacher autonomy conceptualized as self-directed professional development or teachers' development as teacher-learner. One of these studies was conducted by Akbarpour-Tehrani and Mansor (2012), who aimed to explore how ESL secondary school teachers in Malaysia acquire knowledge of pedagogy, how autonomous they are in obtaining this knowledge, and how they develop this knowledge into perception and attitude. The study highlighted that workshops, online resources, and colleagues are the major sources of knowledge while the teachers also obtain knowledge from books, articles, and conferences. Teachers are fully autonomous in gaining knowledge from online resources and colleagues as they are free in making decisions regarding what information to look for and what resources to select. However, they have limited autonomy in selecting books, articles, and conferences due to having limited choices in their library and selecting conferences or books based on their colleagues' or supervisors' recommendation. However, since workshops are usually compulsory to attend as part of school activities and teachers have no control over the topic and the scope of the workshops, they are considered heteronomous sources of knowledge. When teachers' perceptions and attitudes were analyzed, it was seen that they implement what they learn from online resources or colleagues in their classes more, but the workshops are thought of as being less effective for their classroom practices owing to being repetitive and mostly referring to strategies to teach using textbooks. This implies that selecting sources of knowledge autonomously may influence teachers' perceptions positively and help to change their attitudes and classroom practice.

Vazquez (2015) claimed that pedagogical inquiry and critical reflection are effective ways of promoting pre-service and in-service teachers' autonomy. To this end, many studies have been conducted on action research and teacher reflection in EFL context to find out their effects on the development of teacher autonomy. Being one of them, Wang and Zhang (2014) conducted a university- school collaborative action research which involved secondary school EFL teachers and university researchers with the purpose of fostering teacher autonomy in Chinese context. School teachers received

training on how to carry out an action research and received support from university researchers for 18 months. Doing research enabled teachers to critically reflect on their practice and gain greater insight into the educational context. It also helped them to be more learner-centered as their concerns shifted from their own teaching to student learning and developing learners' interests, capacities, and learning strategies. Moreover, they became more active and autonomous not only in their teaching but also in research as they gained a better understanding of their classroom practice, developed an ability to research their classroom problems, and became more reflective. In addition, Mello, Dutra, and Jorge (2008) investigated the effect of collaborative action research on language teachers' autonomy and they also found that some participants experienced problems like narrowing down their topics; however, defining classroom problems, developing new materials, and implementing new techniques enabled teachers to become more autonomous and motivated to do action research in the future.

With respect to relationship between teacher reflection and teacher autonomy, Noormohammadi (2014) carried out a study with Iranian teachers of English and he found a positive correlation between teachers' reflective practice and their autonomy. While cognitive reflection improves teaching, and enables teachers to develop independence in planning their lessons and selecting language materials, reflection on critical and learner elements provides an opportunity to figure out the problems related to classroom management and to try out and evaluate new strategies to solve these problems.

Xu (2015) examined the influence of teacher collaboration on the promotion of teacher autonomy and professional development. To this end, four novice Chinese teachers of English who were engaged in collaborative lesson preparation participated in the study. The results suggested two types of collaboration: product-oriented and problem-based, which had differing effects on teacher autonomy and professional development. In product-oriented collaboration, teachers are committed to designing complete, ready-to-use teaching materials, which are then used by the contributors; thus, this

process reduces novice teachers' anxiety. However, as Xu (2015) argues "low anxiety does not substantially promote teacher autonomy and may even restrain it to some extent, and thus deprives novice teachers of some of the impetus for self-directed development" (p. 146). On the other hand, problem-based collaboration does not provide novice teachers with concrete help but facilitates exchange of experiences; thus, provoking anxiety for the novice teachers. Nevertheless, this type of collaboration is claimed to increase autonomy as novice teachers are motivated to explore independently, which will encourage professional growth in the long run.

In addition, a few studies have been conducted to explore the relationship between teacher autonomy and job satisfaction, motivation, and burnout. Being one of them, Javadi (2014) examined the relationship between teacher autonomy and feeling of burnout among the EFL teachers in Iran using Maslach Burnout Inventory designed by Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter (1996) and Teaching Autonomy Scale developed by Pearson and Hall (1993). The results revealed a negative correlation between the two constructs and the participants who were noted to have a high control over their teaching also reported a low level of burnout. It was also found out that the components of burnout such as emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment are strong predictors of teacher's perceived sense of autonomy. Emotional exhaustion, which is directly linked with work satisfaction, was found to be the strongest predictor of teacher autonomy. This study also indicated that a low level of autonomy led to reduced personal accomplishment, which implies the conditions and variables in the teaching context affect teachers' emotional and cognitive responses. Therefore, it was suggested that teachers' work conditions should be improved and their feelings of autonomy should be addressed to improve the quality of the teaching and learning process.

The relationship between teacher autonomy and motivation was demonstrated in a study carried out by Tsang and Liu (2016), who identified the social causes of teacher demoralization in Hong Kong. When they analyzed the characteristics of "low morale schools", the following themes stood out: strict supervision/ regulations and teacher

disempowerment. In these schools, only principals and School Executive Committees are responsible for the decisions related to the school and teachers are excluded from the decision-making process leaving limited communication and consultation between the principals and teachers. Similarly, Wu (2015) claimed teacher autonomy is a strong predictor of teacher motivation based on his research in Taiwan.

### 2.8 Recent Studies on Teacher Autonomy in Education in Turkey

In Turkey, there have been some research studies on teacher autonomy as freedom from control and as professional development. To start with, Karabacak (2014) investigated the perceptions of high school teachers working in Ankara, Turkey regarding teacher autonomy and teacher self-efficacy in her thesis research. Data were gathered through the "Teacher Autonomy Scale" developed by the researcher and the results revealed that surveyed teachers embrace instructional autonomy, autonomy in professional development, administrative and financial autonomy. Being able to select the course book, arranging the physical space of the classroom, determining the way to teach the curriculum, and deciding on the class schedule with the administrators are among strongly agreed instructional autonomy items. Respondents also hold the opinion that teachers should take part in administrative issues like determining the school objectives, planning social club activities, deciding on the rules and regulations, and determining how students are placed into classes. Furthermore, they think teachers should be able to decide how the school budget is to be spent. As for professional development items, participants opine that teachers should be able to study for a Master's or doctorate degree and convey their desires for professional development trainings. Participants' perceptions of teacher autonomy in these four areas do not differ based on gender, age, and educational degree. However, as their age and work experience increases, they consider autonomy in these areas more practicable.

Üzüm and Karslı (2013) investigated the awareness level of elementary grade teachers about teacher autonomy in technical, psychological, and political dimensions. They identified the technical dimension of autonomy as the capacity for self-directed professional action and self-directed professional development while referring to

political dimension as teachers' freedom from control over professional action and professional development with regards to Smith (2001) and teachers' involvement in administrative issues. Psychological dimension refers to teachers' being able to manage the teaching process and their professional growth as they like. They found out that teachers' awareness level of autonomy in technical and psychological dimensions was high, whereas their awareness level of autonomy in political dimension was moderate. The researchers suggested that teachers' awareness of the areas in which they need to be autonomous may lead them to demand more autonomy.

Ulas and Aksu (2015) also conducted a study to develop a valid and reliable autonomy scale to measure Turkish classroom teachers' autonomy. The data analysis indicated three areas of teacher autonomy: 1) autonomy in instructional planning and implementation, 2) autonomy in professional development, 3) autonomy in determining the framework of curriculum. The first area was consistent with Pearson and Hall (1993) and Friedman (1999), whereas the second area was in line with Friedman (1999). The third area was parallel with Archbald and Porter (1994) and Öztürk (2012). It was revealed that teachers' perceived level of autonomy differed in curriculum planning and classroom practices and teachers perceived to possess less autonomy in curriculum planning.

To gain insight into teachers' and administrators' perceptions of teacher autonomy in Turkey and Azerbaijan, Uğurlu and Qahramanova (2016) conducted a qualitative study, which had similar research questions to the present study. It aimed to explore how teachers conceptualize the notion of teacher autonomy, which areas teachers have autonomy in, and what the obstacles to their autonomy are. The participants who worked at a primary school in Sinop, Turkey and Baku, Azerbaijan described teacher autonomy as the freedom to make decisions about the selection of teaching methods, the freedom to make decisions concerning teaching profession, participation in school-wide decisions, and freedom of self-expression. The areas participants noted to have autonomy in were selection of teaching method, student evaluation, discipline, and professional development. Participants had the highest level of autonomy in selecting

their teaching method, whereas they had the lowest level of autonomy in curricula and school budget. Turkish participants did not report to have autonomy in curriculum and school budget. Lastly, the reported obstacles to autonomy were strict regulations, content, intense workload, attitude of administrators, low social status, limited opportunities for professional development, and reluctance to undertake responsibility.

Öztürk (2011) analyzed the new history curriculum for secondary schools to see whether and how it addresses the problem of reduced teacher autonomy and he concluded that it does not promote teacher autonomy since it does not provide teachers with enough room to select and plan their teaching content, strategies, and materials. First, teaching content is described in great detail in the curriculum as "acquisitions", "activity examples", and "explanations" leaving no room for teachers to take responsibility pertaining to the content. Besides, although it suggests activity examples are just illustrative and teachers could implement them as they are or make necessary modifications, it does not make the sphere of autonomy clear and explicit. Moreover, it is compulsory to use the textbook prepared by MoNE's publishing house, which hinders teachers' autonomy to select their course materials.

In an effort to find out whether teachers wish to be involved in decisions about administrative issues, course delivery, and classroom management, and why they desire involvement in the decision-making process, Özkan (2013) conducted a mixed study with a population of 73 primary school teachers, which indicated that most of the participants were willing to take part in decisions related to material selection, time schedule, school rules, syllabus design, discipline, holding teachers' meetings, preparation of exams and evaluation, conducting parental meetings, and student and teacher rewarding. All the participants in the questionnaire reported willingness to make decisions about evaluation of learning, stating they are fully aware of the topics covered, that they can assess students' levels better, that they know what students lack, and that they can prepare reliable and valid tests. Another area of decision which attracted a very high percentage of involvement was material selection. Teachers felt that they are aware of learner styles and levels, that they are able to match content to

age, and that they can find suitable materials by observing students' needs. Concerning discipline, the respondents who favored willingness expressed that it should be the teachers' responsibility to maintain discipline, reward or punish students, whereas a small number of participants stated it is the administrators' duty to maintain discipline. All in all, the researcher argues that teachers feel more empowered when they get involved in decisions regarding their work, which contributes to the improvement of the institution and benefits all the members (teachers, administrators, students, and parents).

### 2.9 Recent Studies on Teacher Autonomy in EFL Contexts in Turkey

In the field of EFL, a few studies have been conducted on teacher autonomy in Turkey and the recent studies were reported below:

In a thesis research, Arslan Şakar (2013) aimed to examine EFL teachers' perceptions on teacher autonomy and whether centralized exams have an influence on their perceptions of autonomy. The data were obtained from middle and high school EFL teachers working in Sakarya through a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The study indicated that in general participants had moderate perceptions of teacher autonomy, which can be attributed to administration of centralized exams, standardized curriculum, and centralized textbooks. When self-perceptions of middle school teachers and high school teachers were compared, it was seen that high school teachers had higher perceptions of autonomy, which may be because the centralized testing has a stronger impact on middle school teachers as they prepare their students for Achievement Determination Exam (SBS). The study also suggested that teachers' perceptions of autonomy do not differ across gender, but age and years of experience were found to have a statistically significant effect on self-perceptions of teachers.

Khezerlou (2013) examined Iranian and Turkish high school EFL teachers' perceptions on teacher autonomy in three domains: the choice of teaching methods, strategies, and techniques and implementation of curriculum, teacher involvement in decision-making, and teachers' use of personal initiative in solving work problems.

The data collected through 11-item questionnaire demonstrated that the majority of the subjects had moderate levels of autonomy in three domains; however, Turkish teachers had higher levels of perceived autonomy than Iranian teachers. When the relationship between teacher autonomy and age, marital status, gender, and educational degree was analyzed, it was found that there was no statistically meaningful relationship between teacher autonomy and age and marital status. On the other hand, female participants and B.A. holders had higher perceptions of autonomy in decision-making than male participants and M.A. degree holders, who stated that they are not adequately involved in the decision-making process. Lastly, to improve their autonomy, Iranian participants suggested having less restricted curricula and Turkish participants demanded permission to use personal initiative in solving work related problems. It was also proposed that teachers should be involved in the decision-making processes and given opportunities to voice their ideas.

In another study exploring lower secondary school EFL teachers' perceptions of teacher autonomy, Khalil (2013) found that participant teachers exercised autonomy over professional development both at the individual and social level; however, it was also revealed that teachers had limited agency and dismissed opportunities to create spaces for their autonomy, which suggests that teacher agency can be either a promoting factor or a constraint in the exercise of teacher autonomy.

In a study investigating students' perceptions of their attitude towards learner autonomy, Sert (2007) also examines teachers' perceptions on their own autonomous learning as "only those who have self- governing capacity for their own learning are assumed to teach their students how to direct and monitor their language learning" (p. 180). Within the scope of this thesis, only the findings about English teachers' current level of autonomy and their needs as autonomous learners are reported. Based on the results of the study it can be said that some participants are not able to determine their immediate needs, evaluate whether they have reached their goals objectively, and make self-evaluation, although in general they do not have serious problems regarding their preparedness for teaching autonomous learning. They report that in-service

teacher training programs do not take their needs into consideration, stating that they are repetitive and are not applicable to classroom situations; thus, this affects their autonomous learning negatively. To enable students to learn autonomously, teachers first need to believe in the need for autonomy and if they are autonomous learners themselves, it will be easier to direct and monitor their students in this process. For this reason, it is suggested that teachers also be guided to be autonomous learners through appropriate training and support.

Genc (2007) inquired into the impact of keeping reflective journals on teacher autonomy of six in-service EFL teachers working at different state schools in Bursa. Teachers kept journals related to their experiences and thoughts about their teaching and reflected on such issues as lesson planning, teaching and learning process, classroom management, interaction, and assessment in their journals. Keeping journals raised teachers' awareness of the needs and problems specific to their context and encouraged them to think over viable solutions to those problems. As they applied self-initiated pedagogical solutions, they felt more autonomous and empowered. Therefore, as the researcher puts forward, reflective journals enable teachers to become autonomous in making informed and conscious decisions and restructuring their classroom practices.

Likewise, Çakır and Balçıkanlı (2012) investigated ELT student teachers' opinions about the use of EPOSTL as a reflection and self-assessment tool. They concluded the use of EPOSTL promotes reflection, raises student teachers' awareness of their strengths and weaknesses, and enables teachers to shape their teaching. Hence, this practice helped them to develop awareness of autonomy and take charge of their teaching and learning as prospective teachers. Another study on the use of portfolios to enhance ELT student-teachers' autonomy was carried out by Yıldırım (2013), who perceived autonomy as "the ELT student-teachers' "awareness," "responsibility," and "ability" to manage their own learning as students and as prospective teachers" (p.105). The results of the study revealed that student-teachers become more autonomous by taking more responsibility for setting goals, planning, managing, and

monitoring their learning and by developing self-awareness, subject-matter awareness, and teaching awareness through reflection.

Balçıkanlı (2009) carried out a qualitative study with EFL student teachers to explore their perceptions on teacher autonomy. The participants described the notion of teacher autonomy as self-awareness, self-development, self-control, and taking responsibility for their learners. According to them, it is crucial to have autonomy to keep up with the recent innovations, and to develop critical self-awareness. They stated that teachers should do self-observations, cooperate with others, observe each other, provide feedback, and accept criticism to develop autonomy. Thus, the researcher suggests emphasizing teacher autonomy during pre-service education.

# CHAPTER 3

# METHODOLOGY

## 3.0 Presentation

This chapter starts with the presentation of the research design along with the theoretical framework it is based on. Next, the research context is described in detail to clarify whether the findings of the study can be transferable to other contexts. It also provides information about the participants and data collection procedure followed by data collection instruments. In addition, it offers an explanation of how the data gathered through the survey questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were analyzed. Lastly, trustworthiness and ethical considerations in addition to limitations are mentioned.

## 3.1 Theoretical Framework and Research Design

The current study, which aimed to find out EFL instructors' and administrators' perceptions on teacher autonomy as well as the instructors' experiences of autonomy in an English language preparatory program of a state university, was grounded in the interpretative framework of social constructivism which seeks an understanding of the world by exploring the subjective experiences of individuals. As suggested by Creswell (2013), according to social constructivism, individuals develop subjective meanings of their lived experiences through negotiation and interaction with others and through historical and cultural norms in their lives. As guided by social constructivism and acknowledging that there are varied and multiple realities, the researcher intended to develop a pattern of meaning inductively by exploring the viewpoints and experiences of EFL instructors and administrators in this study.

In line with the interpretative framework of social constructivism, a case study approach was adopted for the present study. Case study was defined by Stake (1995) as "the study of the particularity or complexity of a single case" (p. xi). A case can be a person, an institution, a program, or a community. As Dörnyei (2007) puts forward, a case study is "a method of collecting and organizing data so as to maximize our understanding of the unitary character of the social being or object studied" (p. 152). To this end, a case study research focuses on a unit or set of units like an institution, a program, or an event and aims to offer a detailed description of it (Richards, 2003). It also attempts to depict what it is like to be in a situation and provide insight into the research subjects' lived experiences of, opinions about, and feelings for that situation (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). Within the aforementioned characteristics of a case study, the present study can be specified as a single instrumental case study focusing on the EFL instructors' and administrators' perceptions and experiences of teacher autonomy and examining it within the bounded case chosen: English language preparatory program of a state university. It was referred as an instrumental case study with regard to Stake (1995) due to the examination of the case for the purpose of gaining insight into the issue of teacher autonomy.

Stake (2005) states that "case study is not a methodological choice. By whatever methods, we choose to study the case" (p.443). Likewise, Yin (2003) warns us not to confuse case study with qualitative research as "case studies can be based on any mix of quantitative and qualitative evidence" (p.15). Based on these premises, this study was conducted employing both quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments for the purpose of triangulation "to verify one set of findings against the other" and to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the case (Dörnyei, 2007, p.164) due to the fact that a questionnaire consisting of only close-ended questions would be insufficient to get a complete picture of the EFL instructors and administrators' perceptions and experiences of teacher autonomy. To understand the reasons behind the instructors' desire for autonomy or reluctance to have autonomy as well as the factors that restrict or promote their autonomy, the collection of qualitative data through open-ended questions along with semi-structured interviews was considered essential. In this way,

the quantitative data were to be supported by qualitative results and the exploratory capacity of the study was to increase though descriptions of multiple views of the case.

### 3.2 Research Context

The case was chosen due to its typicality and suitability for the research purpose. As the purpose of the study was to explore the perceptions and experiences of EFL instructors and administrators working at tertiary level regarding teacher autonomy, the study was conducted in the English language preparatory program of Karabük University, a state university, which has similar characteristics to other EFL programs at tertiary level in Turkey.

In a case study, it is crucial to provide a thick description of the research context as "Rich, thick description allows readers to make decisions regarding transferability" (Erlandson et al., 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988 as cited in Creswell, 2013, p. 296). When the researcher describes the case in detail, the readers may transfer this information to other settings and they can decide whether the findings are transferrable to their case.

The institution which was adopted as the case in this study was Karabük University School of Foreign Languages (hereafter SFL). The school was established in 2010 to provide one-year intensive English preparatory courses for students who are admitted to a program where the medium of instruction is partially or completely English. The students who are eligible to enroll at such a program at Karabük University based on their scores in national university entrance exam first need to document their proficiency in English by providing a certificate of achievement from the national or international language exams accredited by the University, or they have to sit the English proficiency exam administered by the SFL at the beginning of the first year. The students failing this exam are placed into classes based on their levels of language ability. For students to continue their education at their academic units, they need to complete the preparatory program successfully.

The program offers both daytime and evening education and it serves approximately 1500 students in an academic year. The analysis of attendance lists of 2016-2017 academic year indicated that international students coming mostly from Middle East countries make up almost 15% of the total student population of the preparatory program. It is compulsory for 95% of the students to study at preparatory school as their fields of study are engineering (78%), English Language and Literature (9%), and Applied English and Translation (8%), all of which have a partially or completely English medium of instruction. Students enrolled in programs where Turkish is the medium of instruction can also study at the English preparatory program voluntarily and they constitute only 5% of the total student population of the program.

Some documents like the teacher and student handbooks and the school webpage were studied and it was revealed that the current preparatory program is based on a modular system, which has four levels of English proficiency (A1, A2, B1, B1+) as described in the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). In an academic year, the school offers three modules, each of which takes 10 weeks. The students who will major in Engineering and Applied English and Translation are required to take at least B1 level, whereas students of the English Language and Literature (ELL) department have to complete at least B1+ level. For students to proceed to a higher level, they need to be successful in their current level. Passing each level is not enough to achieve success in the preparatory program. The students also have to take a comprehensive exam covering all four skills and sub-skills at the end of the year. Forty percent of their scores from this exam and 60% of their previous scores from the levels they have studied at are calculated and if they obtain the required passing score, they are considered successful.

In A1 level, students are offered 22 hours of instruction (20-hour main course classes, 2-hour LAB classes), whereas in A2 level, they have 26 hours (4-hour reading classes are added) and in B1 level they have 28 hours (4-hour ESP classes and 2-hour writing classes are added). In B1+ voluntary students are offered only 16-hour main course and 4-hour ESP classes while ELL students study for 28 hours. The program aims to

boost students' general English skills; hence, in main course classes, integrated-skills instructional materials that cover four skills of English (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) and sub-skills (grammar and vocabulary) are used. The purpose of ESP classes is to familiarize students with the terms and academic texts related to their field of study; therefore, instructional materials designed for this purpose are covered during these classes.

In the preparatory program, all classes at the same level have the same curriculum. They are taught the same content through the same course book on the days determined beforehand, assigned the same portfolio tasks, given the same assessment tools and evaluated based on the same criteria. In each module, students are given several exams: three quizzes, one mid-term, and one end-of-module test. Students are also assigned four writing portfolio tasks and three speaking portfolio tasks.

In SFL, administration is formed by six people and Figure 3.1 shows the administrative positions and the staff and/or the units they are responsible for.

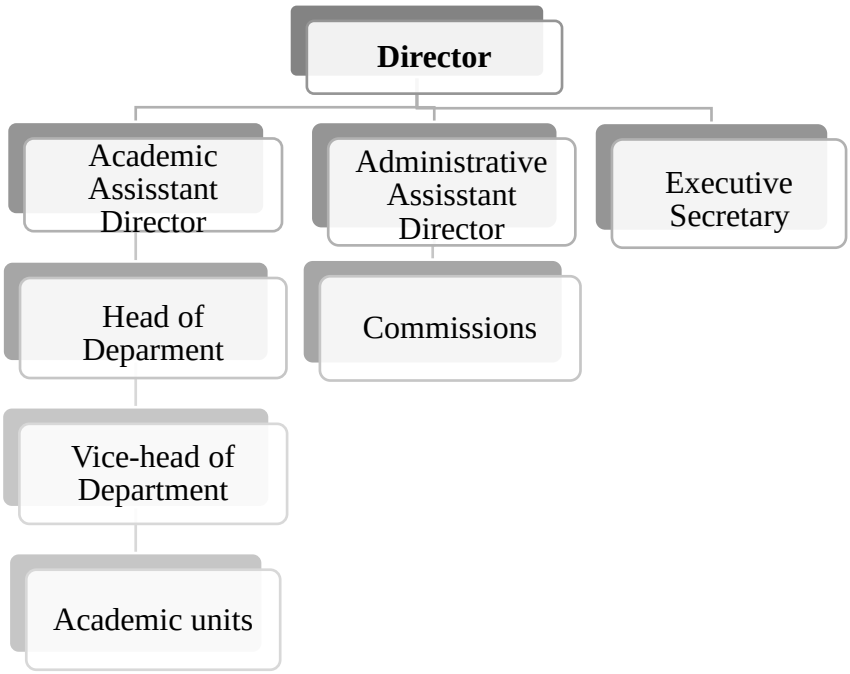


Figure 3.1 Administrative Positions

While Academic Assistant Director and Head of Department are responsible for providing academic consultancy, monitoring the work of academic units, and providing professional development sessions and in-service trainings, the Administrative Assistant director deals with administrative work of instructors and students, documentation of board decisions, class composition and schedules, and monitoring the start and end of classes.

In the preparatory program, there are several academic offices as presented in Figure 3.2. The Curriculum Development Unit is responsible for identifying and defining expected outcomes of language learning for each level by referring to CEFR, defining objectives for each skill, selecting content and topics to be taught, determining the portfolio tasks to be assigned in each level, and collaborating with testing and assessment unit to determine the objectives of the exams. The Testing and Assessment Unit is responsible for preparing, applying and assessing all the exams held by the SFL, preparing the content of these exams and editing them, announcing the date and place of these exams to the students and instructors, and dealing with the official objections to exam results by collaborating with standardization committee, which is responsible for establishing student achievement evaluation criteria for writing and speaking tasks, holding sessions with instructors before the evaluation process of tasks and exam papers, carrying out spot-checks for evaluation of task/exam paper in need, and re-evaluating tasks/papers in case of an official objection by students. The Material Development Unit prepares booklets to improve students' reading and writing skills, creates worksheets which helps students practice, and composes new learning materials when necessary. Module Coordinators are responsible for collaborating with all the other units in determining the objectives and content, scope of the exams, giving feedback on the materials prepared by the Material Development Office, preparing and announcing the weekly course maps, and holding meetings with instructors and/or student representatives when necessary. All the units need to inform the Module Coordinators and Head of Department about their studies.

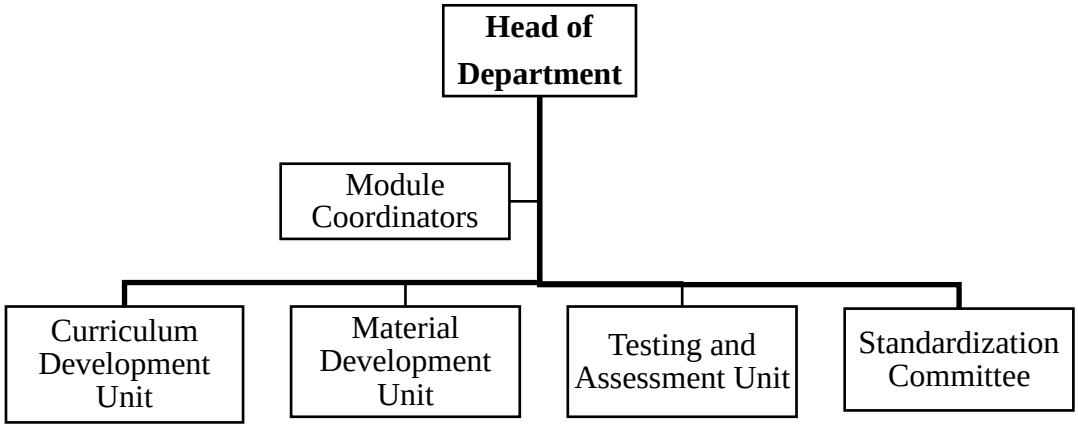


Figure 3.2 Academic Units

There are also two more offices supervised by the Administrative Assistant Director. One of them is Social and Academic Events Unit, which is in charge of preparing the student's and instructor's handbook, organizing events which help improve students' language and social skills, and planning students' clubs. The other one, Data Analysis Office, forms classes before each module, prepares weekly schedules of each instructor and class, forms students' lists, and makes and follows necessary announcements on the school website. The number of instructors involved in each unit changes depending on the workload of that unit.

There are 65 full-time instructors and a few part-time instructors working at the English preparatory program. The number of the part-time instructors changes depending on the need. All the instructors have to use the same textbook, teach the same content, assign the same portfolio tasks, and use the same assessment tools and evaluation criteria prepared by the academic units. Each instructor teaches between 14 and 20 hours a week. They also have 10 hours of evening classes a week. At least two teachers share the same class, teaching them on different days. Therefore, they are required to keep log records into automation system called UBYS about what they have covered in class, the problems they have experienced etc. to inform their partners and the module coordinators. Apart from their teaching duties, all instructors are expected to start and end their lessons on time, keep and record students' attendance

daily, fulfill the duties given by the academic units on time, and attend the exam duties given by the institution.

### 3.3 Participants

The participants of the study consist of two parties: English instructors and SFL administrators. In addition, as the study was conducted using both quantitative and qualitative means, it involved questionnaire and interview participants.

#### 3.3.1 Questionnaire Participants

The questionnaire participants of this study were 50 Turkish instructors of English and five administrators working at the English preparatory program of Karabuk University. Table 3.1 demonstrates the demographic data of the participant instructors.

As illustrated in Table 3.1, 24 participants (48%) were male and 26 of them (52%) were female. The number of female and male participants was almost equal, which made the sample homogenous in terms of gender. With regard to age, the participants' ages ranged between 24 and 38 and slightly more than half of the participants (56%) were aged between 24 and 29 and the other half (42%) was aged between 30 and 35 and only one respondent was 39, suggesting that the school had a young teacher population. As for the years of experience, the majority of the participants (46%) had between four and six years of experience, 26% of them had between seven and nine years, 16% had 10-12 years, and only 12% had two to three years of experience. Regarding their qualifications, 40 instructors (80%) had a BA degree, whereas the number of instructors with an MA degree was 10 (20%). None of the instructors held a doctorate degree. The instructors had their BA degree in the following fields: English Language Teaching (54%), English Language and Literature (36%), American Culture and Literature (8%), and Translation Studies (2%).

Table 3.1 Demographic Data of 50 Instructors

| Teacher's Characteristics | Number | Percentage % |
|---|---|---|
| **Gender** | | |
| Male | 24 | 48 |
| Female | 26 | 52 |
| **Age** | | |
| 24-29 | 28 | 56 |
| 30-35 | 21 | 42 |
| 36-40 | 1 | 2 |
| **Qualifications** | | |
| Bachelor's degree | 40 | 80 |
| Master's degree | 10 | 20 |
| Doctorate degree | 0 | 0 |
| **Major** | | |
| English Language Teaching | 27 | 54 |
| English Language & Literature | 18 | 36 |
| American Language & Literature | 4 | 8 |
| Translation Studies | 1 | 2 |
| **Experience** | | |
| 0-3 years | 6 | 12 |
| 4-6 years | 23 | 46 |
| 7-9 years | 13 | 26 |
| 10-12 years | 8 | 16 |

When the instructors' experience in their institution was considered, it was found that four instructors were module coordinators and 18 instructors (42%) worked in academic units, namely curriculum development unit (8%), material development unit (14%), testing and assessment unit (8%), and standardization committee (4%) as shown in Figure 3.3.

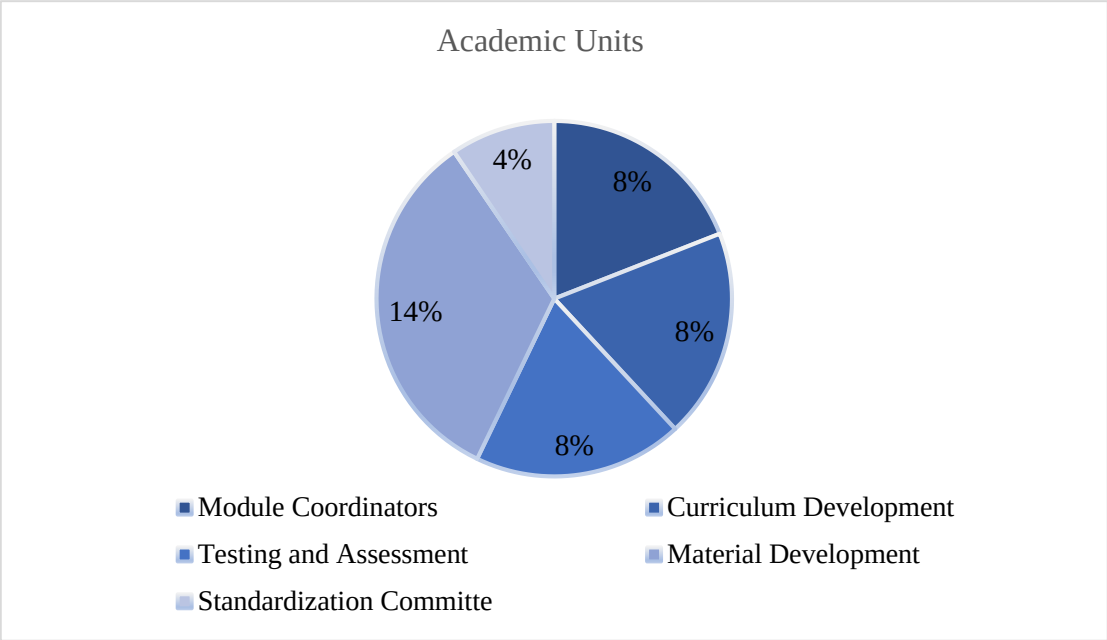


Figure 3.3 The Percentages of Instructors Working in Academic Units

To gain a deeper insight into the concept of teacher autonomy and the factors which promote and limit autonomy, it is also essential to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of administrators about the issue; thus, five administrators were also included in the sample study, four of whom were male and one was female. Four of the participants were aged between 30 and 35, whereas one administrator was at 50 years of age. Regarding their study degree, three of them had a BA degree, but they were also doing their MA while two administrators had completed their MA. They had their undergraduate degree in English Language Teaching (n=2) and English Language and Literature (n=3). The administrators were experienced teachers having between 8 and 12 years (n=4) and 25 years (n=1) of experience. Lastly, all the participants had two years of experience as an administrator. The demographic data about the administrators were summarized in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Demographic Data of Five Administrators

| Teacher's Characteristics | Number | Percentage % |
|---|---|---|
| **Gender** | | |
| Male | 4 | 80 |
| Female | 1 | 20 |
| **Age** | | |
| 30-35 | 4 | 80 |
| 45-50 | 1 | 20 |
| **Qualifications** | | |
| Bachelor's degree | 3 | 60 |
| Master's degree | 2 | 40 |
| Doctorate degree | 0 | 0 |
| **Major** | | |
| English Language Teaching | 2 | 40 |
| English Language & Literature | 3 | 60 |
| **Experience as a Teacher** | | |
| 8-12 years | 4 | 40 |
| 25 | 1 | 20 |
| **Experience as an Administrator** | | |
| 2 years | 5 | 100 |

### 3.3.2 Interview Participants

The interviews were conducted with a representative sample of nine EFL instructors, who were selected in accordance with "maximum variation sampling" strategy, which helps to represent different participants and provide multiple perspectives on the case, so that the findings will more likely reflect differences and different perspectives (Creswell, 2013). Patton (1990) also states that "any common patterns that emerge from great variation are of particular interest and value in capturing the core experiences and central, shared aspects or impacts of a program" (p.172). To this end, upon analyzing the results of the questionnaires, some characteristics were identified to base the selection of the participants on. The informants were chosen among the questionnaire participants according to the following criteria:

- instructors who had a lower level of autonomy and wanted less autonomy
- instructors who had a lower level of autonomy level but wanted more autonomy
- instructors who had a higher level of autonomy and wanted more autonomy
- instructors who had a higher level of autonomy but wanted less autonomy

Figure 3.4 below displays the interview sampling matrix. As shown in the figure, the participants with diverse levels of autonomy and different perceptions about autonomy were selected to provide a variety of voices and perspectives within the case being studied, to add richness in the data collected, and to have a better and more realistic understanding of the case and the variations in experiences.

**INTERVIEW SAMPLING MAXTRIX**

| Desired level of autonomy | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Instructor 6<br>Instructor 7<br>Instructor 8 | Instructor 9 | |
| | Instructor 3<br>Instructor 4 | Instructor 2<br>Instructor 5 | |
| | Instructor 1 | | |
| | Low | Moderate | High |

Current Level of Autonomy

Figure 3.4 Interview Sampling Matrix

Table 3.3 presents the demographic data of the interview participants. As can be seen from the table, six of the interview participants were female and three of them were male. Their ages ranged between 26 and 30 and they had between three and nine years of experience as EFL instructors. Three of the participants had an MA degree, whereas six of them had a BA degree in the fields of English Language Teaching (ELT, n=5)

and English Language and Literature (ELL, n=4). Lastly, only three participants were involved in academic units.

Table 3.3 Demographic Data of the Interview Participants

| Participant | Gender | Age | Years of Experience | Study Degree | Major | Academic Unit involved |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Instructor 1 | Female | 30 | 8 | M.A. | ELL | - |
| Instructor 2 | Female | 30 | 9 | B.A. | ELL | Material Development |
| Instructor 3 | Male | 27 | 5 | B.A. | ELL | - |
| Instructor 4 | Female | 29 | 7 | M.A. | ELT | - |
| Instructor 5 | Female | 29 | 7 | M.A. | ELT | Module Coordinator |
| Instructor 6 | Male | 27 | 4 | B.A. | ELT | - |
| Instructor 7 | Female | 28 | 5 | B.A. | ELL | Standardization Committee |
| Instructor 8 | Male | 26 | 3 | B.A. | ELT | - |
| Instructor 9 | Female | 27 | 6 | B.A. | ELT | - |

In addition to nine instructors, two administrators were also interviewed. Both were responsible mostly for the academic work carried out in the institution. One of them was female and the other one was male. Their ages were 31 and 50. They had two years of experience as an administrator, but 9 and 25 years of experience as an EFL instructor. One of them completed an MA degree in English Language Teaching and the other one had a BA in the same field of study.

### 3.4 Data Collection Procedure

After developing questionnaire and interview questions, the researcher applied to the Middle East Technical University Human Subjects Ethics Committee to get approval for the study and data collection instruments to be used in the study. Upon receiving approval from the committee within three weeks, the researcher contacted the director

of the School of Foreign Languages, where the study would be conducted and asked for permission. As the School of Foreign Languages operates within Karabuk University, the researcher also applied to the rectorate of Karabük University to gain consent for the study. As soon as the required consents were obtained, 60 EFL instructors and five administrators working at Karabük University School of Foreign Languages were contacted in person and informed about the study. They were delivered the questionnaires and informed consent forms. Part-time instructors and five full-time instructors who were on leave were not included in the study. Fifty-one instructors and five administrators returned the questionnaires in two weeks. However, it was later found that one of the instructors misunderstood the scale and filled in only one part of it, so s/he was excluded from the study.

The responses of the participants were immediately entered into SPSS 22.0 and the mean scores of each participant's experienced level of autonomy and desired level of autonomy were calculated. Based on the criteria determined beforehand, nine instructors were selected among the questionnaire participants for the semi-structured interviews. In addition, two administrators agreed to take part in the interviews. Before the interviews were carried out, the participants were informed about the purpose of the study, estimated length of the interview, and the fact that it would be audio-recorded. After they granted their consent, the interviews were conducted by the researcher herself when the instructors and administrators were available- during their office hours or when they did not have classes. The interviews were held in English and audio-recorded. Immediately after the data collection was completed, all the interviews were transcribed and the data in written format were prepared for analysis. The data collection procedure is summarized in Figure 3.5.

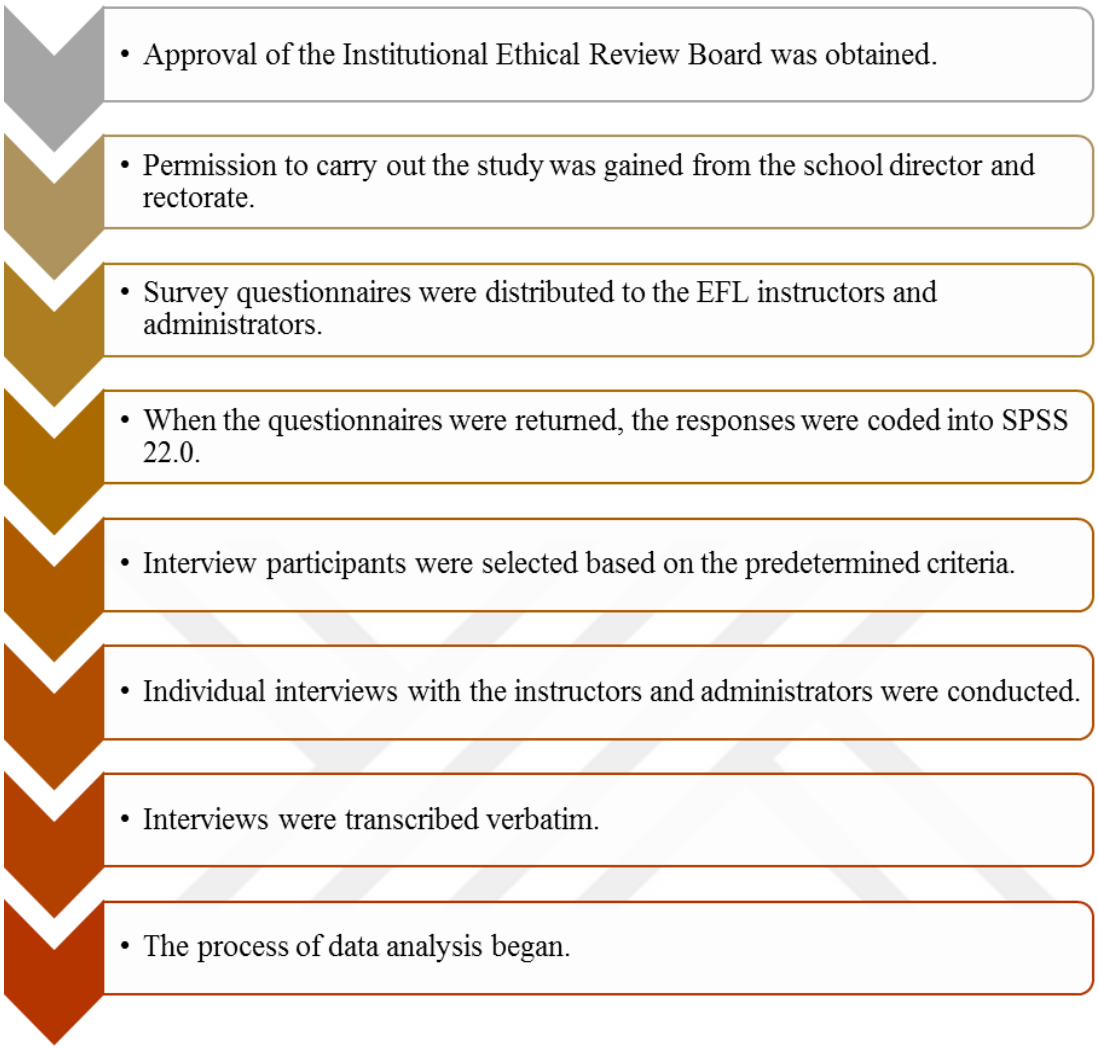


Figure 3.5 Data Collection Procedure

### 3. 5 Data Collection Instruments

The data were collected through two main instruments: questionnaires and semi-structured individual interviews. As Tuckman (1999) described it,

> By providing access to what is "inside a person's head," these approaches allow investigators to measure what someone knows (knowledge or information), what someone likes and dislikes (values and preferences), and what someone thinks (attitudes and beliefs) (p.237).

Taking this into consideration, the researcher aimed to access as much information as possible on the instructors' beliefs and preferences as to the research topic "teacher autonomy" and increase the validity and reliability of the research by employing both quantitative and qualitative data collection tools.

### 3.5.1 Questionnaires

Questionnaires are one of the most common research tools in social sciences as they can collect a large amount of comparable information from many respondents quickly and easily (Dörnyei, 2007; Mackey and Gass, 2005). In order to reach more informants and gather information about their experiences and perceptions of teacher autonomy in a shorter time, the researcher utilized a questionnaire.

The questionnaire administered to instructors (Appendix A) was divided into three sections: Section 1 aimed to collect data about the participants' background, specifically their age, gender, educational degree, major, years of experience, and whether they were involved in any academic unit in their institution. Section 2, which composed of 35 items used to answer two different questions, aimed to investigate instructors' experience of autonomy as well as their desires for autonomy in six domains, namely curriculum, instruction, assessment, professional development, classroom management, and institutional operations. In this section, four-point Likert-type scale was used and for the first question "In my school, I can…" the choices ranged from "always" to "never", whereas for the second question "As a teacher, I would like to…", the options ranged from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". Lastly, in Section 3, the respondents were required to answer open-ended questions about the meaning and importance of teacher autonomy, the extent to which they want to be autonomous, the areas they would like to have more control over, the factors that inhibit and promote autonomy, and the characteristics of autonomous teachers.

The items in Section 2 were developed after doing an extensive review of literature on the research topic "teacher autonomy". To this end, relevant articles, books, and studies conducted both in Turkey and other countries were examined and the relevant

questionnaires were analyzed. It was found that Teacher Autonomy Scale (TAS) designed by Pearson and Hall (1993) and Teacher Work-Autonomy Scale created by Friedman (1999) are the most widely used instruments to measure autonomy. While Pearson and Hall (1993) decomposed autonomy into two as curricular autonomy and general autonomy, which examined autonomy over pedagogy, student discipline, and classroom environment, Friedman (1999) identified four areas: student teaching and assessment, school mode of operating, staff development, and curriculum development. Later, Rudolph (2006), LaCoe (2006), and O'Hara (2006) created a Six Part Model of Teacher Autonomy scale together for their doctoral dissertations by decomposing autonomy into six dimensions: curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, student discipline, classroom environment, and professional development.

Guided by the literature and believing that autonomy is not a unitary concept, the researcher also decomposed autonomy into six domains: curriculum, instruction, assessment, professional development, classroom management, and institutional operations. The researcher combined the dimensions of student discipline and classroom environment identified by Rudolph, LaCoe, O'Hara (2006) and named it as classroom management. In addition, some items of school mode of operating identified by Friedman (1999) were adapted for the domain of 'institutional operations'. Table 3.4 illustrates which items are taken or adapted from which scale.

Table 3.4 The Scales Utilized to Create the Questionnaire Items

| **Researcher** | **Scale** | **Item numbers** |
|---|---|---|
| Pearson & Hall (1993) | Teacher Autonomy Scale | 1, 2, 3, 12, 14, 16 |
| Friedman (1999) | Teacher Work-Autonomy Scale | 4, 5, 15, 16, 20, 27, 30, 31, 32, 34 |
| Rudolph, LaCoe, O'Hara (2006) | Six Part Model of Teacher Autonomy | 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 28, 29 |

In Section 2 of the questionnaire the same items were used to answer two different questions. In order for the respondents not to read the same items twice, a construct similar to the one used by Karabacak (2014) was created, in which the items were placed in the middle and one question and its options were on the right of the items whereas the other question and its options were on the left as shown in the sample screenshot of the scale below.

| **In my school, I can ….** | | | | **STATEMENTS** | **As a teacher, I would like to …** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Always | Often | Rarely | Never | | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1. …select teaching goals and objectives for my class. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 2. …select content and topics to be taught in my class. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

Figure 3.6 Sample Screenshot of the Scale

The internal consistency, which is "the degree to which the items that make up the scale are all measuring the same underlying attribute" (Pallant, 2005, p.6) of the scale was measured using Cronbach's coefficient alpha. The Cronbach's coefficient alpha of the total scale was .91, which indicates that the scale is reliable. Table 3.5 demonstrates the Cronbach's coefficient alpha for each factor.

Table 3.5 Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha for Each Area of Autonomy

| | Autonomy Scale | Items | Alpha |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Curriculum | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 | .835 |
| | Instruction | 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 | .806 |
| **Have** | Assessment and evaluation | 17, 18, 19, 20 | .723 |
| **autonomy** | Professional development | 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26 | .651 |
| **Over** | Classroom management | 16, 27, 28, 29 | .703 |
| | Institutional operations | 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35 | .640 |

Table 3.5 (continued)

| | Autonomy Scale | Items | Alpha |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Desire autonomy over** | Curriculum | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 | .822 |
| | Instruction | 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 | .851 |
| | Assessment and evaluation | 17, 18, 19, 20 | .855 |
| | Professional development | 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26 | .704 |
| | Classroom management | 16, 27, 28, 29 | .712 |
| | Institutional operations | 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35 | .831 |

As can be seen from Table 3.5, Alpha values of all factors except two are above .70, which suggests the scale is reliable. The two factors "professional development" and "institutional operations" for items of "have autonomy over" seemed to be below .70; however, the same ones scored higher for items of "desire autonomy over". As the items were the same, none of the items was removed from the scale.

Administrator survey (Appendix B) also consisted of three sections. In the first section, demographic information about the participants was collected. In the second section, the same 35 items used in the instructor survey were given to answer two questions respectively: "In our school, the teachers can…" and "The teachers should be free to…". The first question aimed to find out their perceptions on the instructors' current level of autonomy in the preparatory school, whereas the second question investigated their views on whether instructors should be given autonomy in the six dimensions. The third section included open-ended questions on the meaning and importance of teacher autonomy, the characteristics of autonomous teachers, the constraints on teacher autonomy, and the ways to promote it as well as the areas they would like to grant teachers autonomy over.

### 3.5.2 Semi-structured Interviews

For this case study, interviews were also of crucial importance as interviews help the researcher to learn about the participants' interpretations of their world and how they consider situations from their viewpoints (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2007). Semi-structured interviews, in which a list of questions is used as a guide allowing the freedom to probe for more information, were used to validate the quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires and to elaborate on it by finding out more about EFL instructors and administrators' experiences and perceptions of teacher autonomy in their teaching context.

Instructor interview protocols (Appendix C) were composed of 12 questions which were adopted from the interview protocols used in the studies conducted by Rudolph (2006), LaCoe (2006), and O'Hara (2006). During the interviews, the researcher sought information about the participants' school policy on curriculum development, instructional planning and implementation, testing and assessment, professional development, classroom management, and institutional operations. In addition, she intended to find out to what extent the instructors were involved in those issues, how they felt about their involvement, and how they perceived their autonomy and the factors that limited and/or promoted their autonomy.

The interview with the administrators (Appendix D) was also comprised of the same questions, but additionally they were asked about the school's expectations about what a teacher should do and shouldn't do, and how they decided which teachers to give more autonomy to in the previously listed domains. The interviews with the instructors and administrators lasted between 20 and 45 minutes.

## 3.6 Pilot Study

After the questionnaire was developed, it was piloted to identify any problems and ambiguity relating to the content, wording, instruction, and the layout as well as to

avoid any problems regarding the validity and reliability of the results. As suggested by Mackey and Gass (2005),

> Pilot testing is carried out to uncover any problems, and to address them before the main study is carried out. A pilot study is an important means of assessing the feasibility and usefulness of the data collection methods and making any necessary revisions before they are used with the research participants (p.43).

The questionnaire was piloted with 14 EFL instructors working at English preparatory programs of two state universities in Ankara. They had similar characteristics with the respondents in the actual study as they worked in similar conditions. The demographic data about the participants are displayed in Table 3.6.

Table 3.6 Demographic Data of the Participants of the Pilot Study

| **Teacher's Characteristics** | **Number** | **Percentage %** |
|---|---|---|
| **Gender** | | |
| Male | 3 | 21.5 |
| Female | 11 | 77.5 |
| **Age** | | |
| 25-27 | 3 | 21.5 |
| 28-30 | 8 | 57 |
| 31-33 | 3 | 21.5 |
| **Qualifications** | | |
| Bachelor's degree | 6 | 43 |
| Master's degree | 8 | 57 |
| **Major** | | |
| English Language Teaching | 12 | 86 |
| American Language & Literature | 1 | 7 |
| Translation Studies | 1 | 7 |
| **Experience as a Teacher** | | |
| 3-5 years | 3 | 22 |
| 6-8 years | 8 | 56 |
| 9-13 years | 3 | 22 |

As illustrated in Table 3.6, the majority of the participants were female (n=11), whereas only three of them were male. Their ages ranged between 25 and 33 and they had between three and thirteen years of experience as EFL instructors. Whereas eight of the participants held an MA degree, six of them had a BA degree in the fields of English Language Teaching (n=12), American Language and Literature (n=1), and Translation Studies (n=1).

The participants were asked both to respond to the items in the questionnaire and comment on the clarity of the scale and items. Based on the feedback received from participants, the wording of a few items was revised. To exemplify, item 28 "…decide how to act on any student discipline infractions" was paraphrased as "…decide how to act on student discipline problems like disruptive student behavior or cheating in my class" and item 32 "…decide on student demographic class-composition policy" was rewritten as "…determine how to form classes based on student characteristics like gender, race, or proficiency level". Some minor changes on the format were also made upon the suggestions of the participants.

In addition, to check the reliability of the scale, the responses of 12 participants were entered into SPSS 22.0 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). Two participants misunderstood the scale and answered only one part in Section 2; thus, they were not included in the reliability analysis. The internal consistency of the scale was confirmed by the sufficient value of Cronbach's coefficient alpha ($\alpha$= .83).

### 3.7 Data Analysis

In the study, the data were collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The analysis of quantitative data and qualitative data were presented in detail in separate sections.

### 3.7.1 Analysis of Quantitative Data

The data collected from questionnaires were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 22.0) and the results were interpreted in the light of the research questions of the study.

First, to describe the characteristics of the sample, descriptive statistics were obtained using frequencies and means.

Second, the mean scores of each participant's current level of autonomy and desired level of autonomy were calculated by assigning each option in the scale a numerical value, for example, 'never'= 1, 'seldom'= 2, 'often'= 3, 'always'= 4. To interpret the results, the mean value boundaries of each response was calculated by dividing the serial width 3 by the number of responses 4, which was calculated to be 0.75. Based on this, the perceived level of autonomy was interpreted as displayed below:

$\bar{x} \leq 1,75$ : no or almost no autonomy

$\bar{x} \leq 2,5$ : low perception of autonomy

$\bar{x} \leq 3,25$: moderate perception of autonomy

$\bar{x} \geq 3,3$ : high perception of autonomy

Moreover, to find out to what extent the instructors would like to be autonomous in domains like curriculum development, instruction, classroom management, and assessment in their institution and to what extent administrators think teachers should have autonomy in these domains, frequency analysis was carried out. The results were organized into summary charts, which were presented in the following results section.

### 3.7.2 Analysis of Qualitative Data

As Creswell (2013) proposed, the data analysis process requires "a preliminary read-through of the database, coding and organizing themes, representing the data, and forming an interpretation of them" (p. 195). Accordingly, in the study, a cyclical-reiterative analysis process was applied to analyze the qualitative data collected

through open-ended questions in the questionnaire and interviews. Before the analysis started, the interviews were transcribed verbatim to avoid the risk of losing or missing any data as all the data could be helpful and insightful for the thorough interpretation.

As with the initial step of data analysis, all the interview transcripts were read and some margin notes and memos were taken to create preliminary codes later. The next step was forming codes, which means "aggregating the text and visual data into small categories of information" (Creswell, 2013, p.200). To this end, descriptive codes were used by assigning summative words or short phrases to the data as the topic shifted (Saldana, 2009). Later, repeating codes and patterns were sought and they were assigned into categories "to organize and group similarly coded data" (Saldana, 2009, p. 8). Following this process, themes, which are defined as "broad units of information that consist of several codes aggregated to form a common idea" by Creswell (2013, p.202), were constructed. Lastly, a cross case analysis among the instructors and administrators was carried out to come up with "thematic connections within and among the participants and their settings" (Seidman, 1991, p.102). In this way, the data were interpreted and some inferences were made. Table 3.7 illustrates the data analysis process employed in the study.

Table 3.7 Data Analysis Process

| | |
|---|---|
| Step 1 | Transcribing the interview data verbatim |
| Step 2 | First reading and memoing of the interview and survey data |
| Step 3 | Forming preliminary codes |
| Step 4 | Assigning descriptive codes |
| Step 5 | Assigning codes into categories |
| Step 6 | Identifying themes |
| Step 7 | Carrying out a cross case analysis |
| Step 8 | Interpreting the results |

In order to provide an example of how the qualitative data were analyzed and descriptive codes were assigned, sample coding is presented in Appendix E.

### 3.8 Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

In this research, the data were collected through both quantitative and qualitative means from multiple sources, 50 instructors and five administrators, to ensure triangulation so that validity and reliability of the information would be enhanced (Mackey and Gass, 2005). In this way, it was aimed to achieve accurate interpretation and understanding of the case being studied. To ensure the validity and reliability of the quantitative data collection tool, a pilot study was conducted and the items causing ambiguity were altered. Also, the internal consistency of the scale was measured in the pilot and main study, which proved to be highly reliable. For the qualitative part of the study, the member-checking strategy, "the most critical technique for establishing credibility" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.314), was utilized to cross check whether the researcher accurately interpreted what the participants meant.

As for ethical considerations, the approval of the Institutional Ethical Review Board and the consent from Karabük University rectorate and SFL directorate was obtained. Participation in the study was voluntary, so all the participants were given informed consent forms (Appendix F) prior to the survey questionnaires and interviews, which informed them about the purpose and procedures of the study and allowed them to quit participating at any time without stating any reasons. The participants were also provided with a debriefing form (Appendix G) after the study and they were granted a right to receive information about the results of the study afterwards. The participants were assured that all the information would remain confidential and anonymous. Therefore, to protect the privacy of the participants throughout the study, participants were assigned numbers instead of names. To conclude, every step in this study was taken by abiding by ethical considerations.

### 3.9 Limitations of the Study

Within the limitations of a Master's thesis in terms of time and length, the study was designed as a single instrumental case study, which examined the perceptions and experiences of EFL instructors and administrators within the bounded case chosen as English language preparatory program of a state university. Thus, the results cannot be generalized beyond the case studied; however, they can be transferrable to similar cases, the results can therefore provide insights into the issue.

Another limitation is that the study concentrates only on EFL instructors' perceived level of autonomy in their institutions and whether they wish to have teacher autonomy. The study does not however examine their capacity for self-directed teaching, another aspect of autonomy, nor does it explore the relationship between their level of autonomy and effectiveness of teaching and learning practices as they are not within the scope of the study.

# CHAPTER 4

# FINDINGS

## 4.0 Presentation

This chapter presents the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data gathered through questionnaires and interviews. First, to provide an overview and summary of the findings of the qualitative data, the descriptive codes and emerging themes from the questionnaires and interviews with teachers and administrators are illustrated in Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2 respectively. Next, the findings for each research question are presented separately. The research questions addressed in the study are as follows:

1. How do EFL instructors and administrators working at an English preparatory program of a state university perceive the concept of teacher autonomy?
   1.1 How do they conceptualize the term teacher autonomy?
   1.2 What are their views on the characteristics of autonomous teachers?
   1.3 What are their views on the importance of teacher autonomy?
   1.4 What are their views on the factors that promote and inhibit teacher autonomy?
2. Based on EFL instructors' and administrators' perceptions, what is the level of autonomy the instructors possess in the following domains: a) curriculum, b) instruction, c) assessment, d) professional development, e) classroom management, f) institutional operations?
3. To what extent do EFL instructors wish to have autonomy in the previously listed domains?
4. Based on the perceptions of administrators, to what extent should teachers have autonomy in the previously listed domains?

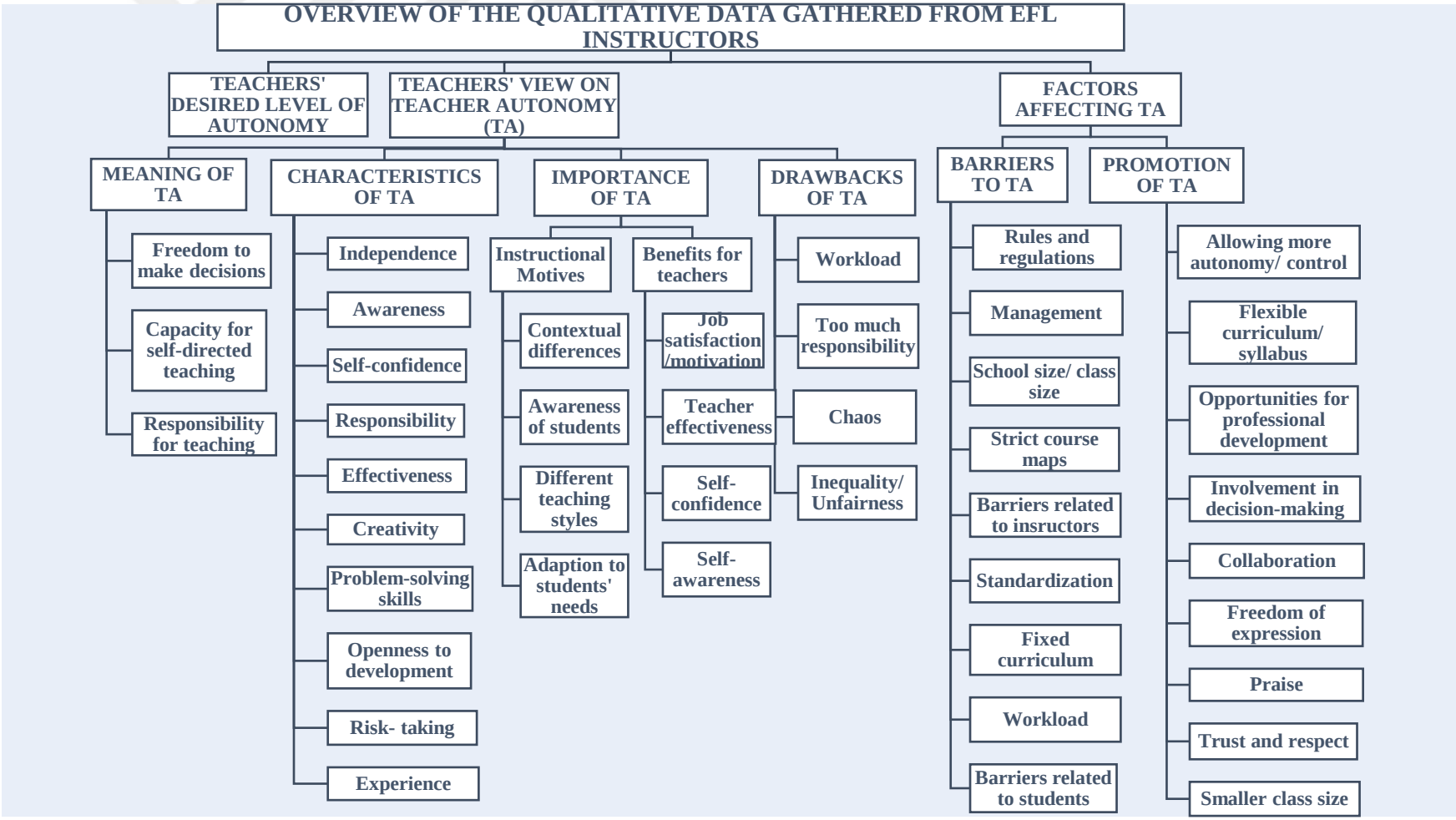


Figure 4.1 Descriptive Codes and Themes that Emerged from Questionnaires and Interviews with Instructors

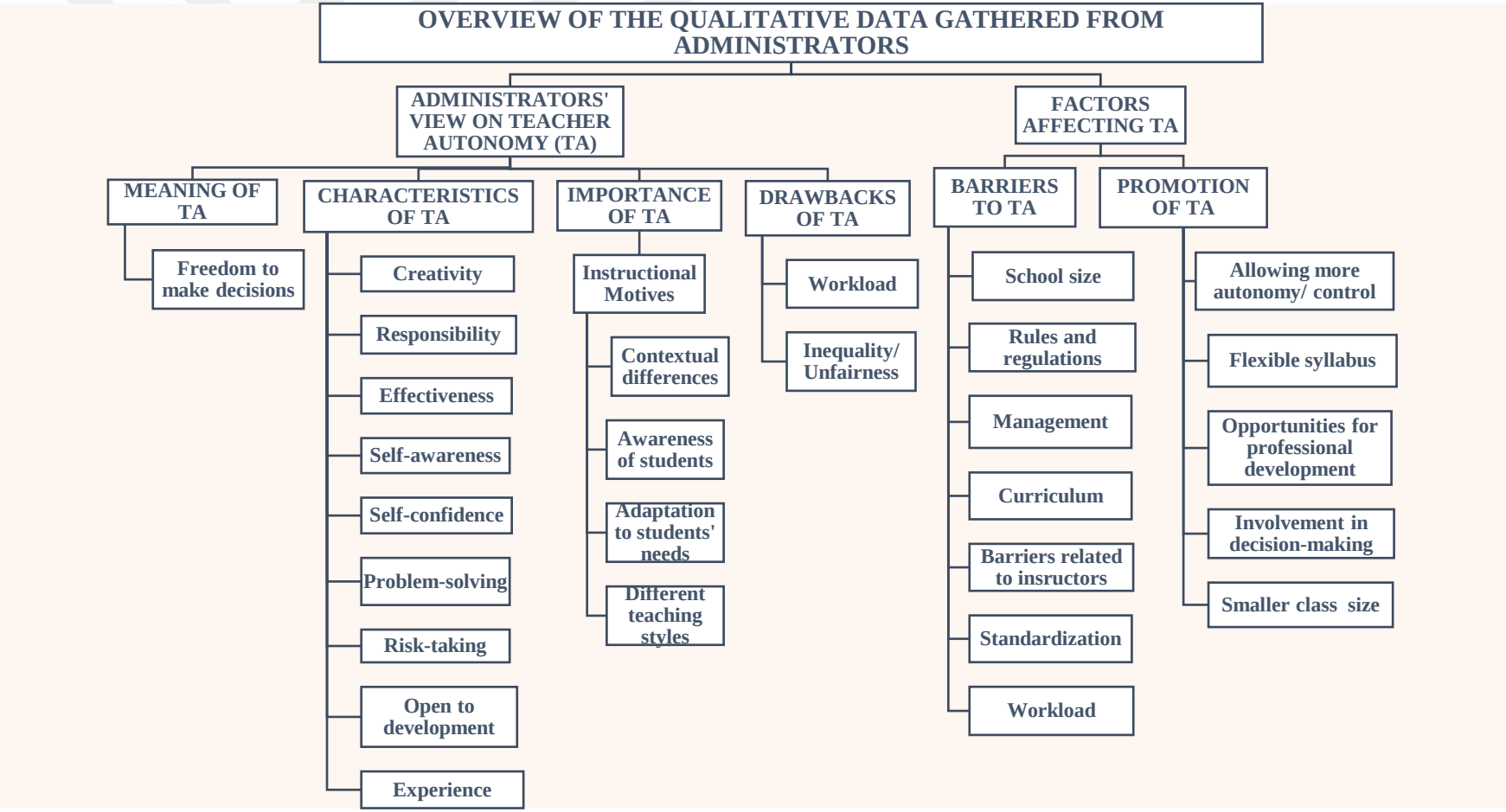


Figure 4.2 Descriptive Codes and Themes that Emerged from Questionnaires and Interviews with Administrators

## 4.1 Participants' Understanding of "Teacher Autonomy"

*RQ 1. How do EFL instructors and administrators working at tertiary level perceive the concept of teacher autonomy?*

*1.1 How do the participants conceptualize the term "teacher autonomy"?*

The first research question aimed to find out how EFL teachers and administrators conceptualize the term "teacher autonomy"; thus, to address this question, the participants were asked to write what the term "teacher autonomy" meant to them in the questionnaire. The definitions participants provided for the term "teacher autonomy" revealed three categories, which were displayed in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1 Participants' Perceptions on the Meaning of Teacher Autonomy

| **Meaning of TA** | ***Inst. (f)*** | ***Admin. (f)*** |
|---|---|---|
| Professional freedom | | |
| Freedom to make instructional decisions | 27 | 3 |
| Freedom to make curricular decisions | 22 | 3 |
| Freedom to make decisions in general | 10 | 2 |
| Freedom to make decisions on assessment | 5 | - |
| Freedom to make organizational decisions | 2 | - |
| Freedom to make decisions on classroom management | 2 | - |
| Capacity for self-directed teaching | 4 | - |
| Responsibility for teaching | 2 | - |
| **TOTAL** | **74** | **8** |

As can be understood from Table 4.1, a substantial majority of the instructors and all administrators defined the term "teacher autonomy" as professional freedom of teachers, especially with regards to making decisions. Some participants did not specify the field of autonomy and only referred to decisions about teaching in general (*f*= 12) as illustrated in the following excerpts:

*The independence of a teacher when making decisions about his/her classes (Quest, Inst. 8)*

*Being independent in making decisions on teaching (Quest, Inst. 13)*

*To me, it refers to teacher independence in making decisions related to their teaching activities (Quest, Admin 1).*

Among the definitions which delineated the area of decision, instructional and curricular decisions were the most frequent ones as most of the participants described teacher autonomy as freedom to make decisions about what and how to teach. In terms of instructional decisions, they mostly mentioned freedom in selecting teaching methods and techniques and deciding the pace of the curriculum and timing of the activities. As for the curricular decisions, the choice of content and the selection of instructional materials were the most recurrent codes. The excerpts below are indicative of this understanding:

*Professional independence of teachers, especially in making decisions about what they teach and how they teach it (Quest, Admin. 2).*

*Teacher autonomy is the professional independence of teachers in classroom in terms of choosing the teaching material and how to teach this material (Quest, Inst. 14)*

*It refers to the teachers' independence on making decisions about what they teach, how they teach, and how to assess the students (Quest, Inst. 38)*

In addition to making curricular and instructional decisions, a few instructors also made a mention of decisions on assessment (*f*=5) as can be seen in the quote above. Deciding on the type and frequency of assessment as well as the grading system were the specific areas the participants referred to. Two participants also added freedom to make decisions on classroom timetables and schedules to their description of teacher

autonomy, which is an example of organizational decisions. Lastly, decisions on classroom management were regarded as a dimension of teacher autonomy by two respondents. The following quote demonstrates this understanding:

> *Teacher autonomy means a teacher's deciding the norms and the rules of the classroom on his/her own in terms of both educational and disciplinary bases (Quest, Inst. 7)*

The second category that emerged from the data gathered from instructor questionnaires was "capacity for self-directed teaching" (*f*=4). A few participants understood the concept of teacher autonomy as teachers' ability to identify their students' needs, assess their teaching, and direct their teaching accordingly. To exemplify,

> *It means the ability and awareness to act, plan, make decisions and implement these according to the needs and characteristics of the class (Quest, Inst. 5)*

> *For me it means that the teacher can act according to the way he/ she sees his/ her learners (the process they make) (Quest, Inst. 28)*

Lastly, two respondents conceptualized the notion of teacher autonomy as teachers' responsibility for teaching as can be inferred from the following excerpt:

> *The responsibility of teachers to take action in their classes (Quest, Inst. 42).*

To sum up, the instructors and administrators who participated in the study were asked what the term "teacher autonomy" meant to them and the findings revealed that the instructors conceptualized it as the freedom of teachers to make decisions concerning their teaching, their capacity to self-direct their teaching, and their responsibility for teaching. On the other hand, the administrators only referred to the term as teachers' freedom to make decisions pertaining to their teaching.

## 4.2 Participants' Views on Characteristics of Autonomous Teachers

*RQ 1.2. What are the EFL instructors' and administrators' views on the characteristics of autonomous teachers?*

The second research question focused on the instructors' and administrators' opinions regarding the characteristics of autonomous teachers. To this end, in the questionnaires and in the individual interviews, they were asked to describe the characteristics of an autonomous teacher. The codes assigned to the data were displayed in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Participants' Views on the Characteristics of Autonomous Teachers

| **Characteristics of autonomous teachers** | ***Instructor*** | | ***Administrator*** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ***Quest.*** | ***Int.*** | ***Quest.*** | ***Int.*** |
| **Positive attributes** | | | | |
| Independent | 23 | 1 | - | - |
| Aware of self & students | 15 | - | 2 | - |
| Self-confident | 8 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Responsible | 8 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Effective | 8 | - | 2 | - |
| Creative | 7 | - | 2 | 1 |
| Motivated | 7 | - | 3 | - |
| Have problem-solving skills | 4 | - | - | - |
| Open to development/ change | 4 | 2 | 1 | - |
| Innovative | 3 | 3 | - | - |
| Flexible | 2 | - | - | - |
| Ready to take risks | 2 | - | 1 | - |
| Communicative | 2 | 3 | 1 | - |
| Experienced | 1 | - | - | 1 |
| **Negative attributes** | | | | |
| Inexperienced | - | 2 | - | - |
| Irresponsible | - | 2 | - | - |
| Controlling/ bossy | - | 2 | - | - |
| Difficult to work with | - | - | 1 | - |
| **TOTAL** | **94** | **17** | **16** | **4** |

Note: The shaded areas indicate the salient codes

Participants' perceptions on the characteristics of autonomous teachers in Table 4.2 illustrated that teacher autonomy is mostly associated with positive attributes by both instructors and administrators. Although most of the codes assigned to the data collected from instructors and administrators were the same, some differences stood out. Although most of the instructors believed that an autonomous teacher is independent and free to make decisions about his/her teaching (*f*=24), none of the administrators cited this attribute. Moreover, some instructors considered autonomous teachers to be flexible (*f*=2), motivated (*f*=7), and innovative (*f*=6) by "*being away from old school teaching methods*" (Quest, Inst. 16) and "*considering new techniques and approaches to apply in the classroom*" (Quest, Inst. 9); however, these characteristics did not come up in the data gathered from the administrators.

The salient codes suggested that according to participants' views, an autonomous teacher is aware of students' skills and needs (*f*=17) and "*what is going on in class in terms of learning and teaching*" as one participant stated (Quest, Inst. 5). Moreover, he/she has self-confidence (*f*=11), responsibility for students' learning (*f*=12). He/she is also effective (*f*=10) as they have the essential skills and knowledge "*to make proper decisions according to needs*" (Quest, Inst. 27) and "*to manage and regulate the learning activities*" (Quest, Inst. 19). He/she is also creative (*f*=10) and open to development and change (*f*=7). The following excerpts further demonstrate participants' views on the characteristics of autonomous teachers:

> *Self-confident teachers, and teachers who develop themselves […] and want to develop themselves and teachers who are ready to change […] according to students' feedback or according to their colleagues' opinions and feedback (Interview, Inst. 6).*

> *An autonomous teacher can motivate himself / herself easily for the lesson. An autonomous teacher can take risks. An autonomous teacher is flexible for different learners and situations (Quest, Inst. 41).*

Furthermore, in the interviews, instructors were asked to voice their opinions as to the characteristics of teachers who wanted a lot of autonomy. Most of the participants pointed to the previously mentioned characteristics: independence, self-confidence, creativity, openness to development, and experience. On the other hand, few instructors associated desiring too much autonomy with negative traits like being irresponsible (*f*=2) and being bossy and controlling (*f* =2). The following excerpts illustrate their beliefs:

> *Irresponsible people, maybe. [...] There are some irresponsible people who don't want to be standard. They want to assess, but they want less. For example, we do four exams, but they don't want to grade. It's too many for them. They just want to have more free time (Interview, Inst. 5).*

> *As a character, if you really like controlling everything, if you are a controller in your own life, in your family, in your relationship, you may like more autonomy (Interview, Inst. 2)*

Another interviewee shared that teachers who wanted more autonomy are either more responsible or less responsible by explaining that

> *The less responsible ones may have difficulties following the course map; that's why, they may want more autonomy, you know, just to make the things more relaxed. And the more responsible ones may not like the content they are going to teach and they may want to change it (Interview, Inst. 4).*

The findings also revealed two participants thought inexperienced or less experienced teachers wanted more autonomy. One interviewee expressed her thought as follows:

> *Young teachers also want more autonomy. By young, I mean, less experienced teachers. Because they haven't tried many methods, many things within the class, they don't know what the results of those actions will be. Until they know that, they learn those, they want to try many things. (Interview, Inst. 3)*

An administrator also expressed a negative attribute of the autonomous teachers by writing "*They tend to bend the rules of the management. They are not always easy to work with*" (Quest, Admin. 4).

Lastly, to find out the characteristics of teachers who are granted more autonomy by the administration, the administrators interviewed were asked how they decided which instructors were to be given more autonomy and their responses revealed that they select academic unit members, those who possess more autonomy than the other instructors at school, based on their skills, knowledge, and experience in the relevant area, which is also parallel with the characteristics of autonomous teachers.

### 4.3 Participants' Perceptions on the Importance of Teacher Autonomy

*RQ 1.3: What are EFL instructors' and administrators' views on the importance of teacher autonomy?*

The third research question aimed to explore the importance of teacher autonomy from the instructors' and administrators' perspectives. To address this question, the data gathered from the open-ended questions in the questionnaire were analyzed. The findings revealed that an overwhelming majority of the participants held the opinion that teacher autonomy is quite important. The reasons stated by the participants can be grouped into two categories as shown in Table 4.3: Benefits for Teachers and Instructional Motives.

Table 4.3 Participants' Views on the Importance of Teacher Autonomy

| **Importance of TA** | ***Inst.*** ***(f)*** | ***Admin.*** ***(f)*** |
|---|---|---|
| **Benefits for teachers** | | |
| Job satisfaction/ motivation | 9 | - |
| Teacher effectiveness/ success | 6 | - |
| Self-confidence | 2 | - |
| Creativity | 3 | - |
| Self-awareness | 1 | - |
| **Instructional motives** | | |
| Contextual differences | 6 | 2 |
| Awareness of students' needs/interests | 4 | 1 |
| Adaptation to learner needs | 2 | 1 |
| Individual differences in teaching styles | 8 | 1 |
| **TOTAL** | 41 | 5 |

*Category 1: Benefits for teachers*

The most frequently mentioned reasons for the importance of teacher autonomy by instructors were related to teachers; on the other hand, none of the administrators cited such reasons. Most of the instructors touched on the benefits of autonomy for teachers (*f*=21). First, job satisfaction and motivation were the most common reasons that emerged from the data analyzed. Being granted autonomy in the workplace was considered to provide job satisfaction, which would also generate the necessary motivation for teachers to go on teaching as can be understood from the data excerpts below:

> *Teachers should take initiatives to set some rules and make some decisions without hesitation. In that way, they can be more satisfied at work. If they get more satisfied, they can be more professional and active in their work" (Quest, Inst. 26).*

*In my opinion, it is really important to give the teacher willingness to go on teaching" (Quest, Inst. 40).*

In addition, possessing autonomy was reported to be essential for teachers' effectiveness and success, another recurrent code in the data:

*It makes the teacher more efficient and effective (Quest, Inst. 4).*

*Very important. No one in any kind of occupation can be successful under others' pressure. Especially teachers must feel free enough to act the way they like in the classroom (Quest, Inst. 18).*

Despite their frequent reference to teachers' effectiveness, these participants did not give an explanation of how autonomy impacts teachers' success or effectiveness; however, the statements regarding self-confidence, self-awareness as well as the instructional motives explained below can help to understand how having the control of the teaching process makes instructors more efficient:

*Being autonomous in learning or teaching makes individuals self-confident and responsible (Quest, Inst.1).*

*When you are autonomous, you feel that you have the control of the class. If not, you'll be confused. A confused teacher can't be self-confident in class (Quest, Inst. 17).*

*Having autonomy is something like a mirror that shows teacher's capacity, development and position in teaching (Quest, Inst. 46).*

Lastly, three participants stated that teacher autonomy is central for their creativity and decline of autonomy inhibits teachers' creativity.

*Category 2: Instructional Motives*

Some instructors (*f*=19) and administrators (*f=5*) also pointed out the necessity of teacher autonomy owing to motives related to instruction: contextual differences, awareness of student profiles, adaptation to those profiles, and differences in teaching styles. Due to differences in classroom contexts or diverse problems that may arise in those contexts, the standard curricula may not be implemented in the same way or do not produce the same outcomes, which makes autonomy essential for teachers. In addition, it is the teacher who knows the students best and is aware of their needs and interests. Below are some comments of instructors:

> *The decided curriculum/ formal curriculum does not always go right (happen) as planned because it is just the ideal one. It may not foresee problems that may arise in classes or it may not meet the needs of each class exactly the same due to some factors stemming from students, teacher, class atmosphere, time etc." (Quest, Inst. 5).*

> *It's quite important to have autonomy especially when it comes to choosing techniques/ strategies, lesson design, or classroom management because they have the best position to observe and determine what their students need and how they learn best (Quest, Admin 1).*

The differences in classroom contexts and learners' profiles require teachers to adapt their teaching; however, to be able to tailor their work, teachers should be given latitude in their classrooms to make decisions regarding their teaching:

> *The term is related with making autonomous decisions about what I teach to my students and how I teach it. As a teacher, I strongly believe that a teacher should be able to adjust the curriculum, teaching and learning strategies according to students' profiles (Quest, Inst. 9).*

*The level of the students in the same level class may change. We may need to teach according to the needs (Quest, Inst. 20).*

In addition, teachers also have different teaching styles and supports different methods; thus, teacher autonomy is essential for them to choose the methods and techniques they are comfortable with. The excerpts below illustrate this belief:

*Every teacher is different. For example, teacher A uses technique B better but teacher B uses technique C much more effectively [...] so they can be more beneficial to their students (Quest, Admin.1)*

*It is important because each teacher has his/her own teaching method (Quest, Inst. 6).*

To summarize, in order to explain the importance of teacher autonomy, instructors mentioned both the benefits it offers to teachers as well as instructional reasons, whereas administrators only referred to instructional motives. Autonomy provides teachers with job satisfaction and motivation, enhances their effectiveness, creativity, and self-awareness, and boosts their self-confidence. Instructors and administrators had similar views concerning instructional motives. As each context has unique characteristics and students have different needs and interests, teachers need to adapt their teaching, curriculum, and syllabus considering these, which makes it essential for teachers to possess autonomy. Autonomy also enables teachers to cater to individual differences in teachers' teaching styles.

### 4.3.1 Drawbacks of Teacher Autonomy

Instructors' comments on their exercise of autonomy or the decline of their autonomy during the interviews revealed some disadvantages of teacher autonomy, which are illustrated in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 Participants' Views on the Drawbacks of Teacher Autonomy

| **Drawbacks of TA** | ***(f)*** |
|---|---|
| Workload | 3 |
| Too much responsibility | 2 |
| Chaos | 2 |
| Inequality/ Unfairness | 2 |
| Abuse | 2 |
| Indecision | 1 |
| **TOTAL** | 12 |

Firstly, the two interviewed instructors shared that they were engaged in the decision-making process on curricular and instructional issues, which made them feel too much responsible to their administrators, colleagues, and students. One of the instructors interviewed was a module coordinator, whose main duty was to decide on the pace of the curriculum and to collaborate with all the other units in determining the objectives, content, materials, assignments, and the scope of the exams. She expressed that she felt too responsible for being one of the people who made the decisions:

> *Sometimes I feel too responsible because I'm one of the people who decide what to study in the curriculum, what should be in the curriculum" (Interview, Inst. 5).*

Another instructor, who was a member of committee responsible for choosing the instructional materials, expressed her feelings as below:

> *It makes me responsible to the students and administration in fact because we are selecting or we are deciding something to do next year. I feel very responsible. With this responsibility, I must do my best to choose the best material or the best activities (Interview, Inst. 1)*

A second drawback that can be inferred from the interview data is workload. When teachers were asked about their opinions and feelings about not being involved in processes like curriculum and assessment, two mentioned an advantage in the lack of freedom in this area: less workload.

*Actually, I feel really free. You know, I don't have any responsibility of what to teach, when to teach. They are just there for me; I use them [...] More autonomy means more work (Interview, Inst. 4)*

*Because it also takes our workload and it is something good, something nice. Because more or less, we teach the same content and it is no problem if we use the same testing tools (Interview, Inst. 5).*

From the excerpts given, it can be concluded that freedom brings responsibility with it and increases the workload teachers already have. Moreover, if all instructors are autonomous in an institution, it may also cause inequality and unfairness among students. One instructor, who is responsible for preparing the evaluation criteria in the institution, exemplifies this situation by referring to why using the same assessment tools or evaluation criteria is better:

*Let's imagine, I am a very soft-hearted teacher and another teacher is cruel. And let's imagine, we both have different exams. So, how is this going to impact our students? [...] We don't want students to get affected by the teachers (Inst. 7).*

Another instructor pointed out the same issue with a different example. When she was asked whether teachers should be given the freedom to decide how to act on student discipline problems, she responded:

*Everyone has a different perception of justice, so let's say, for a serious bad manner, I can consider one type of punishment extreme, but another instructor may see it as really light. It should be standard" (Interview, Inst. 9).*

One of the instructors interviewed stated that he desired more autonomy to decide on when to start and end the class; however, he also warned that there might be some teachers who may abuse this autonomy. The example another participant gave about their past practices showed that their views concur:

> *We had the freedom to give the breaks whenever we wanted to. We did it and most of the teachers, sometimes even me, misused it. For example, instead of giving only 10 minutes of break, we gave 20 minutes of break and we started classes late and when I was in the class, some other teachers gave the break and some other students made noise; that's why I couldn't concentrate on my class and I had to give the break too. It was chaotic (Interview, Inst. 4)*

The example given by Instructor 4 also revealed that if all teachers had autonomy, there would be chaos in the school, which was also corroborated by two more participants. When they were asked about their perceptions of autonomy about institutional operations, they explained that they did not have autonomy in that domain; however, they also believed that teachers should not have much autonomy in this area as it might create chaos:

> *So I don't think that there should be many voices when these things are decided. These things should be consistent, so the decision mechanism should be as few as possible because when you bring too many voices, you cannot bring a structure (order). So even if I am not a part of that decision mechanism, I don't see a problem (Interview, Inst. 3)*

Lastly, some instructors voiced a concern over standardization. To exemplify, one participant noted *"if all teachers become autonomous, [...] standardization would be difficult"* (Interview, Inst. 6). And as a questionnaire participant wrote *"it would be difficult to control or observe teachers and it may cause problems"* (Inst. 2).

## 4.4 Factors Influencing Teacher Autonomy

*RQ 1.4: What are EFL instructors' and administrators' views on the factors that promote and inhibit teacher autonomy?*

To address this research question, participants were asked about what the barriers to teacher autonomy are and how teacher autonomy can be promoted in the questionnaire as well as whether their autonomy is promoted or inhibited by their school in the individual interviews. The data gathered from their responses were analyzed and the findings are reported in two sections in the following order: The Barriers to Teacher Autonomy and the Ways to Promote Teacher Autonomy.

### 4.4.1 Participants' Views on Barriers to Teacher Autonomy

The respondents were asked the question "What are the factors that limit teacher autonomy?" in the questionnaire to elicit their opinions about the constraints on teacher autonomy and each participant stated at least one obstacle to their autonomy. Table 4.5 shows a summary of all participants' responses and the frequency of each barrier:

Table 4.5 Participants' Views on the Barriers to Teacher Autonomy

| **Barriers to TA** | ***Instructors*** | | ***Administrators*** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ***Quest. (f)*** | ***Interview (f)*** | ***Quest. (f)*** | ***Interview (f)*** |
| Rules and regulation | 13 | - | 1 | 2 |
| Management | 10 | 1 | 2 | - |
| School size | 9 | - | 3 | 2 |
| Strict course maps | 9 | 4 | - | - |
| Barriers related to instructors | 8 | - | 1 | - |
| Standardization | 7 | 4 | 1 | 1 |
| Fixed curriculum | 5 | 5 | 1 | - |
| Workload | 4 | - | 2 | - |
| Barriers related to students | 2 | 1 | - | - |
| Class size | 1 | 1 | - | - |
| Collaborative teaching | - | 1 | - | - |
| **TOTAL** | **66** | **17** | **11** | **5** |

The instructors regarded the rules and regulations set by the institutions and the administration (which is partly involved in making regulations and responsible for enforcing them) as the biggest obstacles to their autonomy. Administrators also stressed that rules and regulations (*f*=3) established by the Higher Education Council and the school administration (*f*=2) inhibit teacher autonomy:

> *The barriers to teacher autonomy: of course, the regulations, first of all, the regulations from the higher education council, the regulations that we try to implement here… (Interview, Admin 2).*

Participants also cited school size (*f*=14) and standardization (*f*=13) as the limits to their autonomy touching on the interrelationship between them:

> *The number of the students who are enrolled on a course or program is the most important criterion which shapes the whole teaching- learning process. If the number of the teachers working at a school is high, the standardization of the approach, the materials, and the evaluation becomes inevitable, which is one of the factors that limit teacher autonomy (Quest, Inst. 9).*

> *Standardization. Because we are working with lots of teachers and students and that makes standardization necessary (Quest, Inst. 4)*

Moreover, strict course maps (*f*=13) and fixed curriculum (*f*=11) were also considered to impede teacher autonomy, which is illustrated by the following quotes:

> *To have a fixed curriculum without asking teachers' opinions about it (Quest, Inst. 25)*

> *Being obliged to follow the given course map within a limited time (Quest, Inst. 46).*

Furthermore, some instructors mentioned barriers related to instructors (*f*=8) such as *"lack of sufficient knowledge on methodology, not understanding what curriculum is"*

(Quest, Inst. 5), *"lack of some skills like awareness of teaching and problem solving"* (Quest, Inst. 38), *"the beliefs of a teacher- adopting a conventional method of teaching"* (Inst. 14), *"emotional exhaustion and loss of personal success"* (Quest, Inst. 17), and *"the reluctance of teachers"*. Similarly, one administrator noted that *"teacher efficacy and teacher indifference"* might be barriers to autonomy (Quest, Admin. 3). Here with "teacher efficacy" it is assumed that the participant referred to lack of self-efficacy as he considers this to be an obstacle.

Lastly, workload (*f*=6), class size (*f*=2), and barriers related to students (*f*=3) (for example being reluctant to learn and being misplaced at a level) are the other factors that are thought to hinder teacher autonomy.

The interviews carried out with instructors also corroborated these findings. When the instructors were inquired about whether their school policy promoted or inhibited their autonomy, most of their responses indicated that their autonomy is promoted to some extent, though this autonomy is mostly limited to their classrooms. Their explanation of how their autonomy is restricted also revealed the same codes presented in Table 4.5. The following excerpts illustrate their views:

> *Because we are trying to standardize most of the things, content is not flexible for example, curriculum is definite, content is definite, and every teacher in each class has to teach the same content, but methods are flexible, and also the materials are more or less flexible. So, I can't say it promotes nor I can say it inhibits. In between (Interview, Inst. 5).*
>
> *I think the standardization is the biggest barrier to autonomy. If I was a private teacher, I would have my own book, and my own way of teaching, and the student would be willing to learn English because he would be paying. The student would want, would really want to learn the language, so I can change everything that I want in that situation. But right now, first thing, it is compulsory for students, so there are students who don't want to attend. They*

*just attend physically for example, so even though you are autonomous, you cannot do anything with those students (Interview, Inst. 9)*

The excerpts provide an overview of how standardization, curriculum, and students affect teacher autonomy in a negative way. Another barrier, which only came out during one interview, was related to collaborative teaching as can be understood from the following quote:

*Yes, there are some limits. [...] It sometimes stems from our partners. I mean, we share main course classes or reading classes, so I see a class three times a week and my partner sees the class the other two days. So sometimes it stems from the partner because if the person is late, I mean, trying to fulfill the day's content or the objectives because of one reason, it could affect me the other day" (Interview, Inst. 9).*

Lastly, one interviewee remarked that administrators are the ones who give teachers autonomy or take away their autonomy (Interview, Inst. 7), which implies that management can restrict teachers' autonomy.

### 4.4.2 Participants' Views on How to Promote Teacher Autonomy

The participants' comments to the question "What can be done to promote teacher autonomy?" in the questionnaire were examined and it was revealed that 47 instructors out of 50 offered a suggestion about how to increase teachers' autonomy. Whereas two respondents left the question blank, one wrote that

*I don't think teacher autonomy can be promoted more than it is now because of curriculum and testing, and also, course system. And I don't think this is a problem because I believe there should be a standard (Quest, Inst. 39).*

In addition, four administrators suggested some ideas to foster autonomy; on the other hand, one administrator reported not supporting teacher autonomy and suggested limiting certain decisions and informing teachers about those limits (Quest, Admin. 4).

The suggestions put forward by the participants were coded, which are displayed in Table 4.6 in descending order of frequency:

Table 4.6 Participants' Perceptions on the Ways to Promote Teacher Autonomy

| **Suggestions to promote TA** | ***Inst.* (*f*)** | ***Admin* (*f*)** |
|---|---|---|
| Allowing more freedom/ control | 12 | 1 |
| Flexible curriculum and syllabus | 12 | 2 |
| Opportunities for professional development | 9 | 2 |
| Involvement in decision-making | 4 | - |
| Teacher collaboration | 2 | - |
| Freedom of expression | 2 | - |
| Praise | 2 | - |
| Smaller class size | 2 | 1 |
| Trust in and respect to teachers | 2 | - |
| **TOTAL** | **47** | **6** |

The most frequently stated recommendations were allowing teachers more freedom/ control (*f*=13) and providing them with a flexible curriculum and syllabus (*f*=14). The two codes seem to be overlapping as flexibility of the curriculum/syllabus can also be regarded as granted autonomy; therefore, the code "allowing more freedom/control" was ascribed for more general answers like *"Some more independence may be given to teachers"* (Quest, Inst. 16) and *"Some decisions/rules could be made by the teacher himself/herself"* (Quest, Inst. 2), which do not define the area of freedom or which specify areas other than curriculum such as the ones below:

*Teachers should be allowed to create their classroom environment. If there are ten students in the class and the weather is nice, the teacher can decide to have class in the garden. This is just an example, but when everything is too strict, not flexible enough to be changed, it doesn't seem possible to create a friendly, fun class (Quest, Inst. 25)*

*The teacher could be supported to have more authority in the classes such as deciding the pace, the strategies of teaching etc. This will make the teacher feel more comfortable and responsible about teaching" (Quest, Inst. 42).*

Administrators also proposed giving teachers more autonomy; however, this freedom is limited to the classroom and the choice of teaching methods/techniques and learning activities.

Another recurrent suggestion was to provide opportunities for professional development, which is inferred from the excerpts below to be made in relation to the barriers within instructors:

*Continuous professional development is the vital necessity to eliminate the factors that limit teacher autonomy in terms of teacher (Quest, Inst. 5).*

*Autonomy needs professionalism. All teachers should be given in-service training to make sure that when they have the absolute control of their work, they won't get confused, make mistakes, or use the time inefficiently (Quest, Inst. 50).*

*In service teacher trainings in which teachers become more aware of teaching techniques, new trends in language teaching (Quest, Inst. 38).*

Some instructors also proposed teachers' being involved in making decisions (*f*=4) regarding content, materials, and assessment. One participant also advocated collaboration with teachers working in the academic units, which can be also

considered as involvement in decision-making as the academic units make the decisions regarding academic issues:

> *Teachers can work collaboratively in the design of the curriculum and work closely to share their opinions through weekly planning meetings with the staff working in academic offices and sharing materials and activities" (Quest, Inst. 9).*

Collaboration between teachers (*f*=2), freedom of expression (*f*=2), praise (*f*=2), and smaller class size (*f*=3) were among other suggestions given by participants. The following excerpts represent these opinions:

> *The teacher should feel free to say how he/she feels about the learning and teaching situation without being afraid of being criticized or judged (Quest, Inst. 17).*

> *Teachers' initiation can be praised to reinforce the autonomy (Quest, Inst. 22).*

> *The numbers of students in the classroom should be decreased. When the classroom is crowded, classroom management, checking homework, interacting with students individually; all these things become less possible. If these things aren't possible, autonomy is also not possible (Quest, Inst. 41).*

Lastly, trust in and respect for teachers was another idea that two participant instructors came up with, which can be connected with management being a barrier as some participants perceive the school management to be an obstacle to their autonomy due to their control over teachers and the teaching process.

> *School administration should trust teachers and try to make them feel confident while respecting what they have done so far (Quest, Inst. 18).*

> *Managers can show respect to the capacity of teachers to take control of their own teaching (Quest, Inst. 35).*

Relevant to this idea, one participant expressed that teachers should work hard and become successful to gain more autonomy from administrators, who offer more autonomy when they trust teachers:

> *If the principal and other administrators trust the teachers, they offer more autonomy to the teachers. That's why, I believe, teachers earn it with their success (Quest, Inst. 44).*

In the individual interviews, the administrators also commented on whether their school policy limits or fosters teacher autonomy. They stated that they cannot promote teachers' autonomy fully due to the previously mentioned barriers such as rules and regulation, school size, and standardization; however, they try to encourage it by allowing teachers freedom in their classes concerning their teaching techniques, pacing, and involving them in some decisions. Moreover, they offer teachers the chance to work in any academic unit they like:

> *We try to promote it by saving, for example, extra time in their courses so that they can use any activity, any technique they wish. They also have the chance to work at any office they like to develop themselves in the field […] We apply questionnaires before we want to make a change in the program. In that way, they can be also decision-makers (Interview, Admin 1).*

The interviews conducted with the instructors also supported these results as instructors who were asked whether their autonomy is promoted or inhibited in their institution reported flexibility in the course maps, being able to ask for feedback and opinions while making some decisions, freedom in the selection of teaching methods and some learning activities and materials as the promotion of their autonomy.

## 4.5 Instructors' Perceived Level of Autonomy in General

*RQ 2: Based on EFL instructors' and administrators' perceptions, what is the level of autonomy the instructors possess in the following areas: a) curriculum, b) instruction, c) assessment, d) professional development, e) classroom management, f) institutional operations?*

To address this research question, participants were given a questionnaire consisting of a four-point Likert-type scale. Detailed analysis was carried out to obtain means from the scales. Instructors' level of overall autonomy was calculated based on the teachers' and the administrators' perceptions respectively and the results are displayed in Figure 4.3:

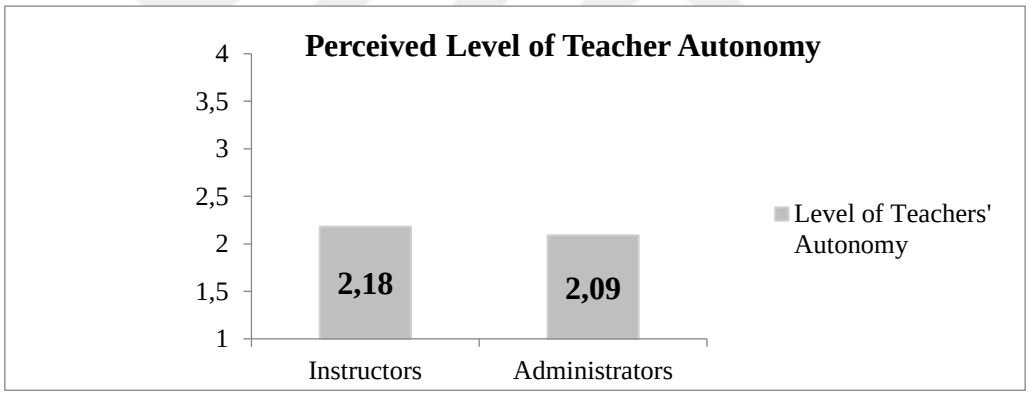


Figure 4.3 Level of Teachers' Autonomy Based on the Perceptions of Instructors and Administrators

As shown in the Figure 4.3, the instructors' perception of their current level of autonomy ($\bar{x}$=2.18) is slightly higher than the administrators' perception of them ($\bar{x}$= 2.09); however, as both mean values are lower than the cutting point ($\bar{x}$=2.5), it can be concluded that instructors and administrators had lower perceptions of teachers' autonomy in general.

The teacher autonomy scale meant to measure teachers' autonomy over six domains: curriculum, instruction, assessment, professional development, classroom management, and institutional operations. The mean scores of participants' responses to each dimension were calculated, which are illustrated in Figure 4.4.

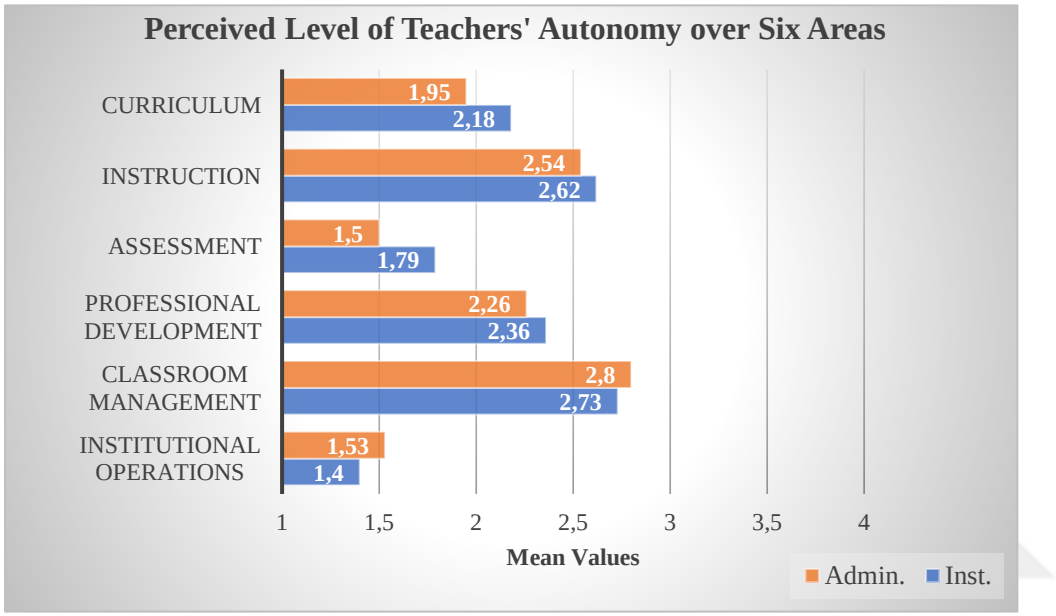


Figure 4.4 Level of Teachers' Autonomy over Six Dimensions Based on the Perceptions of Instructors and Administrators

As can be seen from Figure 4.4, the mean value of classroom management scored the highest ($\bar{x}$=2.8; 2.73) from the administrators and the instructors' perspectives respectively, which indicates that they have moderate perceptions of teachers' autonomy over classroom management ($\bar{x} \geq 2.5$).

Instructional autonomy was also considered to be at moderate level by both administrators and instructors ($\bar{x}$=2.54; 2.62). On the other hand, autonomy levels in other dimensions were found to be quite low; the lowest being in institutional operations ($\bar{x}$=1.53; 1.4), which implies that teachers have almost no autonomy over

institutional operations. As similar mean scores were obtained from both administrators and instructors, it can be suggested that the results are reliable.

### 4.5.1 Instructors' Perceived Level of Autonomy over Curriculum

In the teacher autonomy scale, the first 8 items aimed to find out the level of curricular autonomy the instructor possessed. The mean values of these items are demonstrated in Table 4.7:

Table 4.7 Descriptive Statistics of the Items Regarding Curricular Autonomy

| **Statements** | **Inst. (n=50)** | | **Admin(n=5)** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***In our school, I can .../ In our schools, the teachers can...*** | $\bar{x}$ | **SD** | $\bar{x}$ | **SD** |
| 1. …select teaching goals and objectives for my class. | 2.14 | .957 | 1.40 | .547 |
| 2. …select content and topics to be taught in my class. | 1.81 | .808 | 1.60 | .547 |
| 3. …select what skills to be taught in my class. | 2.08 | .876 | 1.60 | .547 |
| 4. …add content to the curriculum. | 2.26 | 1.01 | 2.40 | .894 |
| 5. …delete content from the curriculum. | 1.74 | .899 | 1.40 | .547 |
| 6. …select the course book to use in my class. | 2.60 | 1.04 | 3.00 | 1.27 |
| 7. …select instructional materials other than course book to use in my class. | 2.70 | .863 | 2.60 | .547 |
| 8. …decide which assignments to use to determine my students' performance. | 2.12 | .982 | 1.60 | .547 |

When the mean scores for each item are analyzed, it can be concluded that the instructors and administrators had a low perception of teacher autonomy over all items except for items 6 ($\bar{x}$= 2.60; 3.00), and 7 ($\bar{x}$= 2.70; 2.60), which are related to selecting course books and instructional materials. These two items received moderate mean scores from both the administrators and instructors. The result can be attributed to the fact that although individual teachers are not allowed to use different course books in their classes, many teachers collectively select a certain textbook to be used in all classes as stated by a participant:

*There is a committee for selecting language materials and course books. This group includes at least 20 or 25 people and this is a huge number when we think that there are 70 or 75 instructors in this institution (Interview, Inst.1)*

Item 5 has the lowest mean score ($\bar{x}$= 1.74; 1.40), which suggests that instructors have almost no autonomy over deleting content from the curriculum. One of the administrators in the interview explained the reason why teachers are declined the latitude to delete content from the curriculum:

*Otherwise you know, what about the assessment then? You know, because the testing office will look at the curriculum or the pacing and they will prepare the tests according to the pacing and curriculum. So, if they delete something, their students will have disadvantages (Interview, Admin 2).*

The responses to other items also revealed that teachers have low perceptions of autonomy over selecting teaching goals and objectives ($\bar{x}$= 2.14; 1.40), content and topics ($\bar{x}$= 1.81; 1.60), skills to be taught ($\bar{x}$= 2.08; 1.60), and adding content to the curriculum ($\bar{x}$= 2.26; 2.40). Although many participants reported that they had flexibility to add content to curriculum during the interviews, the instructors nevertheless feel they have a low level of autonomy. This may be because they are allowed to add content only if they cover the necessary content and the time allows.

When the mean scores of administrators' responses and instructors' responses are compared, it can be seen that administrators feel teachers have less autonomy over curriculum than teachers themselves feel they have, which might be linked to a few factors. First, administrators' answers to the items are dependent on their expectations of what teachers must or must not do in the institution, which may imply that instructors are not given much freedom over these curricular issues by the administration. Second, as some of the instructors are members of the academic units, they have some authority over some areas and curriculum is one of them. During the

interviews, instructors were asked to what extent they were involved in curriculum development, and one stated:

> *It depends, when you are a member, of course, you're involved in that process, but when you're not one of the members, you are not that much involved. Of course, you can express your ideas, but it is up to the team who decides the curriculum and the books (Interview, Inst. 9).*

From these remarks, it can be concluded that the academic unit members may have higher perceptions of autonomy as they are a part of the decision-making process. Some instructors may also feel they have autonomy to an extent, as they can express their opinions and give feedback on the decisions made. In addition, pertaining to curricular autonomy, two teachers noted that

> *No matter what decisions they will make, I will design my class depending on the level of my students and the size of the class. (Interview, Inst. 8).*

> *I can make some little changes on the objectives. Or sometimes I change the sequence of the objectives because I see that my students did not acquire one thing, so first I make sure that they acquire it; then, I do what's needed for the curriculum. (Interview, Inst. 9).*

As the excerpts from instructor interviews suggested, some teachers created space for their autonomy by making some small modifications in the curriculum, which can also explain the result that the participant teachers have higher perceptions of their autonomy than administrators.

### 4.5.2 Instructors' Perceived Level of Autonomy over Instruction

When the items linked with instructional autonomy in Table 4.8 are examined in detail, it can be understood that the instructors perceive themselves as having moderate autonomy for all items except for items 9 ($\bar{x}$= 1.76; 1.40), and 11 ($\bar{x}$= 1.74; 1.00),

which are concerned with deciding the pace of the curriculum and when the topics are taught. Teachers possess almost no autonomy over these issues as they have to follow a course map, which defines when to teach the topics in the curriculum, prepared by module coordinators.

Table 4.8 Descriptive Statistics of the Items Regarding Instructional Autonomy

| **Statements** ***In our school, I can .../ In our schools, the teachers can...*** | **Inst. (n=50)** | | **Admin(n=5)** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | $\bar{x}$ | **SD** | $\bar{x}$ | **SD** |
| 9. …decide the pace of the curriculum. | 1.76 | .870 | 1.40 | .547 |
| 10. …control the amount of time I spend on a topic. | 3.00 | .880 | 2.80 | 1.30 |
| 11. …decide when topics in the curriculum are taught. | 1.74 | .852 | 1.00 | .000 |
| 12. …choose teaching techniques and strategies to use with my students. | 3.20 | .857 | 3.60 | .547 |
| 13. …determine how the required curriculum is taught. | 2.66 | .960 | 2.60 | .547 |
| 14. …decide what learning activities to use in my class. | 3.06 | .818 | 3.40 | .547 |
| 15. …compose new learning materials for my students. | 2.98 | .820 | 3.00 | .707 |

However, they have a higher perception of autonomy over their teaching methods and techniques ($\bar{x}$= 3.20; 3.60), which is also supported by the data from the interviews:

> *They cannot change when to teach, but to some extent they can change how to teach it. We adopt a certain approach as an institution and our materials; also activities are designed and selected accordingly. But teachers are still free to choose the most appropriate one for their classes. (Admin. 1)*
>
> *Nobody controls or nobody informs us you should teach like this or like that, I am free and everybody is free, I think. (Inst. 2).*

*I have the complete freedom. I mean no one forces us to use a certain method to use in classes. (*Inst. 3)

As instructors and administrators interviewed stated that teachers are free to choose any techniques or strategies to use with their students, it was expected that the mean value of the "item 12" would be higher. However, the excerpt below may help to explain the reason for this case:

*If your textbooks are focusing on communicative methods, you cannot do whatever you like. (Interview, Inst.2).*

As textbooks are designed according to a certain approach to teaching a language, the activities or strategies they offer are shaped accordingly. However, if the teacher does not support that approach, but he/she has to use the book and do the activities, he/she can feel that his/her autonomy is restricted in this domain.

### 4.5.3 Instructors' Perceived Level of Autonomy over Assessment

The mean values of the items regarding assessment are presented in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9 Descriptive Statistics of the Items Regarding Autonomy over Assessment

| **Statements** | **Inst. (n=50)** | | **Admin(n=5)** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***In our school, I can .../ In our schools, the teachers can...*** | $\bar{X}$ | **SD** | $\bar{X}$ | **SD** |
| 17. …decide how frequently to assess my students' performance. | 1.88 | .961 | 1.40 | .547 |
| 18. …determine how to assess what my students know. | 1.94 | .956 | 1.20 | .447 |
| 19. …use my own evaluation and assessment activities in my class. | 1.66 | .717 | 1.40 | .547 |
| 20. …establish student achievement evaluation criteria. | 1.70 | .839 | 2.00 | .707 |

The mean scores of the items regarding assessment and evaluation of learning indicate that the instructors and the administrators perceive teacher autonomy as being very low in regard to assessment as the mean values of all the items scored less than 2.0 as illustrated in Table 4.9. A reason why teachers perceived themselves as having low autonomy is that in the institution the testing office prepared the assessment tools and decided on what, how and how often to assess the learners in collaboration with the curriculum unit, module coordinators, and head of the department. Therefore, all the instructors and classes used the same assessment tools and the teachers were not allowed to use another graded assessment tool. However, when the mean scores obtained from administrators' and instructors' answers are compared, it can be noticed that the mean values of instructors' responses are slightly higher, which could have occurred as a result of the perceptions of academic unit members involved in the assessment process. The excerpt from the interview corroborates this finding:

> *Teachers are not within the assessment process. I mean we don't know when the quizzes will be applied or what the questions will be within an exam or what degree of difficulty students will see within a proficiency exam. We are not in the process of assessment. Academic units are responsible for that (Inst. 3).*

Another reason can be related to teachers' perceptions on assessment. To exemplify, during an interview, one instructor stated that

> *I prepare my own quizzes, but it does not affect their grade. […] I told them, so just try to see how well you can do, just try to test your vocabulary. (Inst. 9).*

Although teachers cannot give graded tests to their students at the preparatory program, this instructor said she could administer informal quizzes or tools that helped her and her students to see their performance and progress, which suggests that she perceives this freedom to be a tool that helps her see her students' progress; therefore, she may perceive herself to possess some degree of autonomy over assessment.

### 4.5.4 Instructors' Perceived Level of Autonomy over Professional Development

Instructors' perceived level of autonomy over another dimension, that being professional development, was measured through items 21 to 26. The mean values of these items suggested that the instructors possessed a low to moderate degree of autonomy as displayed in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10 Descriptive Statistics of the Items Regarding Autonomy over Professional Development

| **Statements** | **Inst. (n=50)** | | **Admin(n=5)** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***In our school, I can .../ In our schools, the teachers can...*** | $\bar{x}$ | **SD** | $\bar{x}$ | **SD** |
| 21. …decide whether to participate in professional development programs. | 1.70 | .839 | 2.60 | .547 |
| 22. …decide when to take part in professional development programs. | 3.12 | .824 | 2.00 | .707 |
| 23. …choose what in-service training to attend. | 2.55 | .958 | 2.20 | .447 |
| 24. …decide the amount of in-service training I attend. | 2.56 | .972 | 2.00 | .707 |
| 25.…determine the content of our professional development sessions. | 2.14 | .880 | 1.80 | .447 |
| 26. …freely visit other teachers' classroom to learn other ways of teaching. | 1.84 | .710 | 3.00 | 1.41 |

The interviews conducted with the instructors and the administrators revealed that the preparatory school offers some in-service training sessions, which are given by either teacher trainers outside the school or the instructors working in the institution. Furthermore, the administration organizes some workshops namely micro-teaching sessions in which instructors present demo lessons to their colleagues, which are mandatory to attend. This might have an effect on the instructors' lower perceptions of autonomy over deciding whether to participate in professional development programs (Item 21: $\bar{x}$= 1.70; 2.60). The administrators' perception of moderate autonomy may be because there are both optional and compulsory training sessions.

Item 22 ($\bar{x}$= 3.12; 2.00), item 23 ($\bar{x}$= 2.55; 2.20), and item 24 ($\bar{x}$= 2.56; 2.00) point out the moderate level of autonomy over the time and the content of the professional development sessions as well as what in-service training to participate in, yet the same items indicate a lower autonomy from administrators' perspectives.

Lastly, item 26 revealed conflicting results as the instructors' perceived level of autonomy is quite low ($\bar{x}$= 1.84) whereas the administrators' perception of teachers' autonomy over this item is fairly moderate ($\bar{x}$=3.00). The fact that there is not an application of classroom observation by colleagues may have influenced instructors' perception. On the other hand, as there is no rule prohibiting teachers at the school from observing their colleagues' classes, the administrators' perception of autonomy over this item may be higher.

### 4.5.5 Instructors' Perceived Level of Autonomy over Classroom Management

The fifth domain of autonomy, classroom management, is related to teachers' latitude in arranging the physical environment of the classroom as well as dealing with disciplinary issues.

Table 4.11 Descriptive Statistics of the Items Regarding Autonomy over Classroom Management

| **Statements** | **Inst. (n=50)** | | **Admin(n=5)** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***In our school, I can …/ In our schools, the teachers can…*** | $\bar{x}$ | **SD** | $\bar{x}$ | **SD** |
| 16. …arrange the physical space of my classroom as I choose. | 3.14 | .880 | 4.00 | .000 |
| 27. …determine the norms and rules for student classroom behavior. | 2.68 | 1.21 | 2.60 | 1.34 |
| 28. …decide how to act on any student discipline problems like disruptive student behavior or cheating in my class. | 2.36 | 1.03 | 1.60 | .547 |
| 29. …set my own discipline policies. | 2.74 | .984 | 3.00 | 1.00 |

As can be seen from Table 4.11, the instructors and administrators have higher perceptions of autonomy over item 16 ($\bar{x}$= 3.14; 4.00), which suggests the instructors are free to arrange the physical space of their classroom to a great extent. As for determining the norms and rules for student behavior (item 27) and setting their own discipline policies (item 29), the participants perceive themselves as possessing a moderate level of autonomy as the mean values of these items are higher than 2.50.

However, considering the disciplinary actions, the participants have a lower perception of teacher autonomy ($\bar{x}$= 2.36; 1.60). This finding can be justified by the following excerpt:

> *As a university and as a state university, disciplinary measures are defined by a higher institution called "YÖK". I don't think we can make any changes in these measures (Interview, Inst. 1).*

It can be understood from the excerpt that the disciplinary measures are determined by the Higher Council of Education; therefore, the instructors do not have much control over the disciplinary actions.

### 4.5.6 Instructors' Perceived Level of Autonomy over Institutional Operations

The mean values of the items regarding the last dimension of autonomy, namely institutional operations, scored the lowest as shown in Table 4.12. The mean scores of item 30 ($\bar{x}$= 1.10; 1.00) reveal that the instructors possess no autonomy over decisions about school budget. Additionally, item 31($\bar{x}$= 1.38; 1.20), item 32 ($\bar{x}$= 1.22; 1.40), and item 33 ($\bar{x}$= 1.02; 1.00) suggest that instructors also do not have autonomy over decisions about class timetable, class composition, and class size. As item 35 ($\bar{x}$= 1.42; 1.40) indicates, they also do not have control over the agenda of the teacher meetings.

Table 4.12 Descriptive Statistics of the Items Regarding Autonomy over Institutional Operations

| **Statements** ***In our school, I can .../ In our schools, the teachers can...*** | **Inst. (n=50)** $\bar{x}$ | **SD** | **Admin (n=5)** $\bar{x}$ | **SD** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 30. …make decisions on how the school budget will be spent. | 1.10 | .303 | 1.00 | .000 |
| 31. …decide on class timetable policy. | 1.38 | .671 | 1.20 | .447 |
| 32. …decide how to form classes based on student characteristics like gender, race, or proficiency level. | 1.22 | .581. | 1.40 | .547 |
| 33. …determine the number of students for a class. | 1.02 | .141 | 1.00 | .000 |
| 34. …make decisions on extra-curricular activities. | 2.28 | 1.03 | 3.20 | .836 |
| 35. …decide on the agenda for teachers' meetings. | 1.42 | .730 | 1.40 | .547 |

Finally, the instructors have a low perception of autonomy over extra-curricular activities ($\bar{x}$= 2.28), whereas the administrators' perceptions of instructors' autonomy over such activities are close to high. Again, this may be because teachers are allowed to do extra-curricular activities.

### 4.6 Instructors' Desired Level of Autonomy

*RQ 5: To what extent do EFL instructors wish to have autonomy in the following areas: a) curriculum, b) instruction, c) assessment, d) professional development, e) classroom management, f) institutional operations?*

To address this research question, the same items as the ones measuring current level of autonomy were utilized, but this time the participants were asked to respond to the statement "As a teacher, I would like to..." for each item. The results of the data analysis suggest that the instructors desire a high degree of autonomy ($\bar{x}$=3.34).

Figure 4.5 illustrates the mean values for the desired level of autonomy over six dimensions respectively. As can be seen from the figure, the instructors wish to have a high degree of autonomy over all areas except for institutional operations ($\bar{x}$=2.92) as their mean scores are higher than 3.25, which is the cut point for high level of autonomy. However, despite scoring less than the other areas of autonomy, the mean value of institutional operations suggests that participants still have a moderate desire for autonomy in this area.

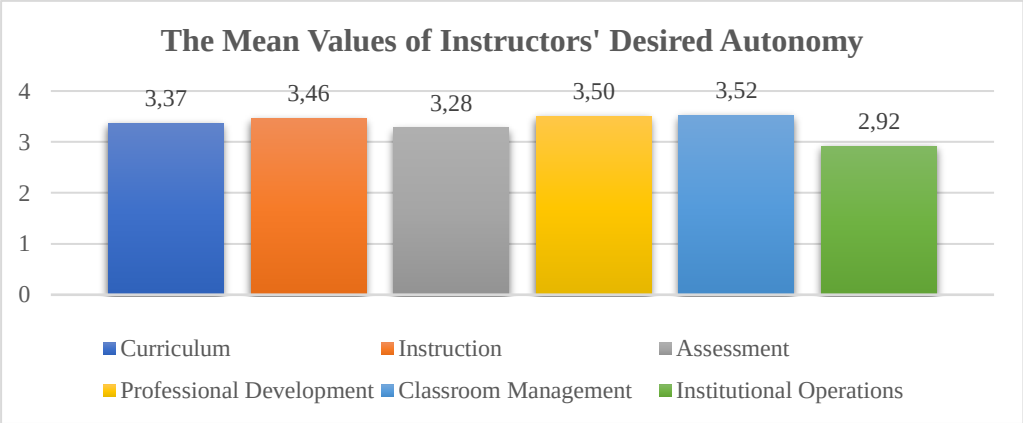


Figure 4.5 Mean Values of Instructors' Desired Autonomy over Six Domains

As shown in Figure 4.5, the areas classroom management, professional development, and instruction scored higher than the others, which implies that instructors would like more autonomy over these areas.

Figure 4.6 demonstrates the comparison between instructors' current level of autonomy and desired level of autonomy based on their perceptions. As the figure clearly shows, for each area instructors desire more autonomy than they possess. The figure also points to an interesting result in that the domain which the instructors have a higher level of autonomy in (compared to other areas) is also the area in which they desire a higher degree of autonomy. Similarly, the instructors have the lowest level of autonomy over institutional operations and this is also the dimension in which they desire the least autonomy.

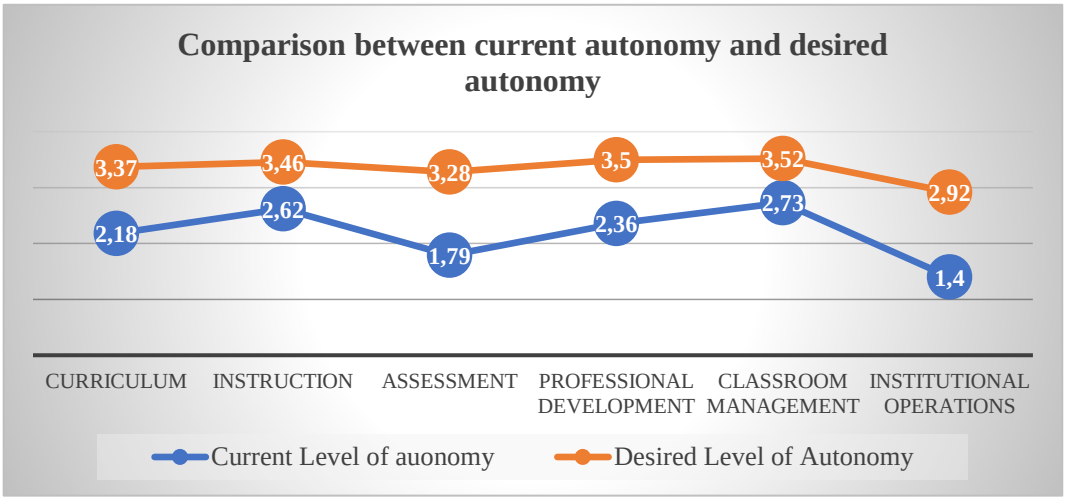


Figure 4.6 Comparison between Current Autonomy and Desired Autonomy over Six Domains

Apart from the Likert-type scale, the participants were also given some open-ended questions pertaining to their desire for autonomy. The instructors were asked whether they would like more or less autonomy in their institution, and if they wished for more autonomy, they were asked to specify the area they would like more autonomy over. The results are presented in Figure 4.7.

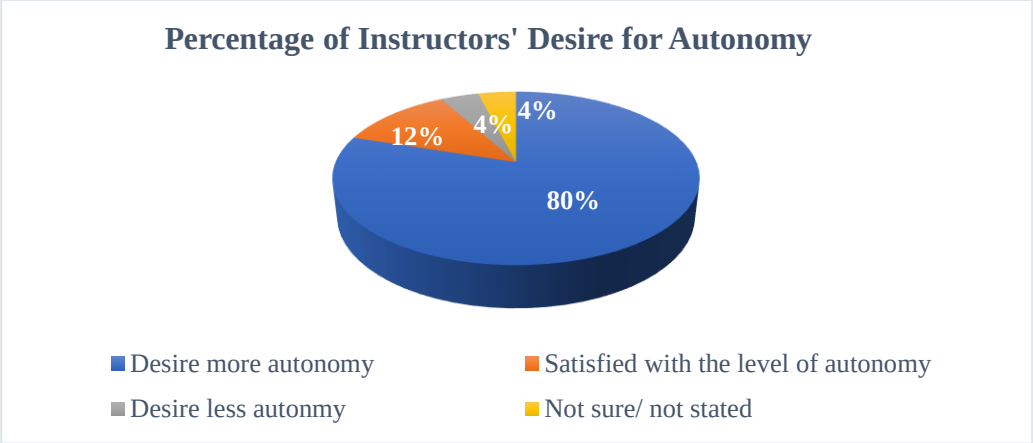


Figure 4.7 Percentages of Participants' Desire for Autonomy Based on Data Obtained from Open-ended Questions

As can be seen from Figure 4.7, a substantial majority of the instructors (80%) want more autonomy, whereas 12% stated that they are happy with the level of autonomy they have. Only 4 % (n=2) wanted less autonomy which they expressed through stating that students should have some freedom as well. One of the instructors noted that the level of autonomy of instructors should not be increased as *"a school needs consistency and if all the teachers become more autonomous, it will be difficult to control the quality of teaching"* (Inst. 41). In addition, two instructors stated that they may want more depending on the needs of the students or the pace of the curriculum; however, they did not state a strong desire.

When the instructors' responses to the open-ended question "In which area you would like to have more autonomy?" were examined, it was found that the instructors desire more autonomy in curriculum (*f*=20), followed by assessment (*f*=19) and institutional operations (*f*=18) as displayed in Table 4.13. Professional development and classroom management were the least frequently mentioned areas.

Table 4.13 The Areas in which Instructors Desire more Autonomy Based on Data Obtained from Open-ended Questions

| **Areas instructors desire more autonomy** | ***(f)*** |
|---|---|
| Curriculum | 20 |
| Assessment | 19 |
| Institutional operations | 18 |
| Instruction | 17 |
| Classroom management | 3 |
| Professional development | 4 |
| **TOTAL** | 2 |
| | **79** |

Instructors' desired levels of autonomy over six dimensions are presented in the following sections separately combining the results from both quantitative and qualitative data analysis.

### 4.6.1 Instructors' Desired Level of Autonomy over Curriculum

The instructors' responses to the statements in relation to their desire for curricular autonomy are presented in Table 4.14.

Table 4.14 Instructors' Responses to Statements Regarding Desired Autonomy over Curriculum

| **Statements**<br>As a teacher, I would like to … | Strongly Agree (%) | Agree (%) | Disagree (%) | Strongly Disagree (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. …select teaching goals and objectives for my class. | 36 | 50 | 6 | 4 |
| 2. …select content and topics to be taught in my class. | 42 | 50 | 4 | 4 |
| 3. …select what skills to be taught in my class. | 44 | 48 | 6 | 0 |
| 4. …add content to the curriculum. | 40 | 52 | 6 | 2 |
| 5. …delete content from the curriculum. | 36 | 56 | 6 | 2 |
| 6. …select the course book to use in my class. | 66 | 26 | 8 | 0 |
| 7. …select instructional materials other than course book to use in my class. | 56 | 40 | 4 | 0 |
| 8. …decide which assignments to use to determine my students' performance. | 52 | 36 | 8 | 2 |

As it can be seen from Table 4.14, a vast majority of the respondents desired autonomy over all areas of curriculum as more than half of the participants selected either "strongly agree" or "agree" for all the statements regarding curriculum. Selecting the course book (item 6) and other instructional materials (item 7) were the most strongly agreed-upon items. Slightly more than half of the participants (52%) expressed a strong agreement to item 32 "deciding which assignments to use to determine the students' performance". Some participants also expressed their desire for autonomy over selecting the content and topics. They stated that they would like to be able to change the topic when they or their students do not like it or when they want to bring topics of their interest to the classroom.

*There are some moments when I don't like the content of the book. For example, sometimes, I say I wish I could just make the students watch a part of a series (Interview, Inst. 6).*

*I love literature […] psychology, psychotherapy and science, and such kind of things. I am very interested in such kind of topics, so I can choose such kind of things and prepare and share with my classes (Interview, Inst. 2).*

One of the instructors interviewed also wanted to have the freedom to extend the curriculum depending on the students' needs (Inst. 3).

The analysis of the open-ended question "In what areas you would like to have more autonomy" also corroborates these findings, as the most frequently mentioned areas with regards to curriculum were: selection of course book and instructional materials (*f*=7) and selection of the content and topics (*f*=5).

### 4.6.2 Instructors' Desired Level of Autonomy over Instruction

The participants' responses to items between 9 and 15 are shown in Table 4.15.

Table 4.15 Instructors' Responses to Statements Regarding Desired Autonomy over Instruction

| **Statements**<br>As a teacher, I would like to … | Strongly Agree (%) | Agree (%) | Disagree (%) | Strongly Disagree (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9. …decide the pace of the curriculum. | 50 | 38 | 12 | 0 |
| 10. …control the amount of time I spend on a topic. | 62 | 36 | 0 | 0 |
| 11. …decide when topics in the curriculum are taught. | 40 | 44 | 14 | 0 |
| 12. …choose teaching techniques and strategies to use with my students. | 64 | 32 | 4 | 0 |
| 13. …determine how the required curriculum is taught. | 36 | 56 | 8 | 0 |
| 14. …decide what learning activities to use in my class. | 56 | 44 | 0 | 0 |
| 15. …compose new learning materials for my students. | 60 | 36 | 4 | 0 |

As demonstrated in the Table 4.15, the majority of instructors would like to have autonomy over instruction. Controlling the amount of time (62%), choosing the techniques and methods (64%), and composing new learning materials (60%) are the most strongly agreed upon items. In addition, all the participants agreed or strongly agreed that they would like to decide what learning activities to use in their classes.

During the interviews, some instructors stated that they are given a course map and they have to follow it; however, they also expressed their desire for flexibility in this issue as exemplified by the following quote:

> *Sometimes I would like to decide what to do on that day because I feel like the students are tired, bored on that day, so I don't want to do something heavy for them. So I would like to decide what to do depending on the day" (Interview, Inst. 7).*

The instructors' responses to the open-ended question "In what areas you would like to have more autonomy" also revealed that latitude to choose the learning activities and materials (*f*=7) and pacing (*f*=5) were the salient codes.

### 4.6.3 Instructors' Desired Level of Autonomy over Assessment

The data analysis done on the responses to the items between 17 and 20 revealed that most of the participants would like to have autonomy over assessment as they selected either "strongly agree" or "agree" as can be seen from Table 4.16. Item 20 reveals that establishing student achievement criteria (18%) and using their own assessment activities (16%) have the highest disagreement percentage in three dimensions: curriculum, instruction, and assessment. This can be linked with the difficulty of preparing tests as mentioned by an administrator, or teachers' lack of experience and skills in the area. As one instructor said, "*You should be an expert, but I don't think I am ready for it*" (Interview, Inst. 8).

Table 4.16 Instructors' Responses to Statements Regarding Desired Autonomy over Assessment

| **Statements**<br>As a teacher, I would like to … | Strongly Agree (%) | Agree (%) | Disagree (%) | Strongly Disagree (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 17. …decide how frequently to assess my students' performance. | 42 | 46 | 12 | 0 |
| 18. …determine how to assess what my students know. | 48 | 46 | 6 | 0 |
| 19. …use my own evaluation and assessment activities in my class. | 42 | 42 | 14 | 2 |
| 20. …establish student achievement evaluation criteria. | 34 | 48 | 18 | 0 |

Regarding the evaluation criteria, some instructors believed that to achieve objectivity among teachers and ensure that it is fair for students, there must be some common standard criteria. The following quote from an interview illustrates this belief:

> *I think because evaluation in its nature is a bit subjective, but we have to be objective, so such kind of criteria help us to be more objective. (Inst. 2).*

The data analysis on the open-ended question "In what areas you would like to have more autonomy" suggested that some instructors wanted more autonomy over assessment (*f*=19); however, most of them did not state in which area specifically they desired more autonomy.

### 4.6.4 Instructors' Desired Level of Autonomy over Professional Development

The participants' responses to the statements between 21 and 26 presented in Table 4.17 indicate that all the participants except one would like to have autonomy over the decisions whether and when to attend the professional development programs. In the interviews, the instructors suggested that participation in professional development programs should be on a voluntary basis by stating the reasons below:

> *If it is mandatory, even if it is related to you, you do not want to do it. (Inst. 2)*

> *Ones who want to develop themselves are there; it is more effective. (Inst. 5)*

Table 4.17 Instructors' Responses to Statements Regarding Desired Autonomy over Professional Development

| **Statements**<br>As a teacher, I would like to … | Strongly Agree (%) | Agree (%) | Disagree (%) | Strongly Disagree (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 21. …decide whether to participate in professional development programs. | 72 | 26 | 2 | 0 |
| 22. …decide when to take part in professional development programs. | 62 | 36 | 2 | 0 |
| 23. …choose what in-service training to attend. | 68 | 32 | 0 | 0 |
| 24. …decide the amount of in-service training I attend. | 62 | 34 | 4 | 0 |
| 25. …determine the content of our professional development sessions. | 44 | 48 | 6 | 2 |
| 26. …freely visit other teachers' classroom to learn other ways of teaching. | 40 | 36 | 18 | 6 |

In addition, all the participants desired autonomy to choose what in-service training to participate in. However, less than half of the respondents (40%) strongly agreed and 24 % disagreed or strongly disagreed with item 26, which suggests that visiting other teachers' classrooms freely is not a strongly desired area of autonomy. The result can be explained with the findings of the qualitative data. Although almost all the instructors in the interview found observations useful, they also stated that being observed by someone would make them stressed, nervous, or anxious. As classroom observation is associated with such negative feelings, it is not surprising that not many teachers desired autonomy in that area.

Instructors' responses to open-ended question "In which area would you like to have more autonomy" revealed that only two teachers made a mention of professional development sessions and they desired to have a say in the content of those sessions.

### 4.6.5 Instructors' Desired Level of Autonomy over Classroom Management

Classroom management is another dimension that the instructors desired autonomy over. Table 4.18 illustrates instructors' responses to items pertaining to classroom management.

Table 4.18 Instructors' Responses to Statements Regarding Desired Autonomy over Classroom Management

| **Statements**<br>As a teacher, I would like to … | Strongly Agree (%) | Agree (%) | Disagree (%) | Strongly Disagree (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 16. …arrange the physical space of my classroom as I choose. | 66 | 30 | 2 | 0 |
| 27. …determine the norms and rules for student classroom behavior. | 58 | 36 | 6 | 0 |
| 28. …decide how to act on any student discipline problems like disruptive student behavior or cheating in my class. | 54 | 28 | 14 | 4 |
| 29. …set my own discipline policies. | 64 | 30 | 6 | 0 |

As displayed in Table 4.18, the instructors' responses to all four items reveal that more than half of the participants strongly agreed with the items while fewer people disagreed. Item 28 suggests that 18% of the respondents do not want to have control over the disciplinary actions, which is supported by the findings of qualitative data. In the interviews, when the instructors were asked whether they would like to have a say over disciplinary measures, most of them showed no desire for it. One respondent stated that it may cause problems if everyone had implemented their own disciplinary actions as their sense of justice may differ (Inst. 9)

Instructors' responses to the open-ended question "In what areas would you like to have more autonomy" revealed that only 3 teachers wanted to have more autonomy over classroom management, discipline (*f*=2) and arranging the physical space of the classroom (*f*=1).

### 4.6.6 Instructors' Desired Level of Autonomy over Institutional Operations

The items between 30 and 35 meant to find out whether the instructors would like to possess autonomy over institutional operations. Table 4.19 illustrates the responses to each statement in relation to institutional operations.

Table 4.19 Instructors' Responses to Statements Regarding Desired Autonomy over Institutional Operations

| **Statements**<br>As a teacher, I would like to … | Strongly Agree (%) | Agree (%) | Disagree (%) | Strongly Disagree (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 30. …make decisions on how the school budget will be spent. | 14 | 28 | 30 | 30 |
| 31. … decide on class timetable policy. | 28 | 38 | 26 | 4 |
| 32. … decide how to form classes based on student characteristics like gender, race, or proficiency level. | 22 | 44 | 24 | 10 |
| 33. … determine the number of students for a class. | 42 | 42 | 10 | 6 |
| 34. … make decisions on extra-curricular activities. | 44 | 50 | 6 | 0 |
| 35. … decide on the agenda for teachers' meetings. | 32 | 40 | 22 | 6 |

As it can be seen from Table 4.19, more than half of the participants (60%) selected "strongly disagree" or "disagree", which suggests that they do not want to have freedom to make decisions on school budget. Items 31, 32, and 35 indicate that although more than half of the participants want to make decisions on the class timetable, class composition, and agenda of the teachers' meetings, the number of the instructors who do not desire autonomy over these areas is not very low. This may be because some teachers regard these issues as administrators' job. However, it can be said that the majority of the instructors would like to make decisions on the class size and extra-curricular activities.

Institutional operations were one of the most frequently mentioned domains in instructors' responses to the open-ended question "In which area would you like to

have more autonomy" and deciding on the class size and class timetable (when to start and end, when to have a break etc.) were the recurrent codes.

### 4.7 Administrators' Views on Teacher Autonomy in Six Domains

*RQ 4: Based on the perceptions of administrators, to what extent should teachers have autonomy in the following areas: a) curriculum, b) instruction, c) assessment, d) professional development, e) classroom management, f) institutional operations?*

To explore administrators' views on allowing instructors more autonomy, the same items used to measure the current level of teachers' autonomy were utilized, but this time, the participants were to respond to the statement "The teachers should be free to..." for each item. The administrators' responses to statements regarding autonomy over curriculum are illustrated in Table 4.20.

Table 4.20 Administrators' Responses to Statements Regarding Autonomy over Curriculum

| **Statements**<br>The teachers should be free to... | Strongly Agree (%) | Agree (%) | Disagree (%) | Strongly Disagree (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. …select teaching goals and objectives for their classes. | 0 | 20 | 80 | 0 |
| 2. …select content and topics to be taught in their classes. | 0 | 40 | 60 | 0 |
| 3. …select what skills to be taught in their classes. | 0 | 40 | 60 | 0 |
| 4. …add content to the curriculum. | 20 | 60 | 0 | 20 |
| 5. …delete content from the curriculum. | 0 | 40 | 20 | 40 |
| 6. …select the course book to use in their classes. | 20 | 40 | 20 | 20 |
| 7. …select instructional materials other than course book to use in their classes. | 0 | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| 8. …decide which assignments to use to determine their students' performance. | 20 | 40 | 40 | 0 |

The analysis of their responses to items regarding curriculum suggested that most of the administrators held the opinion that teachers should not be free to select teaching objectives (80%), content and topics (60%), and skills to be taught in their classes (60%) as illustrated in Table 4.20. In addition, although all the participants agreed that teachers should have the freedom to select instructional materials other than a course book, not all of them were of the same opinion as to the selection of a course book as 40% of the administrators disagreed with this item. Furthermore, whereas the majority of the participants (80%) believed that teachers should have autonomy over adding content to the curriculum, only 40% of them thought that teachers should be free to delete content from the curriculum.

Administrators' opinions about teacher autonomy over instruction are demonstrated in Table 4.21.

Table 4.21 Administrators' Responses to Statements Regarding Autonomy over Instruction

| **Statements**<br>The teachers should be free to... | Strongly Agree (%) | Agree (%) | Disagree (%) | Strongly Disagree (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9. …decide the pace of the curriculum. | 0 | 40 | 60 | 0 |
| 10. …control the amount of time they spend on a topic. | 0 | 80 | 20 | 0 |
| 11. …decide when topics in the curriculum are taught. | 0 | 0 | 100 | 0 |
| 12. …choose teaching techniques and strategies to use with their students. | 80 | 20 | 0 | 0 |
| 13. …determine how the required curriculum is taught. | 20 | 80 | 0 | 0 |
| 14. …decide what learning activities to use in their classes. | 100 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 15. …compose new learning materials for their students. | 60 | 20 | 20 | 0 |

As can be seen from Table 4.21, all the administrators believed that teachers should have autonomy over their teaching techniques and strategies (item 12) and learning activities to use with their students (item 14). In addition, most of them (80%) agreed that teachers should be free to control the amount of time they spend on a topic (item

10) and compose new learning materials (item 15). However, none of the participants held the opinion that teachers should have freedom to decide when the topics in the curriculum are taught and most of t% stated they should not decide the pace of the curriculum.

Items between 17 and 20 aimed to investigate the participant administrators' views on allowing autonomy over assessment and the responses to these items are displayed in Table 4.22. As the figures in Table 4.22 indicate, more than half of the administrators (60%) believed that teachers should not be granted autonomy to decide on the frequency of the assessment (item 17), the type of assessment (item 18), and evaluation criteria (item 20). On the other hand, most of them (80%) welcomed the idea that teachers should be free to use their own evaluation and assessment activities in class.

Table 4.22 Administrators' Responses to Statements Regarding Autonomy over Assessment

| **Statements**<br>The teachers should be free to... | Strongly Agree (%) | Agree (%) | Disagree (%) | Strongly Disagree (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 17. ...decide how frequently to assess their students' performance. | 20 | 20 | 60 | 0 |
| 18. ...determine how to assess what their students know. | 0 | 40 | 60 | 0 |
| 19. ...use their own evaluation and assessment activities in their classes. | 20 | 60 | 20 | 0 |
| 20. ...establish student achievement evaluation criteria. | 0 | 40 | 60 | 0 |

Data analysis done on administrators' responses to items between 21 and 26 revealed that teacher autonomy over professional development is one dimension that almost all administrators supported. As presented in Table 4.23, all the participants agreed or strongly agreed that teachers should have freedom to choose what in-service training to attend (item 23), decide on the amount (item 24) and the content of the training (item 25), and have the freedom to visit other teachers' classroom freely (item 26).

Also, all except one (80%) were of the opinion that teachers should be free to decide whether and when to participate in professional development programs.

Table 4.23 Administrators' Responses to Statements Regarding Autonomy over Professional Development

| **Statements**<br>The teachers should be free to… | Strongly Agree (%) | Agree (%) | Disagree (%) | Strongly Disagree (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 21. …decide whether to participate in professional development programs. | 20 | 60 | 20 | 0 |
| 22. …decide when to take part in professional development programs. | 20 | 60 | 20 | 0 |
| 23. …choose what in-service training to attend. | 40 | 60 | 0 | 0 |
| 24. …decide the amount of training they attend. | 20 | 80 | 0 | 0 |
| 25. …determine the content of the professional development sessions. | 20 | 80 | 0 | 0 |
| 26. …freely visit other teachers' classroom to learn other ways of teaching. | 40 | 60 | 0 | 0 |

In addition, classroom management is another dimension that administrators supported that teachers should exercise autonomy over.

Table 4.24 Administrators' Responses to Statements Regarding Autonomy over Classroom management

| **Statements**<br>The teachers should be free to… | Strongly Agree (%) | Agree (%) | Disagree (%) | Strongly Disagree (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 16. …arrange the physical space of their classroom as they choose. | 100 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 27. …determine the norms and rules for student classroom behavior. | 60 | 20 | 20 | 0 |
| 28. …decide how to act on any student discipline problems like disruptive student behavior or cheating in my class. | 20 | 40 | 20 | 20 |
| 29. …set their own discipline policies. | 20 | 80 | 0 | 0 |

As displayed in Table 4.24, all the respondents strongly agree that teachers should be free to arrange the physical space of the classroom. Also, all of them held the idea that they should have freedom to set their discipline polices in their classes. Most of the participants also believed that teachers should be free to determine the norms and rules for student classroom behavior (80%) and decide how to act on discipline infractions (60%).

Lastly, the analysis of the participants' responses to items pertaining to institutional operations, which is shown in Table 4.25, indicated that all the administrators disagreed with the idea that teachers should have autonomy over school budget (item 20), class timetable policy (item 31), and class size (item 33). Most of them also held the opinion that teachers should not have freedom to decide on the student-demographic class composition policy. However, all the participants believed that teachers should be free to make decisions on extra-curricular activities and more than the half (60%) stated that they should also have freedom to make decisions on the agenda of the teachers' meetings.

Table 4.25 Administrators' Responses to Statements Regarding Autonomy over Institutional Operations

| **Statements**<br>The teachers should be free to… | Strongly Agree (%) | Agree (%) | Disagree (%) | Strongly Disagree (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 30. …make decisions on how the school budget will be spent. | 0 | 0 | 60 | 40 |
| 31. … decide on class timetable policy. | 0 | 0 | 80 | 20 |
| 32. … decide how to form classes based on student characteristics like gender, race, or proficiency level. | 0 | 20 | 60 | 20 |
| 33. … determine the number of students for a class. | 0 | 0 | 60 | 40 |
| 34. … make decisions on extra-curricular activities. | 80 | 20 | 0 | 0 |
| 35. … decide on the agenda for teachers' meetings. | 0 | 60 | 40 | 0 |

The results of the administrator questionnaires suggested that administrators' views on allowing teachers autonomy differ across six dimensions. Most of them believed that

teachers should have autonomy over some dimensions like professional development and classroom management. For curricular autonomy, the administrators supported teachers' autonomy over some items like the choice of instructional materials, but they expressed a disagreement with other items. Autonomy over assessment and institutional operations were the least agreed upon domains, which indicated that the administrators mostly did not feel that teachers should be given autonomy over these areas.

# CHAPTER 5

# DISCUSSION

## 5.0 Presentation

This study aimed to explore the perceptions of 50 EFL instructors and 5 administrators working at an English preparatory program of a state university on the concept of teacher autonomy. It also investigated the level of autonomy the instructors possessed in their work context based on the instructors' and administrators' perceptions. Moreover, the extent to which the instructors desired autonomy as well as the extent to which the administrators believed teachers should have autonomy were examined. In this chapter, the findings of the study are discussed in relation with the relevant literature. Lastly, the implications of the study are discussed.

## 5.1 Participants' Understanding of the Concept "Teacher Autonomy"

Participants were asked to explain what the term "teacher autonomy" meant to them in the questionnaire. The analysis of their descriptions revealed that the majority of participant instructors and all the administrators conceptualized teacher autonomy as being teachers' freedom to make decisions concerning their teaching, which is in line with the definition "freedom from control over teaching" offered by Benson (2000). Although some participants only referred to decisions regarding teaching in general, most of them also defined the field of autonomy as curriculum and instruction by mentioning freedom in decisions about what and how to teach. The results also support Short's (1994) assertion that freedom to make decisions is the most important characteristic of autonomy.

A few participant instructors also understood the notion of teacher autonomy as the capacity for self-directed teaching, which is also considered to be a dimension of

teacher autonomy by Smith (2003). The description of teacher autonomy by Benson and Huang (2008) as the ability of the teachers to control the teaching process may help us to understand what capacity for self-directed teaching refers to. In the study, the participants made mention of teachers' ability to detect the needs and characteristics of the learners and act accordingly. The researcher believed that teachers' capacity to make decisions about their teaching by considering the needs and interests of their learners and their ability to adapt their teaching to the unique characteristics of a classroom as stated by the participants is a characteristic of self-directed teaching.

Lastly, two respondents defined teacher autonomy as teachers' responsibility for their teaching, which is similar to the definition provided by Aoki (2002) as "responsibility to make choices concerning one's own teaching" (as cited in Yan, 2010, p.175).

Interestingly, none of the participants referred to teacher autonomy as teachers' capacity for professional development and ability to develop their teaching skills as proposed by Smith (2003), Benson and Huang (2008), Graves (2009), and Javadi (2014) or as teachers' capacity and willingness to help learners to become autonomous as suggested by Thavenius (1999).

The study produced similar findings to the study by Lepicnic Vodopivec (2016), who also investigated how Slovakian primary school teachers understand the concept of teacher autonomy and found out that teachers regarded teacher autonomy as freedom and independence in their work, professional qualification, trust, and responsibility. In addition, the participants' interpretations of teacher autonomy were in line with the definitions that emerged from the study by Uğurlu and Qahramanova (2016), who suggested that teacher autonomy meant freedom to make decisions regarding teaching and selection of teaching methods as well as participation in school-wide decisions to Turkish and Azerbaijan primary school teachers and administrators.

When the results were compared with the ones obtained from Balçıkanlı's (2009) study with Turkish EFL student teachers, it was concluded that while student teachers

perceive teacher autonomy as self-awareness, self-control, and self-development which are more related to teachers' professional development, in-service EFL teachers delineate the term as freedom to make decisions. From this finding, it can be inferred that teachers' work experience and the constraints they face in their workplace may have an influence on their perception of autonomy. It can also be said that during their training, student teachers focus on the concept of teacher autonomy as a way of professional development.

### 5.2 Participants' Views on Characteristics of Autonomous Teachers

The study also explored the participants' perceptions on the characteristics of autonomous teachers, which revealed that the participant instructors and administrators held similar opinions about their characteristics. The most frequently mentioned characteristic by the instructors was independence. They were of the opinion that an autonomous teacher is independent and free to make decisions, which is consistent with their interpretation of autonomy.

Also, the salient characteristics that emerged from both instructors' and administrators' responses were awareness of their teaching, responsibility, creativity, self-confidence, and effectiveness. These characteristics can be considered related to teacher autonomy as capacity for self-directed teaching, which was put forward by Smith (2003). It is assumed that teachers who are able to direct their teaching are aware of their teaching and knowledgeable, which creates a sense of confidence. They are also creative and innovative, and they take responsibility for teaching and learning, all of which contribute to their effectiveness as a teacher.

Moreover, both administrators and instructors expressed that autonomous teachers are open to development, which can be associated with the conceptualization of teacher autonomy as professional development proposed by Benson and Huang (2008) and Smith (2003). Based on this understanding of teacher autonomy, Sehrawat (2014) also suggested that autonomous teachers try to seize opportunities to develop themselves professionally.

Other traits that came out in the questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were possession of a high level of problem solving skills, readiness to take risks, flexibility, and motivation, which are similar to the characteristics of autonomous learner (Candy, 1991; Holec, 1981 as cited in Çakıcı, 2015).

In the semi-structured interviews, the participants were asked to give their opinions on the characteristics of teachers who want more autonomy and most of the informants pointed to the aforementioned characteristics such as independence, self-confidence, creativity, and openness to development. However, some conflicting ideas emerged: Three participants believed that experienced teachers want more autonomy, whereas two argued that novice teachers would like to possess more autonomy as they want to find their way in teaching by trying out different methods and techniques, which refers to their desire for autonomy inside the classroom. Two participants stated that responsible teachers desire more autonomy, but another two perceived those teachers as being irresponsible. They expressed that some teachers would like more autonomy simply to avoid duties and feel more relaxed. In addition, two instructors also expressed that they believe controlling, bossy people want more autonomy simply because they are the kind of people who desire control. One administrator also commented that autonomous teachers are difficult to work with as they have a tendency to bend the rules set by the administration by making impulsive decisions.

Lastly, in semi-structured interviews with administrators, the participants were asked how they decided to which teacher to grant more autonomy to. This was asked in order to find out more about the characteristics of autonomous teachers. The administrators' responses indicated that teachers' experience, skills, and knowledge in the field in which the autonomy might be given are taken into consideration. This provides an insight into how the instructors are selected to academic units in the context studied.

### 5.3 Participants' Perceptions on the Importance of Teacher Autonomy

The participants' views on the importance of teacher autonomy were sought and the findings suggested that teachers' autonomy is important to them for several reasons:

- Teacher autonomy provides job satisfaction, which is essential for teacher retention.
- Having work autonomy enhances teachers' effectiveness and success as they can act in the way they consider the best in their classrooms.
- Teacher autonomy boosts teachers' self-confidence, self-awareness, and their sense of responsibility.
- Each classroom has unique characteristics, which necessitates the use of different content, materials, or methods in different contexts.
- Teachers are the ones who are best informed about their students' interests, needs, and learning styles, so can they make the best decisions regarding them.
- Teachers should be able to tailor their teaching according to the learners' profile.
- Teachers differ in their beliefs about teaching and learning as well as their teaching styles.

First, many participant instructors believed that teacher autonomy provides necessary motivation and work satisfaction for teachers to go on teaching. This finding also provides support for the relationship between teacher autonomy and job satisfaction, revealed by Kreis and Brockopp (1986), Walter and Glenn (1986), Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2010), and Emo (2015).

Moreover, some instructors stated that teacher autonomy improves teachers' effectiveness and success. Ingersoll (2007) and Benson (2010) also claimed that teachers who have freedom to make school-wide and classroom decisions do their jobs more diligently and effectively.

Two instructors also reported that teacher autonomy makes teachers self-confident. One participant explained that not having the control of the class makes a person feel confused, which undermines his/her self-confidence. It can be interpreted that if teachers are not free to make decisions concerning their teaching or to tailor their work according to the needs of their learners, and if they are only expected to implement what others decide for them, this may cause problems: As the participant commented, it may cause confusion as the teacher may not know why he is doing what he is doing or it may result in deskilling and the loss of productivity and creativity, and as an inevitable result, self-confidence. The notion that autonomy boosts teachers' self-confidence lends support to the findings of White (1992), who suggested "increased decision-making authority raises teachers' sense of self-esteem both on their jobs and in their personal lives" (p.81).

In addition to benefits of autonomy for teachers, which were cited only by participant instructors, some instructors and all administrators mentioned the necessity of teacher autonomy due to the motives related to instruction. Some participants shared that each classroom has unique characteristics, and students have diverse needs, interests, and skills. Thus, what works in one class may not work in another. Also, the prescribed curriculum, methods, or materials may not meet the needs of the learners. In this case, the teacher should be able to adjust the curriculum, teaching methods, or learning strategies to students' profile, which requires teachers to have autonomy. This belief is also supported by Rosenholtz and Simpson (1990) who claimed that "autonomy also provides the opportunity to tailor the work to one's own training and experience and to exercise professional judgment concerning the best response to the instructional needs of particular students" (p. 244).

Another justification the participants gave for the importance of teacher autonomy was that teachers are the ones who are most knowledgeable about their students and aware of what they need and how they learn best; thus, they are in the best position to make decisions about them, as also asserted by Nelson and Miron (2005) and Lin (2014).

Lastly, some participants held the belief that teacher autonomy is vital to cater to individual differences in teaching styles. As each teacher has a unique teaching style and they may have strengths in different methods or techniques, they need autonomy over their instruction. Prichard and Moore (2016) also claimed that an empowered teacher can customize their instruction based on student needs and teachers' teaching style.

### 5.4 Participants' Perceptions on the Drawbacks of Teacher Autonomy

The participants' responses to the open-ended questions in the questionnaire and the individual interviews revealed a few disadvantages of teacher autonomy. Firstly, teachers who were granted more autonomy over some decisions made at the school concerning the curriculum, material selection, or instructional planning expressed that they felt too responsible to the administrators, colleagues, and students. Moreover, some mentioned that not being involved in the decisions regarding curriculum or assessment eases their workload. From these statements, it can be inferred that autonomy also brings responsibility with it and increases the workload. This belief concurs with the views of Wu (2015) on the role of an autonomous teacher. He also asserted that autonomy requires teachers to invest more time and effort, thus increasing their workload and stress.

Moreover, a few participant instructors stated that if all teachers are granted autonomy, that will cause inequality and unfairness among students or class sections, which may result from differences in teachers' beliefs, perceptions, or personalities. One participant exemplified this by pointing to disciplinary actions. As everyone has a different perception of justice, the way the teachers act on the discipline infractions would be different if they had autonomy over disciplinary issues, which would be unfair to students. Another participant cited assessment as an example. If the students in the same school were given different tests or had different evaluation criteria depending on the teacher, that might affect their grade as the evaluation would be rather subjective.

In addition, three instructors held the belief that if teachers were given autonomy over institutional operations like determining class timetable, this would lead to chaos as every teacher in the school would start and end the class at a different time or would have breaks at different intervals, which might interrupt other classes. Two participants by referring to their own past experiences also noted that some teachers might abuse this freedom. The participant instructors' beliefs are in line with the assertion of Murphy, Hallinger, and Lotto (1986) that teachers may deprive students of the conditions linked with learning: instruction, time, and curriculum coverage.

Furthermore, as some other participants stated, granting autonomy to all teachers would make standardization and the control of the teachers difficult. Lastly, as one instructor expressed, if teachers are given complete autonomy over the curriculum, this might lead them to feel indecisive about what to teach.

### 5.5 Participants' Perceptions on the Barriers to Teacher Autonomy

Instructors' and administrators' views on the obstacles to teachers' autonomy were investigated. Analysis of the data from open-ended questions in the questionnaire and individual interviews pointed to several factors that inhibit teachers' autonomy. The most frequently cited factors by both administrators and instructors were rules and regulations, and management. Though most of the participants did not explain how management constrain autonomy, the excerpts like "the attitudes of administrators", which implies the negative attitudes of administration towards the instructors, and "the management's control over teaching" provide an insight into why management is considered as an obstacle. It can also be presumed that as management is partly involved in setting rules and regulations and responsible for enforcing them, they may be thought to impede teacher autonomy. As administrators also mentioned central management as a constraint, it may refer to Higher Education Council or Rectorate as they work at a university. This finding supports the findings of Ramos (2006), who identified regulations and administrator demands as a limitation on teacher autonomy. Similarly, Wermke and Hösfalt (2014) claimed that school principals restrict teacher

autonomy by controlling the output of teachers and the resources available to them to achieve the set goals.

School size and standardization are other constraints, which are also considered to be interrelated. Some participants were of the opinion that if the number of the students and teachers is high at a school where students are expected to achieve the same objectives, standardization is necessary to provide equality and uniformity among students. In the context of the study, there were approximately 1500 students and 70 teachers, which was thought to be quite high in number by the participants. Due to this considerable number, there were more class sections, which were subject to the same education process and followed the same syllabus. Hence, the administrators and some instructors considered "standardization" as an obstacle although they recognized the need for it.

Strict course maps and inflexible curriculum were among the recurrent codes in relation to barriers to teachers' autonomy. In the research context, due to the standardization of the education process, the instructors were expected to teach the same curriculum in the specified time indicated on the course maps. The curriculum design and the instructional planning were carried out by the relevant academic unit members, and all the other instructors were expected to follow it. They could not delete a subject from the curriculum as it could be asked in an exam, which was also prepared by the testing office. Moreover, they could only add topics to the curriculum if they had extra time when they completed the required parts determined on the course map. Therefore, some instructors thought that strict course maps and inflexible curriculum inhibit their autonomy. Two administrators also noted that curriculum was a constraint. The findings of this research are consistent with the results of the studies conducted by Akbarpour-Tehrani and Mansor (2012) and Prichard and Moore (2016), who also revealed that large number of students, more class sections, following the same syllabus across the sections impede teacher autonomy in foreign language education.

In addition, personal constrains related to instructors were cited by both instructors and administrators. Lack of some skills such as self-awareness and problem-solving, lack of knowledge on methodology, adoption of a traditional approach to teaching, as well as affective factors like emotional exhaustion, loss of personal success, and reluctance or indifference were among the personal constraints mentioned. These findings are also in agreement with Benson (2010), who asserted that teacher autonomy is also dependent on "the interests and internal capabilities of individual teachers" (p.273).

Though less mentioned, workload, class size, and attitude of students towards learning were also viewed as impediments to teacher autonomy. This also concurs with the findings of the study by Mustafa and Cullingford (2008), who suggested that heavy workload and large class sizes inhibit teachers' freedom. The researcher presumed that large class sizes and students' reluctance to learn to influence teachers' autonomy in the classroom because the high number of students may hinder teachers from using the methods or techniques they support and the reluctant learners may influence their motivation as well.

### 5.6 Participants' Perceptions on How to Promote Autonomy

Participants' opinions on how to promote teacher autonomy were also investigated and the findings revealed that many participant instructors believed that teachers should be allowed more freedom to make decisions and more control over their teaching. According to the instructors' views, teachers should be free to select their teaching methods and techniques, an idea which the administrators also concurred with. Many instructors also suggested having a flexible curriculum and syllabus/ course maps. Two administrators also agreed with the idea of a flexible syllabus.

As the participants regarded personal constraints within the teacher as a factor which restricts teacher autonomy, another salient suggestion offered by both instructors and administrators was to provide opportunities for professional development so that teachers can be trained for the new and more effective teaching techniques and how to

direct their teaching. On a related note, Merry (2004) proposed that professional awareness is required to be autonomous; thus, it is not sufficient to simply teach techniques, teachers' awareness of the underlying reasons for those techniques should also be raised.

Some instructors also proposed that teachers should be a part of the decision-making process and be involved in decisions regarding curriculum, materials, assessment, and course schedules. An administrator also regarded involvement in decision-making as a way to encourage teachers' autonomy as she stated in the interview that the administration tries to promote teachers' autonomy by applying questionnaires which seek instructors' opinions before they make a change in the program. This belief can be supported with the findings of the study by Lu, Jiang, Yu, and Li (2015), who found that joint decision-making and teachers' participation in decisions by working collaboratively, which is called participative management, fosters teacher autonomy. Similarly, as a more specific example, Reinders and Lewis (2008) proposed that teachers' participation in the process of evaluating and selecting materials can be a remedy for the disempowerment of the teachers.

Collaboration between the teachers, freedom of expression, praise, and smaller class size were less frequently mentioned propositions by the instructors. They believed that teachers should be free to express their opinions and feelings about the teaching and learning process and that they shouldn't be judged or criticized for their opinions. Moreover, they thought that teachers' initiation should be praised. Blasé and Kirby (2009) also considered praise as an effective strategy that has a positive impact on teachers' performance and stated that "Recognition of individual teachers' strengths is viewed as a means of maintaining and developing teachers' skills while promoting teachers' confidence and satisfaction" (p.13). Lastly, two participants also stressed that school administration should trust teachers and respect their opinions and actions, so that they can boost teachers' confidence.

### 5.7 Participants' Perceptions on Instructors' Current Level of Autonomy

The teachers' level of autonomy over six dimensions, namely curriculum, instruction, assessment, professional development, classroom management, and institutional operations were investigated. The analysis of the data collected through instructor and administrator questionnaires indicated that both instructors and administrators perceived that teachers had a low level of autonomy in general. However, teachers' perception of their current level of autonomy is slightly higher than administrators' perception of them. This may be attributed to some factors: First, as Öztürk (2012) suggests, "classroom environment provides the teacher with a certain degree of autonomy because the teacher is the unique authority in his classroom and there is hardly any direct control or supervision" (p. 297). Besides, as can be understood from the participants' statements, some instructors created a space for their autonomy by bringing materials with the topics of their interest, making small changes in the curriculum based on their students' needs. Moreover, some instructors who participated in the study were members of academic units, which were given more autonomy in different domains. Lastly, some instructors felt that they were also a part of the decision-making process as they were given an opportunity to share their opinions with the management through online surveys.

The study revealed that the mean value of classroom management scored the highest, but nevertheless the participants perceived themselves as having a moderate level of autonomy over it. The second highest mean value belonged to the dimension of instruction, but still the participants' perceptions of their autonomy in this area were moderate. Autonomy levels over other dimensions were perceived to be quite low, the lowest being in institutional operations. The low level of individual teacher autonomy may be explained by standardized practices in the preparatory program such as having a standard curriculum for all classes and administering the same assessment tools prepared by a small group of teachers to all classes.

The analysis of items related to autonomy over curriculum indicated that both administrators and instructors perceived that the instructors had a low level of autonomy over selection of objectives, content, and skills, deletion of content from the curriculum and decision on the assignments to use. The findings of the present study corroborate Prichard and Moore's (2016) claim that programs which serve more students and have more class sections have lower curricular autonomy. Besides, Hong and Youngs (2016) found out that Korean teachers did not have the flexibility to modify curriculum similarly to Turkish EFL teachers, who stated that they cannot delete any part from the curriculum and can only add content if time allows after they complete what is expected from them.

On the other hand, the instructors had moderate perceptions of autonomy over the selection of course book and other instructional materials, which can be attributed to the involvement of almost one-third of the staff in the selection of instructional materials. Although Slovakian primary school teachers also selected the course book collectively as Lepicnic Vodopivec (2016) revealed, Turkish EFL instructors who took part in the present study perceived themselves as having a moderate level of autonomy over it, whereas Slovakian teachers perceived to possess a low level of autonomy. This suggests that Turkish instructors of EFL in the context studied appreciate this collective autonomy.

As for instructional autonomy, the participants had moderate perceptions of autonomy in controlling the amount of time they spend on a topic, deciding what learning activities to use, and composing new language materials. Their perception of autonomy in choosing their teaching techniques and strategies was high. Administrators' perception of teachers' autonomy over the teaching methods and techniques were higher than the instructors'. This can be because the administrators set teachers free in their classroom to use any technique or strategy as concluded from the interviews. However, the instructors did not have autonomy over the pace of the curriculum and when to teach the topics in the curriculum as it was pre-decided by the relevant academic unit. The results are parallel with the findings of Lepicnic

Vodopivec (2016) in that teachers were perceived to have the highest autonomy over selecting methods and techniques.

When items linked with assessment were examined, it was seen that the participants had a very low level of autonomy in all areas of assessment. This can be explained by the fact that all the assessment tools and evaluation criteria were prepared by the relevant academic offices in the preparatory school.

In the dimension of professional development, the instructors had moderate perceptions of autonomy in deciding the time and the content of the professional development program and selecting what in-service training to attend, while the administrators had lower perceptions of autonomy. The instructors had a very low perception of their own autonomy in deciding whether to participate in professional development programs, whereas the administrators' perception of teachers' autonomy in this area was higher, which can be because administrators organized some optional and mandatory professional development sessions. The findings of the study were similar to the ones obtained from the study by Akbarpour-Tehrani and Mansor (2012) in that Malaysian ESL teachers also did not have a control over the content of the professional development sessions, which were also mandatory to attend.

Data analysis done on items related to classroom management revealed that the participants had moderate perceptions of autonomy in determining the norms and rules for student classroom behavior and setting their discipline policies. On the other hand, their perception of autonomy over how to act on discipline infractions was low as the disciplinary actions are defined by the Council of Higher Education. However, the participants' perceptions of autonomy over the arrangement of physical space in the classroom, another dimension of classroom management, were higher.

### 5.8 Instructors' Desired Level of Autonomy

The study also examined the level of autonomy the instructors desired to possess over the six dimensions of autonomy and the results suggested that participant teachers,

who were from Generation Y, would like to have autonomy over all the dimensions. This can be explained by a quote from Deal and Celotti (1977): “Most of us cherish the latitude to go our own way. Few people express a willingness to be coordinated or controlled - particularly if they view themselves as self-reliant professionals” (as cited in Anderson, 1987, p. 360). The results also suggested that the instructors’ desired level of autonomy is higher than their current level of autonomy in each dimension, which is also parallel with the findings of LaCoe (2006) that teachers desire more autonomy than they possess.

With regards to curriculum, the results of the quantitative data suggested that the substantial majority of the instructors desired autonomy over all areas of curriculum. The analysis of the interviews and open-ended questions revealed that selection of the content and topics, instructional materials including course books were the most frequently mentioned areas.

Regarding instruction, all the participants would like to decide what learning activities to use in their classes. Most of them also reported a desire for autonomy over controlling the amount of time, choosing the techniques and methods, and composing new learning materials. Another area that they desired flexibility in was pacing. The findings of the present study are in consistency with the study by British Council (2015), which also revealed that the EFL instructors who work in English preparatory programs of Turkish universities follow the course books and additional materials chosen or prepared by the Curriculum Development Unit, but they describe a desire for certain amount of freedom to adapt the materials or introduce their own materials and activities into their lessons.

In addition, most of the participants stated that they would like to have autonomy over assessment; however, establishing student achievement criteria and using their own assessment activities had the highest disagreement percentage. This can be attributed to the difficulty of preparing tests as mentioned by an administrator during an interview, or to teachers’ lack of experience and skills in the area. Concerning the

evaluation criteria, some instructors believed that to achieve objectivity among teachers and ensure fairness for students, there must be some common standard criteria. McMillan and Nash's (2000) claim that teachers assign grades based on their beliefs and values which are grounded in their personal philosophy (as cited in LaCoe, 2006) may provide insight into the participant instructors' opinions in this regard.

Furthermore, all the instructors desired autonomy to choose what in-service training to participate in. However, visiting other teachers' classrooms freely was not a strongly desired area of autonomy. This can be because being observed by someone causes stress and anxiety as noted by the instructors during the interviews. Qualitative data also indicated that teachers desired to have a say in the content of the professional development sessions. Teachers' making decisions regarding what they want to learn in professional development sessions is thought to be more effective as teachers take responsibility for implementing the new strategies that they willingly learn (Hargreaves et al. 2013).

With regards to institutional operations, the analysis of the questionnaire indicated that more than half of the participants wanted to decide on the class timetable, class composition, and agenda of the teachers' meetings. Responses to open-ended questions also revealed that many teachers would like to make decisions on the class size and class timetable (when to start and end, when to have a break etc.).

The findings of the study are consistent with the earlier studies conducted in Turkey. Karabacak (2014) also found that high school teachers embrace autonomy in instruction, professional development, financial and administrative issues. Similarly, the study carried out by Özkan (2013) revealed that primary school teachers desire to be involved in decisions regarding administrative issues, course delivery, and classroom management. Moreover, studies conducted on teacher autonomy in the USA also suggested that teachers wish to possess more autonomy in curriculum (Blasé & Kirby, 2009; LaCoe, 2006; Rudolph, 2006), assessment (LaCoe, 2006), and pace or schedule of curricular content (Rudolph, 2006).

### 5.9 Administrators' Views on Teacher Autonomy in Six Domains

Data analysis done on the administrator questionnaires revealed that administrators' views on allowing teachers autonomy differed across six dimensions. Professional development, and classroom management were the domains in which most administrators thought that teachers should have autonomy in.

In terms of curricular autonomy, although the administrators supported teacher autonomy over some items like the choice of instructional materials including textbook, most of them disagreed that teachers should be free to select teaching objectives, content and topics skills to be taught in their classes, and be able to delete topics from the curriculum. It is assumed that administrators want unity and homogeneity in the school, which explains their standardized practices, and their reluctance that teachers should have freedom in these areas.

With regards to instruction, all the administrators believed that teachers should have autonomy over their teaching techniques, strategies and learning activities to use with their students. However, none of the participants held the opinion that teachers should be free to decide when the topics in the curriculum are taught and most of them stated that teachers should not decide the pace of the curriculum, which can be attributed to the standardized practices again.

On the other hand, autonomy over assessment and institutional operations were the least agreed on domains, which indicated that the administrators mostly did not consider that teachers should be given autonomy over these areas. Although many instructors opined that teachers should be free to use their own evaluation and assessment activities in class, they did not support the idea that teachers should have latitude to decide on the frequency and the type of assessment nor the evaluation criteria. Lastly, administrators did not concur with the idea that teachers should have autonomy over school budget, class timetable policy, class size, and class composition.

## 5.10 Implications

The current study shed light on participants' views on the value of teacher autonomy, the constraints on it, and the ways to promote it. The study also revealed that EFL instructors possessed a low level of autonomy in general but nevertheless, desired more autonomy. Based on these findings, several implications can be drawn:

*Implications for teachers*

The findings of the study indicated that most of the participants perceived the concept of "teacher autonomy" as freedom to make decisions concerning their teaching. However, it should be noted that teacher autonomy does not mean complete freedom from constraints but refers to "responsible exercise of discretion within the limits of school stakeholders' interests and needs" (Wilches, 2007, p.270). Moreover, autonomy also requires capacity and willingness as Littlewood (1996) suggests. Although most of the participant teachers are motivated to have freedom over their teaching as revealed by the present study, they should also have knowledge and skills necessary to make sound decisions. Therefore, teachers should exercise continuous reflection on their teaching practice and collaborate with their colleagues and their students (Little, 1995; Graves, 2009). In addition, they should participate in professional development sessions to improve their teaching. These suggestions may also help to overcome the barriers to autonomy related to teachers as mentioned by the participants.

Another important point for teachers to take note of is that autonomy brings responsibility with it. As some participants, who had autonomy in different domains, expressed in the study, when teachers are granted autonomy by the administrators, they also feel responsible to their administrators, colleagues, and their students. Thus, teachers should also be ready to embrace the responsibility and accountability that autonomy brings with it (Whitaker & Moses, 1990).

*Implications for Teacher Educators*

The present study revealed that the instructors and administrators in the context studied believed that one of the biggest constraints to teacher autonomy is related to instructors. As they expressed, teachers may lack the necessary methodological knowledge, skills, or awareness in their teaching. As Smith (2001) claimed, "If teachers do not know how to/are not willing to engage in self-directed teaching and teacher-learning for their own benefit and that of their students, they are, of necessity, the 'victims' of received ideas." (p. 8) For this reason, teacher education programs should not only focus on theoretical knowledge, but should aim to develop teachers' teaching skills and self-awareness through critical reflection.

In addition, teachers should be well-equipped to cope with the demands of autonomy over different domains like curriculum, assessment, and classroom management. Teacher education programs should help pre-service teachers to acquire necessary knowledge and skills in all these domains.

*Implications for School Administrators*

In the study, participants indicated why teacher autonomy is of utmost importance by referring to benefits for teachers such as provision of job satisfaction and motivation, enhancing teachers' effectiveness, self-confidence, and self-awareness. They also raised instructional motives by stating that every student and every class has a different profile and unique needs. It is the teacher who can observe what students need and how they learn best, so they should be able to customize their teaching depending on their students' profile. In addition, teachers have different teaching styles. To cater for all these differences, teachers' autonomy should be promoted. Based on the propositions of participants in the present study on how to foster teacher autonomy, the following suggestions can be offered to school administrators, who would like to support teachers' autonomy while also catering to needs for standardization.

- Teachers should be allowed some flexibility in curriculum and pacing. As students' needs and interests differ, teachers should customize the curricula accordingly, which requires more flexibility in curriculum and pacing. They should be given the chance to adapt the textbooks used in the class since lack of adaptation "limits the amount of personalization to the students' contexts and interests, limits the amount of variety in the lesson, limits opportunities for classroom interaction, and restricts personal initiative of the teacher" (British Council, 2015, p. 90).

- In-service teachers should also be provided with support and guidance in each domain to handle the autonomy they possess. They should be offered opportunities for professional growth as professional development is prerequisite to put teacher autonomy into practice effectively (Steh & Pozarnik, 2005). However, as teachers also desire freedom to make decisions regarding the time and the content of professional development programs and whether to participate in in-service training sessions offered, teachers should be allowed to decide on their professional development experiences. Akbarpour- Tehrani and Mansor (2012) also concurs that "only the sources of knowledge which have been selected autonomously by teachers may follow to make changes in teachers' attitude and class practice" (p. 552)

- The literature suggests that involving teachers' in important school-wide and classroom decisions improves the effectiveness of the schools (Blasé & Kirby, 2009). The study also revealed that participant teachers appreciate being involved in decisions and advocate that this promotes teacher autonomy. Therefore, school administration should provide opportunities for teachers' involvement in the decision-making process. In this process, teachers should be encouraged to express their opinions freely and they should be respected as was suggested by the participants of the study.

- Teachers should also be provided with opportunities to collaborate, which enable them to learn from each other.

- As large class size is considered to be another constraint on teacher autonomy, the number of students in each class should be small.

# CHAPTER 6

# CONCLUSION

## 6.0 Presentation

In this chapter, a summary of the study is provided and the results in connection to each research question are summarized. Following this, some recommendations for further research are proposed.

## 6.1 Summary of the Study and Findings in Relation to Research Questions

This study aimed to explore the perceptions of EFL instructors and administrators working at an English preparatory program of a state university on teacher autonomy and to investigate to what extent instructors possessed autonomy and desired autonomy over six domains, namely curriculum, instruction, assessment, professional development, classroom management, and institutional operations. The study also explored administrators' views on what the extent of teacher autonomy over each domain should be. To this end, data were collected through questionnaires and semi-structured individual interviews. The findings of the study are summarized below in relation to research questions:

The first research question aimed to find out the participant instructors' and administrators' perceptions on the meaning of teacher autonomy, the characteristics of autonomous teachers, the importance of teachers' possessing autonomy as well as the factors that inhibit and promote teacher autonomy. The findings revealed that most of the participant instructors and all administrators conceptualized the notion of teacher autonomy as teachers' freedom to make decisions concerning their teaching. In addition, a few instructors also understood it to be the capacity for self-directed teaching and responsibility for teaching.

According to participants' views, autonomous teachers are independent, self-confident, responsible, effective, and creative. They are mindful of their teaching and students' skills and needs. They are innovative and open to development. They have a high level of problem-solving skills. On the other hand, some participants associated teachers who desire more autonomy with negative attributes such as being inexperienced, irresponsible, controlling or bossy, and difficult to work with.

Participants indicated that having autonomy is of importance due to the benefits it offers to teachers and instructional causes. Autonomy provides teachers with job satisfaction and motivation to stay in teaching. It also improves their effectiveness and self-awareness, and boosts their self-confidence. Moreover, each classroom context is unique with diverse students' needs and interests, which requires teachers to have freedom to customize curricula and syllabi accordingly. In addition, as teachers are the ones who are in contact with the students, they are naturally in the best position to observe them, so they can make better decisions regarding them. Furthermore, autonomy is fundamental to catering to individual differences in teachers' teaching styles. On the other hand, some participants stated that autonomy also has some disadvantages, namely increased workload, burdening teachers with too much responsibility, leading to chaos and inequality or unfairness. It was also claimed that some teachers may abuse autonomy granted to them.

With regards to factors that influence teacher autonomy, participants identified the following constraints: rules and regulations, management, school size, strict course maps, inflexible curriculum, and standardization. They also asserted that there might be some barriers related to teachers such as lack of knowledge, skills, and awareness. They also suggested some ways that can promote teacher autonomy: allowing teachers increased freedom over their teaching, curriculum, and pacing, providing opportunities for professional growth and involving teachers in the decision-making process were among the salient suggestions.

The second research question aimed to investigate the level of autonomy the participant instructors possessed in their work context based on their own and administrators' perceptions. The analysis of quantitative data indicated that instructors and administrators perceived that teachers had a low level of autonomy in general. Participants had moderate perceptions of autonomy over classroom management and instruction, whereas they perceived that teachers had a low level of autonomy over curriculum and almost no autonomy over assessment and institutional operations. Reasons for this could be related to standardized practices implemented in the school such as having a standard curriculum for all classes and administering the same assessment tools prepared by a small group of teachers to all classes.

The third research question addressed in the study was related to EFL instructors' desire for autonomy. The data gathered through questionnaires and interviews suggested that the Generation Y teachers wished to possess more autonomy over all dimensions; however, their desire for autonomy over institutional operations was at a moderate level. Their responses to open-ended questions also demonstrated that they would like to have more autonomy over curriculum, especially over selecting instructional materials, content, and the topics to be taught in class. As for the domain of instruction, they indicated a desire for latitude to choose their learning activities and materials, and pacing. They also wanted to decide on the content of the professional development sessions and in terms of institutional operations, determining the class size and class timetables was the frequently cited desire.

The last research question focused on the participant administrators' views on what the extent of teacher autonomy should be. The results of the administrator questionnaires indicated that administrators' views on the issue differ across dimensions of autonomy. Most of them held the opinion that teachers should have autonomy over some domains such as professional development and classroom management. For curricular autonomy, although they supported teachers' autonomy over the choice of instructional materials, most of them did not think that teachers should have freedom to select teaching goals and objectives nor the content and skills

to be taught in class. Besides, the participant administrators mostly believed that teachers should not have autonomy over assessment and institutional operations.

## 6.2 Recommendations for Further Research

The present study focused on EFL instructors' and administrators' perceptions of teacher autonomy; therefore, it is hoped that the study provides valuable insight into their views on the importance of teacher autonomy, the obstacles to teacher autonomy, and how to encourage teacher autonomy. It also investigated the level of autonomy EFL instructors working at tertiary level perceived to possess and desired to possess. However, it was limited to a preparatory program of a state university; therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to other preparatory programs in Turkey. Considering the importance of teacher autonomy, it is suggested that the issue be explored in other contexts as well to see whether other EFL instructors also desire more autonomy.

The study was conducted in a context where the level of individual teacher autonomy is low, as revealed by the results; thus, it is recommended for future research to focus on a context where teachers experience a high degree of autonomy so that their perceptions on their autonomy can be explored and comparisons with the results of the present study can be made. In addition, the positive and negative aspects of exercising a high level of autonomy can be investigated.

This study only explored the participants' perceptions on teacher autonomy. Teachers' capacity to make decisions regarding teaching or self-directing their teaching, which is a crucial aspect of autonomy, was beyond the scope of the study. This area might also be of interest for further research. Moreover, the relationship between teacher autonomy and student achievement can be examined.

Furthermore, as some participants suggested that teacher autonomy is central to job satisfaction, the relationship between the two can be explored further.

Lastly, as the participant instructors of this study was quite young, from Generation Y, a study including teachers of Generation X can be carried out and the perceptions of teachers from two different generations on teacher autonomy could be compared.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Instructor Questionnaire

Dear Participant,

The aim of this survey is to explore the beliefs and perceptions of English language instructors working at tertiary level on teacher autonomy as a part of Master's thesis. The survey has three main sections. Completing this survey takes approximately 30 minutes and is entirely voluntary.

Your completion of the survey is assumed to grant permission to use your answers for this study. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential and will be anonymous.

There are no right or wrong answers for the questions. Please read each question carefully and give accurate and sincere answers.

Thank you very much for your participation and valuable contributions.

Tuğba YILDIRIM
tuubayildirim@hotmail.com
Middle East Technical University

I have read and understood above and agree to participate in this study.

| Name/ Surname: | Date: | Signature: |
|---|---|---|
| ..... | ..... | ..... |

## SECTION 1: PERSONAL INFORMATION

*Please answer the questions below about yourself.*

1. Age:
2. Gender: Male () Female ()
3. Educational degree: BA () / MA () / PhD ()
4. Major:
   a) BA: …….
   b) MA: …… Ongoing () / Completed ()
   c) PhD: …… Ongoing () / Completed ()
5. How long have you been a teacher including this school year? ……(years)
6. How long have you been a teacher at this school including this school year? …..
7. Are you involved in any academic units? Yes () No ()
   *If yes, please choose the unit you are involved in.*
   a) Curriculum development unit
   b) Material development unit
   c) Testing unit
   d) Other: …….

## SECTION 2: THE CURRENT & DESIRED LEVEL OF AUTONOMY

*In this section, the same statements are used to explore two different points: your experience as a teacher in your institution and the level of autonomy you would like to have as a teacher.*

a) For the columns on the left, select the option that best describes your experience as a teacher in your school.

**A=Always (4) O=Often (3) R=Rarely (2) N=Never (1)**

b) For the columns on the right, select the option that shows the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the statements

**SA=Strongly agree (4) A=Agree (3) D=Disagree (2) SD= Strongly disagree (1)**

| In my school, I can …. | | | | STATEMENTS | As a teacher, I would like to … | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **A** | **O** | **R** | **N** | | **SA** | **A** | **D** | **SD** |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1. …select teaching goals and objectives for my class. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 2. …select content and topics to be taught in my class. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 3. …select what skills to be taught in my class. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 4. …add content to the curriculum. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 5. …delete content from the curriculum. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 6. …select the course book to use in my class. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 7. …select instructional materials other than course book to use in my class. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 8. …decide which assignments to use to determine my students' performance. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 9. …decide the pace of the curriculum. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 10. …control the amount of time I spend on a topic. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 11. …decide when topics in the curriculum are taught. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 12. …choose teaching techniques and strategies to use with my students. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 13. …determine how the required curriculum is taught. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 14. …decide what learning activities to use in my class. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 15. …compose new learning materials for my students. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 16. …arrange the physical space of my classroom as I choose. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 17. …decide how frequently to assess my students' performance. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 18. …determine how to assess what my students know. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

| In my school, I can …. | | | | STATEMENTS | As a teacher, I would like to … | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **A** | **O** | **R** | **N** | | **SA** | **A** | **D** | **SD** |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 19. …use my own evaluation and assessment activities in my class. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 20. …establish student achievement evaluation criteria. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 21. …decide whether to participate in professional development programs. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 22. …decide when to take part in professional development programs. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 23. …choose what in-service training to attend. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 24. …decide the amount of in-service training I attend. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 25. …determine the content of our professional development sessions. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 26. …freely visit other teachers' classroom to learn other ways of teaching. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 27. …determine the norms and rules for student classroom behavior. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 28. …decide how to act on any student discipline problems like disruptive student behavior or cheating in my class. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 29. …set my own discipline policies. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 30. …make decisions on how the school budget will be spent. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 31. …decide on class timetable policy. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 32. …decide how to form classes based on student characteristics like gender, race, or proficiency level. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 33. …determine the number of students for a class. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 34. …make decisions on extra-curricular activities. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 35. …decide on the agenda for teachers' meetings. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

**SECTION 3: TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ON TEACHER AUTONOMY**

1. In your opinion, what does the term "teacher autonomy" mean?

2. Is it important for teachers to have autonomy? Why? Why not?

3. What do you think the characteristics of an autonomous teacher are? Please, list at least three characteristics.

4. Would you like more or less autonomy than you have at your school? Why or why not?

5. In what areas would you like to be more autonomous?

6. What are the factors that limit teacher autonomy?

7. What can be done to promote teacher autonomy?

**Thank you for your cooperation ☺**

## Appendix B: Administrator Questionnaire

Dear Participant,

The aim of this survey is to explore the beliefs and perceptions of administrators working at tertiary level on teacher autonomy as a part of Master's thesis. The survey has three main sections. Completing this survey takes approximately 30 minutes and is entirely voluntary.

Your completion of the survey is assumed to grant permission to use your answers for this study. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential and will be anonymous.

There are no right or wrong answers for the questions. Please read each question carefully and give accurate and sincere answers.

Thank you very much for your participation and valuable contributions.

Tuğba YILDIRIM
tuubayildirim@hotmail.com
Middle East Technical University

I have read and understood above and agree to participate in this study.

| Name/ Surname: | Date: | Signature: |
|---|---|---|
| ..... | ..... | ..... |

**SECTION 1: PERSONAL INFORMATION**

*Please answer the questions below about yourself.*

1. Age:
2. Gender: Male () Female ()
3. Educational degree: BA () / MA () / PhD ()
4. Major:
   a) BA: …….
   b) MA: ……
   c) PhD: ……
5. How long have you been an administrator at this school including this school year? …… (years)
6. How long have you been a teacher including this school year? …… (years)

**SECTION 2: ADMINISTRATORS' PERCEPTIONS ON TEACHER AUTONOMY**

*In this section, the same statements are used to explore two different points: your perceptions on the autonomy of teachers in your institution and the level of autonomy you would like teachers to have.*

a) For the columns on the left, select the option that best describes your opinion.

**A=Always (4) O=Often (3) R=Rarely (2) N=Never (1)**

b) For the columns on the right, select the option that shows the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the statements.

**SA=Strongly agree (4) A=Agree (3) D=Disagree (2) SD= Strongly disagree (1)**

| In our school, the teachers can …. | | | | STATEMENTS | The teachers should be free to … | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **A** | **O** | **R** | **N** | | **SA** | **A** | **D** | **SD** |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1. …select teaching goals and objectives for their classes. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 2. …select content and topics to be taught in their classes. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 3. …select what skills to be taught in their classes. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 4. …add content to the curriculum. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 5. …delete content from the curriculum. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 6. …select the course book to use in their classes. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 7. ..select instructional materials other than course book to use in their classes. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 8. ..decide which assignments to use to determine their students' performance. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 9. …decide the pace of the curriculum. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 10. …control the amount of time they spend on a topic. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 11. …decide when topics in the curriculum are taught. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 12. …choose teaching techniques and strategies to use with their students. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 13. …determine how the required curriculum is taught. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 14. …decide what learning activities to use in their classes. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 15. …compose new learning materials for their students. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 16. …arrange the physical space of their classrooms as they choose. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 17. …decide how frequently to assess their students' performance. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 18. …determine how to assess what their students know. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

| In our school, the teachers can …. | | | | STATEMENTS | The teachers should be free to … | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **A** | **O** | **R** | **N** | | **SA** | **A** | **D** | **SD** |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 19. …use their own evaluation and assessment activities in their classes. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 20. …establish student achievement evaluation criteria. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 21. …decide whether to participate in professional development programs. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 22. …decide when to take part in professional development programs. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 23. …choose what in-service training to attend. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 24. …decide the amount of in-service training they attend. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 25. …determine the content of the professional development sessions. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 26. …freely visit other teachers' classroom to learn other ways of teaching. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 27. …determine the norms and rules for student classroom behavior. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 28. …decide how to act on any student discipline problems like disruptive student behavior or cheating in their classes. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 29. …set their own discipline policies. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 30. …make decisions on how the school budget will be spent. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 31. …decide on class timetable policy. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 32. …decide how to form classes based on student characteristics like gender, race, or proficiency level. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 33. …determine the number of students for a class. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 34. …make decisions on extra-curricular activities. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 35. …decide on the agenda for teachers' meetings. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

**SECTION 3: ADMINISTRATORS' PERCEPTIONS ON TEACHER AUTONOMY**

1. In your opinion, what does the term "teacher autonomy" mean?

2. Is it important for teachers to have autonomy? Why? Why not?

3. What do you think the characteristics of an autonomous teacher are? Please, list at least three characteristics.

4. What are the factors that limit teacher autonomy?

5. What can be done to promote teacher autonomy?

6. In what areas would you like to give more autonomy to teachers? Why?

**Thank you for your cooperation ☺**

## Appendix C: Instructor Interview Protocol

### Individual Interview Protocol Form

Institution:

Time of Interview:

Date:

Interviewee:

Interviewer:

The main purpose of this case study is to explore the beliefs and perceptions of EFL instructors and administrators working at tertiary level on teacher autonomy and to find out the level of autonomy the instructors have in their school and they would like to have in the following areas: curriculum, instruction, assessment, classroom management, professional development, and organizational decision making.

I would like to audio record the interview conversation. Please make sure that you have signed the consent form. For your information, only the researcher in the study will have access to the audio-recordings. Basically, this document assures that: (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary and you may quit participating at any time if you feel uncomfortable.

This individual interview is planned to last approximately one hour.

Thank you for your agreeing to participate.

**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR INSTRUCTORS:**

1. How long have you been a teacher at this school?
2. How do you perceive your role as a teacher?
3. What is your school policy in terms of curriculum development, textbook and content selection?
    a) Who decides the curriculum and which textbook(s) to use?
    b) Do you think that you are adequately involved in curriculum development and textbook selection?
    c) How much control do you feel you have over the curriculum that you teach? How does it make you feel?

4. What is your school policy in terms of instructional planning and implementation?
    a) Who decides when and how to teach?
    b) How much control do you feel you have over teaching methods/ techniques you use?
    c) Do you feel free while selecting language materials or activities? How does it make you feel?

5. What is your school policy in terms of assessment and evaluation of learning?
    a) Who prepares the assessment tools?
    b) Does every teacher use the same assessment tools and evaluation criteria? How does it make you feel?

6. What is your school policy in terms of teacher professional development?
    a) Do the administrators provide any opportunities for professional development?
    b) Is it mandatory or voluntary to attend those professional development sessions?
    c) How do/would you feel about classroom observations?
    d) What do you do to develop yourself professionally?

7. What is your school policy in terms of organizational decisions like disciplinary measures, class timetable, and class composition?

a) To what extent do you feel the part of decision making process?
b) What areas/decisions would you like to have a say in? Why?

8. Do you think your school policy promote or inhibit your flexibility as a teacher?

9. How much autonomy do you feel you have as a teacher in your institution?

10. Would you like more or less autonomy than you have at your school? Why or why not? If yes, in what areas?

11. What are the limits/barriers to your autonomy?

12. What kind of teachers do you think want lots of autonomy? How would you characterize them?

## Appendix D: Administrator Interview Protocol

### Individual Interview Protocol Form

Institution:

Time of Interview:

Date:

Interviewee:

Interviewer:

The main purpose of this case study is to explore the beliefs and perceptions of EFL instructors and administrators working at tertiary level on teacher autonomy and to find out the level of autonomy the instructors have in their school and they would like to have in the following areas: curriculum, instruction, assessment, classroom management, professional development, and organizational decision making.

I would like to audio record the interview conversation. Please make sure that you have signed the consent form. For your information, only the researcher in the study will have access to the audio-recordings. Basically, this document assures that: (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary and you may quit participating at any time if you feel uncomfortable.

This individual interview is planned to last approximately one hour.

Thank you for your agreeing to participate.

**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR ADMINISTRATORS**

1. How long have you been an administrator at this school?
2. How do you perceive your role as an administrator?
3. How would you describe the school's expectations about what a teacher should and should not do?
4. Do you think the culture of your school promotes or inhibits teachers' flexibility?
5. What is your school policy in terms of curriculum development, textbook and content selection?
    a) Who decides the curriculum and which textbook to use?
    b) How much influence do teachers have over the curriculum that they teach?
    c) How do you decide which teachers to give responsibility for curriculum development?
6. What is your school policy in terms of instructional planning and implementation?
    a) Who decides when and how to teach?
    b) How much control do teachers have over teaching methods/ techniques they use?
    c) Are teachers free to select language materials or activities? Why? Why not?
7. What is your school policy in terms of assessment and evaluation of learning?
    a) Who prepares the assessment tools?
    b) Does every teacher use the same assessment tools and evaluation criteria? Why?
    c) How do you decide which teachers to give responsibility for preparing assessment tools?
8. What is your school policy in terms of teacher professional development?
    a) Do you have a professional development unit in your institution?
    b) How do you contribute to teachers' professional development?

c) Is it mandatory or voluntary to attend the professional development sessions you provide? Why/ Why not? How does this impact their autonomy?

9. To what extent do you involve the instructional staff in making organizational decisions on disciplinary measures, class timetable, and class composition? Why?
10. How do you decide which teachers to give more autonomy and to what degree?
11. What do you do to promote teacher autonomy?
12. What do you think the barriers to teacher autonomy are?
13. What kind of teachers do you think want lots of autonomy? How would you characterize them?

## Appendix E: Sample Coding

| | |
|---|---|
| **R:** What about your school policy in terms of curriculum development, textbook and content selection?<br>**Admin1:** For the curriculum, the head of department, we are responsible for the academic content of the program. We work with module coordinators and curriculum unit collaboratively, so we are not only decision-makers. And for the textbooks, that group also decide on the textbooks. But we also include some other teachers for the material selection. We organize a unit and they work together to select the most effective textbook and materials which fits the curriculum. | School policy on curriculum |
| **R:** So not only the coordinators or the curriculum development office, but there are some other instructors.<br>**Admin1:** Yes, there are other instructors. They can voluntarily take part in this unit and we also select one person from each academic unit. We can say a large group decides that. | Teacher involvement in course book selection |
| **R:** How do you decide which people to give responsibility for these offices: curriculum development office or module coordinators?<br>**Admin 1:** OK. First, voluntary ones are encouraged. We usually do a survey before we start a study and if nobody is volunteer, we usually assign people. We have to assign people. We assign... of course we have a talk before we assign the job. Depending on their skills or knowledge or experience in that area, we select people. | |
| **R:** So you try to select people with more experience?<br>**Admin1:** Depending on the field. For example, for the testing office, we first consider for how many years that teacher has been a teacher, I mean, the experience year. But also if that person has ever studied in that area. We also consider these. | Selection of teachers for academic units |
| **R:** How much influence do you think teachers have over the curriculum they teach in the classroom?<br>**Admin 1**: If they are not in the curriculum unit or if they are not module coordinators, of course, to a minimum extent maybe. At the beginning of the program they don't have any effect in fact, but during the program we get feedbacks from | Limited teacher control over curriculum |

| | |
|---|---|
| the teachers. We can again update the curriculum for the next term.<br>**R:** Ok. What about your school policy in terms of instructional planning and implementation? Again who decides when and how to teach? | Teacher involvement in curriculum |
| **Admin1:** Again the curriculum unit with module coordinators. They usually decide it at the beginning of the year when they are designing the curriculum and syllabus. So usually the unit members are responsible for that.<br>**R:** So can teachers, like, change when and/or how to teach something. | School policy on instruction |
| **Admin1:** So they cannot change when to teach, but to some extent they can change how to teach it. As a certain approach... Ok, we adopt a certain approach as an institution and our materials also activities are designed and selected accordingly. But teachers are still free to choose the most appropriate one for their classes.<br>**R:** So they have control over their methodology? | Some freedom in the choice of teaching methods |
| **Admin1:** The main material like the textbooks to teach. They are not of course very free because we also decide the content and the topic and these are designed by the offices, academic units. | Lack of autonomy in the selection of content |
| But at other times they can be free. For example, for vocabulary practice, what kind of different activity or game they would like to use in their classes; in that sense, they are free. We encourage them also to select the activity they want by saving more time in the course map.<br>**R:** So why? Why do you give them some time or encourage them? | Some freedom in the selection of learning activities |
| **Admin1:** Depending on their classes and their students' needs and also every teacher is different. For example, teacher A uses technique B better but teacher B uses technique C much more effectively. So we can also give a chance to them. Which technique they can use the best, so they can be more beneficial to their students. | Contextual differences<br><br>Differences in teaching styles |

## Appendix G: Informed Consent Form

This is a case study conducted by Instructor Tuğba Yıldırım as a part of Master's thesis under the supervision of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Perihan Savaş. The aim of the study is to explore the beliefs and perceptions of EFL instructors and administrators working at English preparatory program of a state university on teacher autonomy and to find out the level of autonomy the instructors have in their school and they would like to have in the following areas: curriculum, instruction, assessment, professional development, classroom management, and institutional operations. Participation in the study is on a voluntary basis. No personal identification information is required in the data collection instruments. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential and evaluated only by the researcher; the obtained data will be used for scientific purposes.

The data collection instruments do not contain questions that may cause discomfort in the participants. However, during participation, for any reason, if you feel uncomfortable, you are free to quit at any time. In such a case, it will be sufficient to tell the data collector that you have not completed the questionnaire.

I would like to thank you in advance for your participation in this study. For further information about the study, you can contact Tuğba Yıldırım (researcher) (E-mail: tuubayildirim@hotmail.com) and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Perihan Savaş (thesis supervisor) from Middle East Technical University (E-mail: perihans@metu.edu.tr)

*I am participating in this study totally on my own will and am aware that I can quit participating at any time I want/ I give my consent for the use of the information I provide for scientific purposes.*

Name Surname Date Signature

… / … / ..

## Appendix H: Debriefing Form

This study, as stated before, is a case study conducted by Instructor Tuğba Yıldırım as a part of Master's thesis under the supervision of advisor Assoc. Prof. Dr. Perihan Savaş. The study concentrates on the beliefs and perceptions of EFL instructors and administrators working at English preparatory program of a state university on teacher autonomy.

Teacher autonomy, which is a highly debated issue in education, is defined as the freedom given to teachers to make their own decisions to choose their own methodologies, to select or design tasks and materials, to evaluate outcomes, to take responsibilities for their own decisions (Tehrani & Mansor, 2012; Anderson, 1987), to involve in organizational decision making (Friedman, 1999; Ingersoll, 1994; Ingersoll, 1996), and to improve themselves regarding professional skills (Friedman, 1999; Little, 1995). However, it is believed that teachers' autonomy is limited to the activities within their classrooms (Ulas& Aksu, 2014). Thefore, the present study aims to explore EFL instructors' experiences and to find out the level of autonomy they have in their school and they would like to have in the following areas: curriculum development, instructional planning and implementation, professional development, and organizational decision making. In this study, it is also aimed to shed light on the characteristics of autonomous teachers and the factors that might promote and limit teacher autonomy in foreign language teaching in Turkey by exploring the opinions of the EFL instructors and administrators.

It is aimed that the preliminary data from this study will be obtained by April, 2017. These data will be utilized <u>only</u> for research purposes. For further information, about the study and its results, you can refer to the following names. We would like to thank you for participating in this study.

## Appendix I: Turkish Summary

### GİRİŞ:

Öğretmenler, öğrencilere sunulan eğitimin kalitesi ve okulun başarısında oldukça önemli bir role sahiptir. Bu durum, öğretmenleri daha etkili bir hale getirmenin yollarını araştırmayı gerekli kılmıştır. Bu alanda araştırılan konulardan biri de öğretmen özerkliğidir.

Öğretmen özerkliği, alan yazında yaygın olarak kullanılan bir terim olmasına rağmen, bu kavramın tanımı üzerine uzlaşmaya varılamamıştır. Bu nedenle öğretmen özerkliğinin çeşitli bilim adamları ve uzmanlar tarafından yapılan birçok tanımı bulunmaktadır. Öğretmen eğitimi alanında, bu kavram, öğretmenlerin mesleki bağımsızlığı, karar verme yetkisi ve gücü olarak ele alınmıştır (Anderson, 1987; Friedman, 1999; Webb, 2002). Short (1994) öğretmen özerkliğini, öğretmenlerin çalışma ortamını kontrol edebilme düşüncesi olarak ifade etmiştir. Bu anlamda Anderson (1987) öğretmenlerin özerkliğinin sınıf içiyle sınırlı olduğunu ve öğretmenlerin sınıf dışına çıktıkları anda özerkliklerinin azaldığını belirtmiştir. Benzer bir şekilde, Lasley ve Galloway (1983) öğretmenlerin neyi, ne zaman ve nasıl öğretmeleri gerektiğinin başkaları tarafından belirlendiğini, onlara karar verme yetkisi olan profesyoneller gibi davranılmadığını ve bu durumun onların profesyonelleşmesini engellediğini ifade etmiştir.

Öğretmen özerkliği kavramı, yabancı dil eğitimi alanına yaklaşık 20 yıl önce öğrenci özerkliği ve öğretmen özerkliğinin birbiriyle bağlantılı olduğu düşüncesi belirmeye başladığında girmiştir (Smith & Erdoğan, 2008; Benson, 2011). Öğretmen özerkliği kavramı bu alanda kullanılmaya başlandıktan sonra farklı anlamlar kazanmıştır. Öğretmenin bizzat kendisinin yönettiği profesyonel eylemde bulunabilme (özerk öğretme) yeteneği (Little, 1995; Smith, 2003); öğretmenin kendisinin yönettiği mesleki gelişimde bulunabilme yeteneği (Smith; 2003; Benson & Huang, 2008;

Graves, 2009), ve öğretmenin öğrencilerin özerk öğrenmeleri için sorumluluk almalarına yardım etme yeteneği ve isteği (Thavenius, 1999) bu tanımlar arasında yer alır.

Öğretmen özerkliği üzerine birçok araştırma yapılmıştır ve bu araştırmalar öğretmenlerin özerk olmasının birçok avantajı olduğunu ortaya çıkarmıştır. Öncelikle özerklik öğretmenlerin işteki verimliliğini, işe bağlılığını ve motivasyonlarını artırır (Ingersol, 2007; Benson, 2010; Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010; Emo, 2015). Bunun yanı sıra, özerklik daha etkili bir öğrenme ortamının oluşturulmasına katkıda bulunur (White, 1992; Nelson & Miron, 2005; Öztürk, 2011). Ayrıca, özerk bir öğretmen, öğrenen özerkliğini geliştirebilir (Little, 1995).

Bütün bu faydalarına rağmen, öğretmen özerkliği, okul yönetmeliği ve kuralları, okul yönetimi, eğitimde standartlaşma, merkezileştirilmiş müfredat, ulusal sınavlar, sınava yönelik hazırlanmış ders programı, öğrenci beklentileri ve talepleri, öğretmenlerin değişiklik korkusu ve kişisel gelişimi için zaman ve para ayırmaması gibi unsurlar tarafından kısıtlanmaktadır (Archbald & Porter, 1994; Crookes, 1997; Yıldırım, 2003; Ramos, 2006; Uğurlu & Kahramanova, 2016).

Öğretmenlerin özerklik seviyeleri ve özerk olma istekleri çalıştıkları ortama göre değişiklik gösterebilir. Öğretmen özerkliğinin önemi ve faydaları göz önüne alındığında, bu alanda bir çalışma yapmanın değerli olabileceğini düşünen araştırmacı bu tezde, yüksek öğretim kurumlarında çalışan İngilizce okutmanlarının özerklik üzerine algılarını, özerklik seviyelerini ve özerk olabilme isteklerini araştırmayı hedeflemiştir.

Bilindiği üzere ülkemizde yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğretimi giderek önem kazanmaktadır. Özellikle ülke genelinde üniversitelerin birçok bölümünde eğitim dili olarak İngilizcenin tercih edilmesi, öğrencileri bölümlerindeki akademik çalışmaları için gerekli yabancı dil becerilerinin kazandırılmasını amaçlayan İngilizce hazırlık okullarının açılmasını gerekli kılmıştır. Öğrencilerin üniversiteye başlarken İngilizce

seviyelerinin düşük olması nedeniyle bu programlarda okuyan öğrenci sayıları ve dolayısıyla da bu kurumlarda çalışan okutman sayıları oldukça fazladır.

Ülkemizde İngilizce hazırlık okullarında İngilizce öğretiminin önemli bir ulusal aktivite haline gelmesi nedeniyle (Borg, 2015), bu kurumlarda karşılaşılan problemlerin belirlenmesi ve bu problemleri ele alarak öğretimin kalitesinin artırılması büyük bir önem taşımaktadır. Öğretmen özerkliğinin eğitimde karşılaşılan problemlerin anlaşılması ve çözülmesinde yeni ve farklı bir bakış açısı sunduğu (Öztürk, 2011) düşüncesinden yola çıkarak araştırmacı bu tezde bir devlet üniversitesinin İngilizce hazırlık programında öğretmen özerkliğini incelemeyi hedeflemiştir.

**ÇALIŞMANIN AMACI:**

Bu çalışmanın amacı bir devlet üniversitesinin İngilizce Hazırlık Programında çalışan İngilizce okutmanlarının ve okul yöneticilerinin öğretmen özerkliği kavramını nasıl algıladıklarını incelemektir. Ayrıca, bu okutmanların ve yöneticilerin algılarına dayanarak, okutmanların çalıştıkları kurumda altı alandaki (müfredat, öğretim, değerlendirme, mesleki gelişim, sınıf yönetimi ve kurumsal faaliyetler) özerklik düzeylerini ortaya çıkarmak hedeflenmiştir. Bunların yanı sıra, okutmanların bu belirtilen alanlarda ne derece özerkliğe sahip olmak istedikleri ve yöneticilerin, aynı alanlarda okutmanların ne derece özerk olmaları gerektiğini düşündüklerini belirlemek amaçlanmıştır.

**ARAŞTIRMA SORULARI:**

Bu çalışma aşağıdaki soruların cevaplarını bulmayı amaçlamaktadır:

1. Bir devlet üniversitesinin İngilizce Hazırlık Programında çalışan İngilizce okutmanlarının ve okul yöneticilerinin öğretmen özerkliği kavramına ilişkin algıları nasıldır?
   1.1. Katılımcılar ‘öğretmen özerkliği’ terimini nasıl kavramsallaştırmaktadır?

1.2. Katılımcıların düşüncelerine göre bir özerk öğretmen nitelikleri nelerdir?
1.3. Katılımcıların öğretmen özerkliğinin önemi üzerine düşünceleri nelerdir?
1.4. Katılımcıların düşüncelerine göre öğretmen özerkliğini artıran ve kısıtlayan unsurlar nelerdir?

2. İngilizce okutmanlarının ve okul yöneticilerinin algılarına göre, okutmanların belirtilen alanlarda sahip oldukları özerklik seviyeleri nedir: a) müfredat, b) öğretim, c) değerlendirme, d) mesleki gelişim, e) sınıf yönetimi, f) kurumsal faaliyetler?
3. İngilizce okutmanları belirtilen alanlarda ne ölçüde özerkliğe sahip olmak istemektedirler: a) müfredat, b) öğretim, c) değerlendirme, d) mesleki gelişim, e) sınıf yönetimi, f) kurumsal faaliyetler?
4. Okul yöneticilerinin algılarına göre, İngilizce okutmanları belirtilen alanlarda ne ölçüde özerkliğe sahip olmalıdır: a) müfredat, b) öğretim, c) değerlendirme, d) mesleki gelişim, e) sınıf yönetimi, f) kurumsal faaliyetler?

**ARAŞTIRMANIN ÖNEMİ:**

Araştırmacı, ülkemizdeki diğer İngilizce hazırlık okullarıyla benzer özelliklere sahip olan bu İngilizce Hazırlık Programını incelemenin, ülkemizde yükseköğretim düzeyinde İngilizce öğretimi alanında öğretmen özerkliği konusuna ışık tutacağına inanmaktadır. Bu konteksti ve bu kontekste çalışan İngilizce okutmanlarının ve okul yöneticilerinin özerklik üzerine algılarını derinlemesine inceleyerek, bu çalışma yüksek öğretim kurumlarında çalışan İngilizce okutmanlarının mesleki yaşantılarını, sahip oldukları ve sahip olmak istedikleri özerklik seviyesini ve özerkliklerini kısıtlayan unsurları anlamamıza katkı sağlamaktadır.

İngilizce okutmanlarından, öğrencilerin akademik ihtiyaçlarını karşılama, öğrencilere özerklik ve eleştirel düşünme becerilerini kazandırma ve bir mesleki gelişim aracı olarak eylem araştırması ve yansıtıcı düşünme faaliyetlerinde bulunması beklenmektedir. Fakat aslında bu beklentiler okutmanların kendi öğretme süreçlerinin kontrolüne sahip olma ve sınıflarında gerekli değişiklikleri yapabilme özgürlüğüne

sahip olmalarını gerektirmektedir. Bu nedenle, bu araştırma incelenen kurumda İngilizce okutmanlarına bu beklentileri gerçekleştirebilmeleri için fırsatlar sunulup sunulmadığını ortaya çıkararak aynı şartlarda farklı üniversitelerde çalışan okutmanların durumuna da ışık tutacaktır.

Bu çalışmada okutmanların yanı sıra, okul yöneticilerinin de öğretmen özerkliği üzerine görüşleri incelenmiştir. Bu durum, öğretmen özerkliği kavramının ve yöneticilerin düşüncelerine dayanan kurum içi uygulamaların daha iyi anlaşılmasını sağlamaktadır.

Son olarak, bu araştırma katılımcıların düşüncelerine göre öğretmen özerkliğinin önemini, öğretmenlerin özerkliğini kısıtlayan unsurları ve bunu geliştirme yollarını inceleyerek, özerk eylemleri artırma yolları arama konusunda bizlere rehberlik etmekte ve İngilizce öğretmenleri, okul yöneticileri ve İngilizce öğretmen yetiştirme programları için önemli öneriler sunmaktadır.

**YÖNTEM:**

Bu çalışmada durum incelemesi yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Durum çalışması, belirli bir durumu tasvir etmek ve katılımcıların bu durum ile ilgili tecrübeleri, düşüncüleri ve hislerine ilişkin bilgi vermeyi amaçlar (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Stake (1995)'e göre incelenen durum bir kişi, kurum, program veya bir topluluk olabilir. Bu tezde, durum olarak bir devlet üniversitesinin İngilizce hazırlık programı seçilmiştir. Stake (1995)'i referans alarak, bu durum, öğretmen özerkliği konusu üzerine bilgi edinmek için araştırılmıştır.

Stake (2005)' e göre durum çalışması bir yöntem seçimi değildir ve hangi yöntemlerle olursa olsun, önemli olan incelenen durumdur. Benzer bir şekilde, Yin (2003) durum çalışmasının, nitel çalışmayla karıştırılmaması gerektiği; durum çalışmalarının nicel ve nitel verilere dayanabileceğini ortaya sürmüştür. Bu düşüncelere dayanarak, bu çalışmada hem nicel hem de nitel veri toplama araçları kullanılmıştır.

Bu tezde durum olarak Karabük Üniversitesi Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu'na bağlı İngilizce Hazırlık Programı seçilmiştir. Bu program, eğitim dili tamamen ya da kısmen İngilizce olan bölümlere kabul edilen ve İngilizce seviyesi bölümdeki akademik çalışmalarına devam edemeyecek kadar düşük olan öğrencilere bir yıl zorunlu İngilizce eğitimi sunar. Bu araştırmanın amacı İngilizce okutmanlarının ve okul yöneticilerinin öğretmen özerkliğine ilişkin algılarını incelemek olduğu için araştırmaya, daha önce adı geçen kurumda çalışan 50 İngilizce okutmanı ve 5 yönetici katılmıştır.

**VERİ TOPLAMA:**

Bu çalışmada veri, anket ve bireysel mülakatlar aracılığıyla toplanmıştır. Çalışmada kullanılan anket alan yazında yapılan araştırmalarda kullanılan anketlerden (Pearson & Hall, 1993; Friedman, 1999; Rudolph, LaCoe & O'Hara, 2006) uyarlanmıştır. Anket üç bölümden oluşmaktadır: 1) katılımcı demografik bilgileri, 2) algılanan öğretmen özerkliği seviyelerini ve özerklik isteklerini ölçmeyi hedefleyen 35 maddelik Likert ölçeği, 3) öğretmen özerkliğine dair açık uçlu sorular. Öncelikle anketin güvenilirliğini ölçmek ve anlaşılırlığını test etmek için Ankara'da iki farklı devlet üniversitesinin İngilizce hazırlık programlarında çalışan 14 İngilizce okutmanıyla pilot bir çalışma yapılmıştır. Pilot çalışmada, anket güvenilir bulunmuştur ($\alpha$= .83). Katılımcıların geri dönütleri üzerine birkaç maddede ifade değişikliği yapılarak maddeler daha anlaşılır hale getirilmiştir. Bunlar sonucunda araştırmacı, kurumda çalışan 60 okutmana ve 5 yöneticiye anket dağıtmış ve 50 okutman ve bütün yöneticiler araştırmacıya geri dönüş yapmıştır.

Mülakatların anket sonuçlarını destekleyeceği ve İngilizce okutmanlarının ve yöneticilerinin öğretmen özerkliğine dair tecrübe ve algılarını daha detaylı bir şekilde ortaya koyacağı düşünülmüştür. Bu nedenle yapılan mülakatlar için alanyazında yapılan çalışmalarda kullanılan mülakat sorularından (Rudolph, LaCoe & O'Hara, 2006) faydalanılmıştır. Araştırmacı mülakatlara katılımcı seçmek için bir kriter oluşturmuştur. Buna göre mülakat için özerklik seviyesi düşük ve özerklik isteği

düşük; özerklik seviyesi düşük fakat özerklik isteği yüksek; özerklik seviyesi yüksek ve özerklik isteği yüksek; özerklik seviyesi yüksek fakat özerklik isteği düşük katılımcıların seçilmesi planlanmıştır. Bu amaçla, anket sonuçları incelenerek, belirtildiği gibi öğretmen özerkliği konusunda farklı tecrübelere ve görüşlere sahip 9 okutman ile bireysel mülakatlar gerçekleştirmiştir. Ayrıca, iki yönetici ile de bireysel mülakat yapılmıştır. Mülakatlar ve anketler gönüllülük esasına dayalı gerçekleştirilmiştir ve bütün mülakatlarda ses kaydı yapılmıştır.

**VERİ ANALİZİ:**

Araştırmada toplanan nicel veriler SPSS 22.0 kullanılarak analiz edilmiş ve buna göre katılımcıların özelliklerini, okutmanların algıladıkları özerklik seviyelerini ve özerklik isteklerini, okul yöneticilerin algılarına göre öğretmen özerkliğinin ne ölçüde olduğunu ve ne ölçüde olması gerektiğini belirlemek için sıklık ve ortalama hesapları kullanılarak betimleyici istatistikler elde edilmiştir.

Bütün mülakatlar, başlangıç tema analizi için fikir vermesi açısından olduğu gibi yazıya dökülmüştür. Anketlerdeki açık uçlu sorulara verilen cevaplar ve mülakat verilerinin analizi, Cresswell (2013)'in betimlediği veri analiz sürecine uygun olarak yapılmıştır. Buna göre, öncelikle veriler baştan sona okunmuş ve kısa notlar alınmış, ardından veriler kodlanmış ve bu kodlar kategorilere ayrılmıştır. Bunun sonucunda temalar oluşturulmuş, sonuçlar yorumlanmış ve bulgular araştırma sorularına göre sunulmuştur.

**BULGULAR VE TARTIŞMA:**

Bu bölümde bulgular araştırma sorularına göre sunulmuştur. Birinci soru bir devlet üniversitesinin İngilizce Hazırlık Programında çalışan İngilizce okutmanlarının ve okul yöneticilerinin öğretmen özerkliği kavramına ilişkin algılarını ortaya çıkarmayı hedeflemiştir. Bu amaçla, katılımcılara göre öğretmen özerkliğinin anlamı, özerk öğretmenlerin nitelikleri, öğretmen özerkliğinin önemi, özerkliği kısıtlayan ve geliştiren unsurlar araştırılmıştır.

*Katılımcılara göre öğretmen özerkliğinin anlamı*

Araştırmaya katılan okutmanların büyük bir çoğunluğu ve okul yöneticilerinin hepsi öğretmen özerkliğini "öğretmenlerin öğretim süreciyle ilgili alanlarla karar verme özgürlüğü" olarak algılamaktadırlar ve bu katılımcıların çoğu karar verilen alanların "öğretmenlerin neyi nasıl öğretecekleri konusunda karar verme özgürlüğü" olarak tanımlayarak, özerklik alanlarını müfredat ve öğretim yöntemi olarak belirtmişlerdir. Yapılan bu tanım Benson (2000)'ın yaptığı "öğretmenlerin kontrol altında olmaktan bağımsız olma" tanımıyla uyumlu ve Short (1994)'un karar verme özgürlüğünün özerkliğin en önemli özelliği olduğu iddiasını destekler niteliktedir.

Ayrıca birkaç okutman, öğretmen özerkliğini, Little (1995) ve Smith (2003)'in açıkladığı gibi, öğretmenin bizzat kendisinin yönettiği profesyonel eylemde bulunabilme (özerk öğretme) yeteneği olarak tanımlamıştır. Sadece iki okutman da öğretmen özerkliğini öğretmeninin öğretme sorumluluğu olarak algılamaktadır.

*Katılımcılara göre özerk öğretmenlerin özellikleri*

Katılımcıların çok büyük bir çoğunluğu öğretmen özerkliğini olumlu niteliklerle bağdaştırmaktadır. Veriler incelendiğinde, okutmanlar tarafından en sık bahsedilen özelliğin, özerk öğretmenlerin bağımsız ve karar vermede özgür olduğu görülmüştür. Katılımcılar, özerk öğretmenlerin kendi öğretim süreçlerinin ve öğrenci ihtiyaçlarının farkında olduklarından, sorumluluk sahibi, yaratıcı, özgüveni yüksek ve başarılı/verimli olduklarından bahsetmiştir. Ayrıca, onlara göre, özerk öğretmenler motivasyonları yüksek, öğrenmeye açık, problem çözme becerileri gelişmiş ve risk almaya hazır öğretmenlerdir. Sadece bir yönetici özerk öğretmenleri beraber çalışılması zor insanlar olarak nitelemiştir.

Mülakatlarda fazla özerk olmak isteyen öğretmenlerin özellikleri sorulduğunda birbirine zıt cevaplar elde edilmiştir. Bazı katılımcılar sorumluluk sahibi öğretmenlerin daha fazla özerklik istediğini düşünürken bazıları da bu öğretmenlerin sorumsuz olduklarını ve özerkliği sorumluluklarından bir kaçış olarak gördüklerini

belirtmiştir. Ayrıca bazıları tecrübeli öğretmenlerin daha fazla özerklik istediğini iddia ederken, kimi de tecrübesiz öğretmenlerin daha fazla özerklik istediğine inanmaktadır.

*Katılımcılara göre öğretmen özerkliğinin önemi*

İngilizce okutmanlarının ve yöneticilerin çoğu aşağıda belirtilen nedenden dolayı öğretmen özerkliğinin önemli olduğunu savunmaktadır:

- Öğretmen özerkliği, öğretmenlerin uzun yıllar mesleklerine devam edebilmeleri için iş tatmini sağlar. Bu düşünceleri Skaalvik ve Skaalvik (2010), Emo (2015), ve Kreis ve Brockopp (1986)'un öğretmen özerkliği ve iş tatmini arasında bir ilişki olduğunu belirten araştırmalarını destekler niteliktedir.
- Mesleki özerklik, öğretmenlerin sınıflarında en iyisi olduğunu düşündükleri şekilde hareket etmelerine olanak sağlayarak öğretmenlerin başarılarını ve verimliliklerini artırır.
- Öğretmen özerkliği öğretmenlerin özgüvenini, farkındalığını ve sorumluluk duygularını artırır.
- Her sınıfın özelliği farklı olduğu için, her sınıfta farklı içeriğin, metotların ve materyallerin kullanılması gerekebilir.
- Öğretmenler, öğrencilerin ihtiyaçları, ilgileri ve öğrenme stilleri hakkında en iyi bilgi sahibi oldukları için, onlarla ilgili en iyi kararı verebilirler (Nelson & Miron, 2005).
- Öğretmenler öğrencilerin profillerine göre derslerini adapte edebilmelidir (Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990).

Okutmanlar öğretmen özerkliğinin hem öğretmenler için faydalarından hem de bağlamsal gerekliliklerinden bahsederken, okul yöneticileri sadece bağlamsal gerekliliklere değinmiştir.

Öğretmen özerkliğinin öneminin ve faydalarının yanı sıra birkaç katılımcı özerkliğin öğretmenlere çok fazla sorumluluk yüklediği ve iş yükünü artırdığını ifade etmişlerdir. Ayrıca, birkaç okutman öğretmenlerin bazı konularda özerk olmalarının öğrenciler

arasında eşitlik ve adaleti sağlayamayacağı, bu özerkliğin bazı öğretmenler tarafından istismar edilebileceği ve okulda kargaşa ortamı doğurabileceği yönünde endişelerini dile getirmişlerdir.

*Katılımcılara göre öğretmen özerkliğini kısıtlayan unsurlar*

Katılımcıların mülakatlarda ve anketlerin açık uçlu sorulara verdikleri cevaplarda en sık bahsettikleri özerkliği engelleyen unsurlar, okul yönetmeliği ve kuralları, okul yönetimi, okulun büyüklüğü (öğrenci ve öğretmen sayısının fazla ve sınıfların çok olması), ve bunun gerektirdiği standardizasyon çalışmalarıdır. Ayrıca, esnek olmayan bir müfredat ve sıkı sıkıya takip edilmesi gereken bir program, özerkliği önleyen öğelerdir. Bunların yanı sıra öğretmenlerinin farkındalığının, problem çözme becerilerinin ve öğretim yöntemleri hakkında bilgilerinin yetersizliği ve duygusal yorgunluk, kişisel başarının kaybedilmesi, isteksizlik gibi duyuşsal nedenlerin de öğretmen özerkliğini etkileyen unsurlar arasında olduğu belirtilmiştir. Bu bulgular, Benson (2010)'ın öğretmen özerkliğinin bireysel öğretmenlerin ilgi ve yeteneklerine bağlı olduğu düşüncesini destekler niteliktedir.

*Katılımcılara göre öğretmen özerkliğini geliştiren unsurlar*

Neredeyse katılımcıların tamamı öğretmen özerkliğinin nasıl artırılabileceği konusunda bir fikir beyan etmiştir. Bunların başında öğretmenlere daha fazla karar verme özgürlüğü verilmesi ve öğretim süreçlerini kontrol edebilmelerinin sağlanması gelmektedir. En sık bahsedilen diğer bir öneri de öğretmenlere mesleki gelişim olanaklarının sağlanmasıdır. Benzer bir şekilde, Merry (2004) de özerklik için mesleki farkındalığın gerekli olduğunu savunmuş ve verilen mesleki eğitimlerde öğretmenlerin farkındalığının artırılmasının hedeflenmesi gerektiğini önermiştir. Bunların yanı sıra, öğretmenler müfredat, ders materyalleri, ölçme ve değerlendirme gibi konulardaki karar verme sürecine dahil edilmeli ve onlara fikirlerini özgürce ifade edebilecekleri bir ortam sunulmalıdır. Son olarak, birkaç okutman yöneticilerin öğretmenlerin düşüncelerine saygı göstermesi, gerekli durumlarda onlara övgüde bulunması ve

öğretmenler arası iş birliği sağlamasının öğretmen özerkliğini artıracağını düşünmektedir.

*Katılımcıların okutmanların sahip olduğu özerklik seviyesine ilişkin algıları*

Tezin ikinci araştırma sorusu, okutmanların ve yöneticilerin algılarına göre, okutmanların altı alanda (müfredat, öğretim, değerlendirme, mesleki gelişim, sınıf yönetimi ve kurumsal faaliyetler) ne ölçüde özerk olduğunu ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamış ve nicel veriler analiz edildiğinde, okutmanların genel olarak özerklik seviyelerinin düşük olarak algılandığı görülmüştür. Katılımcılar okutmanların sınıf yönetimi ve öğretim üzerine orta derecede özerk olduklarını, müfredat alanında düşük seviyede, ölçme ve değerlendirme ve kurumsal faaliyetler alanlarında ise neredeyse hiç özerkliğe sahip olmadıklarını düşünmektedir. Bu sonuçlar, araştırmanın yapıldığı kurumda bütün sınıflarda ortak bir müfredatın olması, aynı materyallerin kullanılması ve ortak değerlendirme araçlarının ve kriterlerin kullanılması gibi standart uygulamalara bağlanabilir. Daha önce yapılan araştırmaların da gösterdiği gibi (Lepicnic- Vodopivec, 2016; Hong & Youngs, 2016) okutmanlar müfredat alanında çok kısıtlı bir özerkliğe sahipken, sınıf içinde öğretim teknik ve metotlarını seçmede ve sınıflarındaki alanı istedikleri gibi kullanabilmedeki özerklik seviyeleri yüksektir.

*Okutmanların özerklik istekleri*

Araştırmanın diğer bir sorusu da okutmanların daha önce listelenen altı alanda ne derecede özerk olmak istediklerini ortaya koymaktır. Nicel ve nitel veriler incelendiğinde, okutmanların büyük bir çoğunluğunun bütün alanlarda özerk olmak istedikleri görülmüştür; fakat kurumsal faaliyetler alanında özerklik istekleri orta seviyededir. LaCoe (2006)'nın da belirttiği gibi öğretmenler sahip olduklarından daha fazla özerklik talep etmektedirler. Öğretmenlerin açık uçlu sorulara verdikleri cevaplar öğretmenlerin müfredat alanında içeriği ve konuları belirleme, ders materyallerini seçebilme; öğretim alanında öğrenme aktivitelerinin seçiminde özgür olma; mesleki gelişim alanında yapılan eğitimlerin içeriğini belirleme ve kurumsal faaliyetler

alanında da sınıf mevcudunun ve ders programının belirlenmesinde söz sahibi olma isteklerini ortaya çıkarmıştır.

*Okul yöneticilerinin öğretmen özerkliği üzerine algıları*

Araştırmanın son sorusu okul yöneticilerinin algılarına göre, daha önceden belirtilen altı alanda İngilizce okutmanlarının ne ölçüde özerkliğe sahip olması gerektiğini bulmayı hedeflemiştir. Anket verileri incelendiğinde, okul yöneticilerinin öğretmenlere mesleki gelişim ve sınıf yönetimi alanlarında özerklik verilmesi gerektiğini; fakat müfredat, ölçme ve değerlendirme ve kurumsal faaliyetler alanında öğretmenlerin özerkliğe sahip olmamaları gerektiğini düşündükleri görülmüştür.

**ÖNERİLER:**

Bu araştırma İngilizce öğretmenleri, okul yöneticileri ve İngilizce öğretmen yetiştirme programları için önemli öneriler sunmaktadır. Öncelikle, öğretmenler kendilerine sunulan özerkliğin aynı zamanda beraberinde sorumluluk da getirdiğinin farkında olmalı ve özerkliklerini geliştirmek için dersleri üzerine sürekli eleştirel düşünmeli ve meslektaşları ve öğrencileriyle iş birliği içinde olmalılardır. Öğrencilerin ihtiyaçları ve istekleri farklılık gösterdiği gibi öğretmenlerin öğretme şekilleri ve güçlü olduğu yönler de farklılık göstermektedir. Bu farklılıkları göz önünde bulundurarak öğrencilerin gereksinimlerini karşılayabilmek için okul yöneticileri öğretmenlere daha fazla özgürlük tanımalı, fakat aynı zamanda öğretmenlerin bu özerkliği iyi yönetebilmeleri için gerekli rehberlik ve mesleki gelişim eğitimlerini sağlamalıdırlar. Okul yöneticileri ayrıca eğitim-öğretim ile ilgili kararların alınması sürecinde öğretmenleri de bu sürece dahil etmelidir. Blase ve Kirby (2009)'nin de ileri sürdüğü gibi, öğretmenlerin karar verme sürecine dahil edilmesi okulun başarısını artırır. Bu nedenle, fikirlerini özgür bir şekilde ifade edebilmeleri için öğretmenler teşvik edilmelidir. Öğretmen eğitim programları ise öğretmen adaylarına sadece teorik bilgi kazandırmayı değil, onların becerilerini ve öz farkındalıklarını geliştirmeyi hedeflemelidir ve bahsi geçen bütün alanlarda (müfredat, öğretim, değerlendirme, sınıf yönetimi, mesleki gelişim ve kurumsal faaliyetler) öğretmenlere verilmesi istenen

özerkliğin getirdiği gereksinimleri karşılayabilmeleri için, öğretmen adaylarının bu alanlarda gerekli bilgi ve becerileri kazanmalarını sağlayarak onları donanımlı yetiştirmelilerdir.

Öğretmen özerkliğinin önemi düşünüldüğünde, benzer çalışmalar farklı bağlamlarda yapılıp diğer İngilizce öğretmenlerinin ne derecede özerk oldukları ya da özerk olmak istedikleri araştırılabilir. Ayrıca öğretmen özerkliğinin fazla olduğu kurumlarda bir araştırma yapılıp öğretmenlerin bu duruma ilişkin algıları araştırılabilir. Bunların yanı sıra, öğretmen özerkliği ve iş tatmini arasında ve öğretmen özerkliği ve öğrenci başarısı arasındaki ilişki araştırılabilir.

## TEZ FOTOKOPİSİ İZİN FORMU

**ENSTİTÜ**

Fen Bilimleri Enstitüsü ☐

Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü ■

Uygulamalı Matematik Enstitüsü ☐

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Deniz Bilimleri Enstitüsü ☐

**YAZARIN**

Soyadı : Yıldırım
Adı : Tuğba
Bölümü : İngiliz Dili Öğretimi

**TEZİN ADI** (İngilizce) : THE PERCEPTIONS OF EFL INSTRUCTORS AND ADMINISTRATORS ON TEACHER AUTONOMY: A CASE STUDY

**TEZİN TÜRÜ** : Yüksek Lisans ■ Doktora ☐

1. Tezimin tamamından kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir. ☐
2. Tezimin içindekiler sayfası, özet, indeks sayfalarından ve/veya bir bölümünden kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir. ☐
3. Tezimden bir bir (1) yıl süreyle fotokopi alınamaz. ■

**TEZİN KÜTÜPHANEYE TESLİM TARİHİ**: