

Power Relations and In-service English Teacher Education in a Second Language Context: A Decolonised Study

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This qualitative study explores the nexus between power relations and in-service English teacher education in a second language context. While previous studies have examined the power-relations in pedagogy between students and teachers, there is a lack of studies focusing on power relations in teacher education. Addressing this gap, the study investigates how power relations in teacher education influence teachers' professional development and classroom practices contributing to a deeper understanding of power structures in teacher education. The study is grounded in Paulo Freire's banking concept and problem posing education which challenge hierarchical power structures and advocate for dialogue-driven, egalitarian learning environments. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with in-service English teachers engaged in postgraduate studies across diverse educational and professional institutions both within and outside the country. Purposive sampling ensured a range of perspectives, while field notes were utilized to ensure depth and reliability. The data were analyzed using thematic and discourse analysis to uncover patterns and narratives around power relations in teacher education. The findings revealed that balanced power relations positively impact teachers' agency, collaborative learning, and instructional practices contributing to more inclusive and dynamic educational settings. Supportive, discussion-based environments foster mutual respect, knowledge co-creation, and active teacher engagement. Power imbalances, particularly in lesson observations and feedback sessions, can cause discomfort and emotional distress affecting teachers' confidence and willingness to experiment with new teaching strategies. Traditional linguistic choices like 'madam' and 'sir', reflect hierarchical respect, influenced by cultural norms and habitus. While some participants are comfortable with these practices, viewing them as symbols of respect, others prefer informal, egalitarian interactions that promote approachability and collaboration. Evolving societal norms influence power relations, emphasizing the interplay of tradition, culture, and power in teacher education. Teachers adapt their communication styles and power negotiations based on situational contexts, demonstrating flexibility in maintaining professional relations.

These findings highlight the importance of fostering supportive, collaborative environments through open communication, accessibility, constructive feedback and teacher engagement. Addressing power imbalances, promoting inclusivity and implementing clear feedback protocols contribute to equitable, empowering educational settings that prioritize mutual respect, growth, and shared responsibility. The study offers practical implications for teacher education programs by emphasizing the transformative potential of balanced power relations on teachers' professional growth and classroom practices. It calls for strategies that empower teachers and foster equitable learning environments. Future research could further explore discourse and power dynamics in professional development contexts.

Keywords: Power Dynamics, Teacher Education, L2 context, Teacher Agency Critical Pedagogy