

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The first chapter of the study introduces the essential points into which the study is directed. The points are related to the issues on teacher's autonomy in instructional planning decision-making in EFL teaching practices. The research procedure in this chapter, therefore, outlines the background of the study, followed by the formulation of the research questions, purposes of the study, significances of the study, scope of the study, operational definitions of terms and the organizations of the thesis.

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Teacher autonomy plays a significant role in building the education world and in building the school as specific. To please teachers with teacher autonomy means to bring a bright future to the school. In other words, without teacher autonomy, it seems impossible to build a dream school with excellence and pride. Almost every aspect of schools is affected by teacher autonomy. One of those is teacher professional competences. Teacher competences will be effectively possessed by teachers with the advantage of teacher autonomy, due to freedom and authority that facilitate teachers to act independently to implement the knowledge and concept of teaching. In fact, teachers in Indonesia were not still given such freedom, especially in the current curriculum development. The authorities still tend to omit teachers' role in initiating ideas and changes into curriculum aspects. As a consequence in daily applications, teachers tend to be put at the back or to be instructed, without any understanding of how to manage them knowledgeably.

Teachers with a high level of autonomy are having a high level of competence and vice versa. It can be said that when we want to increase our teacher professional competence, rising teacher level of autonomy is a likely matter to ensure. By increasing teacher autonomy, the teacher will feel very passionate in working, and as a result, the teacher will work very creatively and independently (Blase & Kirby, 2009). Teachers are the main subject of education in the classroom beside the students. Teachers then will need to act and perform

certain responsibility autonomously regarding curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, students' behaviour, classroom environment and professional development (Strong, 2012). When doing their job, teachers should organize it freely so they can act independently and creatively. But when a teacher does not possess such freedom, a teacher will feel does not support enough to perform well.

Decision-making ability is the hallmark of teacher autonomy (Crawford, 2001). It allows teachers' choice and determination in critical issues surrounding their duty. These issues related to how the teacher can use their professional judgment to decide the instructions in the classrooms, as well as to take a decision in many contexts and situations (Lamb & Reinders, 2008). Correspondingly, Ozturk (2012) states that teachers' autonomy refers to teachers' freedom in deciding the organization of their instructional documents for the students' improvement. He believes that teachers have a large control over the choice of goals, topics, teaching techniques, and learning activities.

Instructional planning is considered necessary in teaching aspects. It is a concrete representation of the actual activities that guide teacher-student interactions and instructional outcomes (Ball, Knobloch & Hoop, 2007). Teachers' skills in designing instructional planning recognized in teacher professional standards as one of the required competencies. It is stated in Law No. 14/2005 about professional teachers' competence in Indonesia that teacher's knowledge in developing their instructional planning aspects and implementing them in the classroom is one of the considerable aspects of teachers' competence in the current curriculum development. The most important thing is that it must be related to their comprehension of their students' characteristics, material mastery, and the methodology of teaching English as a foreign language (Sundayana, 2015). Besides, the ability to plan instruction in order to meet students' needs and make it coherent to the curriculum requirements are also taken into consideration.

Even though it is believed that instructional planning skills are critical for instructional effectiveness in the classroom, there is no guarantee that teachers actually apply it in designing their instructional planning. In some cases, although teachers have an authority to make some improvement in the lesson plan, most of them only follow the designed lesson plan without implement changes to it. Jasmi

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(2014) found that the teachers did not have time to construct their own lesson plan so that they only adapted it from the internet. In reality, it is not only because the teachers' did not have time but also because of their lack of willingness and creativity to introduce changes to their lesson plan.

Recent studies have found that teacher autonomy has a positive correlation to teacher professional competence and students' autonomous motivation (Facrurrazi, 2012; Maulana et al., 2016). These studies reveal that teacher autonomy influence to the improvements of the teachers' and students' performance. Meanwhile, in instructional planning and implementation, Ozturk (2012) found that teachers were more flexible in implementation process rather than in the planning process. The teacher flexibility in the implementation process has resulted in different practices in terms of the selection of course contents and materials as well as the teaching techniques. Moreover, Westerman (1991) specifically found that an experienced teacher was better than a novice teacher in terms of objectives development in instructional planning. Novice teachers relied more on following the stated objectives in the curriculum rather than modifying these objectives to take into account student characteristics and their own goals as the experienced teachers did. It also reflected in the implementation process that experienced teachers were more flexible in making an adjustment when unexpected circumstances in student learning occurred.

Although several studies have found a number of teacher autonomy practices in the field of education, the research findings have not explicitly described the role of teacher autonomy in EFL situations. Besides, the results of these studies mostly cover teacher autonomy in general, including teachers' involvement in instructional planning development, staff development, parental involvement, extracurricular subjects, and curriculum development. Moreover, earlier studies have mostly focused on specific subject lessons (e.g., mathematics and history). Therefore, this study is an attempt to focus on EFL teacher autonomy in planning and implementation phase including several aspects such as instructional goals and objectives, instructional activities, instructional media, and assessment tools and technique.

## 1.2 Research Questions

The research is intended to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent are the teachers autonomous in instructional planning decision-making?
2. What are the internal and external factors that facilitate and constrain teacher autonomy?

## 1.3 Purposes of the Study

The aims of this research are:

1. To investigate the degree of EFL teachers' autonomy over their instructional planning decision-making.
2. To investigate the internal and external factors that facilitate and constrain teacher autonomy.

## 1.4 The significance of the Study

This study is expected to provide significances for EFL teachers, school administrators, and future researchers.

For pedagogical implication, the findings of this study are expected to encourage the teachers to be more aware of their students' needs and not always depend on the conventional teaching practices, even after they have had the authority to improve their teaching and their students' learning.

For school administrators, the findings of this study are expected to be used as the consideration in putting teachers' autonomy as one of the critical aspects of the school's academic and administrative activities. Thus, appropriate and periodic training programs related to teachers' autonomy development can be formulated.

For future researchers, the findings of this study are expected to provide insight related to the role of EFL teachers' autonomy over their instructional planning decision-making. Besides, the findings of this study are also expected to be useful information to conduct a more comprehensive study related to teacher's autonomy in the instructional planning decision-making in Indonesian educational context.

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### 1.5 Scope of the Study

Considering the complexity of the topic, the researcher acknowledges some limitations of this study. First, this study is limited to investigate the degree of EFL teachers' autonomy in instructional planning decision-making in Secondary Schools in Palembang and factors that facilitate and constrain the development of teacher autonomy.

Second, among three forms of teachers' autonomy, this study focuses on examining teacher's individual autonomy. In this case, the individual has a chance to take decisions related to the content selection of teaching practices such as choices of the teaching material, instructional strategies, and assessments procedures. Although the teachers are given the individual choices, but it does not mean that they possess complete freedom as they have to respect the official rules and instructions.

### 1.6 Operational Definitions of Terms

To avoid misunderstanding and misinterpretation of some key terms, the terms will be defined as follows.

*Teacher autonomy* is the freedom of the teachers to make their own decisions in their work life. It involves the capability to choose their teaching methodologies, select their teaching tasks and materials, evaluate outcomes, cooperate with others to solve problems and take responsibilities of their own decisions (Tehrani and Mansor, 2012). In this study, teacher autonomy refers to the teachers' freedom in making decisions related to their instruction. This freedom covers the capability of the teachers to make their own decisions toward the content selection of their instructional goals and objectives, instructional activities, instructional media, and assessment tools and technique.

*Instructional planning* is the preparation for teaching and learning, including the construction of goals, objectives, and instructional and assessment methodology (Lai and Lam, 2011). The sources of instructional planning may come from several aspects such as the goals or mission statements, textbooks, the study program, the policy statement, and the syllabus. These sources can be useful for teachers in developing teaching planning in order to achieve curriculum goals

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and instructional objectives. Instructional planning in this study focuses on systematic instructional planning as it is implemented in the 2013 curriculum. This planning process includes identifying the instructional goals, objectives, and activities, choosing the instructional media, developing assessment tools, implementing the instruction, and revising the instruction.

### **1.7 The Organization of the Thesis**

This thesis was elaborated in five chapters. Chapter one presented the background of the study, the research questions, the purposes of the study, the significance of the study, scope of the study, the operational definitions of terms, and the organizations of the thesis. Chapter two explored theoretical issues. This consists of the concept of autonomy, definition of teacher autonomy, forms of teacher autonomy, elements of teacher autonomy, concept and measuring teacher autonomy, what is not part of autonomy, instructional planning, systematic model of instructional planning and teacher autonomy in constructing instructional planning. Chapter three described six aspects consisting of research design, research site and participants, data collection techniques, data collection procedures, and data analysis. Chapter four presented two main sections of the study, research findings and discussions. Chapter five covered the conclusions, implications, limitations of the study, and recommendations of the study.