



Teacher Autonomy and Empowerment

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Abstract

Teacher autonomy refers to the freedom of teachers in schools – specifically, the degree to which teachers decide what to teach and how to teach. It is the ability to control one's own teaching, which in turn may be actually called empowerment. Teacher self-efficacy is positively associated with teacher job satisfaction and retention. According to the methods, procedures and standards used in the evaluation of the teacher's work, the evaluation rules will affect the freedom of the teachers. If the assessment process, expectations and requirements are more stringent or harsher, this will affect the way teachers teach students. Social pressures, government education policies, and school policies can help or hinder teacher independence in assessment. Teachers who learn to self-motivate in the classroom can benefit from enhanced teaching skills, and health education. Student support, classroom participation, and professional development will be greatly appreciated. Students who felt more teacher support reported to have higher levels of self-efficacy, commitment, and motivation to learn.

Key Words: Empowerment, Job-Satisfaction, Self-Efficacy, Commitment, Self Regulated Learning

Teacher Autonomy

Teacher Autonomy means the freedom of teachers in schools to decide what and how they teach students. This is a multifaceted concept that can be learned by examining who makes the decisions about the teacher's work and who controls the consequences of those decisions.

While teacher freedom is usually about what and how teachers teach students, the problem can also arise in other ways – the school has no legal staff; teachers often change jobs. In addition, the collective bargaining and negotiation of teacher contracts may vary by region.

Teacher autonomy is a key aspect of the teaching profession (**Wermke & Höstfält, 2014**) that is positively related to perceived self-efficacy, job satisfaction and positive work climate (**Cribb & Gewirtz, 2007; Wermke et al., 2019**). These factors are crucial to teachers' motivation and commitment to providing effective learning opportunities for students (**Cribb & Gewirtz, 2007**).

Teacher autonomy therefore includes both teachers' ability to determine the content and conditions of their own work, and teachers' willingness and ability to inform and improve practice (**Mausethagen & Mølstad, 2015**). In this way, they should be able to establish an organization by finding other ways to think critically and to learn to follow the social, cultural and physical aspects of the workplace (**Priestley et al., 2012, 2015; Biesta et al., 2017**).

Multidimensionality of Teacher Autonomy

Teacher autonomy is a multidimensional concept that can be studied by examining who makes the decisions about a teacher's work and who controls the consequences of those decisions. Specifically, researchers can examine whether decisions are made by teachers or other actors inside the school (internal control) or outside the school (external control) (**Mausethagen & Mølstad, 2015**). **Wemke et al., (2019)** explains that the decisions of teachers or other actors regarding teaching activities can affect many areas of the school environment. These areas are academic, referring to instructional planning, teaching and assessment; relations with policy development, student monitoring and treatment of special students, evaluations; and development, actions related to the development of school personnel and decision making; managers focus on making decisions about time and resources (**Wermke et al., 2017, 2019**).

Teacher's freedom is a situation and interaction as well as being a multiple ideal, meaning that the freedom of an individual and/or group affects freedom among others (**Bergh, 2015; Frostenson, 2015**). **Wermke and Forsberg (2017)** use the term “service autonomy” to refer to the concept of personal autonomy and the term “institutional autonomy” to refer to the general concept of freedom of action in teaching work.

From a management perspective, the identity of the teacher is related to how the state manages education (**Cribb & Gewirtz, 2007; Wermke & Höstfält, 2014**). The state can control the administrative apparatuses in the country or distribute them to the municipal and school level. Examination of the duties imposed by the state on municipal and school levels is important in terms of understanding the effect of the redistribution of responsibilities on individual freedoms and teachers.

Teaching for the Test

A phenomenon known as “teaching for the test”, where teachers focus on teaching the content most likely to be tested, or spend time preparing students for the examination rather than teaching students in the classroom, may have more important knowledge and skills. Critics say that if schools, teachers, students or teachers are penalized because of the examination, teachers will have less freedom in the teaching process as they will have to “take the examination”.

State Standards – All states of India have developed and implemented educational standards, written descriptions of what students should know and be able to do at a given level of education. Thus, when schools “fix” their programmes and classrooms to the learning objectives described in the standards, some argue that teachers have no less “freedom” to determine the knowledge, skills, and content to teach students. The extent to which educational standards limit teacher freedom remains a subject of ongoing debate and debate, but many educators believe that standards do not limit teachers’ freedom.

Curriculum Policy – Some states, countries, and schools have curriculum policies that can more or less affect the teacher. Some districts and schools require teachers to use “scripted curriculum”, which are prescriptive, standardized, pre-packaged lesson formats that may require teachers to follow a certain level.

Although the term is now generally accepted and rarely used, in the last few years the writing literature has been called “teacher use”. Obviously, when such a curriculum system is controlled, a teacher’s autonomy will be very

limited. In other countries or schools, teachers are required to use specific textbooks or lessons or follow a “speed guide” that outlines specific curriculum and content sequences.

Promotion Policy – Some states, countries, and schools have policies regarding promotion, and this may limit teachers’ ability to play a role in promotion. In this case, the teacher will have no say in how the student “gets back” grades that the teacher did not receive in his/her class.

Evaluation Policy – Discussions and debates about “teacher evaluation” and “teacher responsibility” have become important and controversial in recent years. According to the methods, procedures and standards used in the evaluation of the teacher’s work, the evaluation rules will affect the freedom of the teachers. The evaluation process will affect the way teachers teach students if the expectations and requirements are more stringent or difficult.

Teacher Autonomy Support

Teacher autonomy support refers to the autonomy that teachers provide students with learning, including teaching behaviours that explore and develop children’s abilities, needs, tastes, and interests and provide opportunities for students to use their talents in the classroom, motivation to manage their work and activities. When students feel that their teachers are open to their ideas and allowing them to make decisions about their own learning and work, they are engaged in school, and report better getting along and connecting with school. Students have intrinsic motivation that, if sustained, can lead to engagement and satisfaction.

Teachers can provide independence support to students in many ways – practicing that promote student autonomy include talking to students about autonomy and its benefits; encouraging students to participate in behavioural learning; getting students to reflect on their learning; doing activities to promote independence in the classroom; engaging to activities that promote independence outside the classroom; asking and connecting students’ perspectives; welcoming students’ thoughts, feelings, and behaviour; understanding students’ motivational abilities; providing them with a variety of discussions, answers and alternatives to choose from; and involving students in the collaboration. These practices can help teachers create an environment that encourages student independence and encourages motivation.

Student Autonomy

Student autonomy has many benefits. When students feel open to their teacher's ideas and allow them to make their own choices about their studies and careers, they are more engaged in school, have an impact in the classroom, study less, and report better understanding and connection with school. Several studies reported that self-motivated instruction had a positive effect on student engagement.

Additionally, students who are more independent in their learning are more likely to develop self-directed learning. These skills include goal setting, self-monitoring, self-assessment, and self-motivation.

Some ways teachers can support self-learning. These include – teaching students to set goals and monitor their progress towards those goals; encouraging students to evaluate their own learning through self-reflection and self-assessment; giving students the opportunity to practice independently. These practices can help students develop self-awareness and become effective learners.

Teacher Autonomy and Student Engagement

Studies of student engagement have grown in recent years as it has the potential to address issues such as early leaving and underachievement. The concept of collaboration is attractive because it is simple and understandable for changes in teachers (**Fredricks et al., 2016**). Therefore, participation is used as an important goal of intervention and an explicit goal of many school improvement programmes (**Appleton et al., 2008**).

Recent research has highlighted the importance of teaching practices that support self-regulation for student engagement, including teacher discussion practices (**Böheim et al., 2021**) and classroom models (**Cheon et al., 2020**).

Teacher support refers to the degree of autonomy that teachers provide to students in learning activities, including teaching behaviours that identify and develop children's needs, interests, preferences and provide students in the classroom (**Reeve, 2009**). The teachers actually bring about learning and empowerment (**Reeve et al., 2004**).

Evidence shows that when teachers learn to be supportive in the classroom, there are benefits for teachers (such as effective teaching, teaching skills, and healthy clean drinking) (**Rimm-Kaufman & Sawyer, 2004; Cheon et al., 2014**) and students' motivation, classroom participation, and skill development (**Cheon et al., 2020**).

A recent literature review focusing on intervention studies on the use of autonomic support has shown that teaching autonomic support is appropriate because it can be achieved while teaching (Reeve & Cheon, 2021). In intervention studies, most of the participants showed that teaching behaviour such as not saying the answers or answering students' questions, taking more time to listen, and providing meaningful justifications is good (McLachlan & Hagger, 2010; Reeve & Cheon, 2021). The self-regulated and self-supportive behaviour sustains once learned in practice (Cheon & Reeve, 2013; Tilga et al., 2020). An important factor in promoting student participation is instruction/motivation (e. g. teacher support). Teachers who support autonomy help students develop intrinsic motivations that facilitate their participation in learning (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Reeve, 2009). It also offers students a choice of meaningful assignments or activities, explains why the lesson is important, and allows them to pursue their goals and objectives.

Although many studies have been done on the relationship between empowerment and academic engagement, there is still no link between previous researches on the subject. Additionally, recent reviews of student engagement highlight technology-enhanced environments (Henrie et al., 2015; Schindler et al., 2017) and reviews of autonomic support appear to be more frequent in the field of autonomic support at work (Slemp et al., 2018) and in sport and exercise (Pérez-González et al., 2019; Raabe et al., 2019). There is a review of the effect of teaching practices on student engagement (Harbour et al., 2015) suggest effective teaching methods that require greater student participation. However, this particular review failed to provide insight into how autonomous support fosters collaboration. According to a recent report, the effects of the epidemic on education will last longer than we need; education causes a loss of income in students' future working lives (Dorn et al., 2020).

Student Participation

Student engagement refers to the process by which a student participates enthusiastically (Lei et al., 2018). As suggested by Zhang et al., (2007), students are interested in learning when they are involved in what is called participation. Engaging students on multiple levels, including intellectual and emotional, is a versatile practice (Harbour et al., 2015).

Participation is viewed from three different perspectives – learning, learner and teacher. In an educational context, participation is defined as the effort, attention, assistance, and skill students put into completing tasks in and out of

the classroom, and the methods and techniques teachers use to encourage students to participate in learning (**Kuh, 2003**). In recent studies, behavioural research has shown how much the student is involved in learning, how involved in the learning process (**Hiver et al., 2021; Sang & Hiver, 2021**).

Students receive health and psychology training in the education process called intelligence. Students engage with intelligence when they show purpose, specificity, and attention to accomplish a task or learning goal (**Reeve, 2013**). Consistency is thought to have a significant impact on the collective content due to the ambiguous content of the mind or understanding expressed by the students in the classroom or the work involving different types of cooperation (**Henry & Thorsen, 2020**).

For this reason, preferred (emotional) collaboration refers to students' perception of the learning environment, people in the particular environment, work and participation in education (**Skinner et al., 2009; Reeve, 2012**). As **Philp and Duchesne (2008)** stated, social participation is important in language learning. Indeed, engagement relationships are characterized by identifying knowledge of the relationship between cooperation and participation in education, including those linked to questioners and social situations (**Linnenbrink-Garcia et al., 2011; Mercer, 2019**).

Self-Determination Theory

An organic argument that defines humans as organisms that are related, born, created, functioned and changed in their environment is called self-determination theory (SDT) (**Deci & Ryan, 2000**). Self-determination theory points out that people have three basic needs – (a) the need for autonomy, (b) the need for competence, and (c) the need for a sense of belonging. How teachers meet the basic needs of students will affect learning, motivation, participation and success (**Ryan & Deci, 2017; Núñez & León, 2019**). Self-determination theory argues that in addition to material needs such as food and shelter, important spiritual needs such as independence, sociability, and competence are also important means by which people develop (**Ryan & Deci, 2020**). As **Deci and Moller (2005)** stated, social competence in self-determination theory is defined as a sense of value, competence and achievement power in social communication.

Individuals have a sense of support in an environment that provides them with a promising environment and resources to communicate, support and develop their abilities (**Ryan & Moller, 2017**). As **Deci and Ryan (2000)** reported, a

sense of belonging or connection to a particular person or group is called the need for socialization (**Deci & Ryan, 2000**), and this need is valid only when the relationship is free and genuine.

“Autonomy” is characterized by self-regulation or self-management, which is the model of self-directed behaviour and activities (**Ryan & Deci, 2020**). The need for independence has received significant attention because of its important role in meeting different needs. In addition, self-determination theory researchers explain the view that an activity is collaborative or self-supporting, not externally controlled (**Ryan & Deci, 2017**).

Autonomy Support

Autonomy is gained through experiences and practices that are self-regulating, self-sustaining, and considered appropriate to human values and interests (**Ryan & Deci, 2017**). Therefore, the practices and thoughts experienced by social organizations can be liberating when viewed as self-sustaining decisions and motivations (**Reeve, 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2017**). For young learners, promoting independence is associated with self-control, in-depth information processing, perseverance in setting and achieving goals, higher education and health (**Kins et al., 2009; Kunst et al., 2019**).

In education, as suggested by **Niemiec and Ryan (2009)**, autonomy support leads to self-motivation, thereby improving learning, adaptability, and performance of the educational programme (**Niemiec & Ryan, 2009**). Therefore, autonomous support is essential in the internal development and implementation of effective teaching and learning goals.

Three types of independent support have been proposed by **Stefanou et al., (2004)** – knowledge, processes and organisations. Intellectual support includes strategies that enable students to be independent, explore ideas, and become independent learners.

Institutional autonomy supports the empowerment of students to take ownership of the learning environment. Teachers are likely to use at least one of these methods, but some researchers have found that intellectual support may be most effective because of its ability to motivate students (**Wang & Guan, 2020**).

Resilience

Although there is no uniform definition, resilience is often seen as a metaphor that includes assets and practices for adapting to difficulties and problems, thus promoting motivation and mental problem solving (**Grant & Kinman, 2014**). Creativity enables one to focus on strengths and opportunities rather than weaknesses and vulnerabilities by changing one's perspective (**Russ et al., 2009; Harrison, 2012**). Resilience can also be seen as a behaviour that develops from strong patterns, including three interconnected groups of patterns, particularly inheritance, external resources, and training methods (**Kostoulas & Lämmerer, 2018**).

Patience is important in teaching to understand learning (**Hui & Abdullah, 2020; Xue, 2021**). Resilience will be developed when people associate their own being with beings – identifying and using effective skills to overcome problems (**Grenier et al., 2021**).

Flexibility is a new topic in language teaching and is clearly defined as the ability to manage stress (**Connor & Davidson, 2003**). Since **Martin and Marsh (2006)** express resilience as a student's ability to cope with problems, difficulties and emotional burdens, resilience is generally accepted as a person's ability to recover from difficulties and adapt to the environment.

Impact of Teacher Autonomy on Student Learning

When students are taught by teachers who promote independence, they experience positive learning outcomes and improve their recovery, including greater ability, greater interest and determination, action, good study, and interest for their participation in learning. The teachers know the wishes, interests and preferences of the students by facilitating and encouraging them (**Reeve & Jang, 2006; Hang et al., 2006, 2017**).

Teachers are taught to reward their students by listening and accepting their thoughts, giving them opportunities to engage in creative work, allowing them to work as they please, allowing students to control what they teach, communicating implicit learning, and providing support and praise, as gifts (**Kaur et al., 2014**). By promoting autonomy, teachers can increase independence, which can be considered a good way to reduce students' fear and depression (**Yu et al., 2016**).

Teachers who are committed to self-regulation not only increase the number of self-directed students who are satisfied in the classroom, but also contribute to the development and expansion of their psychological well-being and health, adaptability despite age, and quality of work (**Salazar-Ayala et al., 2021**).

By using self-support as a social learning approach, teachers can reduce control and respond to students' needs, which can increase students' motivation and success in the classroom, thereby encouraging their participation (**Núñez & León, 2019**).

Social support is associated with higher performance and better health (**Bovier et al., 2004**). In fact, the implementation of social support discussions in a teaching setting will help promote cohesion, improve students' psychological well-being, and voluntarily improve student memory.

Debates on Teacher Autonomy

Although debates on teacher independence vary from region to region, professional teachers are often at the centre of the discussion. Many teachers, including groups such as teacher unions or teacher membership organizations, may argue that restrictions on teachers' freedom in the classroom affect teachers' performance and skills. This view states that attempts to micromanage teaching strategies or teacher performance through greater control, greater supervision, or a stricter curriculum can lead to an interest in the work or the ability of teachers to become professionals with the ability to gain public understanding everywhere.

Advocates of greater teacher autonomy might argue that since it is teachers who are in a position to make the best decisions about student learning, they should provide as much freedom as possible in choosing instructional strategies, developing curriculum, and providing learning support. The view is that tighter regulations, stricter workloads, stricter administrative supervision or stricter teacher evaluation procedures will lead to teacher creativity and action, which can have many negative effects, including reduced student achievement. Teacher performance or higher job satisfaction and turnover.

Given that there is no right policy for all teachers that considers the diverse abilities and needs of students, important decisions about how to teach students should be left to the teacher. Similarly, school administrators and district administrators can determine teacher performance better than the state, such as a general policy that applies to all

teachers in a district or state or value-added evaluation, which is a formula used to estimate or measure how many teachers are. The school year has a positive effect on the education of students.

Criticism of the individual teacher's ability to cite evidence of poor teaching and issues such as low achievement or low graduation rates suggest that steps should be taken to improve the quality of teaching by teachers and in public schools. While there are many solutions to poor teaching, suggestions may include administrative detention, increased education and training for new teachers pre-made or "scripted" materials, stricter performance evaluations, or punishment of poorly performing teachers.

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