Empowering EFL Teachers to Achieve Professional Autonomy

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Education means conscious and well-planned effort in creating a learning environment and learning process so that learners will be able to develop their full potential for acquiring spiritual and religious strengths, develop self-control, personality, intelligence, morals and noble character and skills that one needs for him/herself, for the community, for the nation, and for the state **(Education Act No. 20/2003, Article 1: 1)**

Implied in the definition are:

-learners as subjects of their own learning → autonomy

in learning ← the learning-centred approach

- the devt. of all potentials (spiritual, ethical, esthetical, intellectual, kinesthetic)
- fulfillment of individual, communal, & national needs

The National Education functions to develop the capability, character, and civilization of the nation for enhancing its intellectual capacity, and is aimed at developing learners' potentials so that they become persons imbued with human values who are faithful and pious to one and only God; who possess morals and noble character; who are healthy, knowledgeable, competent, creative, independent; and as citizens, are democratic and responsible. (Artl. 3, the 2003 Education Law)

Thus the development of totals persons as individuals, social beings, and citizens

DIVERSITY

National education
& its goal

Decentralized system by implementing

school−based management &
school−level curriculum

Six principles to guide the
educational provision

IN UNITY

4th International JETA Conference and Workshop

- **Education** is organized democratically, equally and non-discriminatorily based on human rights, religious values, cultural values, and national pluralism.
- **Education** is conducted as systemic unit with an open system and multi-meanings.
- Education is conducted as a lifelong process of inculcating cultural values and for the empowerment of learners.
- **Education** is conducted based on the principles of modeling, motivation and creativity in the process of learning.
- **Education** is conducted by developing culture for reading, writing, and arithmetic for all members of the community.
- **Education** is conducted by empowering all components of the community through their participation in the implementation and quality control of the education services. (Artl. 4, the 2003 Education Act)

The strategic environments keep changing due to the societal development and advancements of science and technology.

The fulfillment of the changing learning needs of students.

The need to constantly learn, relearn, and unlearn

Teacher Professional Autonomy

Autonomy = "both mastery over oneself (an internal, psychological mastery) and freedom from mastery exercised over oneself by others (an external, social and political freedom). Thus it is based on a belief in a developed self ─ a self-conscious, rational being able to make independent decisions ─ and an emphasis on freedom from external constraints─a sense of liberty bestowed by social and political structures (Pennycook, 1997, as quoted by Bailey, 2006: 57)

… autonomy is not achieved by handing over power or by rational reflection… rather it is the struggle to become the author of one's own world, to be able to create one's own meanings, to pursue cultural alternatives amid cultural politics of everyday life **(ibid.)**

Recognizing that teaching as always contextually situated, Barfield *et al.* (2001) proposes teacher autonomy that constitutes:

- a continual process of dialogue and critical reflective inquiry into how teaching can best promote autonomous learning for learners

- understanding of possible various constraints and collaborative work to confront and transform them into opportunities for change

- institutional knowledge and flexibility in dealing with external constraints

- a need for continuous personal and professional improvement

- ability to work collaboratively & establish networking both within the institution and beyond; hence, the importance of negotiation

- a recognition of teacher-learner pools of diverse knowledge, experience, equal power and autonomous learning.

- understanding of the interrelationship between learner autonomy and teacher autonomy in the light of values of co-learning, self-direction, collaboration and democratic co-participation as related to critical reflective inquiry, empowerment, dialogue.

- willingness to collaborate with learners and colleagues in questioning and flexibly re-interpreting the exercise of authority within the classroom.

"...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 possible degree of affective and cognitive control of the teaching process, and exploiting the freedom that this confers" (Little, 1995, as quoted by Barfield *et al.,* 2001).

Autonomous EFL teachers are reflective EFL practitioners, capable of (1) recognizing own strengths and weak-nesses, (2) independently making informed decisions and taking action accordingly to satisfy their Ss' learning needs, developing their own classroom teaching skills (a wide repertoire of routines to fit widely varying concrete EFL learning circumstances), and (3) willingly taking a large degree of responsibility for their own professional development (cf. Bailey, 2006: 76)

In short, autonomous EFL teachers:

- understand well the level of their
  ELT/Educational competencies, and
  personal/professional their strengths
  and their weaknesses

- understand well the context of their teaching
  (both internal and external)

- are committed to finding the best
  way to improve and develop themselves
  and their Ss' learning autonomy

Autonomous EFL teachers:

apply the principled eclecticism

&

are reflective to keep self-developing (be lifelong learners

to fulfill their students' learning needs which keep changing →Ss' learning autonomy

To be autonomous, EFL teachers in Indonesia certainly need empowering.

Their professional devt. needs might vary in relation to their education, and the situations and conditions of their schools. They can be categorized into:

• highly advantaged
• fairly advantaged
• disadvantaged
• fairly disadvantaged
• severely disadvantaged

Fig. 1: Teachers' autonomy in decision making and action taking (from Bailey, 2006: 71)

To empower EFL teachers is to provide EFL teachers with knowledge and skills (competencies) that give them more power necessary to exercise more control over their own professional life

so that they

can

independently make decisions and take action for nothing but improving their students' learning

Pedagogical Competencies

1. Prepare classes adequately and have clear aims and objectives.
2. Consider Ss' cultural background to be important when preparing a course.
3. Give clear and sufficient instructions, examples or demonstrations before Ss begin activities.
4. Present language points in clear and interesting ways.
5. Employ a range of techniques to teach language items (voc., grammar, pron.)
6. Employ a range of techniques of practicing grammatical forms.
7. Try to relate language forms, functions and vocabulary to contexts relevant to Ss' interests.
8. Set up interactive pair/group activities.
9. Employ a variety of activities for developing Ss' listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.
10. Employ a variety of techniques to achieve a good balance between accuracy-focused, and integrative, content-focused activities (to help Ss to develop both accuracy (correctness in grammar, pron., punctuations) and fluency
11. Employ a variety of techniques to help Ss to develop their ability to understand the content of texts (oral and written).
12. Use games and puzzles effectively and appropriately.
13. Give Ss sufficient time to respond to learning tasks.
14. Encourage Ss to be active (e.g. ask questions, suggest sth., ask for clarification, be a volunteer in doing things).
15. Elicit background knowledge of Ss appropriately.
16. Avoid impeding student learning via over-use of the mother tongue, or attempt

17. Act as a good language model for Ss.
18. Use the language appropriate for the level of the class.
19. Use, and get Ss to use, correct classroom English.
20. Deal with Ss' errors systematically and effectively.
21. Get Ss to self-correct minor mistakes.
22. Get Ss to correct/comment on each other's written work and oral performance.
23. Make Ss aware of the strategies they can use to learn English more
     effectively.
24. Use/develop interactive, intrinsically motivating techniques to create effective
     tests to evaluate Ss' progress and increase motivation.
25. Involve Ss in selecting classroom activities.
26. Maintain a dialogue with Ss to gauge their reaction to the materials and
     teaching methods.
27. Make Ss aware of the pedagogic purpose of classroom activities.
28. Consider Ss' different language learning styles in designing the lesson.
29. Attend to the learning needs of the various ability levels in the class.
30. Give appropriate feedback to Ss about their progress.
31. Adapt the teaching plan to respond to Ss' immediate needs and reactions to
     planned activities.
32. Provide sufficient variety and change of pace to sustain Ss' interest.
33. Use a variety of techniques to ask questions and elicit responses from Ss.
34. Organize Ss and classroom activities well.
35. Make good use of the whiteboard/chalkboard, visuals and other media (OHP,
     Multimedia).

36. Constantly check to find out if Ss have understood teaching points or benefited from activities.
37. Take a good position at different stages of classroom learning.
38. Believe that education has a vital role to determine the future of societies.

B. Social Competencies

39. Establish a good rapport with Ss.
40. Recognize Ss' achievements and develop Ss' interest in learning.
41. Communicate an enthusiasm for the subject.
42. Be patient, polite and enjoy helping Ss acquire new skills/knowledge.
43. Be patient in working with Ss of lesser ability.
44. Offer challenge to Ss of exceptionally high ability.
45. Value the opinions and abilities of Ss.
46. Be aware of cross-cultural differences and am sensitive to Ss' cultural traditions.
47. Have good strategies for dealing with inappropriate student behaviour.
48. Avoid intimidating shy Ss during classroom learning.
49. Be enthusiastic about working harmoniously and candidly with colleagues to raise the quality of ELT programmes.
50. Seek opportunities to share thoughts, ideas, and techniques with colleagues.
51. Enjoy people; show enthusiasm, warmth, rapport, and appropriate humour.

C. Personal Competencies

51. Indicate a good classroom presence and personality.
52. Dress in the style that can be an asset in the classroom.
53. Be flexible when things go awry. (adaptive to what is going on).
54. Organize activities well.
55. Willingly and conscientiously make efforts to meet commitments/ promises.
56. Set goals of life.
57. Set short-term and long-term goals for continued professional growth.
58. Maintain an inquisitive mind in trying out new ways of teaching.
59. Be prepared to experiment and carry out classroom research in order to further improve teaching competence.
60. Consistently practise own religious teachings.
61. Maintain and exemplify high ethical and moral standards.
62. Possess a talent, interest, dedicating will, and idealism.
63. Possess a commitment to improving education quality, belief, piety, and noble character.
64. Obey all legal provisions, laws, codes of teacher conducts, and religious and ethical values
65. Maintain and improve the national unity

D. Subject Matter Competencies

66. Believe that learning English is vitally important for students' future success.
67. See English language learning as part of a larger process of promoting international contacts and interest in other cultures.
68. Be knowledgeable concerning the use of different varieties and styles of English in different societies/cultures.
69. Believe in the importance of empowering Ss to become increasingly more responsible for their own progress in learning (more autonomous learners).
70. Be aware of the value of professional development activities and make full use of available professional support and development opportunities (e.g. conferences/seminars/workshops).
71. Understand the linguistic systems of English phonology, grammar, and discourse.
72. Have adequate English vocabulary to teach Ss.
73. Have adequate English vocabulary to read ELT books.
74. Have competence in the four English language skills.
75. Make constant efforts to maintain/develop own English skills.
76. Comprehensively grasp basic principles of language learning and teaching.
77. Know through experience what it is like to learn a foreign language.
78. Understand the close connection between language and culture.
79. Possess a relevant academic qualification and educational background.

Principles of EFL Interactive Teaching

Cognitive
- Automaticity (1)
- Meaningful Learning (2)
- Anticipation of Reward (3)
- Intrinsic Motivation (4)
- Strategic Investment (5)

Affective
- Language Ego (6)
- Self Confidence (7)
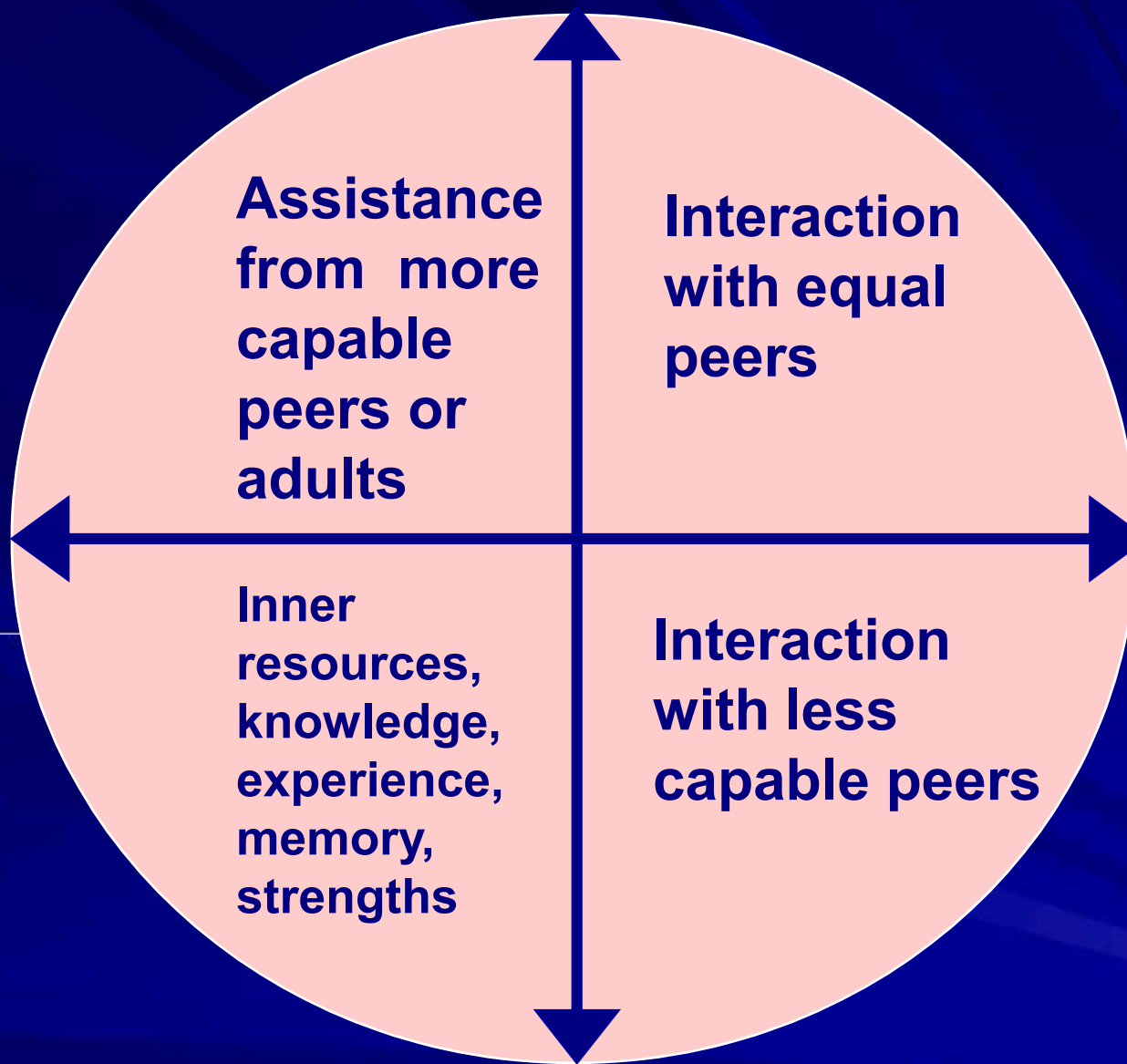- Risk-taking (8)
- Language-Culture Connection (9)

Linguistic
- Native Language Effect (10)
- Inter-language (11)
- Communicative Competence (12)

Brown, 2001

Assistance from more capable peers or adults

Interaction with equal peers

Inner resources, knowledge, experience, memory, strengths

Interaction with less capable peers

Self-regulation and multiple zones of proximal development (van Lier, 1996, as quoted by Bailey, 2006: 64).

Five principles for professional development (Rueda, 1998 as cited by Bailey, 2006: 45-46):

- Promote learning through joint productive activity among leaders and participants

- Promote learners' expertise in professionally relevant discourse

- Contextualize teaching, learning, and joint productive activity in the experience and skills of participants

- Challenge participants towards more complex solutions in addressing problems.

- Engage participants through dialogue, especially the instructional conversion

The Route to Teacher autonomy (Brown, 2001; Edge & Richards, 1993; Harmer, 2001):

A. Individual Efforts to Develop:

 self-assessment/appraisal, regular reading of professional literature, make use of available resources (electronic, print, audio, audio-visual)

B. Developing with colleagues:

 peer- & student assessment/appraisal, peer coaching, team teaching, teacher support group, collaborative curriculum devt. & revision, teacher association, virtual community, action research

Teacher self-assessment of (e.g. Brown, 2001):

I. Learning Environment
   A. Relationship with Ss (3)
   B. The Classroom (3)
   C. Presentation (7)
   D. Culture & Adjustment (3)

II. The Individuals
   A. Physical Health (6)
   B. Self-Concepts (3)
   C. Aptitude & Perception (3)
   D. Reinforcement (4)
   E. Development (3)

III. The Activity
   A. Interaction (7)
   B. Language (5)

(also see Richards, 2001: 240-243, for another example of self-evaluation form)

For an example of a self-assessment instrument, visit the following website:

www.teflinforum.jardiknas.org

Complete the questionnaire and return it to: suwarsihm@yahoo.com

Teacher Peer Assessment of (e.g. Brown, 2001):

I. Preparation (3)

II. Presentation (10)

III. Execution/method (13)

IV. Personal Characteristics (5)

V. Teacher/Student Interaction (10)

Peer Appraisal of (see Richards, 2001: 246-248):

1. Aims and objectives

2. Appropriacy of materials

3. Organization of the lesson

4. Stimulating learner interest

5. Opportunities for learner participation

6. Use of teaching aids

7. Explaining difficult concepts

8. Effectiveness

9. Any other general observations

and Workshop

Student Assessment/Appraisal of (see Richards, 2001):

I. The Teaching (8): class preparation, **warming up,** communicating class material, **arousing and maintaining student motivation,** stimulating Ss' interest, class time management, **opportunity to learn the EL items, opportunity to learn to use the EL items communicatively** responding to student problems, overall performance, the most useful aspect of teaching, the least useful aspect of teaching, **the teacher's personality and presence, teacher-student rapport**

II. The Course (7): course content, course materials, the most useful aspect of the course, the useful aspect of the course, suggestion of ways to improve the course.

In action research, teachers independently conduct a critical reflective inquiry in which democracy, collaboration, dialogue are emphasized in searching the best way to improve students' learning autonomy.

Through action research teachers should first change themselves, and then change the situation with all its components (including the students)

Institutional Implications:

Teachers should be provided with:

- opportunity and support to self-develop (further study, joining associations, attending seminars/ conferences/workshops)
- resources and equipment for professional devt. (e.g. professional books, ICT equipment)
- merit-based rewards

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