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POWER-SHARING IN FORMAL AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION*

Introduction: This article addresses the issue of power-sharing in formal and non-formal education, defined as the distribution of power in all matters that occur within the educational relationships in which individuals participate.

Research Aim: This article aimed to identify three categories based on a review of existing research: factors influencing power relations among participants of formal and non-formal education; levels of power-sharing in education; and practices of power-sharing in education. Based on these categories, a comprehensive definition of power-sharing in education will be formulated.

Evidence-based Facts: A total of 18 research reports obtained through a systematic search of the Scopus and Google Scholar databases were analysed. The selection criteria included relevance to the topic, identification of strategies, methods, research goals and questions, the study group and conclusions. The analysis distinguished factors influencing the power relationships between teachers and students, such as socio-cultural context, socioeconomic status, responses to students' activities and mistakes, methods of formulating messages, educational regulations and school subjects. Nine levels of power-sharing were identified, considering the relationships between educational policy, local government, local environment, management, administration, teachers, students and parents and in various configurations of these groups. Additionally, a catalogue of power-sharing practices in the teacher-student relationship was created, encompassing six areas: content, assignments, rules, the teaching/learning process, evaluation and grading and organisation of space.

Summary: The review identified areas within the field of power-sharing in education that require further research, particularly in preschool and early school education, which have been overlooked in previous studies.

Keywords: power-sharing, education, research review

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INTRODUCTION

Power-sharing is an interdisciplinary concept that, in its original context, originates from political science. The first researcher to describe this process was William Arthur Lewis, who argued that it was a type of democracy that reconciles the interests of various ethnic groups through decentralisation of power, coalition formation and the use of a proportional electoral system (Dobrzeński, 2020). Another proponent, Lijphart, initially employed the term “consociational democracy” to refer to this phenomenon (Lijphart, 1969), understanding it as a political system that ensures the distribution of power among different actors through its fragmentation (Lijphart, 1969). According to *Collins English Dictionary*, power-sharing is “a political arrangement in which different or opposing groups all take part in government together” (*Collins English Dictionary*, 2024).

Polish-language political science studies typically use two terms: “power-sharing” and “co-governance” (Trzciński, 2016, p. 27), which will be used interchangeably in this context. A central feature of co-governance is enabling all groups in society to participate in governance (Juon and Bochsler, 2022). This is based on four pillars: grand coalitions, proportional representation, reciprocal veto rights and group autonomy (Bochsler and Juon, 2021). In addition to the Lewis model mentioned earlier (Dobrzeński, 2020), three additional models of power-sharing have been identified (Trzciński, 2018):

- consociationalism, where the groups to which individuals belong represent their interests, while power is diffused;
- centripetalism, where the represented groups are more diverse, but power is concentrated at the centre of the state;
- hybrid power-sharing, which seeks integration and compromise.

Regardless of the chosen model, power-sharing has both advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, it provides greater decision-making space to previously overlooked groups (Agarin and McCulloch, 2020) and limits the governing power of only the largest groups (Juon and Bochsler, 2022). On the other hand, it primarily focuses on ethnic minorities and does not adequately support other groups (Stutzer and Slotwinski, 2021) such as sexual and gender minorities, which, in an era when these communities are striving for representation, could contribute to the development of a truly inclusive society. Considering the definition, based on the available English-language literature, power-sharing in education can be tentatively defined as: Sharing power in all matters that occur within an educational relationship in which individuals participate. This definition is formulated at a high level of generality and serves as a starting point for further exploration.

RESEARCH AND QUESTION

This article aimed to delineate three categories based on the analysed texts: 1) factors influencing power relations among participants in formal and non-formal education; 2) levels of power-sharing in education; 3) power-sharing practices in education; and to extend the definition of *power-sharing* in education accordingly.

A structured review was necessary to broaden the initial definition of the process in question. The work of Kopińska (2021) and Sandelowski and Barroso (2003) inspired the procedure for including individual articles in the analysis. However, the analysis presented in this article is not a meta-synthesis. The systematic review comprises research conducted using both qualitative and quantitative strategies, and the inspirations indicated above relate only to the selection of research reports for analysis.

The Scopus and Google Scholar databases were searched using “power-sharing”, “research”, “education” and “school” as keywords. The inclusion of the terms “education” and “research” is justified by the aim of reaching works focused on formal and non-formal education. The Scopus database search engine required the use of logical operators and various inflectional forms, resulting in the final search term:

TITLE-ABS-KEY (power-sharing AND research* AND educat* OR school*).

Consequently, 92 papers were obtained from the Scopus database. It was necessary to further narrow the search criteria by:

1. Research area (social sciences)
2. Document type (article, book chapter, book)
3. Language, based on my linguistic competence (English)
4. Document availability
5. Publication year – papers published no earlier than 30 years ago

Another important step was to assess the relevance of the texts. A list of questions was created to guide the reader while reviewing the texts obtained from both databases. These questions pertained to two levels: the subject matter of the research and its methodology and included:

Does the text address the theme of power-sharing in education (formal, non-formal)?

1. Is the text a research report?
2. Has the research strategy been specified?
3. Have the aims of the study and the research questions been clearly stated?
4. Has the study group been identified, and the sampling logic presented?
5. Have methods of data collection and analysis been indicated?
6. Are the conclusions of the research clearly presented?

A search of the Google Scholar platform enhanced the review. After searching for keywords, like the Scopus database, the search results were narrowed using the database tools. Subsequently, the content of the obtained documents was assessed

against the above control questions. A negative response to any question resulted in the rejection of the text. After applying these criteria, 18 documents were collected from both databases and analysed. They are summarised in Table 1, which includes the authors, the year of publication, the research strategy applied, the research sample and the aim of the research/questions.

Table 1.
*Publications analysed concerning the strategy, sample and aim of the research/research question**

No.	Author(s) and year of publication	Research strategy	Research sample	Aim of the research/research question
1.	Manke, 1997	Qualitative	Two fifth-grade classes and a first-grade class, along with their teachers	To find power-related interactive resources available to teachers in classrooms. To find power-related interaction resources available to students, individually and as a group, in classrooms. To find how teachers and students use these resources in power-related interactions
2.	Bickmore, 2001	Qualitative	Staff members, co-unsellers, advisors, teachers, peer mediators and other students in six schools	To explore and analyse the different concepts of citizenship used in the implementation of the peer mediation model in six different primary schools within the same urban school district
3.	Cornelius and Herrenkohl, 2004	Qualitative	Two fifth and sixth grades of primary	To explore changes in class structures, focusing on the transformation of power dynamics
4.	Garrett, 2008	Quantitative and qualitative	Three teachers in a suburban primary school	Do teachers who use student-centred instruction also implement student-centred governance?
5.	Reinsvold, and Cochran, 2012	Qualitative	The third grade of primary school class (21 students) and their teacher	To explore the nature of the questions posed by the teacher and students and how these questions relate to power dynamics in the classroom

6.	Humphreys, 2012	Qualitative	Seven teachers in a two-year college	To determine the challenges and successes associated with using participatory and engaging teaching methods to enhance the personality development of students
7.	Oral, 2013	Qualitative	Seventh-grade class (13–14 years) and their teacher	How are power relations are negotiated between teachers and students in the context of English as a foreign language in classes
8.	Wong, 2015	Qualitative	Three principals, 13 senior teachers, 12 teachers and 50 students (aged 9–11)	What is the role of teachers and students in their power relationship? What strategies do they use to share power? What factors enhance power-sharing in the school classroom?
9.	Wong, 2016	Qualitative	16 classes (8 fourth graders, 8 fifth graders), 4 school principals, 17 senior teachers, 16 teachers and 65 students (34 boys and 31 girls aged 9–11)	What factors shape power relations between students and teachers in the observed classrooms? How do these factors affect the power relationship between students and teachers?
10.	Karafil and Ari, 2016	Quantitative	454 students	What are students' beliefs about the current levels of power-sharing in universities? Do these beliefs differ by gender? Do these beliefs differ depending on the stage of study? Do these beliefs differ according to the success rate in English?
11.	Wood et al., 2018	Qualitative-quantitative	93 secondary school students (15–18 years) and 146 teachers.	To explore teaching practices and young people's experiences of standards of achievement in personal social action and to identify strategies and approaches that can support students in actively participating in critical and informed social activities
12.	Oruç and Acat, 2020	Quantitative	185 students (98 females, 87 males).	To investigate the relevance and reliability of the classroom power-sharing scale

13.	Emerson, 2020	Qualitative	13 evaluators of the Girls Education Challenge programme and 10 staff from participating organisations.	To explore power dynamics in international evaluations
14.	Szech, 2020	Qualitative	Teachers and families participating in the family visit programme.	To understand what teachers and families learn through participation in strength-based family visits
15.	Bremner, 2021	Qualitative	326 research articles published between January 2010 and July 2019.	To determine how learner-centred education is interpreted in the educational literature
16.	Litsa and Bekiari, 2022	Quantitative	117 secondary school physical education students and 195 physical education students.	To explore the relationship between social power position, attractiveness, verbal aggression and social networks in secondary school and university students
17.	Tombak-İlhan and Gunduz, 2022	Qualitative	Students in the first grade of primary school and their teacher.	To understand the nature of the school classroom in the context of inequality and power-sharing
18.	Howells et al., 2023	Qualitative	Social work students, practitioners and researchers.	What are the experiences of the surveyed group in community engagement and how these can be valuable in social work education as part of a university and local authority learning partnership

* Author’s own translation.

Source: Author’s own study.

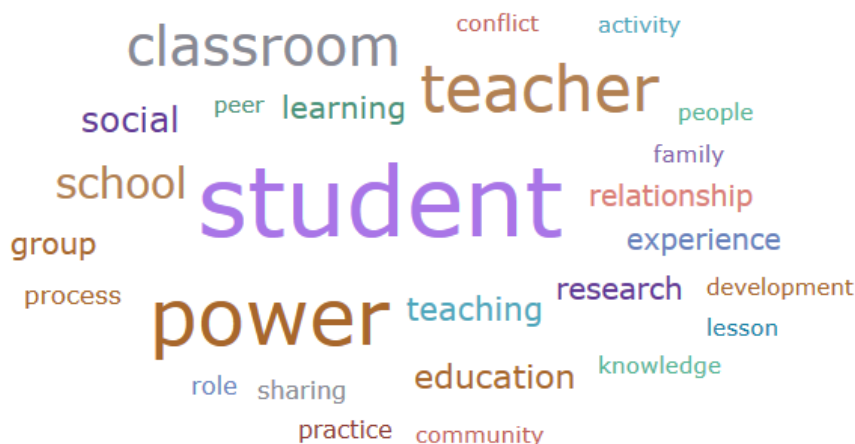
EVIDENCE-BASED REVIEW

Before analysing each work in detail, the word cloud function available in Atlas.ti was used to select the most common nouns, verbs and adjectives. The results are shown in Figure 1. The most frequent words across all works were “pupil/student”, “authority”, “teacher” and “classroom”. The texts refer to various social spaces and processes: education, learning, community, relationship, activity, experience, conflict and role-playing. Among the rarer terms are sharing (e.g. power, knowledge), references to educational participants (people, family, group, peer) and terms related to research activities (research). This suggests that the works aligned with the established criteria were correctly selected. However, an analysis of the research questions and aims indicates that in most studies, power-sharing is a secondary focus, and the prevalence of the term “power” may stem from its presence in the

conclusions. The reference to power may not have been the primary aim of the researchers, but the study nonetheless illuminated some aspects of it.

Figure 1.

Frequency analysis of words occurring in the analysed material



Source: Author's own study.

Research on power-sharing is conducted in relation to formal and non-formal education, with some work additionally considering the informal aspect of education. Formal education predominates in the sample, as evidenced by the word cloud. Most words (student, teacher, classroom, teaching, school) refer to formal or non-formal education. Most of the analysed papers employed qualitative research strategies, using methods such as observation, interviews (individual, group, focus group), anonymised questionnaires and source searches for data collection methods. One article assessed the reliability and relevance of the Classroom Power-Sharing Scale (Oruç, 2014; Oruç and Acat, 2020), while another (Karafil and Arı, 2016) utilised it in their research. A minority of texts employed a qualitative-quantitative strategy, where standardised tools complemented the qualitative data collected (Wood et al., 2018).

In the analysed texts, researchers embedded the term “power-sharing” within the context of learner-centred education, equating power with a relationship in which decisions are made collaboratively, individuals are persuaded of their opinions and there is an element of social influence (Karafil and Arı, 2016, p. 171; Wong, 2016, p. 249; Szech, 2020, p. 3; Bremner, 2021, p. 12). For instance, according to Manke (1997) and Bickmore (2001), power is a relationship that cannot be owned or transferred but can be shared. Power should be shared by all actors within the class, group, school or institution. This may initially be chal-

lenging for teachers to accept (Wood et al., 2018), but research indicates that this practice fosters democratic conditions in education (Bickmore, 2001). Not all authors of the studies analysed treat power-sharing similarly. Litsa and Bekiari (2022) suggest that individuals “distribute” power among peers based on trust and emotional dependence arising from social attraction. Thus, it can be inferred that in this approach, not every individual can participate in power-sharing.

The review revealed that the power relationship between teachers and students can be influenced by several factors, including:

- socio-cultural context – differing treatment of students with non-native backgrounds, ethnicity, language skills, etc. (Szech, 2020);
- socio-economic status – middle-class students are better able to adapt to classroom rules. The language and methods of working are tailored to them, granting them a greater share of power. Students from families with lower socio-economic status often exhibit poorer compliance with teachers’ instructions, leading to criticism and being overlooked in classroom communication;
- responses to students’ activities and mistakes, and how messages are communicated (Tombak-İlhan and Gunduz, 2022);
- educational and intra-school regulations;
- school subjects – according to Wong (2016), traditional school subjects are characterised by lower levels of power-sharing.

The research sample primarily included male and female students from various educational stages, male and female teachers, principals, administration and participants in programmes implemented within the institutions. The researchers embedded their research deeply within a social context and compared the obtained data with existing educational policies. Considering the characteristics and subjects of the groups included in the research, nine levels at which power-sharing occurs were distinguished and related to the Polish educational reality:

I: Educational policy – legal acts issued by the ministry responsible for education, as well as other entities influencing the form of education in Poland, including government actions and interference in changes to the core curriculum (Leek and Śliwerski, 2024) and school superintendents exercising pedagogical supervision over schools (Article 55(1) of the Polish Act on the Education System);

II: School-local government – the bodies that run and formally govern schools: municipalities (*gmina*), districts (*powiat*), etc.;

III: School-local environment;

IV: School-parents – the school is understood as all actors within it. In Poland, this includes management, administration, staff, teaching staff and students, as well as the curriculum and other materials used during lessons. The term “parent

council” was deliberately omitted, as it is not the parents but only the body representing them (Article 83(1) of the Polish Act on the Education System);

V: Headmasters-teachers-students – concerning education in Poland, with-in this level and the following levels, teachers are understood as not only subject teachers but also specialist teachers, e.g. school pedagogues, psychologists, therapists, etc. This level represents a power relationship in which governance interacts with teachers, who indirectly convey and implement the instructions they receive to students. An example is a requirement for teachers to supervise how students dress, referencing the binding academy articles of association, which directly influences the teacher-student relationship and the demands placed on the latter.

VI: Management-teacher/management-students – this level includes a dual relationship: between management and teachers (employer and employees) and between management and students (the body responsible for the school, which has significant influence due to its numerous competencies (Article 68 of the Polish Act on the Education System).

VII: Teachers-teachers

VIII: Teachers-students

IX: Students-students

The definition of power-sharing in education was formulated at a high level of generality. Therefore, it is worth specifying what constitutes power-sharing and, consequently, what the practices are in education. I will use the standardised tool Classroom Power-Sharing Scale, constructed by Oruç (Oruç and Acat, 2020), as the basis for identifying areas and practices of power-sharing. This tool was standardised in an article included in the review (Oruç and Acat, 2020), but that text only covered areas of power-sharing and selected examples of practices within their scope. I believe that the tool itself could be valuable for a better exploration of the topic and have decided to include it in the ongoing study as an additional source of knowledge on power-sharing. The author shared her tool and consented to its use in constructing a catalogue of power-sharing practices in education. Since it was designed with higher education in mind, it was necessary to modify the listed areas and practices to adapt them to formal and non-formal education in general. Given that both this tool and other studies have primarily focused on power-sharing practices in the student-teacher relationship, I will refer specifically to this level of power-sharing. Expanding the catalogue would require further research, considering the other levels. The next step was to supplement the material with the areas and practices in Table 1. Thus, I have created a catalogue of areas with their corresponding practices of power-sharing in formal and non-formal education (Table 2).

Table 2.
Catalogue of areas and practices of power-sharing in education in the teacher-student relationship

Area	Examples of power-sharing practices in education
Content covered	The teacher considers students’ opinions when selecting learning materials. Students can suggest additional materials to use during lessons. The teacher takes students’ opinions into account regarding what educational content is presented in class. The tacher involves students in the course planning process.
Homework and credit assign-ments	Students can set time limits for the assignments. The teacher offers a choice of different assignment formats or allows students to suggest them. Students can choose the topic of their assignments. Students decide how to complete their assignments. Students can determine the deadlines for their assignments.
Rules of the learning space and the process of shaping them	The teacher draws on students’ background knowledge and previous learning experiences when introducing a topic. Students and teachers are treated as equal actors. The distance between students and teachers is reduced. The teacher asks about students’ expectations for the lesson. Students and teachers jointly agree on the rules for the learning space. Both students and teachers adhere to mutually agreed rules. Students can express their opinions on the timing of topics. Students are encouraged to voice their own opinions. The teacher uses guiding questions instead of commands. Teachers delay expressing their opinions, e.g. on the solution to an assign-ment, instead of providing supportive guidance. Students have the right to express objections if they disagree with something. The teacher silences students only when necessary and does so directly (e.g. through a look or touch). Students have the right to adopt a comfortable body position. The teacher avoids using apparent politeness or rhetorical questions to convey implicit messages. Decisions affecting the whole group are made jointly, considering the argu-ments of all involved.
The teaching/le-arning process	Students participate in constructing lesson objectives. The teacher engages students in choosing group activities. Students can choose from suggested lesson activities. Students decide how to complete assignments during lessons. Students can choose the topic of their written assignment/essay. Students determine what they want to discuss during verbal comments. Students can decide on reading activities. The teacher explains unclear content to students. The teacher considers students’ levels of concentration.

Evaluation and assessment	<p>The teacher evaluates objections raised by students without dismissing them.</p> <p>The teacher considers tasks constructed by students when giving credit.</p> <p>Students can self-assess their assignments and credits.</p> <p>Students can evaluate each other's assignments and credits.</p>
The organisation of the space	<p>Space is organised to facilitate free movement.</p> <p>Space is arranged to enable all students to work collaboratively.</p> <p>Students can change their seating arrangements.</p> <p>Students can rearrange the space.</p> <p>A break area is available for students.</p> <p>Student and teacher workspaces are equally comfortable.</p> <p>Students can choose their activities during breaks.</p>

Source: Author's own study.

SUMMARY

Having considered the factors influencing the student-teacher power relationship, the levels of power-sharing in education and its manifestations in the student-teacher relationship, a broader definition can be formulated. I therefore propose that power sharing in education is the distribution of power in all matters that occur within the educational relationship in which individuals participate, which may not necessarily be part of the overt agenda of the school; it can take place at the level of educational policy, in the relationships between the school and all actors involved in its operations with local authority, the local environment and parents, as well as among the actors themselves within the school (i.e. headteachers, teachers, students). It is realised through the behaviours and communicative acts of individuals (including both verbal and non-verbal communication) in areas such as content covered, homework and credit assignments, rules of behaviour in the learning space and the process of shaping them, the teaching/learning process, evaluation and assessment and organisation of the space.

The main aim of this article was to delineate three categories based on the analysed texts:

a) factors influencing power relations among participants in formal and non-formal education – based on the available research reports, factors influencing the power relationship between teachers and students have been identified, including socio-cultural context, socioeconomic status, reaction to students' activities and mistakes, methods of communication, educational regulations and school subjects (Wong, 2016; Szech, 2020; Tombak-İlhan and Gunduz, 2022);

b) levels of power-sharing in education – nine levels have been distinguished, taking into account the relationships between educational policy, local government, local environment, management, administration, teachers, students, parents and various configurations of these groups;

c) power-sharing practices in education – practices of power-sharing in the teacher-student relationship were identified across six areas: content covered, homework and credit assignments, rules of the learning space and the process of shaping them, the teaching/learning process, evaluation and assessment and organisation of the space.

CONCLUSIONS

The results obtained can be used in further research on the student-teacher relationship, and reference to additional groups may be made following broader research efforts. The analysed texts indicate that research into this process is both possible and necessary. They have the potential to enhance the awareness of education practitioners on the power-sharing practices employed (or not employed), such as collaborating with students to decide on learning materials, jointly planning lesson content, establishing rules for classroom behaviour, providing students with their own space to work and rest and assessing according to mutual agreements. Thoughtful power-sharing in the classroom can lead, among other outcomes, to a greater sense of responsibility and independence in the learning process (Oruç and Acat, 2020; Szech, 2020; Tombak-İlhan and Gunduz, 2022), which should be a desirable outcome in a democratic society.

Despite the extensive coverage of power-sharing in the English-language literature, a research gap remains. Researchers mainly focus on adolescents or young adults (Bickmore, 2001; Karafil and Arı, 2016; Oruç and Acat, 2020), with little attention given to the youngest learners. Only a few researchers include children in the younger grades of primary school as part of their research group (Wong, 2015; Wong, 2016), yet the youngest groups participating in formal and non-formal education remain largely ignored. Therefore, in the context of further research, it is essential to focus on power-sharing in Polish education and to engage with groups that have been previously overlooked.

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POWER-SHARING CZYLI O WSPÓŁDZIELENIU WŁADZY W EDUKACJI FORMALNEJ I POZAFORMALNEJ

Wprowadzenie: W artykule podjęto tematykę *power-sharingu* w edukacji formalnej i pozaformalnej rozumianego jako dzielenie się władzą we wszystkich sprawach, które dzieją się w relacji edukacyjnej, w której jednostki uczestniczą.

Cel badań: Celem tego artykułu było wyznaczenie na podstawie przeglądu badań trzech kategorii: czynników wpływających na relacje władzy między uczestnikami edukacji formalnej i pozaformalnej; poziomów występowania dzielenia władzy w edukacji; praktyk współdzielenia władzy w edukacji – i na tej podstawie sformułowanie szerokiej definicji *power-sharingu* w edukacji.

Stan wiedzy: Analizie poddano 18 raportów z badań uzyskanych po usystematyzowanym przeszukiwaniu baz Scopus i Google Scholar. Kryteria, którymi kierowano się w ich selekcji to m.in. zgodność z tematyką, wskazanie strategii, metod, celów i pytań badawczych, badanej grupy i uzyskanych wniosków. W oparciu o dostępne raporty badawcze udało się wyróżnić czynniki wpływające na relację władzy między nauczycielami a uczniami, takie jak: kontekst społeczno-kulturowy, status socjoekonomiczny, reakcja na aktywność uczniów i uczennic oraz popełniane błędy, sposób formułowania komunikatów, regulacje oświatowe i wewnątrzszkolne, przedmioty szkolne. Wyróżniono dziewięć poziomów uwzględniających relacje władzy między polityką oświatową, samorządem terytorialnym, środowiskiem lokalnym, dyrekcją, administracją, obsługą, nauczycielami, uczniami, rodzicami i uczniami w różnej konfiguracji. Ponadto, udało się stworzyć katalog praktyk *power-sharingu* w relacji nauczyciele-uczniowie w odniesieniu do sześciu obszarów: poruszanych treści, zadań domowych i zaliczeniowych, zasad obowiązujących w przestrzeni uczenia się i procesu ich kształtowania, procesu nauczania/uczenia się, ewaluacji i oceniania, organizacji przestrzeni.

Podsumowanie: Dokonanie przeglądu pozwoliło dostrzec obszary w zakresie współdzielenia władzy w edukacji, które wymagają dalszych badań, takie jak edukacja przedszkolna i wczesnoszkolna pomijane w dotychczasowych badaniach.

Słowa kluczowe: współdzielenie władzy, edukacja, przegląd badań

