

**Problematism Corporal Punishment Policies in Ivorian Schools:
A Network Ethnography Grounded in National Middle-Level Policy
Actors' Experiences**

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Author's Declaration

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I, **Lucia Quintero Tamez** confirm that the work presented in my thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.¹

¹ I acknowledge the use of Microsoft Copilot to help proofread my final draft.

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Abstract

Corporal punishment (CP) remains pervasive in primary schools of Côte d'Ivoire, with estimates ranging from 25% (Balliet, 2024) to 63% (MENET-CI / UNICEF, 2015) of students experiencing it. Despite numerous initiatives aimed at reducing its prevalence, there is still limited understanding of which policies are truly effective particularly in contexts where many educators endorse it. To address this gap, in this critical policy study I examine how CP policies are interpreted and enacted within the Ivorian context.

Drawing on a post-structuralist epistemology and post-development thought I conduct a network ethnography that integrates social network analysis, genealogy, and qualitative interviews to explore how discourses, power relations, and socio-historical contexts shape the enactment of CP policy. Central to this analysis are Ivorian middle space policy actors, comprised of government civil servants, and national staff from civil society and international organisations. These actors occupy a middle role, navigating and shaping the discourse between international and local realities but are often overlooked in research.

Findings reveal that the Ivorian CP policy network is structured in ways that concentrate decision-making power internationally, reinforcing historical asymmetries and privileging externally defined, short-term interventions. National middle actors, while far from passive, operate within a system that structurally disincentivises collaboration and long-term, context-sensitive engagement. Their efforts to promote more grounded approaches are frequently constrained by dominant rights-based and development discourses that marginalise local knowledge and aspirations. This configuration exposes the limitations of prevailing discourses around local ownership and participation, which often fail to translate into meaningful shifts in power. Yet, within these constraints, national middle space actors engage in forms of counterwork, practices that mutate dominant narratives and carve out space for alternative enactments of CP policy.

Ultimately this study examines what interrogating prevailing discourses, analysing policy network power, and considering local expertise can contribute to the development of more effective CP policies. It highlights the value of embracing complexity and adopting a broader definition of violence that includes structural and symbolic dimensions. In doing so, it offers a critical lens through which to reimagine CP policy enactment in Côte d'Ivoire.

Impact Statement

In this thesis, I critically examine how corporal punishment (CP) policies are enacted in Côte d'Ivoire, a topic made especially timely by the first-ever Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children, held in Colombia in November 2024. At this landmark event, many countries committed to banning CP, and international discourse urged to “re-imagine” member-state-driven policies to create safer schools (WHO & UNICEF, 2024). Yet, despite this renewed momentum, there is a risk of repeating past patterns: criminalising acts without meaningful local engagement, relying on narrow discourses of children's rights, and promoting policies that only appear to be locally owned.

To avoid these pitfalls, it is essential to place new efforts within a historical continuum of internationally driven policies, to conduct an analysis of their effects and to be accountable by learning from past missteps. This study represents a first attempt to do so by problematising the enactment of Ivorian CP policies, their dominant discourses, and the structure of the policy network. It reveals how these elements may be contributing to persistent challenges such as community backlash, fragmented initiatives with limited reach, teacher disempowerment, and the continued use of CP.

I contribute to the field of violence against children (VAC) by applying a broad and contextual conceptualisation of violence. One that aims to transcend individual acts and sidestep binary debates between universalism and cultural relativism. I also advance the use of critical policy analysis in education, highlighting its value in addressing school-based violence. By conducting a Foucault inspired policy network ethnography I encourage an academic exercise that seeks to move beyond critiquing policies to one that points out to decisionmakers the assumptions and unchallenged modes of thoughts underpinning their enactment practices.

By making these dynamics visible, I aim to offer policymakers insights into how they could enact CP policies differently. For instance, empowering national actors to design context-specific policies could foster more sustainable community engagement and lead to meaningful shifts in practice. However, achieving this would require more than

rhetorical international commitments to ‘ownership’; it would necessitate concrete changes to the power structures that currently shape policy networks.

I call for greater recognition of the colonial legacy shaping CP and education policymaking. Colonial-era disciplinary norms continue to influence how authority, respect, and success are understood today. Acknowledging this legacy helps policymakers engage with CP’s socio-political dimensions. It also challenges them to reflect on whether their approaches sustain historical power imbalances. Confronting these dynamics opens space for reframing CP in ways that align with local values and support non-violent classrooms.

Ultimately, this work responds to the Conference’s call for a “transformative shift on child protection” (WHO & UNICEF, 2024). By critically examining past policy enactments and centring the perspectives of national actors, it offers a first step toward reimagining CP policy in Côte d’Ivoire. It invites international and national policymakers to engage in a nuanced, cross-cultural dialogue that acknowledges the complexity of CP and seeks meaningful, lasting change.

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Why is outlawing the physical punishment of children so objectionable to so many adults...? It appears that many people simply cannot reconcile the logic and decency of according children, the most vulnerable and impressionable people in society, the same consideration, respect and protection from assault as adults. (Saunders, 2014, p. 155).

*So you know, we don't have same realities...
Every continent or every country has their own culture.
The fact of transferring, of bringing your culture here,
it fatigues us...
So for Blacks, to catalyse him...we don't need to exaggerate
but we fear more when we grab a stick, a whip,
then the child will be docile. We have not learnt to discuss.
You know, you need that (the stick) to calm him.
Now, they tell us this is no longer an option.
Secondary school teacher Abidjan
(Quintero, 2020, p.10)*

CHAPTER 1. Troubling the enactment of corporal punishment policies: theoretical approaches and key concepts

Violent discipline by school staff, including corporal punishment (CP) is reported as a widespread form of violence against children (VAC) in schools. A 2022 systematic review situates lifetime prevalence of CP in African schools above 70% and past-week prevalence above 40% (Heekes et al.). Preventing this widespread and socially acceptable manifestation of VAC is a flagship priority for international organisations (Pinheiro, 2006) and its prohibition is described as an indispensable step toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in Africa (GIEACPC, 2017). However, progress has been slow and often resisted by local actors.

In Côte d'Ivoire, despite a 2009 ministerial ban of CP in schools its use is still pervasive. The latest available school survey found that 63% of primary school children conveyed being hit with an object by a teacher in the last 12 months and 80% of children reporting physical violence by a teacher said it occurred more than once per week. More than half (54%) of primary school children viewed physical violence by teachers as normal and one third of parents and one fifth of teachers considered CP as necessary to educate children (MENET-CI / UNICEF, 2015). The Violence Against Children Survey, similarly, confirms CP in schools as a widely accepted norm with 31.9% of young women and 29.6% of men between 18-24 believing the use of CP by teachers as necessary (MFFE, 2020). A recent secondary analysis of the VAC survey

data found that one in four Ivorian primary school students from a sample of 13- to 17-year-olds reported physical violence from teachers. It also identified male teachers as the most common first (55.46%) and last time (75.57%) perpetrator of physical violence by an adult in the community (Balliet, 2024).

Numerous international initiatives have consistently put the issue of prohibiting CP in Ivorian schools in the spotlight. Notable examples include Côte d'Ivoire's designation as a Pathfinding country for the End Violence Against Children partnership and the implementation of the Violence Against Children Survey in 2018. However, a disconnect between these policies and Ivorian society's widespread experience of CP seems to be halting progress and, at times, fuelling a backlash against the idea of prohibiting the practice. For instance, when regional standardised tests revealed a decline of 14.2 points in reading and 21.7 points in mathematics compared to the 2014 results, some professionals and parents attributed these low scores to the prohibition of CP (PASEC, 2019, pp. 224–226). In the media, public opinion rallied for the return of the 'chicotte²,' arguing it was a fundamental value of primary education and a key element of Ivorian cultural heritage, contending that school quality deteriorated following its prohibition (7info, 2021; Kautcha, 2019; RTI Info, 2021).

Situated at the intersection of internationally driven efforts to eliminate CP in schools and their national enactment, this thesis presents a critical policy study that employs network ethnography to examine how CP policies are enacted in Côte d'Ivoire. It stems from my personal experience of this nexus and the tensions I observed. As a non-western NGO employee working in Côte d'Ivoire, I often found myself inhabiting a hybrid position between Ivorian actors tasked with the enactment of policies to reduce CP in schools and the northern international agents designing and funding them. Being privy to frustrations from both sides what particularly struck me was how, in private, disagreements over policies could easily encounter a deadlock with positions between international policymakers and Ivorian school-based actors generally closing off any possibility for dialogue or moral deliberation. The impasse often manifested as a binary between universalist and relativist perspectives. Either one was exclusively

² Chicotte: refers to an object used to whip or flog students. In West Africa the act of using the chicotte has its own verb "chicoter" (Martineau, 2018)

committed to the dominant global definition of VAC spearheaded by international organisations (IOs) and justified by the moral imperative of children's rights. Or one was aligned to a cultural relativist perspective that rejected moral evaluations of these acts as they could only respond uniquely to each cultural system.

I observed how these two discourses shaped the enactment of policies by acting as frameworks of how we think what we think (Ball, 2015b). These framings limited the opportunity of both critiquing harmful practices and fully engaging with contextual differences. The result was often half-hearted national implementations of internationally driven CP policies which after being loudly announced were easily forgotten or ignored, compounded with frustration from most of those involved in their enactment.

This thesis, in a sense, is born out of that frustration. Standing in school classrooms, although convinced that CP could be prevented, I also empathised with teachers' frustrations at what policies and programming were asking of them. I often felt that the logic of the global discourse embodied within these policies exercised the type of violence described by Butler as an application of universality that "fails to undergo a reformulation of itself in response to the social and cultural conditions it includes within its scope of applicability" (2005, p.6) or worst as an "indifference to the social conditions under which a living appropriation might become possible. If no living appropriation is possible, then ...the precept can be undergone only as a deathly thing, a suffering imposed from an indifferent outside" (p.7). There was something in the way policy actors were working, myself included, that was limiting and unhelpful as it did not allow space for any living appropriation of what the CP solutions could look like in context. I was disturbed to observe that CP policies, at best, had no significant change and, at worst, seemed to entrench positions in favour of CP. And yet, I remained convinced that the policies' intent of improving children's wellbeing was a widely shared goal.

I suspected that the definitiveness with which the global policy discourse portrayed CP irrefutably as VAC and as an abuse of children's rights made those who appealed for their contextual particularities to be addressed to feel unheard. It seemed to me that the sense of "fatigue" conveyed by the Ivorian teacher in the opening epigraph, arose

from limited opportunities to incorporate contextual concerns and was aggravated by a colonial legacy of interventions in communities. By leaving this fatigue unaddressed it made some seek refuge within a cultural relativist discourse. Counterintuitively, while the intent of mobilising a definitive or normative discourse regarding ‘CP as VAC’ is meant to express the utmost concern for children, the effect of this discourse seemed to be making the goal of less violent classroom relationships harder to attain. Leaving my position in a Swiss NGO active in Côte d’Ivoire was strongly motivated by a desire to have space to think differently of CP as a social problem, to focus on the policy effects rather than their intent and to question my role (and that of other development workers) in it. A PhD seemed like a privileged space to do just that.

In this introductory chapter, I not only outline the motivation and scope of the study but also establish the key theoretical frameworks and concepts that underpin the analysis. These include policy enactment, policy as discourse, problematisation, violence, and the role of national middle space actors. Framed within a post-structuralist epistemology, I make the case for a Foucault-inspired critical policy study that interrogates the material, historical, and power conditions that have elevated CP as a policy problem in Côte d’Ivoire. By embedding these theoretical foundations early on, this introduction sets the stage for exploring the limitations of current policy enactments and the analytical lens through which the rest of the thesis unfolds. I conclude by outlining the structure of the thesis and introducing the research objectives.

1.1 Expanding and problematising corporal punishment policy work

This study undertakes a critical analysis of the enactment of school CP policies in Côte d’Ivoire. Rather than employing the term *implementation*, which is often associated with linear and positivist models of policy analysis, I adopt the concept of policy *enactment* (Peck & Theodore, 2012b; Scheurich, 1994). Policy enactment, as conceptualised by Ball et al. (2011) encompasses an analysis of “the diverse and complex ways in which sets of education policies are ‘made sense of’, mediated and struggled over and sometimes ignored” (p.3). Maguire et al. (2015) further emphasise how enactment, in contrast to implementation, captures the moments where meaning

is socially, culturally and emotionally constructed and interpreted that are frequently overlooked in outcomes-driven analysis. These scholars argue that enactment allows us to consider policy work as “a more fragile and unstable process than is sometimes imagined” (p.498) because it comprises all the micro-processes through which individuals touched by the policy interpret and perform it.

Similarly, Parkes et al. (2016), in their review of school-related gender-based violence, apply the term policy enactment to include a wide range of activities such as “negotiations involved in developing policies, allocating resources, prioritizing and planning across sectors” (p.5). Their approach broadens the scope of analysis to include a more diverse set of actors and their “engagements with ideas, evidence, institutional forms and power relations across sites” (p.5). From this perspective, policy enactment includes and does not take for granted the initial and iterative processes, conditions and power dynamics through which issues get constructed and framed as problems requiring intervention.

In this expanded conceptualisation of the policymaking process, I draw on two key Foucauldian analytical tools: problematisation and genealogy. For Foucault (1983) problematisation involves exploring “how and why certain things... became a problem” (p. 67). This involves interrogating the historic conditions and subconscious modes of thoughts that allowed ‘problems’ to emerge as so. In parallel, genealogy offers a way of unsettling present policy problems. It is “a mode of analysis that denaturalises the present by examining, in empirical detail, how our time contingently came into being and how non-inevitable its existence is” (Lovbrand & Strippel, 2015, p. 94). Following Ball and Tamboukou (2003), I approach genealogy as a critical and context-bound mode of inquiry that challenges the universal authority of scientific knowledge by tracing its historical and discursive contingencies.

These tools allow me to challenge the assumption that policy issues, such as CP, are self-evident or normative starting points. Instead problematisation and genealogy conceptualise policies as historically and discursively constructed value judgments that acquire the status of ‘truths’ through specific configurations of power and knowledge. Critical policy studies, particularly when informed by Foucauldian thought, seek to uncover how policies are not merely shaped by social reality but also actively shape

that reality. They do so by delineating what constitutes legitimate knowledge, framing issues as problems that demand political attention, and influencing the actions of policy actors. From this perspective, policies are not simply neutral responses to objectively existing problems; they actively participate in the construction of those problems.

To problematise how CP became conceived as a social problem in the Ivorian context I am inspired by authors such as Carol Bacchi, Susan Goodwin, Stephen Ball, Wanda Pillow and Joseph Scheurich, all of whom are in turn influenced by post-structuralism and Foucauldian genealogy. These authors take recognising the systems of thought that have made possible the emergence of particular policies as an important starting point for analysis. Scheurich (1994) for instance, conducts an archaeology of policies by examining the historical conditions or *a priori*s that make social constructions of policy problems possible. In his study of policies addressing the academic failure of Black children in American schools, he identifies how discursive regularities, such as race, class and professionalisation, function as a “preconceptual field,” that privileges certain policy responses while rendering others “virtually invisible” (p.303). These historically contingent discourses create the realm of possible and impossible solutions.

Bacchi and Goodwin (2016) propose an analytical strategy of questions on the nature of the representation of a policy problem that are meant to help policy actors analyse how certain knowledges or problems acquire the status of truths. These questions also encourage the examination of the power relations that elevate certain knowledges to the policy field. Problematisation and genealogy, also align with Bacchi’s (2000) description of policy as discourse that seeks to demystify the conditions and power relations that led topics to be constructed as a problem in need of a solution.

Ball’s work also considers policies as discursive strategies that construct relationships between “truth and power and the self” (2015b, p. 308). He argues that policy as discourse is not merely descriptive but constitutive. Beyond policy texts and language, policy as discourse is an active process where truths and knowledge are constructed. It actively shapes how individuals understand themselves and others, and how they are expected to act. Ball’s (2016) practical application of policy as discourse through

network ethnography highlights the wide arena and individuals involved in the construction and re-construction of policy problems. His more recent work with Junemann (2018) also identifies how policy networks act as transnational discourse communities with an increasing role in constructing policy problems far away from where policies are physically enacted.

In this study, I therefore approach CP policy not as a static set of directives, but as a dynamic discursive field that shapes and is shaped by the actors it engages. I pay particular attention to how policy discourses offer individuals “ways of thinking and talking about our institutional selves, to ourselves and to others” (Ball, 2015b, p. 307). This includes an exploration of how embodied knowledge of policy actors, knowledge rooted in lived, physical experiences of CP in the Ivorian context, contributes to the enactment of policy. By foregrounding these embodied and discursive dimensions, I align with the idea that disturbing the “tranquillity with which... [social problems] are accepted” (Scheurich, 1994, p. 300) and recognising “the non-innocence of how ‘problems’ get framed within policy proposals, how the frames will affect what can be thought about and how this affects possibilities for action” (Bacchi, 2000, p. 50) are worthwhile academic pursuits.

1.2 Balancing post-structuralism with a motivation for critical inquiry

Foucauldian genealogy, has, at times, been accused of being a trendy term too hastily applied and misinterpreted (Ball, 2015b; Koopman, 2013) and I do not aim to resolve theoretical debates on the ‘correct’ way to conduct genealogy or interpret Foucault. I adopt problematisation and genealogy as methods within critical policy studies that embrace the contingency, complexity, and historicity of policy problems. In this context, a genealogical approach that problematises CP policies entails a critical interrogation of the socio-historical conditions and power relations that made it possible for CP to be designated as a problem needing intervention in Côte d’Ivoire. It involves tracing the discursive, institutional, and affective forces that have shaped how CP is framed, who is authorised to speak about it, and what kinds of solutions are deemed legitimate. Genealogy asks how certain truths come to dominate, and how

these truths shape the policies that are proposed, the ways they are enacted and their situated effects.

Epistemologically, this approach aligns with post-structuralist thought, which rejects the notion of objective and universal truths in favour of an understanding of knowledge as historically and discursively constructed. From this perspective, this means treating the conceptualisation of social problems such as CP not as an essential phenomenon that exists independently of its representation as a problem. Rather, they are seen as present and contingent formations that are products of specific historical, cultural and contextual conditions that could have been otherwise. As Williams (2005) notes, within post-structuralist epistemology, “knowledge or moral good is made by its limits and cannot be defined independently of them” (p. 2). This insight underscores the impossibility of arriving at final or exhaustive truths. Accordingly, this study does not aim to produce definitive answers about CP policy but instead seeks to illuminate the processes through which certain problem representations gain authority, while others are marginalised or rendered invisible.

However adopting a post-structuralist epistemological stance in the analysis of CP policy is not without its challenges. One of the most destabilising aspects of this approach lies in its refusal to treat even seemingly self-evident phenomena, such as violence, as fixed. It requires a deliberate unsettling of such certainties. It asks not whether CP is violent in some objective sense, but how and why it has come to be understood as violence in particular contexts, by particular actors, and through particular discourses. This does not mean denying the harm or suffering associated with CP. Rather, it involves critically examining the historical, cultural, and institutional conditions under which CP is rendered visible as a problem, and how these framings shape the kinds of policy responses that are considered appropriate or legitimate. This epistemological stance can be uncomfortable, because it resists the impulse to offer clear moral judgments or definitive solutions, and instead highlights ambiguity, contradiction, and the partiality of all knowledge claims.

However, there are several reasons why I find that attempting to conduct a post-structuralist genealogy of CP policymaking can be valuable. According to critical policy scholars problematisation can be a useful tool to understand the historical

construction of how we presently approach social problems that are proving particularly difficult to address (Bacchi, 2015). This method can serve as "a critical inquiry into the complex and contingent formation of the present in which we find ourselves" (Koopman, 2013, p. 12). By taking into consideration this initial archaeology of the policy and its discourses then subsequent reactions, interpretations and effects of CP policies can be understood more holistically.

The act of problematisation also helps to look forward into imagining other possible ways of enacting policies. Since the naming of a 'problem' through discourse already carries with it "proposals about how we ought to proceed from here" (Bacchi, 2000, p. 45), looking at its limitations could expand our viewpoint. The 'problem's' name shapes and is shaped by what is considered as relevant and possible when solving a problem, for example by placing the onus either on individual choices (teachers who use CP) or structural constraints (inequitable schooling conditions). The process of naming a 'problem' also constructs subjects by either designating or rendering invisible who is part of the 'problem' (violent teachers or international creditors) and who is part of the solution (development workers or community activists). As discourse, policies carry, are built upon and perform many of the un-said truths and knowledges that are subconsciously being proposed. By looking at the "historical limits of our understandings and experiences" (Koopman, 2013, p. 93) through how we have problematised CP policies we can make space for different discursive framings.

While all 'problems' could be analysed by problematising how they came to be prioritised in the policy agenda, this approach can be particularly useful for those social issues like CP, which can be described as "wicked" (Rittel & Webber, 1973) or "submerged" (Koopman, 2013, p. 1) problems. These are social issues "whose remedies are ever just beyond our grasp, and whose very articulations require a severe work of thought" (p. 1). Policies addressing CP aim to change deeply personal and ingrained childrearing beliefs and practices, which some groups label as violent and others see as beneficial and as part of their caregiving responsibility. When a policy discourse pits two heartfelt views at odds with each other, the legitimacy of the systems of thoughts and the exchanges through which the problem is defined become as important as the strength of evidence or the logic of arguments for or against it.

What makes CP particularly complex is that it is not only ideologically charged but also deeply embodied. Embodiment refers to the idea that knowledge is also constructed through what is experienced and remembered in the body. Most policy actors and not just targeted 'beneficiaries' have a personal and embodied experience of the premise of whether or not CP is a social problem since we were all cared for in ways that either favoured or rebuffed CP. In spaces where CP is commonplace and where we can expect most people involved in policymaking have experienced it or are actively using CP then a policy discourse that seeks to prohibit it by labelling it as abuse will be received differently than in places where its use is less widespread. These embodied histories matter as they inform not only how policies are received but also how they are enacted, resisted, or reinterpreted.

If as Ball proposes we consider that policies as discourse “form ‘a regime of truth’ that ‘offers the terms that make self-recognition possible” (2015b, p. 307) then in a certain sense policy discourses also help construct people's identity. For example, policies banning CP and labelling it as abuse will tacitly ask individuals to recognise themselves in relation to the discourse, as either good or bad caregivers or as having had a happy or an abusive upbringing. The parts of our identities at play during the problematisation of CP are likely to be more personal than those mobilised in other educational policies such as those on teacher training or school management. Or to borrow from Pillow's (2003) embodied analysis of policies, in CP policies the ostensibly objective and neutral position of policymakers is even more tenuous, and it would be especially important to acknowledge policymakers' “own embodied, subjective position in the policy process” (p. 153). Considering how policy as discourse is embodied, or understood in the body, by different individuals forming a policy network could also create space for a plurality of approaches.

Bacchi (2000) notes a second reason that motivates my desire to problematise how CP came to be policy problem in Côte d'Ivoire. She highlights that most theorists that problematise policies do so with an ultimate activism agenda. They see the discourses mobilised as policy hindering progress and are “primarily interested in identifying the reasons progressive change has proved so difficult to accomplish. Hence, they tend to emphasise the constraints imposed by discourses, through meaning construction”

(p.47). I am definitely, at times, guilty of this reasoning and situate this study within the tradition of what Taylor (1997) describes as critical policy analysis in which the “political nature of policymaking” (p.25) is accentuated. This study contains an underlying desire to explore whether inherent constraints in the dominant conceptualisation of ‘CP as a VAC’ are blocking us from seeing alternative ways of approaching children's wellbeing in schools that would become apparent if we problematised violence in classrooms differently. I am therefore attracted to problematising policies and engaging in genealogy as critique because by revealing “the contingency, even arbitrariness of what appears natural and necessary...it serves to open possibilities” (Mahon, 1993, p. 132).

At the same time, I acknowledge that we always act within power relations and discourses so any alternative possibility will also be situated within its own set of unsaid truths, limitations and norms. Embracing a post-structuralist and Foucauldian approach to critique means I do not aim to discover the true origin of a policy or a normative solution to CP that is free from discursive conditions, values and power dynamics. Although the critique of this thesis does not pretend to arrive at some ultimate truth and solution for CP in schools, it all the while maintains a desire for transformation in the Foucauldian sense:

To do criticism is to make harder those acts which are now too easy. Understood in these terms, criticism (and radical criticism) is utterly indispensable for any transformation.... As soon as people begin to have trouble thinking things the way they have been thought, transformation becomes at the same time very urgent, very difficult, and entirely possible. (Foucault, 1981 as cited in Koopman, 2013, p. 16)

I therefore borrow from Ball (2013) the idea that conducting critical policy analysis means that we continue trying, continue failing but perhaps failing better.

Despite the activist impulse I try to exercise what Bacchi and Goodwin call a “self problematizing ethic” (2016, p. 24) in which they exhort us to continue to problematise our own proposals. Any insights, discourses or proposals from this thesis are situated within a plurality of practices possible. They invite change and subsequent challenge rather than new 'truths' or normative positions. In the next two sections I try to make explicit some of the 'un-saids' of what failing better means to me by delving deeper

into the political stance, lens and conceptual framing of violence that accompanies the 'critical' part of this study's analysis of CP.

1.3 Applying a broad conceptual framework of violence

As alluded to in the previous section I embrace the idea that the discourse of CP from which one operates acts as the arbitrator for what counts as violence, who we believe is affected by it and ultimately unveils who or what is responsible for it. It acts as a 'regime of truth' that sets the borders of what is observed and delimits our understanding of its causes and restricts the possible solutions envisioned. Whichever discourse is adopted will always be historically, contextually and discursively constructed. It is thus a significant and far from neutral first positioning in any research attempting to study VAC and I find it important to be candid as to which conceptualisations of violence are guiding my own thinking on CP.

To work towards my aim of stepping away from a dichotomous debate between universalists and relativists and facilitate new conversations on CP, I draw on conceptualisations of violence that seek to be non-essentialist, that encompass context holistically, and that try to move away from individual acts to centre on the power that creates and maintains these (Scheper-Hughes & Bourgois, 2017; Wells & Montgomery, 2014). I find it useful to look at a conceptualisation or an ontology of violence in broad terms and as a continuum that does not isolate violent acts from one another. It is against this prism that I will explore the limitations and strengths of CP policy discourses circulating in Côte d'Ivoire.

1.3.1 Defining violence through Galtung

A central influence on my conceptualisation of violence is Galtung's (1969) extended view of violence where he defines violence broadly as that which is "present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations" and as "the cause of the difference between the potential and the actual" (p. 168). Galtung defines violence as whatever separates an actual state from a potential one, or that which might be truncating individuals from achieving their latent possibilities. In Laurie and Shaw's (2018) revisiting of Galtung they note how this definition "understands violence as both that which increases the

gulf and, more potently, that which fails to close the gulf. This shifts away from a comprehension of violence as an intentional act towards a constraint-based ontology of violence" (p. 9). It is a conceptualisation of violence that de-emphasises a focus on visible direct acts and shifts our gaze to enquire about the conditions that maintain the status quo and make certain possibilities inaccessible or seem impossible. It invites us to label these conditions as violence. To complement his definition Galtung (1990a) identified three inter-related and crossbreeding types of violence that inhabit the gulf between the actual and potential: direct, structural, and symbolic violence. Together they form a triangle of violence with linkages, connections and feedback loops flowing in all directions. The first, direct violence includes psychological, material, and physical acts or threats that can be directly traced back to a subject. It includes visible events by discernible actors.

Structural violence on the other hand is indirect and built into our economic and political systems in such a way that it is hard to notice it. Whilst direct violence are visible events that make a splash, we hardly notice we are immersed in structural violence, "Structural violence is silent, it does not show – it is essentially static, it is the tranquil waters"(Galtung, 1969, p. 173). Structural violence is also often referred to as social injustices as it "shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances" (p.171). Butchart and Engström (in Macassa, 2023) argue in favour of calling structural injustices violence as they are many times more lethal than direct forms of violence. Similarly for Winter and Leighton (2001) structural violence is human violence despite it being difficult to attribute to a visible perpetrator, because it is caused by human decisions and can also be prevented through human interference. Montesanti and Thurston (2015) have also noted that structural violence is not just harmful by itself, but it often fosters more direct violence. Galtung (1969) for example argued that our overemphasis on correcting, punishing and deterring direct violence means our efforts "often fail to capture structural violence in their nets – and may hence be catching the small fry and letting the big fish loose" (p.172).

A third type of violence helps answer the question -why do we tolerate structural violence that breeds direct violence and vice versa? Symbolic violence are those aspects which "serves as legitimization of both personal and structural violence"

(Galtung, 1990a, p. 336) and make them “look, even feel, right -or at least not wrong” (p.291). This type of violence can be immaterial, internalised and embedded into all aspects of social life for example in religion, language or science. Laurie and Shaw (2018) describe it as a set of norms that legitimise violence through common sense thinking which takes for granted unjust conditions by rationalising them as natural. This type of violence feels natural because it manifests through a:

set of fundamental, prereflexive assumptions that social agents engage by the mere fact of taking the world for granted, of accepting the world as it is, and of finding natural because their mind is constructed according to cognitive structures that are issued out of the very structures of the world. (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2004, p. 272)

Symbolic violence is that which allows particular ideas or discourses on unjust conditions to become "what counts as truth" (Ball, 2013, p. 5) and sit in "the domain of subconscious knowledge" (p.19). It represents the "never saids" (p.20) that we cannot think outside of, and which make it difficult for us to problematise certain unjust conditions.

Confortini (2006) revisits Galtung's three dimensions of violence through a feminist lens, emphasising the interdependence of these dimensions. She notes that the “three corners of a violence triangle...breed each other in many ways and that violence reproduces itself across all dimensions” (2006, p. 339). Rather than viewing violence as a singular act, system, or structure, Confortini conceptualises it as a “complicated process through which social relations of power are built, legitimized, reproduced and naturalized” (2006, p. 356). The idea of violence as a process is reinforced by the triangle imagery which resists hierarchical distinctions among the types of violence – direct, structural, and cultural, and instead asserts that all types relate to each other. The flexibility of the triangle's orientation allows for different interpretive emphases: for instance, when the triangle stands on the ‘direct’ and ‘structural violence’ corners, cultural violence appears as the legitimising force; conversely, when inverted, direct violence is framed as the outcome of deeper structural and cultural roots (Galtung, 1990b, p. 294).

This conceptualisation also satisfies my need to make context an indispensable criterion through which violence is defined. For Galtung, potential and actual

realisations are neither static nor context-free states, rather they are contingent on what is possible or not at a given time and place and “with a given level of insight and resources” (1969, p. 169). This allows the relational and contextual aspect of violence to emerge as we do not consider the harm incurred in isolation but together with the concrete possibilities of those enduring and perpetrating it. For example, if someone dies from an incurable disease then their death would not be considered as violent. However, if in the future a cure is found, but access to treatment is not available to that individual because of economic or social inequalities, then the cause of their death would be labelled violent (Galtung, 1969). In this case the perpetrator of such violence shifts into the realm of the structural systems that cause the unequal access to persist rather than on an individual medical staff that might not have been allowed to administer the cure. In this sense it is context that gives an act its violent designation and we no longer need to look for an immutable list of acts that are in their essence violent.

As per Galtung's definition if an act of CP against a child, within the bounds of what is possible in a specific context, truncates that child's potential or maintains it stalled, then this act would be labelled as violent. However, if through enquiry we note that teachers' human and material constraints and the discourses in the school community are leading them to perceive CP as the best action possible to help a child reach his or her potential then this opens further fields of analysis. This conceptualisation helps us understand the weight of individual constraints and makes us shift our gaze from the direct act to the conditions that make an act of CP seem like the only action possible to achieve a child's potential state. It provides a framework through which to include the contextual elements that are often mentioned when studying violence in schools.

In schools, underpaid, ill-trained teachers working in overcrowded, poorly resourced classrooms may be unable to provide safe spaces for learning and challenging violence. Instead, there is ample evidence that through their curricula, pedagogies and management structures, schools may reinforce rather than disrupt violence But the dynamics of violence vary from one context to another, with particular cultural manifestations shaped by distinct political, social and economic histories. (Parkes, 2015, p. 5)

By fundamentally linking direct violence to structural and symbolic violence the analysis can go much deeper towards analysing the roots of educational violence that impede children from achieving their potential and the power that is maintaining violence in place. The idea is not to excuse or tolerate direct acts of CP but rather to use a framework that will encourage analyses that do not shy away from the complexity of tackling the structural and symbolic violence fuelling direct acts. This in turn could lead us to construct alternatives to preventing CP that go beyond a focus on treating individual teachers' behaviours.

However, it is important to acknowledge that there exist harsh critiques of how Galtung stretched the conceptualisation of violence to include what others label as injustices and oppression. Keane (as cited in Bufacchi, 2005) for example writes that Galtung has gone too far and "makes a nonsense of the concept" (p.198). Bufacchi, also warns that comprehensive conceptualisations of violence such as Galtung's are problematic because "this definition is much too inclusive, its scope much too broad" (p.198) and poses problems when looking for an operational definition. Yet, it is precisely the expansive nature of Galtung's framework that most excites me. A limited definition might seem more operational and feel morally safer, but it leaves us blind as to what those visible acts mean in different contexts. Furthermore, if we choose to shy away from the complex and violent structural, cultural and historical conditions that sustain and give meaning to acts we continue with little information on how to reduce their occurrence, understand why they are so resistant to change and how we might be part of the problem.

Looking at the wider systems where violent acts and violent relationships are embedded does not mean I wish to ignore the agency of a teacher who uses CP or accepts the practice as inevitable. However, it is an attempt to embrace the complexity of forces behind such acts. I would like to reiterate that engaging with a broader and less dichotomous definition of violence is not in any way an attempt to promote or endorse the use of CP in schools. I am personally convinced CP is neither beneficial nor unavoidable however I am less certain that current policy discourses of 'CP as VAC' are resulting in helpful actions towards making less violent classroom relationships a reality.

One of the goals of this thesis is to explore the limitations of current conceptualisations and discourses of 'CP as a VAC' policy problem. In my analysis I engage with Galtung's theory of violence to gauge how the CP policy discourses mobilised in Côte d'Ivoire make space for contextual particularities and for structural and symbolic violence fuelling direct acts. Galtung's violence framing also helps me analyse CP in Ivorian school classrooms from a broader perspective that shifts the focus away from the morality of individual physical acts in isolation to reflect on the complex processes and relationships invested in its use.

1.3.2. A violence framework with an evaluative space for dialogue

Galtung's framing of violence as the gap between the actual and the potential invites us to begin not with harm, but with possibility. It suggests that defining violence requires a prior conversation about what could be, that is, about the aspirations, capabilities, and potentials. As Barnett (2008) puts it, "it ultimately requires some measures of what is possible in order to determine the extent to which violence occurs" (p. 77). It therefore grounds the conversation of violence within a wider discussion of desired social goals and concrete possibilities within a context. Building on this, Paulson and Tikly (2022) bring together Galtung's framework with Sen's capability approach to argue that identifying violence demands a contextual evaluation of "the possibilities for human well-being and flourishing in terms of the capabilities (opportunity freedoms) available to individuals and groups to realise valued functionings" (p.10). Barnett (2008) similarly combines Sen's theory of development with Galtung's framework to argue that to close the gap between the actual and the potential, requires creating conditions that "allow people to take initiatives to pursue outcomes that are valuable to them" (p.80). What emerges from these perspectives is a shift away from imposing universalised notions of what outcomes should be achieved for all children, towards context-specific dialogue where communities can collectively explore what is possible and desirable. Within this framework, violence is defined not merely as harm inflicted, but as the truncation of a child's potential as identified through situated, participatory processes.

This violence framework is non-essentialist in the sense that it does not prescribe a list of acts that are by nature violent but rather notes that defining violence is an act of

choice amongst a concerned group in a particular time and place. Barnett for example moves away from prescribing specific outcomes and rather focuses on those "processes that allow free actions and decisions, and opportunities that people have available to them" (p.80). Similarly, Parekh (1999) notes that deciding what these potential realisations or human constants are should happen through "cross-cultural moral deliberation" (p.142) and "our concern is not to discover these values, for they have no objective basis, but to agree on them" (p.140). These authors therefore strip away the essentialist character of defining violence present in a universalist perspective and make defining violence a matter of human decision.

However, they also avoid cultural relativism or the idea that any opinion is as valid as others by linking defining something as violent to cross-cultural dialogue.

Deliberations of what constitutes as violence need to be "capable of being defended by interculturally shareable good reasons" (p.150). Whilst decisions will never be conclusive in absolute terms they can be in practical terms when our defence of them "withstands criticism and is stronger than the case that can be made out for opposite values" (p.143). Sen, according to Paulson and Tikly (2022) also refers to dialogue as a critical part needed to arrive at an understanding of human wellbeing as "what counts as valued capabilities and functions ought to... arise through processes of informed public dialogue" (p. 10).

Placing the definition of violence within this evaluative space liberates moral values from a discourse of essentialism and absolutism of human nature which have been accused of hiding imperialistic epistemologies. This liberation is also what makes dialogue and not just advocating or convincing for one's own ideas possible. Secondly it allows scope for more diverse values but at the same time does not treat them as beyond the realm of cross-cultural reasoning and discussion. By appealing to some conception of flourishing linked to our common human identity it differs from a narrow version of cultural relativism.

Free from the task of identifying acts which are in essence violent the emphasis shifts to the processes where goals or values are agreed upon. However, when asked to operationalise these ideas and "how to make space for the inescapable cultural mediation of universal values without depriving them of their normative and critical

thrust” (Parekh, 1999, p. 151) most authors recognise that not enough has been done. Specifically, on the continued entrenched position between universalists and relativists on children’s rights many authors fall back on the idea of the need for more dialogue. Putnam (2008) for example makes an appeal to our courage when she asks us not to:

give up on the very possibility of rational discussion nor to seek an Archimedean point, an ‘absolute conception’ outside of all contexts and problematic situations but...to investigate and discuss and try things out cooperatively, democratically, and above all fallibilistically. (p.45)

Reynaert et al. (2012) for example put forth a “mestiza conception” of children’s rights in which rights would act as frames of reference from which to critically reflect together on the way children and society interact. Twum-Danso (2011) insists that engaging in an “an open and nonjudgmental dialogue process in which all parties are equal partners whose views are considered seriously no matter how much they go against the grain of children’s rights principles” (p.390) is imperative and that doing so actually reveals concrete middle grounds that can be mobilised to better protect children from violence.

Parekh (1999) gives broad guidelines to facilitate complex cross-cultural dialogues such as acknowledging that the language in which values are expressed (for example rights or duties) should be freely chosen to most suit cultural sensibilities. He also emphasises that such values will only be useful if individuals are uncoerced to agree to them, “If universal values are to enjoy widespread support and democratic validation and be free of ethnocentric biases, they should arise out of an open and uncoerced cross-cultural dialogue” (p.139). In a similar vein, Tomlinson (1991) argues that for more useful forms of dialogue to occur “what is required is a radical, structural re-organization of the way in which cultural goals become defined and enacted” (p.178).

This study identifies the policy enactment process as a critical site where such dialogues could occur and from where to analyse how specific power relations shape the way social goals and hence violence becomes defined. I find Galtung’s framework useful and will use it throughout the thesis because context, and structural and symbolic violence are integral elements of its conceptualisation and not just add-ons. Moreover, as discussed in this section, Galtung’s approach aligns with a post-

structuralist perspective that resists essentialist definitions of violence. Instead, it emphasises the discursive processes through which violence is constructed and through which policy solutions are negotiated. This theoretical orientation is particularly well-suited to my focus on the problematisation of CP policies in Côte d'Ivoire. Studying this process rather than narrowing down on the individual perpetrators of CP is meant to try to move away from dominant truth regimes around CP and see whether we can glimpse at alternative ways of promoting healthier classroom relationships in Ivorian schools.

1.4 Post-colonial, post-development and a middle space for challenge

Along with a broad framework of violence I also mobilise a postcolonial and post-development lens to the enactment of CP school policies. The embodied dimensions of policy enactment also include the continuing legacy of power imbalances between those who are asking others to change. The unfinished business of colonialism continues to be embedded in the relations between national and international policy actors. It adds a particular set of power differentials and complexities that should be taken into consideration when trying to understand the enactment of CP policies, its effects, and ensuing shortcomings (i.e. slow progress and local resistance).

Postcolonialism according to Young (2003) is concerned with recognising the unequal power dynamics between the West and non-Western societies and addressing the imbalances it causes in terms of economic, cultural and knowledge dominance. The postcolonial critique of continuing inequalities between former colonising and colonised nations is a reminder that all policies, particularly those that touch on such sensitive subjects such as raising one's own children, must be situated and understood with the colonial history as an ever-present backdrop:

The perpetrators of violence forget far sooner than those subjected to their power...in that sense the postcolonial will always be left over... the continuing projection of past conflicts into the experience of the present... (Young, 2012, p. 21)

Postcolonial theory which developed alongside post-structuralism, places central attention to the role that colonial discourse played in the construction of imperialism

and its continued use in the maintenance of present power inequalities. Through a focus on discourse its critique goes beyond specific colonised societies to tackle the colonial project's overall "process of production of knowledge about the other" (Ziai, 2012, p. 6). Kayatekin (2009) describes the colonial discourse as "the constructions of the 'conquered' cultures and of the subject populations as different from and in opposition to an assumed norm of modernity, which may or may not be achieved, but nonetheless represents a more advanced stage of development" (p. 1113). Such representations that justified colonial rule may also continue to inform contemporary global hierarchies and development discourses.

Post-development scholars such as Escobar (2017), Zaia (2015), Nustad (2007), Lie (2015), Arce and Long (2000) have critically examined the enduring colonial logics embedded within the field of international development—the very sphere from which CP policies in Côte d'Ivoire emerge. These authors argue that the traditional concept and practice of development has evolved from the colonial discourse and continues to maintain the power of defining what is good for non-Western others.

Knowledge about 'development' is in this sense knowledge about the deficiencies of others' way of life, about the necessity of its transformation, about the appropriate method, and about the legitimacy of all that. In the face of heterogeneous conceptions of a good society, to define one conception as universal clearly implies a position of power. (Ziai, 2007a, p. 9)

Like postcolonialism, post-development authors identify and critique how a discourse that defines the other as lacking in reference to a Western universal is often mobilised by the development field. They argue that this discourse has had negative effects on the populations who have been othered, led to a poor track record on what the development field has achieved and has displaced alternative world views and possibilities of living. These critiques on development resonate with me and feel familiar to Butler's description of the violent effect that a universal discourse can have on those tasked with appropriating universal precepts (such as CP being labelled as VAC) without space to incorporate the realities of a particular context. Furthermore, if like Ball (2013) we refer to policy enactment as a process through which power is exercised "through a production of 'truth' and 'knowledge' " (p.14) then by using

postcolonial and post-development frame I remain attentive to whether CP policy discourses exercise power by mobilising a development discourse of a superior 'Western' knowledge or way of life.

These perspectives also align well with a genealogical approach that emphasises the need to take historical context seriously. Through a postcolonial and genealogical perspective, I ground the analysis of contemporary CP policies in an awareness of the histories of the enacted modalities of power including the material and social effects of colonialism. Studying how power asymmetries and colonial discourses have historically manifested in the relationships between policy actors makes it possible to analyse how remnants of these discourses in CP policies have been received, resisted or used by Ivorian policy actors.

However, post-development scholars caution against viewing recipients of development agendas as passive subjects. Rather than simply absorbing or resisting imposed discourses, local actors actively engage with, reinterpret, and reshape them. Arce and Long (2000), for instance, introduce the concept of counterwork to describe the nuanced and strategic ways in which communities respond to development interventions. According to them, counterwork does not imply outright rejection or uncritical acceptance or suffering of these discourses; instead, it refers to the creative and often subtle practices through which people appropriate elements of development discourse and reposition them within their own cultural and social frameworks. In doing so, they strip these discourses of their presumed authority and reconfigure them to serve local priorities. As Arce and Long explain, "people reposition these elements within their own familiar contexts. In doing so, they de-essentialise them of their superior power, creating distinctive social spaces where contests for authority are fought out, often as a prelude to new power claims" (p. 9). This perspective highlights the agency of local actors and the fluid, negotiated nature of development encounters.

Similarly, Bacchi (2000) critiques the policy as discourse tradition for giving the impression that discourse is only used by those that hold power and that those lacking power are simply suffering from the effects of powerful discourses. In this study the postcolonial and post-development frame will maintain some focus on the inequality of power and on how discourse and knowledge is used to maintain powerful positions.

Yet I will take a Foucauldian approach to power as intrinsically relational and also generative or productive. To Foucault (1980), power is a multiplicity of ever-moving force relations that we cannot tangibly possess but that we exercise. We also cannot be outside of power relations as power is constitutive of relations but we can change them. Power can be a productive force and not only a mode of "subjugation, or a general system of domination ... Power is not merely prohibitive it is productive, a lot of the time it "makes us up" rather than grinds us down" (Ball, 2013, p. 30).

1.4.1 A middle level that may disrupt binary thinking

With this thesis I aim to contribute to Bacchi's (2000) call to "spend more time theorizing the 'space for challenge' " (p.55) that exists by focusing on the experiences and acts of power from the middle level of Ivorian policy actors tasked with enacting CP school policies. By middle level, I refer to those often overlooked actors that are charged with operationalising, appropriating and translating into action, policies that have generally been conceived by an upper tier of policy actors and in the case of CP policies an upper international tier. I take inspiration from Ball's work on policy subjects which situates policy enactment as occurring by multiple people and which gives a particular focus to those " 'small' and middling actors, the hewers and drawers of policy work" (2015a, p. 1). This middle space or what Peck and Theodore (2012a) refer to as the "prosaic netherworlds of policy implementation" (p.24) is largely overlooked in research despite it being "crucial to the manner in which the conjoined process of policy mobility/mutation occurs" (p 24) and playing a pivotal role in doing policy work. Unterhalter and North (2018) remind us that it is people not texts that enact policies and that they do not enact them impersonally. They argue that a better understanding of the different terrains of this middle space and how they interact with ideas and their social relationships is necessary to unlock the observed disconnect between local and international interpretations of global agendas as "there is little investigation as to why these disconnections might occur" (p. 8).

In the last ten years there has been a nascent interest of this middle space of policy actors with different interpretations as to who is included in this middle position. It follows an effort to stop treating all policy actors uniformly and recognising that those mostly labelled as 'implementers' play a much more creative role in enacting a

policy. Ball, Maguire and Braun (2015) for example focus on how school managers and different types of teachers interact, interpret and enact divergent versions of the same policy. Unterhalter and North (2018) have a more expansive view in which they identify that the vast middle terrains of actors that exist between a global policy's formulation and its realisation are under-researched. Their focus on global policies shifts the middle space away from what happens in schools and situates it in "locales between the global gatherings that decide on policy, like the MDGs and EFA, and the places where policy is implemented in schools" (p.10).

Other studies have focused on particular "terrains" of the middle space, for example Asim et al. (2023) argue that in low- and middle-income countries that are undergoing a decentralising agenda of their education system a focus is needed on subnational actors such as regional, district and municipal institutions that are gaining a bigger say on how policy is enacted. Authors studying neoliberal policies such as privatisation also have a long tradition of working through networks to research how discourses and ideas are embodied and translated in distinct geographies. Work for example on travelling technocrats has a strong tradition of underscoring the role of middling individuals whose 'expertise' plays an influential role in enacting policies in different contexts (Dezalay & Garth, 2000; Goldman, 2007; Larner & Laurie, 2010).

Other scholars such as Asim et al (2023), note how the roles, views, buy-in and embodied experience of this national "missing middle" are often taken for granted by international rights programming. For example, in Archambault's (2009) study on CP in Kenya, she wonders whether there is an assumption that schools, as modern and Western inspired institutions, will "naturally propagate the global human rights discourse" (p.300). The same hypothesis could be extended wider within this middle space. Are national NGO and INGO workers, and national civil servants as intermediaries assumed to be neutral knowledge brokers? Archambault concludes that this is not necessarily the case and that "in this middle ground they may find themselves conflicted, trying to translate global messages into local terms, or they may use their privileged position of translation to further their own interests" (p.293). These discrepancies have already been reported as present within the ranks of NGO staff as illustrated by this example from the StC office in Lao:

It proved difficult to get Save the Children staff to attend, because most believed that hitting children is an acceptable form of discipline. At the workshop, most of the morning was spent establishing what level of beating is nationally acceptable. Lao presenters stressed that it is difficult – even impossible – to advocate the abolition of corporal punishment with government partners if Save the Children staff themselves have not assimilated this policy. (Ennew & Plateau, 2017, p. 4)

My thesis is an initial exploration of the possible disconnections, connections and counterwork that emerge when CP policies, originating in the international development sphere are received and embodied by a middle level of national actors that are charged with operationalising them to local particularities. Specifically, I focus on the perspectives of national policy actors who occupy a space between, but distinct from, Government ministers and local district administrators. This group includes ministerial civil servants, heads of government departments, NGO and INGO programme officers, and representatives of families and teachers. These actors are neither the architects of policy nor its direct targets; rather, they operate within a liminal space where global discourses meet local realities. Given Côte d'Ivoire's highly centralised governance structure, I have deliberately excluded district-level figures from this study, as key decisions and adaptations tend to be concentrated at the national level.

These middle actors have a particular hybrid position where structure and agency poignantly meet as they are close enough to understand the complex needs of citizens in their context but also as “street-level bureaucrats” (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2012, p. 17) they are strongly bounded to the rules, norms and discourses set by policy networks and structures. In addition to this middle position between the deciders and the receivers of CP policies they are also in the middle of the global and local continuum of experiences and ideas. They are in touch with both worlds simultaneously and represent a middle or third space that is both and neither local nor global (Merry, 2006). They are in a sense caught in the middle of a simplified binary of universalist versus cultural relativist discourses in relation to CP as VAC.

However, they can also bend the binary to create a fertile ground where complexities are unpacked, negotiated and reformulated. By studying the experiences of this

complex middle group from a post-colonial and post-development lens this thesis explores opportunities that divert or subvert binary thinking. I follow the more recent writings from post-development authors such Santos (2018), Long and Arce (2000), Lie (2015), Gibson-Graham (2009) and Matthews (2007; 2010) which pivot from solely critiquing development efforts to also identifying the creative ways in which actors create “alternatives to hegemonic experience” (Gibson-Graham, 2007, p. 146). These post-development authors suggest that to start looking for new possibilities one should analyse what is happening in concrete development events. By connecting lived and concrete experiences to larger regimes of knowledge and dominance I remain attentive to instances of counterwork, that is the “rebounding effect of knowledge in its diversity...involve(ing) the interplay of ‘hegemonic’ and ‘non-hegemonic’ discourses and values” (Lie, 2007, p. 58). I therefore take the enactment of policies working against CP in Ivorian schools as possible “contestation(s) of development on the ground” (Ziai, 2007a, p. 21) and as place where new ways of thinking about achieving less violent school classrooms can emerge.

1.5 Thesis structure and research questions

This thesis begins its analysis of the present-day enactment of CP policies by national middle space actors through a genealogical interrogation of the historical and discursive conditions that made such policies possible in Côte d’Ivoire. A foundational objective of the study is to explore the *a priori* conditions that enabled CP to emerge as a legitimate policy problem and explore how it gained momentum, authority, and coherence within both national and international policy spaces. This objective is primarily addressed in chapters 2 and 4.

Chapter 2, the literature review, is framed as a problematisation of how the discourse of ‘CP as VAC’ became institutionalised as a global policy truth. I examine the academic and policy literature that contributed to the normative framing of ‘CP as VAC’, tracing the origins and diffusion of this discourse within international development. I then build upon authors that have critiqued the limitations and the ‘lived effects’ of this discourse, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. I review the efforts of a diverse set of authors to critique and overcome the discourse’s limitations.

Chapter 3 outlines the methodological framework of the study, including the fieldwork conducted with national middle-level actors. It explains how the study combines genealogy, social network analysis, and qualitative interviews within a network ethnography approach.

In **chapter 4** I take the petition for contextualization seriously and try to mitigate the fact that a "lack of historical perspective has been a feature of the development story since its inception" (Hickel, 2017, p. 65). I use documentary analysis and a genealogical approach that is "grey, meticulous, and patiently documentary" operating "on a field of entangled and confused parchments, on documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times" (Pillow, 2003, p. 150) to take a long-term perspective into the historical foundations, structures and institutions that today are involved with CP policies in Côte d'Ivoire. Drawing on a postcolonial and post-development perspective, I cast a wide historical net beyond VAC and review how violence and unequal power regimes have manifested broadly in the Ivorian educational policy field and in the relationships between international and national actors.

Chapter 5 shifts the focus to the present-day Ivorian CP policy landscape. It begins with a documentary analysis of CP-related policy events in Ivorian schools from 2004 to 2022, followed by a social network analysis that maps the relationships between key organisational actors. This structural analysis is then enriched by qualitative data that explores how national middle-level actors experience the policy network structure and its main discourses. Together, these analyses address the first research question:

How have contextual and historical conditions shaped school CP policies and their enactment in Côte d'Ivoire?

Chapter 6 presents how national middle-level actors engage with the conceptual framing of 'CP as VAC'. I explore how these actors problematise, reinterpret, and sometimes resist dominant discourses, offering alternative conceptualisations of CP. This chapter addresses the second research question:

What conceptualisations of CP are mobilised by Ivorian middle space actors, and how do these align with or diverge from the dominant CP policy discourse?

Chapter 7 delves deeper into how middle-level actors experience the discontinuities between the discourses mobilised by the CP policy network and the unequal power relations of the network structure. It examines concerns around ownership, legitimacy, and influence, and highlights instances of counterwork and practices that challenge binary framings of universalism versus cultural relativism. These practices suggest the emergence of hybrid, contextually grounded alternatives. Responding to Unterhalter's critique that when research has considered this middle group it tends not to see them as a "peopled group, cross cut with historical, political and social relationships articulating capabilities" (2013, p. 13) I look for heterogeneity of perspectives within middle space actors. This chapter addresses the third research question:

How is power exercised in the enactment of school CP policies, and how do middle-level policy actors experience these power dynamics?

Finally, **chapter 8** brings together the findings from across the thesis to reflect on what the experiences of national middle-level actors, analysed through the lenses of genealogy and postcolonial critique, can tell us about the barriers and opportunities for reducing violence in Ivorian classrooms.

For all offences, except the most trivial, -in short for any breach of the regulations of the school- every boy...whatever be his age, is punished by flogging. The operation is performed on the naked back, by the head master himself, who is always a gentleman of great abilities and acquirements, and sometimes of high dignity in the church (G. Scott, 1938)

Despite the clear human rights imperative to enact legislation explicitly prohibiting all corporal punishment of children, some individual governments resist reform, ignoring repeated recommendations by treaty bodies, rejecting recommendations to prohibit made during the Universal Periodic Review, or even openly defending the legality and use of corporal punishment. (GIEACPC, 2017b, p. 7).

CHAPTER 2. Problematising corporal punishment as violence against children: an international affair

This chapter presents a critical literature review tracing the emergence and consolidation of a dominant international discourse framing corporal punishment (CP) as violence against children (VAC). Drawing on a genealogical approach, I treat the literature review as an inquiry into the “historical conditions of existence” (Mahon, 1992, p. 104) that enabled CP to be constructed as a global policy problem. I examine the “performative mechanisms of truth production” (Rooney, 2013, p. 483) and the mutually reinforcing roles of global advocacy, research, and programming in institutionalising a narrow conceptualisation of CP.

I then engage with scholars who critique this dominant framing, including those advancing socio-ecological models and postcolonial or anthropological perspectives that challenge the universalisation of Western ideals of childhood and rights. I highlight how these critiques open up space for more nuanced, contextually grounded understandings of CP and its reduction.

Throughout, I argue that the ‘CP as VAC’ discourse, has become overly rigid and insufficiently theorised. By tracing its genealogy and engaging with its critiques, this chapter sets the stage for a broader interrogation of how CP policies are enacted, resisted, and reinterpreted in Côte d’Ivoire, and how global discourses interact with local histories, organisations and actors.

2.1 A priori conditions for a dominant definition

The widespread use of CP in schools across European history is well documented, as are the gradual shifts—economic, societal, and epistemological—that enabled its

decline in Euro-American contexts (Prairat, 2021; Prout, 2010; Qvortrup et al., 2009; Reynaert et al., 2012; G. Scott, 1938; L. Tisdall, 2017; Verhellen, 2000). These changes did not occur in a vacuum, nor did they unfold overnight (Sandin, 2023). From the 1950s to the 1980s, educators in Europe and the United States began to reconceptualise children not as ‘becomings’, future adults in need of shaping, but as ‘beings’ with agency and rights in the present. This epistemological shift had profound implications for authority, pedagogy, and the diminishing legitimacy of CP as a disciplinary tool (Qvortrup et al., 2009). Notwithstanding the gradual and endogenous nature of this shift, some adults still struggled with the resulting changes, feeling at a loss and confused, expressing “it is not always so easy to accept the more spirited, disrespectful child which is the result” (L. Tisdall, 2017, p. 32). Furthermore, a complete elimination of the practice in these societies is still not a reality.

However, a dominant portrayal of VAC which categorically includes CP was made possible through this historical backdrop. It was also shaped by two key 20th-century developments in Euro-American contexts: the rise of human rights discourse and the evolution of public health paradigms. From a rights perspective, rejecting VAC including all forms of physical punishment, is a logical extension to the recognition of women’s rights (Freeman, 2009). As the feminist movement exposed the magnitude of violence suffered in the private sphere, the pressure to consider women and children’s rights as human rights formed the basis of the moral argument against ‘CP as VAC’, “adults must stop ‘hitting children because it is wrong...as it is wrong to hit adults” (Saunders, 2014, p. 170).

In parallel, the public health field began framing VAC as a disease with costly and undesirable effects for both individuals and society at large. Dahlberg and Mercy (2009) note that as infectious diseases declined and behavioural interventions proved effective in reducing chronic illnesses, such as cancer and heart diseases, public health experts turned their attention to violence as a leading cause of death and disability. They link these two developments as directly influencing the World Health Organisation’s (WHO) declaration of violence as “a leading worldwide public health problem” (1996) and laying the foundation for an epidemiological approach to violence research.

In 1989 the Convention on the Rights of the Child (the Convention) defined violence in a somewhat circular manner as “all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse” (p. Art 19.1) and Article 37 stipulated that “no child shall be subjected to...cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment”. The Convention garnered widespread support and was signed by 196 countries who committed themselves to give children the right to be protected from violence. However, the concept of “degrading punishment” was left undefined. This ambiguity was not accidental but reflected the political negotiations and compromises made during the drafting process. Contributions from Global South countries, such as Senegal, played a key role in resisting overly prescriptive definitions, preserving space for cultural interpretation and contextual flexibility (Harris-Short, 2001; OHCHR & Save the Children, 2007).

Yet, as the Convention was operationalised through international development and human rights mechanisms, this initial openness narrowed. Space for debating diverse cultural understandings of discipline and childrearing diminished, and the definition of VAC evolved to gradually but categorically include CP as child abuse, violence, and a violation of children's rights. For example, the 2002 World Report on Violence and Health introduced a typology and working definition of violence³. The authors acknowledged the subjectivity of their definition, stating that “defining it (violence) is not an exact science but a matter of judgement. Notions of what is acceptable and unacceptable in terms of behaviour, and what constitutes harm, are culturally influenced and constantly under review as values and social norms evolve” (Krug et al., 2002, p. 4). Despite this recognition and the explicit admission that “moderate (corporal) discipline is not universally agreed to be abusive” (p. 63), the report nonetheless positioned CP firmly within the category of child abuse.

Building on the WHO's framing, the child rights community also moved to explicitly define CP as a form of violence. In 2006, General Comment No. 8 of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (the Committee) urged states to

³ The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation.

challenge the widespread legality and social acceptance of CP, framing its prohibition as both a legal obligation under the Convention and a key strategy for preventing all forms of violence in society (CRC, 2006, p. 3). This marked a decisive shift: CP was now unequivocally classified as violence and a violation of children's rights. To reinforce this stance, the Committee provided an acts-based list and worked to operationalise it through countries' periodic reviews. The space for interpretive flexibility was further narrowed when the Committee asserted that "[i]t was not up to individual countries to interpret the Convention as they saw fit" (CRC Chairperson, 1996 as cited in Harris-Short, 2001b p. 337).

With each successive international report, the opportunity for a broader conceptualisation of VAC that included nuances on CP diminished, revealing an interesting pattern where the lack of consensus was acknowledged but ultimately overridden. These documents often framed the lack of consensus as differences in popular beliefs, traditions, and cultural variations, treating them as marginal issues compared to a common universal view. Harris-Short's (2001) analysis of the Convention and the Committee's observations concluded that non-Western traditions or values were generally portrayed in a negative light, seen as obstacles to the Convention's implementation.

A pivotal moment in this discursive consolidation was the UN World Report on Violence Against Children (Pinheiro, 2006), which declared that VAC, including CP, remained legal, state-authorised, and socially approved in many countries, in direct contradiction to states' human rights obligations. The report called for a "definitive global turning point: an end to the justification of violence against children, whether accepted as 'tradition' or disguised as 'discipline' " (Pinheiro, 2006, p. 3).

In sum, the dominant framing of 'CP as VAC' emerged from a confluence of moral conviction in the universality of children's rights and a sense of epidemiological urgency. Together, these sociohistorical conditions constitute key a priori foundations that enabled the emergence of 'CP as VAC' as a dominant and narrowly defined global policy problem.

2.2 Normalising through a triangle of global advocacy, research and programming

The ‘CP as VAC’ discursive framing was further normalised through a self-reinforcing and well-funded triangle of advocacy, research and programming. These three domains operate as what Mahon describes as “technologies of power embodied in social practices,” (1992, p. 104) shaping not only how CP is understood but also what policy responses are deemed legitimate. As Pillow notes, discourses and practices are not separate; they “intertwine, supporting and reconstructing each other in a web of power/knowledge relations” (2003, p. 151). This section explores how these interconnected mechanisms have contributed to the dominance of the ‘CP as VAC’ framing, often at the expense of alternative or contextually grounded perspectives.

A compelling example of how advocacy has shaped the global CP discourse is the work of the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children (GIEACPC). Established in 2001, with support from Save the Children Sweden (StC Sweden), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), UNICEF, and the Committee, the GIEACPC has been instrumental in advancing the legislative prohibition of CP. Strategic and sustained funding enabled the organisation to maintain a strong presence in influential policy spaces such as UN committees and advisory boards where it consistently deployed a suite of advocacy tools, including briefings, studies, and technical reports. These tools were not merely informational; they were discursive instruments that helped frame CP as a children’s rights violation.

The GIEACPC’s influence is perhaps most visible in its close involvement with the UN’s flagship study on VAC, where its executive director, Peter Newell⁴, served on both the International NGO Advisory Panel and the Editorial Board. As Pinheiro, the study’s lead author acknowledged, “Peter Newell...played a significant role in the prominence accorded to the issue of corporal punishment in my Report to the UN” (Bower, 2015, p. 1). Through sustained lobbying which included submitting over 250 briefings to the Committee and more than 300 to the Universal Periodic Review the GIEACPC helped elevate CP from a marginal concern to a central issue in child rights advocacy. An

⁴ Peter Newell, GIEACPC’s executive director has since been convicted in 2016 for sexually abusing a 12-year-old boy and is now in jail.

evaluation of the organisation's impact notes that it had "since its inception... lobbied decision- makers at the highest levels to put the issue of prohibiting corporal punishment of children on the global human rights and development agenda" (p.8) and that it had briefed the Committee "before its examination of every state party report since the very beginning" (p.2). What emerges from this is not just a story of effective advocacy, but of discursive consolidation.

In contrast, voices that espoused a broader or different positioning were not able to influence the implementation and monitoring mechanisms which followed the Convention. Lack of African representation and contextualisation were some of the reasons why in 1990 the African Union Assembly adopted its own African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (African Charter) (Viljoen, 2012). Like the original Convention, the African Charter made no specific mention of CP as VAC. Moreover, it added language on the duties of children to obey parents and gave adults "the primary responsibility of the upbringing and development the child and...the duty:... (c) to ensure that domestic discipline is administered with humanity and in a manner consistent with the inherent dignity of the child" (African Union, 1990, p. 18).

However, these adaptations and contextualisation did not align with the 'CP as VAC' discourse and were soon challenged by international advocacy efforts. For instance, StC Sweden declared, "The issue of corporal punishment remains one of the least clarified and vague in the Charter. Unfortunately, there prevails a view within some quarters that the provisions of the African Charter do not ban (and in fact at times its provisions promote) corporal punishment" (2012, p. 7). Through targeted advocacy, such as the GIEACPC's Africa Project launched in 2009, international actors worked to include the prohibition of CP into African policy agendas. GIEACPC believed that by attending "as many regional meetings on the issue of violence against children as possible, and sittings of the ACERWC, it became possible to ensure that the prohibition of corporal punishment began to be knitted into agendas" (Bower, 2015, p. 34). The term "knitting" in this context vividly describes the process of integrating and normalising 'CP as VAC' within the fabric of regional discussions and policies through intentional and constant acts of advocacy.

Advocacy efforts were further facilitated by structural dependencies. The African Charter's Committee (ACERWC), for example, lacks the resources to undertake the complex administrative and legal role akin to those of the Committee in Geneva (ACERWC, 2015; Lloyd, 2012). Compared to other African Union treaty bodies, such as the African Commission (USD 6 million) or African Court (USD 13.28 million), the ACERWC was the least resourced in 2020 with an annual budget of USD 1.9 million. (Amnesty International, 2020). In addition to financial constraints, ACERWC members often lack the necessary background in international human rights law to effectively enforce the treaty (Viljoen, 2012). Consequently, IOs are well positioned to act as technical experts, supporting members and facilitating their decision-making.

In his analysis of the African children's rights infrastructure, Viljoen argues that ACERWC's work has been “‘shaped and to an extent dictated by partners’ who provide funding for activities within their own priority areas” (2012, p. 405). A notable example is a 2012 advocacy paper drafted by StC Sweden for ACERWC members. The briefing outlined a legal rationale for implementing an interpretation of the African Charter that support an absolute ban on CP. It also provided a step-by-step guide on how to utilise the regional bodies and mechanisms to achieve this ban. Recommended actions included: declaring a Day of the African Child focused on CP, selecting a winnable CP case to bring before the ACERWC, and a suggested drafting of the case to avoid inadmissibility (2012). Following this roadmap, soon after the ACERWC received a communication concerning a case against the government of Senegal involving physical punishment of children (ACERWC, 2014). The following year, the day of African Child was themed “Eliminating harmful social and cultural practices affecting children: our collective responsibility”.

Advocacy successes such as these tend to reinforce each other, paving the way for more actions that lend greater legitimacy to the ‘CP as VAC’ discourse. For instance, the ACERWC's 2018 General Comment No. 5 references Senegal's case, affirming that the ACERWC “has in the past stressed that legislation must be adopted to outlaw corporal punishment in all settings” (2018, p. 20). Advocates then strategically mobilise this new mention of CP to eliminate ambiguity surrounding the African Charter's stance on CP. For instance, in 2021, the GIEACPC cited both the Senegal case

and the General Comment as “evidence of its (the African Charter’s) unequivocal support to the campaign for the eradication of corporal punishment of children in Africa” (Vohito, 2021, p. 88), despite limited deliberation among member states.

The institutionalisation of the ‘CP as VAC’ discourse in policy texts has also enabled other forms of advocacy wins, such as benchmarks and indicators like the progress outcome on CP for SDG goal 16.2 and the aspiration to end CP by 2040 in Africa (ACERWC, 2015). These, in turn, have generated demand for data to monitor progress, positioning quantitative research as a central mechanism for tracking global goals (Hart et al., 2005; Hillis et al., 2016; Straus, 2010).

The emphasis on standardised, comparable data has become a defining feature of a global efforts against CP. For example, UNICEF’s global database, compiled from Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys and Demographic and Health Surveys, has produced widely cited statistics, such as the figure that “6 in 10 children worldwide... are subjected to physical (corporal) punishment” (2014, p. 166). These figures are frequently used to justify further interventions and reinforce the urgency of the issue (Hillis et al., 2016; Pundir et al., 2019; WHO, 2016; World Health Organization, 2020).

UNICEF’s 200-page report encapsulates this data-driven approach, concluding that “Ending violence against children is in our hands. With reliable data, we will know when this human rights imperative is finally achieved” (2014, p. 169). This emphasis on data reliability reinforces the preference for quantitative research, at the expense of nuanced or culturally specific understandings of violence which are difficult to quantify and monitor. As a result, this methodological preference not only shapes what is studied and how but further entrenches the dominance of the ‘CP as VAC’ discourse. In doing so, it strengthens a conceptualisation of CP that tends to standardise and smooth over differences.

The tendency toward standardisation has also extended beyond measurement into the realm of programming. A key example is the 2016 launch of INSPIRE: Seven Strategies for Ending Violence Against Children, a technical package developed by a coalition of international actors aligned with the ‘CP as VAC’ discourse. Promoted as a set of evidence-based and universally applicable interventions” (Butchart & Hillis, 2016),

INSPIRE was endorsed by the WHO, which declared, “we know the solutions and need to shift to implementing them” (2020, p. 2). This framing reflects a belief in the transferability of global solutions, often overlooking the complexities of local contexts.

Within the INSPIRE framework, two primary strategies are recommended to address CP in schools: legal reform and norm change. The first, heavily influenced by the advocacy of the GIEACPC, calls on countries to enact legislation banning all forms of CP. This approach often relies on naming and shaming tactics to pressure governments into compliance. While such advocacy has led to the passage of legal bans in many countries, enforcement remains weak, and legal reforms have not reliably translated into changes in practice. For instance, Feinstein and Mwachombela (2010) found that in the African context, legal bans had little impact on teachers’ use of CP. Similarly, Gershoff (2017, p. 235) observed that “there is still much work to be done to educate teachers about alternatives to corporal punishment so that they completely abandon its use,” (2017, p. 235) despite widespread legal prohibitions.

A recent cross-national study by Smarrelli et al. (2024) further complicates the picture. Among 24 countries analysed, six of the nine that introduced CP bans saw no significant reduction in parental support for or use of CP. Conversely, in nine of the 15 countries without bans, parental use of CP significantly decreased. The study concluded that the success of legal bans is contingent on their alignment with prevailing community values around discipline.

This finding underscores the importance of INSPIRE’s second strategy: programming to change norms and values. This approach includes interventions aimed at educating teachers on positive discipline and child-centred pedagogy, often through the dissemination of toolkits, handbooks, and training materials (Durrant, 2016; UNESCO, 2006). These resources frequently draw on Northern pedagogical traditions and familiar figures such as GIEACPC’s executive director, reinforcing the normativity of the ‘CP as VAC’ discourse.

However, the evidence base for such interventions remains limited, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. A review of UNICEF’s ‘Evidence and Gap Map’ reveals only one intervention with high-confidence evidence of effectiveness in reducing teacher-

perpetrated CP: the Good School Toolkit in Uganda (Pundir et al., 2020) . Even when the search is expanded to include all low- and middle-income countries, this remains the sole intervention with robust evidence. Similarly, in their systematic review of systematic reviews, Lester et al. (2017) sought to answer the question “What do we know about preventing school-based violence?” including CP. They found so little documentation for interventions tackling teacher-on-student violence that they had to discard it as unit of analysis, stating, “there is very little literature on prevention of teacher-on-student violence (including corporal punishment) ...even though these forms of violence seem quite common” (p.206).

In this section I have argued that a normalised view of ‘CP as VAC’ has gained dominance, partly because the Convention unleashed a wave of advocacy, research and programming on VAC that took a children’s rights framework as the “last word” (Freeman, 2014, p. 5). Nieuwenhuys and Hanson similarly assert that post-1989, “strengthening and implementing the Convention was widely seen as the only justifiable aim of childhood research” (2020, p. 122). Reynaert et al’s. (2009) review of children’s rights literature confirms this trend, observing that “the focus on the triptych of standard-setting–implementation–monitoring suggests that children’s rights in the global human rights industry are not under discussion” (p.527). Alanen’s review of the journal *Childhood* (2000 to 2010) also concluded that most research used the Convention as a straightforward framework. Even Freeman, an ardent supporter of the rights-based agenda notes that, “the research project has come under its (the Convention’s) spell; this has proved to be both valuable and deleterious. Harmful when, as happens, the research fails to problematize the Convention and takes it as the ‘last word’ on the subject” (2014, p. 5).

2.3 Following the dominant discourse: a mirage of consensus and an impasse

Those seeking to reduce CP continue to face the stubborn persistence of the practice and limited knowledge of what works (Guedes et al., 2016). At this impasse, marked with few successful examples of eliminating CP in schools, actors often revert to the *a priori* conditions that allowed CP as policy problem to emerge: public health and human rights. The public health basis reinforces an attraction back towards

quantitative and measurable action with the idea that we must double down on our initial strategies as we have not yet sufficiently developed our “evidence architecture to eliminate VAC” (Pundir et al., 2019, p. 3). This has motivated a further set of large quantitative studies focused on identifying individual risk and protective factors, measuring the negative effects of punishment on children (E. Gershoff, 2018), and calculating teacher profiles with a higher likelihood of using violence (Hecker et al., 2018; Merrill et al., 2017; Nkuba et al., 2018).

At the same time, the discourse’s moral imperative based on rights generates a powerful emotional pull back to the urgency of stopping individual acts of CP and pushing a children’s rights agenda. This emotional pull back to our own moral codes is strong given the subject matter and the thin line separating a children rights advocate from a VAC researcher. On the one hand the specificity of working with vulnerable children makes it very hard for researchers to remain unmoved.

Many children’s rights researchers have found themselves trapped between the role of the detached observer and the role of the advocate that cannot remain unmoved in the face of children’s sufferings... it can be difficult to continue to consider wider parameters in relation to context and long-term processes. (Reynolds et al., 2006, p. 295)

Secondly, it is understandable that in international policy circles, diverting resources away from research aimed at stopping concrete acts of violence towards research that critiques the theoretical basis for defining VAC can be seen as superfluous or an unaffordable luxury.

All too often professionals, activists and policy-makers get so caught up in the pain, distress and needs they work with that the answers to these questions are either assumed or dismissed as irrelevant to practice, as academic luxuries for sociologists and philosophers to muse upon. (Burman, 1996, p. 46)

While the passion and urgency driving this focus are understandable and often necessary, the uncritical adoption of dominant definitions of VAC is not without consequence. When interventions or studies begin from a fixed moral narrative and focus narrowly on individual acts, they risk overlooking broader social functions and meanings of violence. As Wells and Montgomery (2014) argue, it is crucial to ask,

“what does violence do?” (p. 8), that is, to explore the roles and purposes that behaviours labelled as violence may serve in their local contexts. Without a conceptual framework that permits this kind of inquiry, research and programming may offer limited insight into what actually works to shift behaviours of teachers at the practical level.

Furthermore, the dominant framing has been accused of mobilising an ‘othering’ discourse found to permeate international development and education policy (Hopkins & Sriprakash, 2016, p. 6). This discourse is underpinned by a belief in the universal applicability of children’s rights, rooted in what Harris-Short (2001) describes as “a culturally determined faith in their absolute truth,” which in turn stems from “a group’s faith in the superiority of its moral code” (p.309). This moral certainty becomes particularly visible when advocates express frustration at the need to provide empirical evidence for the harms of CP, arguing that such proof should be unnecessary. For example, GIEACPC opens its review on the impact of violence with the unequivocal assertion:

Corporal punishment is a violation of children’s rights. International human rights law is clear that children have a right to legal protection from all corporal punishment in all settings of their lives. There is no need to look for evidence of the negative effects of corporal punishment in order to know that it must be prohibited in law and eliminated in practice (2016, p. 2).

Similarly, Gershoff, whose meta-analyses on the negative outcomes of CP is among the most widely cited in the field, also describes her efforts as an endeavour that should be unnecessary, “Given the conclusion stated above that school corporal punishment is a form of violence that violates children’s human rights...arguments about its effects on children are, or at least should be, moot” (2017, p. 231). Others such as Freeman (2014) are more forthcoming about pushing for moral agenda through children’s rights, “One answer to this is to plead guilty! Would you rather be a child in the U.K. or North Korea?” (p.7) as, “It is all very well having doubts about the application of Western norms to African children. ... Are we wrong to want to rid African schools of the cane? ...Should it survive censure just because it is their cultural practice?” (p.12).

When confronted with critiques regarding the Western origins of rights’ discourse,

proponents argue that such origins should not be an impediment to the adoption or relevance of progressive ideas to other nations “Such arguments...confuse the origins of a practice with its validity, an error that logicians call the genetic fallacy. Human rights are too important to be rejected or accepted on the basis of their origins” (Donnelly, 2013, p. 112). Moreover, advocates note that rights in general have been a proven destabiliser of power structures before and “children’s rights should be seen as entitlements instrumental in including the hitherto excluded” (Reynolds et al., 2006, p. 293). Others note that local resistance is to be expected when power and authoritative structures are challenged. For instance, Abramowitz in her account of resistance to gender-based violence discourse in Liberia observes that “Expatriates and sympathetic Liberian GBV activists have come to believe that, through sustained encounters, Liberian populations will eventually acquire a sensibility for the ineffable rightness of human rights rhetoric, and over time will come to accept the core value of equal rights”(2012, p. 139). Under this view acceptance and progress is a matter of time and persistence.

Suggesting a broader conceptualisation of violence that contradicts the essentialist nature of the ‘CP as VAC’ discourse is emotionally hard. In some way it is contrary to the knowledge discourses from which international development researchers tend to operate. Nieuwenhuys and Hanson (2020) suggest that the “epistemological environment” after the signing of the Convention did not encourage academic critique of this sort:

it was not considered “bon ton” to address painful themes ... with the required academic detachment. NGO workers, consultants and academics alike were expected to find solutions ... those that aligned with what Northern donors deemed ‘fundable’. Critical questions were often labelled “unhelpful.” (2020, p. 127)

Tobin (2014) describes the Convention as an “incompletely theorized” (p.399) document, noting that its broad consensus was achieved by accommodating divergent and sometimes conflicting foundational principles. This theoretical ambiguity, however, has not impeded the international development field to operationalise it. As Ferguson observes, “few people need [this theoretical debate] resolved before they are willing to attribute rights to children... who amongst us would want to say that they

were against giving children legal rights?” (2013, p. 178). This widespread acceptance has allowed the Convention to function as a normative anchor, even in the absence of a fully articulated and agreed theoretical foundation.

Sayer (2009) extends this critique to the broader field of Critical Social Sciences (CSSs), for often relying on unexamined normative assumptions, where moral judgments are implied rather than explicitly argued. He calls this tendency “crypto-normative” reasoning that relies on “vague negative feelings about the phenomena being analysed,” assuming that readers already share their evaluative stance, or that the moral implications are too obvious to require elaboration (p. 776). Reynaert et al. (2012) identify this tendency as a form of “dominant consensus-thinking” (p. 163), particularly among what they call “uncritical proponents” of children’s rights (p. 156). These scholars argue that the consensus, while powerful, can obscure the need for deeper theoretical engagement and limit the space for alternative or context-sensitive interpretations of children’s rights and wellbeing.

As key concepts of the dominant ‘CP as VAC’ discourse remain under-theorised, its moral judgements and value systems are often presented as natural or universally valid, rather than as historically and culturally situated constructs. In much of the policies and research that take the Convention as a definitive framework, these assumptions are rarely questioned, resulting in a portrayal of its core tenets as self-evident and beyond critique. When calls are made to accommodate a plurality of views or cultural diversity, proponents of the discourse have often responded with arguments that critics describe as reminiscent of colonial thinking. That is, a mindset that promotes a singular trajectory for what constitutes progress or civilisation and frames cultural differences as barriers to that progress. Such framing not only marginalises non-Western perspectives but also obscures deeper structural causes of violence, such as colonial legacies, social injustice, and systemic inequality.

Moreover, by conceptualising violent acts as a disease rather than as a symptom of “far deeper-seated ills” (Fletcher, 2014, p. 127), much of the research aligned with the ‘CP as VAC’ framework tends to give marginal attention to the social context where violence occurs and are faced with insufficient knowledge of what works to eliminate it. In the following section, I engage with a body of scholarship that has actively challenged this

apparent consensus. These researchers do not reject the importance of protecting children, but rather seek to reframe the conversation by interrogating the assumptions underpinning dominant approaches and by foregrounding alternative, often locally grounded, understandings of violence and care.

2.4 Critiquing the mirage of consensus on VAC

Despite the dominance of the ‘CP as VAC’ discourse a growing body of scholarship has critically examined its conceptual limitations and theoretical blind spots. In this section, I begin by engaging with scholars that critique international VAC interventions and research focusing on the original conception of violence as a public health epidemic or disease. These authors advocate for an expanded understanding of violence, one that illuminates the often-invisible structural and systemic forces that sustain harmful practices. In the second part of this section, I analyse efforts by authors who tackle the ‘unsaid’ and limitations arising from the discourse’s reliance on a Western conceptualisation of children’s rights as the sole means of improving children’s wellbeing.

2.4.1 Room to grow: expanding the dominant definition through a social and ecological framework

Fletcher argues that framing violence through a public health lens is a foundational misconception that has misguided programming efforts. It has led programming down the wrong path of looking for “the biomedical concept of a discrete, identifiable, static, ‘removable cause’ ” (2014, p. 127), which oversimplifies the complex and structural-dependent nature of violent acts. In the field of intimate partner violence (IPV), this has translated into portraying violence as a problem of individual and atypical men, resulting in an overreliance either on incarceration or attempts to retrain these men through factual education (Powell & Henry, 2014). Similarly, in child protection services, the disease model, has been linked to punitive services that pathologise caregivers (Parton, 2014). In his book the “Politics of Child Abuse” Parton (1985) notes how when child abuse was ‘discovered’ as a public health problem it was considered “an illness of sufficient unity to be put into a diagnostic category in its own

right and that.... the pathology resides primarily in the parents but manifests itself in the relationship with the child” (p. 132).

In response to the limitations of this reductive model, some researchers working within the epidemiological tradition have sought to develop more nuanced frameworks. One such development is the socio-ecological model, which has become a widely cited tool in the field of VAC. This model attempts to account for, “the impossibility of understanding an individual’s behaviours without also considering the social context in which they live ...and then considering how these factors interrelate” (Freedland et al., 2010, p. 530).

A key application of this model is Heise’s (1998) work on IPV where she proposes an ecological framework to conceptualise “violence as a multifaceted phenomenon grounded in an interplay among personal, situational, and sociocultural factors” (p. 262). Building on earlier work by Bronfenbrenner (1977) and Belsky (1980), Heise uses the model to tackle the “messiness of real life” (1998, p. 262) in its multiple levels and as a “heuristic tool” (p.262) to organise varied existing literature on the subject. The aim is to have better measurement capabilities for example by looking at the factors with the most explanatory power, the portion of variance in rates of violence according to combinations of factors or by developing “a profile of those men most at risk of abusing” (p.283). In the context of VAC in classrooms, researchers have adapted this model to isolate the most significant risk factors and identifying the teacher characteristics that could predict a higher likelihood of use of violence (Hecker et al., 2018; Merrill et al., 2017; Nkuba et al., 2018).

Whilst a wider perspective is at the centre of socio-ecological approach the epidemiological outlook is still very much present in its application. For instance, the quest towards measuring inputs places attention primarily towards the individual rather than structural level of analysis within the framework (Golden & Earp, 2012). The team behind the Multi-Country Study on the Drivers of Violence Affecting Children (the Drivers Study) sought to redress this gravitation towards individual factors by reworking the socio-ecological model. They proposed to change the layered nature of the levels of analysis (individual-interpersonal-community-institutional-structural) into a framework that puts the child at the centre and the levels of analysis

around it interacting and overlapping. In this respect the structural elements are not distant outer drivers but just as close to the act of violence as those interpersonal factors. Maternowska, highlights how this rebalance in focus is a key objective of the study and a defiant break from the dominant perspectives on VAC when she says:

We dared to move beyond traditional public health and child-protection approaches ... — we wanted to show that to understand children's lives in their entirety, then one needs to push further to understand how the big macro forces that define the context in which violence happens — the drivers of violence — also need to be understood.
(UNICEF, 2018)

The framework also differs because it relishes in methodologies that are rich in context and hence utilises qualitative data from a variety of sources many of which are much more local and regional. The shift towards qualitative studies represents another break away from the dominant current of VAC research. For example, the Young Lives Study, a longitudinal cohort study of children growing up in poverty used this approach to review the experiences of violence that emerged through qualitative data. By grounding the data theoretically in the socio-ecological framework the intersections between the children's structural contexts and their experience and response to different types of violence were made evident. The authors' conclusion is significantly different from that of studies more closely linked with the portrayal of 'CP as VAC' and represents a step towards a shifting perspective on VAC research:

Rather than purely focusing on the behaviour of individuals, there is a need to understand and address how interpersonal violence can emerge from structural forms of violence; how structural and institutional factors shape the operation of power in settings, such as the school and the home; and how these dynamics are in turn are navigated by children. (Pells et al., 2018, p. 33)

The application of this model represents an opportunity for national efforts to be able to prioritise interventions in accordance with their contexts, to incorporate a wide arrange of government agencies around the problem and to vindicate poverty reduction strategies as efforts in preventing VAC. However, the success of the Drivers Study model depends on its take-up and applicability. The model also runs the risk of being hijacked by those factors which are easier to measure at the individual level and

ignoring wider and more uncomfortable issues of structural inequalities that are upheld by dominant groups.

Maintaining an inclusive and interactional perspective of CP can prove challenging when interventions are situated within the 'CP as VAC' discourse. For example, in an evaluation partnership between ActionAid and the Institute of Education the researchers had to balance between donor demands for measurable outcomes of drops in violent acts and their knowledge that change does not happen sustainably without influencing the "gender norms and regimes that underpins more substantive forms of gender justice" (Parkes et al., 2013, p. 548). They resolved the incommensurability of perspectives by expanding the work to include both views. However, the gravitation towards the "authority of quantitative data" (p. 554) was still strong:

Paradoxically, the emphasis on acts and individuals seems to be the easiest to turn into concrete actions, but these actions may be limited by their oversimplification, and may detract from or fail to address unjust institutional structures or the low level everyday harassment that girls experience, and hence may be the least effective actions in terms of effecting sustainable change in reducing gender violence or achieving gender justice. (p. 552)

Other authors warn that without rooting the analysis firmly within a theory that investigates the structural dynamics of oppression research runs "the danger of co-option" (Powell & Henry, 2014, p. 13). Pease (2014) critiques the broad international endorsement of the ecological model, arguing that its eclectic theoretical foundation "can easily be colonised by traditional categories of political thought" (p. 33) and often leads to the privileging of certain narratives, particularly those focused on individual behaviours and attitudes while more complex, structural dimensions of violence are frequently marginalised in intervention strategies.

Through a gender perspective other academics have begun researching VAC and CP differently from what is prescribed by the dominant definition. For instance, Parkes (2015) continues moving away from violence as a disease by situating it as a form of social injustice. She conceptualises violence as a means of navigating or communicating through force and coercion and as a tool used to negotiate, survive, resist or dominate the unequal power regimes we are all located in.

Parkes resolves the threat of co-option by situating her analysis firmly at the heart of unequal power regimes. In her model the inner rings of interpersonal/personal and norms/institutional explanations of violence are englobed by an outer ring depicting unequal power regimes (2015, p. 198) such as gender, economic, social or generational inequalities. Whilst these power regimes do not directly cause violence, together they create the conditions or structures for the norms and institutions that will make violent acts possible. The difference might be subtle, labelling the outer ring inequalities rather than macro-level drivers, but it is intended to keep our focus on violence as a complex issue of social injustice. Furthermore, she warns that researchers are constantly negotiating, adhering or resisting to unequal power regimes that sustain violence, in a sense we are always a part of it and as such we need to maintain “a reflexive consciousness of the pull of acts” (2013, p. 555). She also questions whether our obsession with acts of violence acts as a mechanism to ignore looking critically at our contribution to power regimes which create and sustain violent lives.

2.4.2 Critical proponents: dismantling normativity and essentialism

It is precisely this risk that motivates a different set of authors to critique the moral ‘unsaid’ underpinning the ‘CP as VAC’ discourse. Reynart et al. (2012) describe this emerging group as “critical proponents” who, in the spirit of enhancing efforts to improve children’s wellbeing, challenge the assumptions behind the dominant portrayal of children’s rights. They critique for example the “homogenisation tendency” (p.159) of global discourses regarding the concept of a child. Burman (2007) argues that the homogenisation of the Western ideal into a universal norm was supported by developmental psychology’s ambition to emulate medicine. It standardised white middle class child development into distinct age stages of ‘normal’ child development and by doing so the northern roots of this ‘normal’ child are disguised as scientific and become the norm. For example, Penn’s (2011) analysis of education programs shows that cultural neutrality is claimed whilst applying Western childhood models, “Underlying such an approach is an implicit belief that there are scientifically sound, universally applicable precepts about child development which can be abstracted and reapplied from the global North to the global South...” (2011, p.

105). By making the Western ideal the norm, global advocacy of children's rights suppresses the possibility of different developmental paths. However these authors warn that "tempting as the discourse of universal childhood is then, there is simply no basis for assuming that common needs should be met in similar ways" (Burman, 1996, p. 61).

Similarly, Hopkins and Sriprakash (2016) observe that much of international development work employs a universal and abstract notion of a child as the standard against which all children's experiences are compared. However, they argue that the universal child evoked in global discourses represents an idealised version of a Western, white, male and middle-class child, characterised by freedom from worries, abundant play, innocence, a strong emotional bond with two heterosexual married parents, the opportunity to voice opinions, and attendance at a school that caters to the child's individual needs. By essentialising this model of childhood, international discourse labels deviations from these standards as robbed childhoods and children's rights abuses. The inability of countries or families to achieve this universal childhood experience is evoked as justification for intervention and reform.

The reliance on an under-theorised concept of a universal child also risks it becoming "an empty rhetorical vessel into which subjective preferences or political agendas may be poured" (Tobin, 2014, p. 261). Baird refers to this as "child fundamentalism" when "the child" is so often invoked as a discursive category with which one cannot disagree" (Baird, 2008, p. 291). In her analyses of Australian politics, she notes that when child abuse in Indigenous communities was declared a national emergency anyone who disagreed with the ensuing intervention was labelled as "pathological" or suffering from a "form of madness" (p.294). Similarly, Pupavac notes that the discursive use of the global child is often used to pathologize parents, "Adults in the South are cast as child abusers because their children's experiences violate the image of childhood held in the West" (2001, p. 102).

Going further into analysing the remnants of a colonial discourse and its reliance on a Western ideal of superiority has led some authors, such as Mutua to consider the human rights agenda as a whole tainted because of the "brutalising history of the colonial powers which pressed for its adoption" (Morris, 2010, p. 330). Sriprakash and

Hopkins (2016) identify the use of a universal (western) model of child development as a means to continue the idea of a civilising mission through international development. Pupavac (2001) notes that some interpretations of the Convention empower external actors “driven by a morality of conviction to act as moral agents on behalf of children in the non- Western world” (p.103) and represent a loss of sovereignty for countries and a delegitimisation of caregivers in the Global South as equipped to look after the best interests of their children.

These scholars also argue that the essentialist turn of the child as a universal and natural unit of analysis abstracts it from its context and relationships. Pupavac (2011) accuses global advocates of using an abstract definition of culture, one that separates culture from social and material conditions and in doing so “condemns people to a tough way of life and then condemns their tough discipline norms, as if they were superfluous to the physically onerous tasks demanded of children” (p.305). Gordon also finds this disconnect problematic when she says, “the idea that children should not have to bear the burdens of their parents’ poverty; that children deserve opportunity precisely because of their youth” (cited in Hopkins & Sriprakash, 2016, p. 11). Freeman (2014) extends this consideration to countries when he notes that most countries do not have the resources needed to achieve the legally binding commitments of the Convention.

Pupavac (2011) goes further in her analysis by highlighting that international development has abandoned a comprehensive vision of poverty reduction. Instead of seeking material advancements, programmes are “increasingly targeted towards changing the poor’s attitudes and behaviour” and seek individual’s moral reform by “repackage self-help strategies and offer little material advancement” (p.303). She links global advocacy’s use of childhood normativity as a way of keeping VAC programming “divorced from socio-economic relations of production” (p.289). Porette et al’s. (2014) documentary analysis of the translations of different ideas of ‘stolen childhood’ on the international child rights agenda reveals how a universalised victimhood narrative has depoliticised structural critiques. By framing violence as a cultural or behavioural issue rather than structural, the discourse shifts responsibility away from systemic reform and toward individual or community-level change. It also reinforces the ‘saviour’ role

of international actors while obscuring the political and historical contexts in which children's rights violations occur.

A conceptualisation of rights as natural and universal has also been critiqued particularly for its emphasis on the individual as separate from their social relationships and broader community context, and for its reliance on legal legitimacy to justify change (Reynaert et al., 2012). This perspective has been criticised for its tendency to dichotomise relations and set opposing individual interest against each other. From an anthropological perspective Mead and Benedict warned that "the particular way of emphasizing the contrast between adult and children is a cultural dogma not necessarily shared with other cultures" (Qvortrup, 2009, p. 29).

In collectivist communities for example the granting of 'rights' has been linked to reciprocity or to being inextricably interconnected with one another within a lineage. Rights may be understood not as entitlements held by isolated individuals, but as responsibilities and recognitions that emerge within the fabric of communal life. As Tisdall and Punch (2012) observe, in such contexts, people exist "not as autonomous individuals, but relationally in society" (2012, p. 258). For example, in several ethnic groups of Côte d'Ivoire, newborns are viewed as the incarnation of an ancestor "enfant ancêtre" (Douville, 2010; Gottlieb, 2019; Haxaire, 2003; Schwartz, 1975). This places children first as part of a group and then as an individual, with a continuity within generations that does not manifest itself in the Western paradigm.

Anthropologists have increasingly questioned the implicit assumption in rights discourse that individuals exist independently of their social relations. As Archambault (2009) argues, "in many contexts, it is these very social relationships which make people into persons" (p. 297). This relational view invites a broader understanding of discipline and care, one that recognises that "discipline norms are part of a totality of social relations" (Pupavac, 2011, p. 305).

For instance, Archambault (2009) describes how in Maasai communities learning through pain (not harm) was fundamental and represented the strength needed for future struggles, "Acts of corporal punishment can be understood as small rites of passages" (p.291). Pain was also seen as pivotal for communal life as experiencing it made "individuals feel that they are sacrificing part of themselves to join the group"

(p.290). In her study of Ghanaian parent-child relationships, Twum-Danso (2009) suggests that the subordination and respect that children seem to accept in African societies are not demonstrations of passivity but rather expressions of agency “because they are aware of the benefits that come with playing the subordinate role expected of them in society” (p.428). Children know that by showing respect, parents will fulfil their obligations and take care of their needs. Similarly, Wells and Montgomery (2014), note that in some contexts everyday violence is understood by children as a means of accessing social recognition.

This complexity extends to how caregivers interpret their own CP practice. Frankenberg’s et al’s (2010) found that in poverty contexts, care-giving and CP were tightly interwoven. Caregivers and children in Tanzania differentiated between “beating with care” (p.459) as a way of educating, loving and protecting children, excessive beating as a form of abuse and non-beating as neglecting children. In an environment where children were regularly unsupervised and where the neighbourhood was unsafe, beating with care was perceived as a way to ensure children’s safety. Talking about collectivist cultures, Sorkhabi and Mandara argue that “such behaviours (authoritarian parenting), especially when accompanied by beliefs of parental sacrifice or warmth, are more likely to be interpreted as a sign of parental care, concern and involvement” (2013, p. 122). Similarly Tao’s (2015) study on Tanzanian teachers also showed that CP was largely used by teachers when they felt their ability to teach and help students learn was constrained by overcrowded conditions.

Children’s own perspectives further complicate the picture. Kyegombe et al. (2017) found that some students in Uganda preferred the quickness of CP to alternative discipline methods, which took longer, such as writing an apology or sweeping the school compound. Similarly, Franchi and Payet (2008) observed that students in South Africa, particularly those in underprivileged schools, justified what they labelled as use of fair and moderate CP as a means to guarantee a peaceful learning environment, describing it “as a benign form of pain that permits order and discipline to be maintained in a hostile environment” (p.168).

Archambault's research (2009) on CP in Kenya also found that learners viewed, what they called non-harmful CP, as a way of parents demonstrating care, with the boundaries and intensity of CP highly regulated according to age, status within the community and even curses from spirits for those who beat improperly. Turner et al's (2024) systematic review of qualitative research on how children in sub-Saharan Africa conceptualise violence found that in contrast to the international focus on direct acts defined as violence, children rarely described these acts as violence. They were more concerned with experiences where adults either abused or neglected their responsibilities towards them. They concluded:

Children and adolescents focused less on the act of violence itself and more on their feelings and overall wellbeing as related to the experience. Their feelings about painful or difficult experiences were relational, and linked to relationship to perpetrator, location of the act, and age-related dynamics, all of which shaped the way acts were viewed. (p.22)

Taken together, these studies suggest that cultural specificity needs a place in our portrayal of CP. Without negating that research has also found children expressing hurt and disagreement regarding physical disciplining what I have tried to argue against are the blanket statements present in the portrayal of 'CP as VAC'. Differences in caregivers' socialisation goals, possibilities in context, children's interpretations of childrearing practices and their functionality in a particular context may make the same discipline style carry different meanings.

The studies mentioned also show that seeking social change and justice for children through legislation of children's rights is a choice, not one that is preordained or natural, but one that is a social product of a particular geo-political context.

Recognising rights and childhood as social constructs destabilises the dominant consensus thinking present in 'CP as VAC' and underlines its reliance on a Western ideal. This discourse has not proven easily reconcilable with the much-needed material contextualisation of violent practices without which efforts against CP will not be sustainable. Insufficient contextualisation of our portrayal of 'CP as VAC' might even prove harmful to children if we undermine the logic behind current practices without substituting them with others:

Caregivers need power to raise their children and corporal punishment is regarded as a useful tool in the context described. Those advocating for the abolition of corporal punishment, without providing caregivers with alternatives grounded in the local context, may weaken the caregiving environment for both caregivers and children. (Ibrahim & Komulainen, 2016, p. 66)

The effects of applying normative and thinly theorised concepts can also translate into concrete embodied experience or “social lives” of CP policies in the form of resistance. Those being asked to change their ‘violent’ practices strongly react against colonialism’s unfinished business and against an approach that asks individual change whilst ignoring context. For example, in Rujumba and Kwiringira’s (2014) study of the intersecting drivers of violence in the Karamoja region of Uganda interviewees openly challenged the motives, legitimacy and decontextualised approach of interventions using human rights discourse:

You mean that you love my daughter and wife, more than me the husband and father!? This is disguised interference in the name of human rights. If I am not fair to my wife and daughters; my neighbours, in-laws and clan heads will discipline me, or the LC will take me to police. We love our wives and they love us too, just give us the means to love them; where is water for our wives, where are jobs for our daughters that have completed school? Who are you to claim that you have merely come all the way to tell us how to love our wives and children? I am now very suspicious about your presence here. (Male, retired civil servant Kotido district) (p.340)

Another example can be found in Viruru’s study of family literacy projects targeted to Mexican-American communities which identified that mothers used a variety of techniques to resist aspects of the programme that sought to modify their childrearing. In particular, the use of the word ‘rights’ made them wary of the programme as a colonising action, “What the program saw as attempting to break the cycle of poverty, the participants saw as trying to break their way of viewing the world” (2013, p. 28).

Twum-Danso encountered similar resistance whilst researching family relationships in Ghana. When mentioning the global children’s rights agenda “several adults stated at various times during the research process that, ‘we do not want Western children here in Ghana’” (2009, p. 426). An even more telling analysis is that made by Archambault

in which she sees a new motive emerging for embracing CP as a legitimate childrearing practice in African middle classes. She notes that CP had become a symbol of resistance to the intrusion of Western morality through the children's rights agenda and as a way to "hotly asserting their identities as Africans" (p.298):

Many still use corporal punishment as a way to establish new boundaries between themselves as Maasai, as Christians and as Africans - and those from the international community who attempt to impose rules and regulations on how they should raise their children. (Archambault, 2009, p. 298)

Archambault's findings jolts us to consider the real and counter-productive effects of treating concepts such as children's rights "as though they are above social conditions and not implicated in projects of colonialism and imperialism" (Viruru, 2013, p. 28). Poretti et al. (2014) further illuminate how this approach often reinforces a binary moral logic that positions international child rights advocates as global moral agents, while casting local communities as morally deficient. As they argue, the anti-violence campaign is frequently built on a "savage-victim-saviour" (p.35) metaphor, which erases the role of structural violence and frames local cultures as the primary source of harm. A decontextualised application of the paradigm of 'CP as VAC', can quickly become the problem or at least a hindrance towards communities achieving the social goals they have for their children. By relying on normativity, the dominant portrayal of VAC runs the risk of being easily dismantled or rejected.

2.5 Conclusions

In this literature review, I have used a genealogical approach to examine how a 'CP as VAC' discourse has come to be framed as a universally accepted policy problem within international development. I traced how advocacy, research and programming have functioned as discursive events that "have determined in a certain way what constitutes our present ... our knowledge, our practices, our type of rationality" (Mahon, 1993, p. 135).

I reviewed literature that notes how this push towards an apparent international consensus on CP and a particular focus on the individuals enacting harsh discipline is letting structural and symbolic violence 'off the hook'. Furthermore, with regards to CP, the status quo which discourages debating the dominant definition of VAC by

placing it as a natural definition may not only impede progress towards reducing violent acts, but it can also be experienced as symbolic violence, an extension of colonialism, being directed towards those we evaluate as failing to reach ‘universal’ goals of behaviour.

I have made the case that the ‘CP as VAC’ discourse has reached an impasse and that stepping out of the mirage of consensus could re-start a more fruitful dialogue on how to reduce CP. ‘CP as VAC’ discourse by magnifying differences and establishing ultimate right ways of being and doing, makes us miss an important point, which is that in most cases “The divergence...has taken place at the point where shared principles encounter divergent solutions, and not at the level of culture or principle” (Abramowitz & Moran, 2012, p. 139). That is, by insisting on the essentialism of children’s rights and using mechanisms that are linked to colonial discourses we risk polarising positions rather than moving towards more common goals of improving children’s and their communities’ wellbeing.

One important implication of policy-oriented qualitative research is that it has the potential for engaging the researched as well as the researcher in evaluating the status quo and bringing about change.
(Taylor, 1997, p. 33)

CHAPTER 3. Following policies: methodological approach and research design

This chapter outlines the methodological architecture of the study, a network ethnography (Ball, 2016) that combines three interlinked methods: a genealogical analysis to trace the historical and discursive emergence of CP as a policy problem; a social network analysis to map the institutional actors and relational structures shaping the CP policy domain; and qualitative interviews to explore how national middle level individuals experience, interpret, and negotiate policy discourses and power dynamics. This multi-layered approach seeks to follow the enactment of CP policies across time, space, and institutional boundaries and explore it as a socially embedded, discursively constructed, and relational practice.

One of the methodological trappings of critical policy studies is that “what to look for (and how and where) is also related to a researcher’s political disposition” (Gale, 2001, p. 383) and “self-questioning becomes an ethical consequence of critique” (Butler, 2005, p. 23). Therefore, central to the study’s methodological orientation is a recognition that my own position within the field profoundly shapes the questions asked, the relationships formed, and the knowledge produced. By starting this methodological chapter with a reflexive account of my own trajectory I hope to offer transparency about the ethical and epistemological tensions that have shaped my engagement with the field.

3.1 Positionality

Beyond any academic aspirations I recognise this study as a personal enquiry and journey where I have tried to make sense of my “self”, my legitimacy, and my complicity as a Mexican living in Europe who has stumbled into working in international development. Finding myself ‘stuck’ for personal reasons abroad but with a deep desire to work professionally towards the betterment of my community I stepped into the development sphere to get closer to working with groups of people

that felt more familiar to me. However, interest for Latin America in the development studies and spheres I gained access to was not exactly vibrant and job opportunities seemed scarce at a moment when making myself a place as a migrant worker was a priority. Africa and its 'developmental problems' provided many more job opportunities and hence I (a Mexican migrant worker in Switzerland, with questionable French skills) stumbled to work in projects that sought to reduce CP in schools of Côte d'Ivoire.

It was all quite exciting and at the same time ridiculous. I stepped into a privileged Western developmental role that I had a hard time fitting into and that I moulded to differentiate from my 'true' Western colleagues. My ontological stance was different from theirs as I was open to the falsity of my technical expertise and legitimacy for working on the problems of Ivorian primary schools. I found that this stance was not commonplace, and I believe it made a big difference to how I forged relationships with Ivorian national colleagues. It is not that I believed I had nothing to contribute but I saw the role I was given as nonsensical and problematic. I would not expect an Ivorian 30-year-old with mediocre Spanish to be contributing to pedagogy manuals for teachers in rural Mexico and convening ministers and civil servants to include objectives within their workplans.

My discomfort was sometimes eased through meaningful and collaborative working sessions with my Ivorian counterparts. Preventing CP in schools was also something that resonated with me as I had been raised in a securely attached and non-violent dynamic with my caregivers and was replicating that with my own young children. Believing I was in some way contributing towards preventing VAC was comforting. However, a gnawing feeling that my presence represented some sort of injustice and violence continued, especially when I conducted qualitative work with teachers about CP.

As I transitioned from my NGO work towards pursuing a PhD I also began to worry that proposing work on Latin America, a region where I might arguably have a more legitimate presence, would not be feasible, given what I perceived as a limited institutional focus on the region within the universities I had access to. Furthermore, I had gained 'expertise' on the Ivorian context, it was probably there that I could

‘contribute’ knowledge to the field. Professionally, I had been a programme officer that oversaw the implementation of a CP prevention programme in Ivorian primary schools and coordinated its external evaluation analysing the impact in changing teachers’ use of CP. I had also conducted mixed methods research on how modifications to the Ivorian pre-service teacher training curriculum had impacted student-teachers’ views on CP. And finally, I had conducted baseline qualitative study with Ivorian teachers to inform the adaptation of the CP programme to secondary schools.

My initial and accepted proposal intended to conduct deep fieldwork with Ivorian teachers to better understand the pedagogical challenges and successes in their day-to-day attempts of using positive discipline. A deeper look at their context would surely help us improve our tools and policies that had so far achieved so little. Looking back, I can see this concern as a reminder of my deep embeddedness in dominant power regimes and how they inevitably affect practical research choices despite personally wanting to disturb dominant power structures. As Marshall describes, “to be employed and to earn contracts, policy analysts must conduct studies that inform the policy debates raised in arenas of power. Thus, dominant values determine which are the relevant, significant questions, issues, and answers” (1999, p. 69) . However, the discomfort of my position in that proposed research quickly grew. One month into my doctoral studies I wrote in a reflective piece for my supervisors,

I am still brought back to my own struggle to find legitimacy in researching “the periphery” or any group of which I am an outsider. If we took the post-structuralist thought even further, we would have to ask about the power structure that we are maintaining or reinforcing by giving money to “White European” researchers to study such topics? Would a Black South African researcher (who did not speak fluent English) with a scholarship from his/her home country sent to study violence in a national UK education campaign in a poor midlands English community be problematic? Would an Ivorian researcher sent to a Mexican village to study teachers’ use of violence make sense? I would argue that it doesn’t, and I struggle with what that means for my own research. (Quintero, 2019)

Furthermore, an initial plan to spend the summer in the Ivorian city of Man and bring my young family with me was quickly thrown up in the air with the Covid-19

pandemic. Bringing my family with me during my fieldwork was a way of offering a 'truer' part of me and not just my research self to the community I would be 'studying'. This was in my mind a way of softening my feelings of illegitimacy. Now writing on the theoretical underpinnings of my research I recognise my struggle in Butler's explanation of what Foucauldian critique entails:

For Foucault, the regime of truth comes into question because "I" cannot recognize myself, or will not recognize myself, within the terms that are made available to me. In an effort to escape or overcome the terms by which subjectivation takes place, my struggle with norms is my own. His question effectively remains "Who can I be, given the regime of truth that determines ontology for me?" (2005, p. 25)

I was struggling with the norms, discourses or regimes of truth from which I was acting as a development worker and then as an academic researcher. I was not comfortable with the 'self' available to me. As a response I shifted my research's focus to somewhere closer to home, somewhere where I felt I also had 'skin in the game' of my own critique, the policy enactment process of which I had been a part of. This seemed like a more honest position rather than analysing the lives of individual teachers that no matter how long of a stay I managed to achieve in schools, were not a group I felt I should be speaking for.

The policy enactment process on the other hand is starting to be inhabited by more individuals like me, privileged but Southern developmental workers that might engage with development work differently but that will find themselves immersed in strong truth regimes and strategies of power that are not immediately visible. This position has the potential of forging hybrid identities where one is "Perceived as being 'in' the group but not 'of' the group" (Maya-Jariego et al., 2021, p. 63) with bespoke power differentials with all type of actors. And whilst my legitimacy of speaking about Ivorian policies remains to be debated this shift made me feel more legitimate as:

self-questioning of this sort involves putting oneself at risk, imperilling the very possibility of being recognized by others, since to question the norms of recognition that govern what I might be, to ask what they leave out, what they might be compelled to accommodate, is, in relation to the present regime, to risk unrecognizability as a

subject or at least to become an occasion for posing the questions of who one is (or can be) and whether or not one is recognizable. (Butler, 2005, p. 23)

Furthermore, my focus on the middle level of policy actors also foresaw power differentials with my interviewees that I felt more comfortable with. My interviewees were my equals or superiors professionally which resulted in an either studying up or studying sideways (Hannerz, 2010) where I considered them as having the upper hand in terms of hierarchy and power. I also hoped to leverage my 'hybrid' identity to create dynamics where interviews could become mutual exchanges that might not be possible if I was identified as 'fully' Western. I no longer felt compelled to haul my family with me for my fieldwork and I felt more comfortable reducing my time in country to a manageable and Covid-19 feasible stay.

In addition to my position within my research field it is also important to reflect on my position towards the subject matter of CP. This thesis takes a post-structural perspective influenced by Foucault, in which the contingent nature of what seems like self-evident natural truths are critiqued and interrogated. Applying this to a topic such as CP where its inalienable link to VAC is seen as "contingent historical creations, human constructions, that need to be interrogated rather than enshrined as 'truth' " (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 5) is particularly uncomfortable. It is uncomfortable because simply insinuating the possibility of debate around violence against children from a Global North university and within the field of international development feels wrong and unnatural. It unsettles my own worldviews and structures from within which I make sense of my work, my childhood and my childrearing practices as a mother of two. It is a tricky and tenuous position of which I have many times while writing wanted to run away from.

However, engaging fully with these tensions and the arguments put forth by universalists and cultural relativists is not meant to give reason to either one or the other. Rather it is an effort from my part to outmanoeuvre the binary and look at the issue differently. Working through the malaise is an experiment to see whether it can reveal new perspectives that might move us closer to a framework for studying CP that will focus on a broader consensus that a general concept of 'wellbeing' of children might elicit. My position is that there is great value in engaging in genuine dialogue

with communities that today endorse CP as beneficial to children, that is dialogue that is prepared to learn from these positions and not just try to find ways to change them.

One last ‘political disposition’ that has influenced my research methods and design is a belief that it is communities themselves and their local and national policymakers that need greater space to discuss amongst themselves what educational and social goals they want to address. I find the international voice too loud, too prescriptive, too overpowering so through a focus on my middle level national counterparts I hope to get my international colleagues to pause, listen and find how they can be allies rather than protagonists to goals that might be different to their own.

Overall, a questioning of legitimacy, embeddedness in unequal power regimes and a hybrid identity are the uncomfortable stances which have shaped my research approach and design that I describe below.

3.2 Network ethnography: a mixed-methods approach

To explore how CP policies are enacted within and across institutional, discursive, and relational spaces in Côte d’Ivoire I have adopted a broad methodological approach grounded in the imperative to “follow the policy” (Ball, 2016) across the diverse and shifting terrains. While various theoretical frameworks exist for classifying policy transfer mechanisms (Dale, 1999; Steiner-Khamisi, 2014), this study aligns with Peck and Theodore’s (2012a) conceptualisation of policy mobility and mutation. This perspective, rooted in critical epistemologies, views policy enactment not as a linear or rational process but “as a socially structured and discursively constituted space, marked by institutional heterogeneity and contending forces” (p. 23). It focuses on the unpredictable “social lives” of policies (Peck & Theodore, 2015, p. xxv), emphasising how policies are continuously reconstituted through relational dynamics embedded in specific social networks. This approach resonates with the theoretical commitments of this study, particularly the emphasis on context, relationality, and power.

Referring to mobility and mutation rather than transfer or translation also serves as a reminder to disrupt viewing policy as simply being enacted in a top-down manner or through a global to local binary. These terms refer to a third option where policy enactment and its resulting actions are hybrid and mutated/new possibilities that may

influence both the global and local arenas. This ties well to postcolonial authors' perspectives of development policies as "not, or not only a unidirectional process that transforms previously non-western societies and leaves the West intact" (Burman, 1996, p. 48).

To concretely study the social lives of policies not as fixed activities but as continually and socially constructed processes Peck and Theodore propose a distended case approach where geography as the classic unit of analysis for policies is replaced by a more "network centric perspective" (2012a, p. 25) and methodology. A distended case approach works "'laterally' through networks across multiple-sites but does so in a fashion that remains attentive to hierarchical and nodal sources of power, asymmetries in capacities and resources" (p.25) and it focuses on "loosely connected actors with varying degrees of institutional leverage located in multiple sites" (p.24).

Similarly, Ball's (2016) network ethnography methodology involves studying the "labour of network actors" (p.552) of a policy domain across sites. These approaches rely on the concept of a network to move away from the idea that policies are enacted through hierarchal linear decision-making process within a delimited set of official actors. A policy network therefore refers to the broad set of governmental, non-governmental, organisational, corporate and societal actors whose formal and informal interactions, connections and relationships allow policies to emerge and influence their shape in a given context.

Network ethnography, as described by Ball is not a fixed method but rather, "an assemblage of research tactics and techniques" (p.552) designed to trace the movement of policy ideas, actors, and discourses across complex and often transnational networks. It combines the structural mapping capabilities of Social Network Analysis (SNA) with the depth and contextual richness of qualitative ethnographic methods. This dual approach allows for both a macro-level understanding of policy networks and a micro-level exploration of the meanings, practices, and power dynamics embedded within them. It focuses on the interaction between individual and structural factors where, "the perceptions, attitudes, and actions of organizational actors are shaped by the larger structural networks within which they are embedded, and in turn their behaviours can change these network structures" (J. Scott &

Carrington, 2015, p. 4) In other words it recognises that “agency cannot exist absent structure, just as structure becomes lifeless without agency” (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2012, p. 519).

3.2.1 Social Network Analysis

Within this mixed methods framework, social network analysis (SNA) serves as the primary tool for mapping actors, their relations and their possible level of influence in different policy domains. It can serve as both a methodological toolkit and a theoretical lens. As Mützel (2009) explains, it offers “a series of formal procedures for the analysis of relations as well as a theoretical perspective on these relations...” (p. 881). Unlike variable-centred approaches, SNA focuses on the relational interdependencies between actors, assuming that social units are not isolated but embedded in networks of interaction. SNA considers relations as the building blocks of the social world and focuses on how network members are tied to one another through different types of relations. It has not, to my knowledge been applied to VAC research or VAC policy networks.

Mapping actors through SNA is especially useful in contexts where policy boundaries are unclear and informal relationships may be as influential as formal roles.

Researchers often begin without a clear picture of who is involved in the policy domain of interest. As Peck and Theodore note, they started with only “hot spots and key coordination points” (2015, p. xix). SNA also challenges assumptions about which actors shape policy, revealing that “these networks of relationships are very different from the formal rules designed and enshrined in legal texts” (Bonvecchi & Scartascini, 2020, p. 5). In education policy, this approach has shown the influence of non-traditional actors in defining policy problems, such as philanthropic and market groups, who strengthen their positions by aligning with others (Lubienski et al., 2016; Reckhow & Snyder, 2014; Regan & Khwaja, 2019).

SNA also offers tools to delve into possible nodes of power and power relationships by studying the networks’ dynamics, shapes and characteristics. Wasserman and Faust (1994) note that SNA is distinct from other social and behavioural sciences because it “is based on an assumption of the importance of relationships among interacting units”

(p.4) and is interested in individual attributes primarily “as arising out of structural or relational processes” (p.8). It is therefore compatible with my consideration of power as relational as explained in chapter 1.

It also provides quantitative measures to identify relations between actors and possible implications of these linkages. It can for example identify who are the actors that are the best connected or those that occupy a central position of connection between different network actors. SNA has been used “as a method to track down and visualize the hidden influence” (Jörgens et al., 2016, p. 985) that actors possess thanks in part to the “consequences of network variables, such as having many ties or being centrally located” (p.985). It also allows for the visualisation of coalitions or different interest groups who are active in a policy domain.

3.2.2 Qualitative considerations

While SNA provides a structural overview of a policy network, mapping who is connected to whom and identifying patterns of influence, it does not capture the meanings, motivations, and discursive practices that animate these relationships. For this reason, it is often paired with qualitative methods, including interviews, observations, and document analysis, that allow for a deeper understanding of how actors interpret and navigate their roles within the network. Qualitative methods provide thicker descriptions of network relational ties.

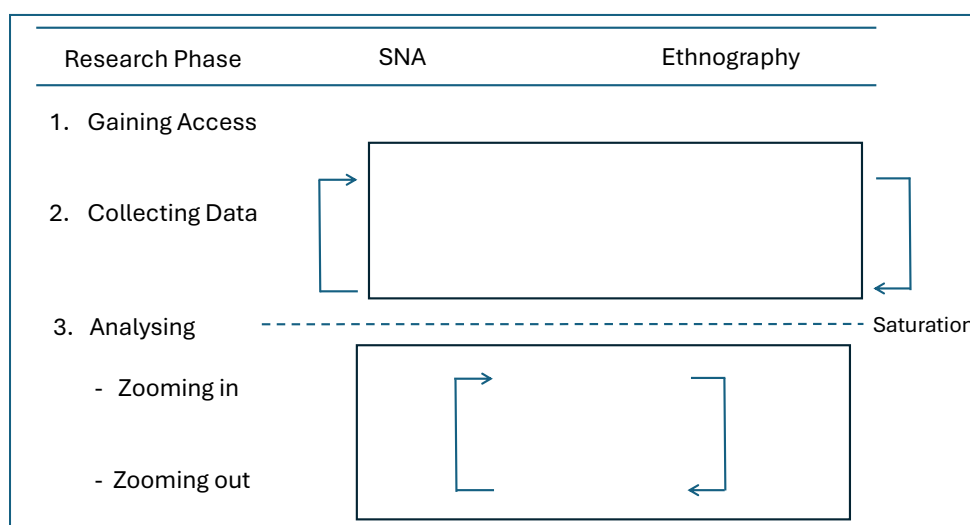
Ball (2016) for example combines the mapping and delimiting of actors and relations of SNA with an exploratory way of working which simultaneously incorporates heterogeneous research techniques through a “judicious combination of observations, documentary analysis and depth interviews” (p.552) and genealogical and policy discourse analysis. Hollstein (2006) also notes that qualitative methods such as observations, in-depth interviewing and documentary analysis are a great complement to the mapping of policy networks because they allow for an understanding of how networks operate and why they matter.

Over the last years the study of networks in policy research has grown rapidly (Zhang et al., 2023) including in the field of educational policy and governance (Hodge et al., 2020). Buchnea and Elsahn (2022) for example propose a mixed methods

methodological process model that collects quantitative and qualitative data on actors' relationships and then analyses the respective data sets through coding, SNA software visualisations and triangulation. Haddad's study on philanthropic networks in higher education also used a similar two-pronged mixed methods approach. Finally, Zhang et al. (2023) recent review of the application of SNA to public policy studies found that 81% of their literature sample used mixed methods and concluded that "that combined application of SNA and other methods is the mainstream trend" (p.10).

This study contributes to this trend by converging quantitative and qualitative techniques to answer the research questions. It is inspired by Berthod et al. (2017), who propose a process for studying inter-organisational networks by "combining rich ethnographic data with the structural clarity of SNA at the level of whole networks" (p. 300). Figure 1 is adapted from their illustration of the network ethnography method.

Figure 1. Description of network ethnography



Note: Adapted from "Network Ethnography: A Mixed-Method Approach for the Study of Practices in Interorganizational Settings," by Berthod et al. 2017, p.311.

The proposed process involves iterative movement between quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis, what they describe as "zooming out" to map the broader policy architecture and "zooming in" to examine the lived experiences and practices of actors within the network. This mixed-methods orientation is particularly well-suited to the study of CP policy in Côte d'Ivoire, where formal policy texts often obscure the informal, relational, and historically embedded dynamics that shape

enactment. By combining SNA with ethnographic tools, I aim to hold space for both individual agency and the structural conditions that influence it

3.2.3 Research questions

In this study, network ethnography unfolds in three overlapping phases: genealogy, social network analysis and qualitative interviews. Each of these phases is broadly aligned with a specific research question, while also contributing to a broader, triangulated understanding of CP policy enactment in Côte d'Ivoire. This layered approach allows me to zoom out to examine the structural and historical conditions that shape CP policy and zoom in to explore how individual actors experience and navigate these dynamics. The three research questions guiding this study are:

RQ1: How have contextual and historical conditions shaped school CP policies and their enactment in Côte d'Ivoire?

Drawing on Foucauldian archaeology and genealogy, this phase traces the discursive and institutional conditions that enabled the emergence of CP as a policy problem. It critically examines how certain truths about CP and VAC became dominant, and their historical specificities in Côte d'Ivoire. It also explores the conditions under which particular power relations between policy actors were established, legitimised, and maintained over time.

RQ2: How do Ivorian middle space actors conceptualise CP, and in what ways do these views align with or differ from the dominant 'CP as VAC' policy discourse?

This question is explored through qualitative semi-structured interviews, with a particular focus on the actors' embodied knowledge of CP. This method enables a close examination of how actors position themselves in relation to dominant discourses, and how they negotiate meaning, identity, and legitimacy within the policy space.

RQ3: How is power exercised in the enactment of school CP policies and how do middle-level policy actors experience these power dynamics?

This question is addressed through a combination of social network analysis (SNA), documentary analysis and qualitative interviews. SNA provides a structural overview of

the policy network, identifying key actors, connections, and potential nodes of power. It offers a structural lens through which to examine how influence circulates within the policy network, and how certain actors or coalitions may shape the direction of policy discourse and practice. The analysis of semi-structured interviews complements this by offering insights into how power is experienced, enacted, and resisted within these relational structures.

This combination of methods enables the study to capture both the structural architecture of the CP policy domain and the lived experiences of those operating within it, in particular national middle space actors. In the following sections, I describe each of these phases in more detail, outlining how they were implemented.

3.3 Research design

3.3.1 Genealogy: tracing the historical and discursive conditions of CP enactment

The first phase of my research design draws on genealogy to trace the historical and discursive conditions that enabled the emergence of CP as a policy problem in Côte d'Ivoire. This genealogical work presented in chapter 4 (although initiated in my literature review in Chapter 2), takes the call for contextualisation seriously, by grounding the international conceptual debates of 'CP as VAC' in the historical and social context of national education policymaking of Côte d'Ivoire. What might seem like a detour, I believe, is essential to understanding how reactions to dominant discourses of 'CP as VAC' are not disconnected from what Radcliffe (2015) calls policy legacies:

Policy legacies are powerful because development institutions and personnel continue to embrace deeply held understandings about core human attributes of project beneficiaries, concerning issues related to (lack of) agency and (lack of) relevant knowledge. In these relational understandings, development actors often associate themselves with a normalized modernity, in contrast to a pathologized, unchanging society, a viewpoint that permeates policy approaches to all social categories and intersectionality (p.13).

These legacies are not abstract, they are embedded in the institutional memory, bureaucratic routines, and discursive frameworks that shape how education policy is imagined and enacted. Genealogy therefore provides a critical historical foundation for the study, helping to surface the discursive rules and conditions that made it possible for CP to be framed as a VAC issue in the Ivorian context. It also offers insight into how these discourses continue to shape policy enactment by national middle space actors.

To conduct this analysis, I undertook a review of Ivorian education policy documents from 1885 to 2004. This timeframe begins with the colonial period, marking the initial point of contact between international and national education agendas, and ends just before the introduction of international CP-focused policies in Côte d'Ivoire. The documentary analysis involved a systematic examination of both primary and secondary sources, with a focus on identifying how education, violence, discipline, and authority have been historically framed in policy texts.

Wherever possible, I prioritised primary documentary sources, including colonial decrees, education laws, ministerial circulars, and official policy statements. These were supplemented by key historical compendiums and scholarly works (Akoto Yao & Gineste, 1987a; Désalmand, 1983, 2004; Pacquement, 2015; Proteau, 2002), which provided essential context and interpretation. The process involved close reading and coding of texts to identify recurring themes, silences, and shifts in discourse over time. I paid particular attention to how teachers, students, and schools were positioned within broader narratives of modernisation, development, and state-building.

To access these materials, I consulted a range of local academic and archival resources. This included visits to the University of Félix Houphouët-Boigny and the Centre de Recherche et d'Action pour la Paix (CERAP) in Abidjan, where I accessed historical archives, policy documents, and academic theses. These local institutions were invaluable in providing access to materials that are not digitised or widely available outside Côte d'Ivoire. Engaging with these sources on-site also allowed me to better understand the institutional memory and local interpretations of education policy history.

Rather than attempting to reconstruct a full history of education policymaking in Côte d'Ivoire, this phase focuses on identifying discursive patterns and historical *a priori*s that may have shaped how schools, teachers, and policymakers engage with CP initiatives today. The analysis pays particular attention to how authority, violence, discipline, and the role of the teacher have been historically constructed, and how these constructions intersect with broader colonial, postcolonial, and development discourses. I do not claim to have produced an exhaustive genealogy, heeding Ball's (2013) caution that such work demands "a vast accumulation of source material" and "relentless erudition" (p. 34). However, I offer a strong contextual base from which to analyse the enactment of school-based CP policies.

In this sense, the genealogical phase does more than provide background as it actively challenges the ahistorical assumptions embedded in many of development discourses present in CP policies. It invites us to consider how post-development critiques (Esteva & Escobar, 2017; Ziai, 2015) remain relevant today, particularly in contexts where policy is shaped by what Ong (2007) describes as "promiscuous entanglements of global and local logics" (p.5). These entanglements do not produce straightforward outcomes; rather, they manifest different conditions of possibility for how CP is understood, problematised, and acted upon.

3.3.2 Zooming out: mapping the CP policy network

Building on this foundation, the second phase employs social network analysis to map the institutional landscape of CP policy initiatives, from 2004 up until 2022. This phase identifies the key actors, organisations, and relational structures involved in the design, funding, implementation, and evaluation of CP-related policies.

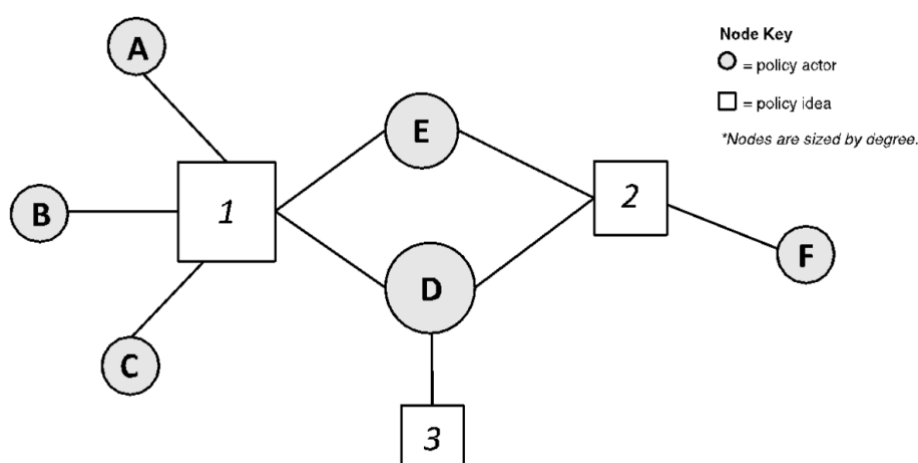
I concentrated on systematically mapping the events related to the policy domain of CP in Ivorian schools. Information about these policies and programmes is dispersed and it quickly became evident that policies are not the distinct units of programming that analysts tend to portray. Rather they were mobile, messy and tended to mutate and morph into new initiatives through the different series of encounters between actors. A combination of prior professional knowledge and in-depth internet searches resulted in an initial list of policies which sought to prevent CP in Ivorian schools

(presented in chapter 5). The policies or ‘policy events’ included programmes, projects, campaigns, studies, surveys and decrees.

At this stage, because “Networks often produce a wealth of documents that help to coordinate their development” (Berthod et al., 2017, p. 317), I collected evaluation reports, briefings, presentations, budgets, terms of references and communication materials. I conducted a documentary analysis to start constructing a genealogical story of these policies and integrating this analysis to the subsequent research design. Once those searches were exhausted, I used the website “AllAfrica” which aggregates news and information from over 140 African news organisations to find articles reporting on the various policy initiatives. These searches further helped me map timelines of the policy events as well as identify key organisations and individuals involved. A list of the documentation analysed can be found in Annexe 2.

To organise and visualise the vast amount of data collected I did a first iteration of a social network visualisation of the policy domain of CP in Ivorian schools. Most policy network analysis use a two-mode network or also called affiliation or bipartite network which has the distinction that it includes two different types of nodes: a set of actors/organisations and a set of policy events (Galey-Horn & Ferrare, 2020; Robins, 2015a). Nodes of the same type, for example organisations are not connected to each other but rather are affiliated if they are engaged in the same policy event as per the example below.

Figure 2. Example of a two-mode policy network



Note: From “Using Policy Network Analysis to Understand Ideological Convergence and Change in Educational Subsystems,” by Galey-Horn, S and Ferrare, J, 2020, *Educational Policy Analysis Archives*, 28(118), p.6. CC by SA

A social network is defined as consisting “of a finite set or sets of actors and the relation or relations defined on them. The presence of relational information is a critical and defining feature of a social network” (Wasserman & Faust, 1994, p. 20). The network boundary, that is where the policy domain of CP in Ivorian school begins and ends, was defined through an iterative and flexible process influenced by the results of the web audit, documentary analysis and network ethnography’s approach of following the policy. I started with a broad set of inclusion criteria for the nodes pertaining to policy events. Initiatives were included if some part of them sought to address school-based violence by teachers even if this was not their primary focus. I then tightened the criteria to only include policy events that had a specific mention of CP. This for example excluded from the network some policy events focused on sexual violence by teachers and student pregnancies. In total I identified 24 policy events spanning from 2003 until 2022.

The second type of node described the different organisations involved in the enactment of these policy events. I included any international or national organisations involved in the policy event through a variety of different capacities such as designing, funding, advocating for, advising, implementing, authorising and/or evaluating the identified initiatives. However, I excluded the ‘beneficiaries’ of such policies, that is the teaching community, parents or students. The relational ties between the nodes represent whether an organisation participated in a CP project/initiative under any of the above capacities. For each set of nodes, the following attributes were collected and the data was analysed using Gephi software. The data and its analysis are presented in chapter 5.

Table 1. Attributes collected for SNA

Projects/initiatives	Organisations
Title	Name
Type : alliance, programme, project, campaign, decree, survey/study	Type: IO, INGO, NGO, National Government (Education or Child Protection), university or research institution, bilateral agency, donor group, consultant

3.3.3 Zooming in: a qualitative focus on national middle level policy actors

Whilst the presence of ties between organisations and their positions within the network yielded information on the patterns of the network, it said little about the quality of relationship between these institutional actors or their intentions. As Dicken et al. (2001) clarify “network relations should be understood as being both structural and relational” but “the structure of the network tells us little about the qualitative nature of the relationships” (p. 93). This mapping thus provided both an organising tool and a way to analyse the network structure that was used for the second phase of data collection in which I qualitatively explored the types of relationships at play and the “intentionality and power relations among social actors” (p.93).

In this third phase, I narrowed my focus to conducting qualitative research with a specific subset of policy players of the identified network that I refer to as national middle level policy actors. For this study I decided to focus on a national middle terrain that comprises Ivorian individuals from different types of institutions but who are neither in a position to ‘instigate’ a policy nor are considered the final ‘beneficiaries’ of it such as school-based staff. I concentrated on a national rather than on a subnational subset because Côte d’Ivoire remains a highly centralised and hierarchised education and government system. On the other end, my sample excludes individuals with more decision-making power such as those working in the headquarters of INGOs, IOs or bilateral agencies as well as government ministers.

The focus on individuals in the national sphere represents a conscious shift away from the international elites driving policies forward that is common subject of study on transnational global policies. Although international individuals’ influence is undeniable it is not all encompassing with “the stubborn reality is that making policies work very often remains a hands on, messy, and very much “local” affair” (Peck & Theodore, 2015, p. xvii). Similarly, Musheno and Moody (2012) note how these street-level bureaucrats constantly live the tension between what policies dictate and the concrete and contextually circumstances that might diverge from this. They are in a privileged places to observe where “the ‘right way’ must be negotiated on the ground” (p.18). Furthermore, when following policies Peck and Theodore warn that researchers

can be attracted to the polished discourses coming from those individuals in the network that are the savviest at communicating and navigating policy events. Being based in Geneva, Switzerland I feared that the ease of access to the international circles (especially as I conducted my PhD during the Covid-19 pandemic) would skew my focus in that direction. I decided therefore to push for an intentional focus on the “circumscribed spheres inhabited by local administrators, stakeholders, and frontline workers” (Peck & Theodore, 2015, p. xvii). Moreover, by not including international counterparts I would be able to delve deeper into the different identities of the national middle, a group which is often seen as a homogenous category of national implementors and in research sometimes relegated to the category of informants.

This choice was an ideological and stubborn gamble to attempt to widen research’s focus to include different experiences of the policy enactment process. However in practice, this was a difficult choice to make. I started my PhD on October 2019 unaware that the world was going to close down 4 months later. It is easy to forget today the lack of visibility we had about the future at that time. Would travelling be possible in the next three months? In the next year? If it was possible, was it safe? Would there be next variants that would close us down again? Was it ethical to do ‘fieldwork’ in this new post pandemic normal?

However, the idea of completing my PhD never having moved from my screen or just analysing publicly available policy texts was hard to accept. I did not feel confident that the kind of embodied rapport I was hoping to build with participants, where they would be able to place me in slightly different position from ‘Western’ international workers could be achieved through a screen. There was additionally something that I found respectful about meeting them in their own space and following hierarchical protocols that was missing if I conducted the research in the comfort of my own home. I therefore designed my research with methods that I would be able to in theory complete remotely but I delayed as much as I could my qualitative data collection activities to travel to Côte d’Ivoire. In January 2022 despite the Omicron variant threatening a new surge I started to plan my fieldwork for the upcoming summer.

In addition to this never before encountered uncertainty, “studying up” networks present a very distinct set of challenges of access (Addey & Piattoeva, 2021). As noted

above I identified a first list of individuals belonging to the national middle and having participated in CP policy events through the SNA. It included Ivoirian IOs staff in national offices, education and child protection civil servants, INGOs local staff, national NGO staff members, teacher and student union representatives and national academics. However, gaining access was not straightforward and I encountered much of what is described by literature on “interviewing elites” (Gupta & Harvey, 2022). These are usually close and guarded circles whose members lead very busy lives. My main point of entry and recruitment strategy was based on my personal knowledge of this network that I was once a part of, albeit marginally.

Whilst I initially attempted to contact my participants from abroad with the hope that interviews could be if not conducted online at least scheduled beforehand, my email, LinkedIn and WhatsApp messages were not very successful. The couple of positive responses I obtained suggested I re-contacted them once I was in Abidjan. With a very tight budget and a high level of worry that my busy and guarded sample was going to be hard to reach I travelled to Abidjan for a one-month period in June 2022 in between ‘calm’ periods of the Covid-19 pandemic flareups.

Fortunately, the offer of meeting face to face and the power of an Ivorian mobile number started to unlock some of the individuals of my purposive sample. After this I quickly adopted a snowball sampling approach to identify other individuals who had been active in the network. Snowball sampling is recognised as the “preferred approach for investigating network structure” (Robins, 2015c, p. 56) as it allows the researcher to build the network in waves until no new actors are identified or saturation is reached. Most interviewees agreed to provide me with names and contact details for subsequent relevant individuals.

I conducted and recorded a total of 30 face-to-face in-depth interviews which accounted for 29 hours and 15 minutes of interview data (annexe 1). 63% of interviewees worked in the education sector whilst 37% were from the child protection field. 11 participants worked in different departments of the MoE, 5 in departments of the Ministry of Family, Women and Children, 5 were from local civil society organisations including unions, 3 from local chapters of international non-governmental organisations, 2 from national universities, 2 from local chapters of IOs

and 2 more had hybrid positions as international organisation representatives within the national government. My sample was predominantly male (76%) and participants were directors, programme officers, heads of programmes and heads of departments.

Reaching saturation in network studies is notably difficult with some labelling it as impossible (Peck & Theodore, 2012a). I will not claim to have reached saturation as I am convinced that there is much more wealth of experience and knowledge this group has about the policy enactment process and on how to address CP in Ivorian schools. As I conducted my fieldwork I was struck how in my previous professional capacity although I prided myself for making space for the national actors I had often engaged very superficially with this middle level. I felt ashamed at times when I re-discovered individuals I had met briefly before and whom I hadn't realised were such powerhouses. Nevertheless, I engaged a wide range of key stakeholders and reached a point where recurring patterns and themes became evident. These were identified through iterative coding and constant comparison across interviews and documents, allowing explanations for their emergence to begin taking shape.

My days in Abidjan usually entailed a lot of phone calls, long taxi drives crisscrossing the city, patiently sitting in waiting rooms and cancelled appointments as participants were called in to attend last-minute high-level meetings. Furthermore, once a meeting was set some interviewees requested a preliminary appointment to ask questions about the project, discuss the consent form and ethical approval before accepting a second meeting when the interview would actually take place. Gaining trust was a slow process but once interviews started I had a hard time wrapping them up as participants were keen to speak at length about their experiences and were extremely generous with their time. I used the time in between interviews to find documentation either at the library of the University of Houphouët-Boigny or at the Centre for Research and Action for Peace (CERAP) library.

3.4 Research tools: semi-structured interviews and vignettes

My main field method for this phase was the use of semi-structured interviews. I chose to use semi-structured interviews because of their appropriateness to study “people’s perceptions and opinions on complex and emotionally sensitive issues”

(Kallio et al., 2016, p. 2959). Interviews took diverse forms as they functioned like curious conversations in which I encouraged interviewees to respond freely in accordance to their own frameworks of thinking and to reflect on their own experience. I conducted the interviews in French and used an interview schedule (Annexe 3) to guide the conversations mainly through three distinct stages. The structured guide was extremely helpful because it allowed me to follow a participant's lead whilst being able to pivot back to issues I was interested. It also provided me with a degree of consistency between conversations. Field testing of the interview schedule was conducted with one former Ivorian colleague who belonged to the target group but whom I excluded from participating in the study because of our personal relationship. I also kept a fieldwork diary where I jotted immediate impressions after the interviews and notes from informal conversations which proved extremely helpful to keep the interview transcripts fresh and contextualised.

Interviews started with introductions, describing the project, and reviewing the consent form. Participants received information sheets prior to the interview (Annexes 4 and 5) but this material was re-discussed at the beginning of each interview. Informed consent was obtained to audio record the interviews and to use the data. The first set of questions in the interview schedule were tailored to the particular CP policy process I had identified that the individuals had been involved in. For each interview this required a lot of background work to tailor the interview guide to the role each interviewee played in the different policy events. The guide was also tailored to participants' current roles in the network. Some interviewees had moved on to different professional roles no longer related to the particular focus of the interview, some had participated in several initiatives, other individuals had retired, and others were very much still core actors of the CP policy network. Letting interviewees know that I was aware of their work and their role through tailored questioning not only made the interview more efficient it also made participants feel valued and at ease. Through this section I sought information on the origin stories of the policy events and the individual's role in the enactment to then transition towards a focus on the norms, values and power governing and being practiced in the network. This section of the interview also provided me with data about other related policy

events and other key actors which informed the next iteration of the social network data and gave me the names of further individuals to interview.

The second section of the interview guide was designed to allow interviewees to share with me their own opinion and perception of CP in schools as a policy problem. I also began shifting the conversation from their professional identity towards their values and personally held beliefs about CP by asking them about what they considered as best practice discipline in schools and their own experiences of discipline as children.

A final section of the interviews involved the use of real-life vignettes from social media that exemplified how dominant discourses on CP were used and how reactions to it could easily lead to binary positioning that are not conducive to dialogue. I used a Facebook post from UNICEF with the message: “Teach without violence, Teach with love” and asked interviewees to react to the message.

Figure 3. Social media vignette 1



I then showed them comments to the post where some users showed reservations to UNICEF’s message. This ranged from dismissive comments like “Nonsense !” or “*What is wrong is that you call all forms of traditional education, education with violence...Yet they have proven themselves. What results do we have to show for in our children and today’s society with the new concepts of education?*”. To demands for more nuance such as “*This reflection is insufficient*” or “*Yes, education without violence but teachers need to be well resourced...*”. I once again asked their reactions and positions regarding the arguments raised.

Figure 4. Social media vignette 2



Finally, I showed them one last exchange of comments between a Facebook user and a response from the UNICEF social media account and asked for their reactions.

User: I agree with that. But tell UNICEF to “enlever leur bouche” (I would translate this as: stop sticking their noses) in the education of our children. As much as it is necessary to educate a child gently, children also have a duty to obey their parents. So talking about the duty of parents towards their children also means talking about the duty that children should have towards their parents. This should be explained well for fear of seeing a child raise their voice at their parent without the parent being able to react.

UNICEF: Dear (name of user), thank you for your interest in children's causes. We will never stop sticking our noses in anything related to the welfare of children. UNICEF works so that every child can be born, grow and thrive. Good day!

Figure 5. Social media vignette 3



The use of vignettes in qualitative research is recognised as a tool to capture meanings and social judgements in ways that are less personal or threatening than directly asking for interviewees' opinions. This is particularly relevant in political sensitive

policy networks such as the ones in this study because “participants can connect their emotions, opinion, and experience to the storyline presented in the vignette. Besides, the vignette can uncover the hidden truth, including silence in the discourse, whether silenced by choice or silenced by the force of some sort” (Wei, CHEAH & Yeik, KOAY, 2022, p. 8). Vignettes are also quick ways to illustrate the tensions between the discourses my study is interested in without a long explanation from my side. Furthermore, placing the vignettes at the end of the interview also allowed for a shift in energy after a long exchange. Having had built rapport, interviewees also showed emotional engagement with the scenarios presented either by laughing or expressing shock.

3.5 Integrated analysis of network and qualitative data

Upon returning from my fieldwork, I transcribed all interview data verbatim and stored them in NVIVO. Interview transcripts were matched with my immediate impressions collected from my field work diary after each interview and interviewee attributes (education or child protection sector, type of organisation and gender). This helped maintain the data contextualised. Transcriptions were kept in French with translation occurring only at the level of drafting the findings.

The task of compiling both qualitative and quantitative network data was particularly time consuming and at times overwhelming. The organisation and coding of the data was a significant step in order to have the ability to both zoom in and zoom out iteratively and to “integrate results from both SNA and ethnography in a balancing way” (Berthod et al., 2017, p. 312). I stepped back and forth in between these two data sets with each feeding into the other at different points in a way that organically resembled to what Berthod et al. identify as a parallel-convergent design in which “no method should dominate over the other to maximize mutual enrichment during the convergence of analyses” (p.306). For example, I began my analysis by organising transcriptions through a first set of deductive codes that acted as organising codes. These were mostly derived from the interview guide and the predetermined research interests such as CP, network relations and policy events. The coding of network interactions and policy events then fed into the initial network relational data matrix, that was then ready for the analysis using quantitative SNA tools.

I ran different visualisations through highlighting different attributes and measures of the nodes. I also transformed the bipartite network into a one-mode network by linking the nodes of actors to each other if they had a common policy event node and weighted their connection to the number of times they shared a policy event. This allowed me to conduct measures on: 1) network density (how close is the network to being fully connected or the number of connections as a proportion of the total number of connections possible), 2) degree centrality (measuring the number of connections per node to identify those who are most connected), 3) betweenness centrality (the extent to which a node lies on the shortest path between other nodes), and 4) modularity (whether a network has more within-group ties than between group ties) (Johnson & Chew, 2021; Robins, 2015a). These results are presented in Chapter 5.

At this point I went back to my qualitative data organised by policy events and those codes that described interactions between different types of organisations in such a way that “observations from ethnography begin informing SNA toward a joint analysis” (Berthod et al., 2017, p. 312). This allowed me to make sense or clarify the observed structural patterns in such a way that the ethnographic data from the fieldwork provided content and meaning to the quantitative data from the SNA visualisations and analysis.

My organising codes allowed me to cross-reference data by creating searches comparing for instance how interviewees from the child protection field differed from those working in the education field. During data analysis it was very useful to both *zoom in* to what individuals were expressing, grounding their descriptions in the historical and contextual review of the education policy making field from chapter 2 and 4. Whilst at the same time being able to zoom out to the snapshot of the CP policy network and consider and analyse the effects of the overarching structure on the individuals involved.

The richness of the qualitative data I collected prompted the development of a second set of codes derived from the emerging patterns, themes and discourses that reflected broader systems of knowledge and power. These were subsequently analysed using post-structuralist discourse analysis (PSDA). PSDA is a form of discourse analysis rooted in post-structuralist thought and primarily inspired by Foucault’s work

(Angermuller, 2014). It conceptualises discourse as a productive force that is both shaped and shapes social realities, identities, and power relations. PSDA has been used to analyse text and conversations in context and is championed for its ability to discuss “the continuously fluctuating ways in which speakers, within any discursive context, are variously positioned as powerful or powerless by competing social and institutional discourses” (Baxter, 2002, p. 828). This analytical method emphasises the changing ways through which subjects construct meaning when negotiating and positioning themselves and others through competing discourse as either powerful or powerless. It does not assume a stable or singular truth instead it is more exploratory and reflexive, focusing on how discourses produce multiple, often contradictory, subjectivities and truths.

In conducting the PSDA, I focused on how interviewees positioned themselves within, resisted, modified, or reproduced dominant discourses. This involved tracing how meanings were relationally constructed and how they were enabled or constrained by broader discursive formations. My analysis centred on what Angermuller (2014) refers to as the “concept/words”, which pertains to “the content-related ‘what’ of intellectual discourse” (p.60) and on the grammatical aspects known as “enunciative markers” to analyse how interviewees claimed authority or positioned themselves within discourses. The codes developed in this phase served as key signifiers -nodal points, master signifiers and myths- through which individuals in the middle space organised their discourse, identities and the relational and social space (Jorgensen & J.Phillips, 2002). Key signifiers identified in the data included terms such as ‘ownership/decision-making’, ‘traditional/Ivorian’, ‘dialogue’ and ‘white/developed/international’. These signifiers were not merely descriptive but functioned as sites of discursive struggle, where competing meanings were negotiated.

To address my research questions, I analysed how individuals signified their positions and identities either by differentiating or linking them to other actors or to the key concepts mobilised in the network. I also examined how interviewees in the middle space spoke about the “discursive struggles” present in the concepts of development and CP. These struggles are characterised by how “different discourses each of them representing particular ways of talking about and understanding the social world are

engaged in a constant struggle with one other to achieve hegemony, that is, to fix the meanings of language in their own way” (Jorgensen & J. Phillips, 2002, p. 13). This analysis was further enriched by the historical review of educational discourses presented in Chapter 4, which provided critical context for interpreting how contemporary meanings were shaped by colonial and policy legacies.

Wherever the discursive struggle was expressed in the data, I also explored how interviewees expressed power. Particularly instances where power was articulated in terms of using discourse to either change, propose or create new and plural meanings, new ways of organising and thinking about the CP policy problem which differed from the hegemonic or “sedimented” (p.36) development and CP discourses. These moments of power or discursive agency were analysed as expressions of what Arce and Long (2002) call “counterwork”, the opening of spaces for plural understandings and actions.

Finally, I incorporated an embodied dimension into the analysis by coding expressions of emotion and affect. These were used to deepen the interpretation of how key signifiers were experienced and contested also through embodied knowledge, offering insight into the affective dimensions of policy enactment. The findings of the PSDA analysis are primarily presented in chapters 6 through 8.

3.6 Ethics: Consent, confidentiality and power in network research

This study engages with multiple methods under the umbrella of network ethnography, each carrying distinct ethical considerations. At the core of this study is a commitment to informed, ongoing, and situated consent. All participants involved in interviews were provided with detailed information sheets (Annexes 4 and 5) outlining the purpose of the research, their rights as participants, and the intended use of the data. Informed consent was obtained prior to each interview, with participants given the opportunity to ask questions and withdraw at any point. Consent was not treated as a one-time transaction but as a continuous process, revisited at different stages of the research, particularly when discussing sensitive topics or when participants expressed concerns about anonymity or representation. The study was approved by

both the UCL IOE Research Ethics Committee and the National Ethics Committee of Côte d'Ivoire (Annexe 6).

In addition to the interviews, the genealogical phase of the research raised its own set of ethical challenges. Genealogy, as a method, involves interpreting historical texts, policies, and institutional narratives, often without the direct involvement of those who produced them. This raises questions about representation, voice, and interpretive authority. I approached this phase with a commitment to contextual sensitivity, recognising that historical discourses are not neutral artefacts but are embedded in power relations that continue to shape present-day policy and practice and that interact with my own positionality.

Following Ball and Tamboukou's (2003) reflections on the ethics of writing genealogy, I acknowledge that there is no neutral or privileged position from which to interpret the past. My own positionality as described in section 3.1, inevitably shapes how I read and present historical discourses. Rather than claiming objectivity, I have aimed for reflexive transparency, asking not only what the documents say, but also how I, as a researcher, am implicated in the discursive field I am analysing.

These ethical commitments extend to how findings are presented. Throughout the thesis, I have sought to balance analytical rigour with ethical responsibility, ensuring that the knowledge produced does not inadvertently harm the individuals or communities it seeks to understand. This includes careful anonymisation of interview data, cautious interpretation of historical materials, and a commitment to presenting findings in ways that are constructive, and open to contestation and dialogue.

Furthermore, network ethnography, as a combination of SNA and interviews with policy actors, carries three distinct ethical issues: difficulties in guaranteeing confidentiality, underestimated consequences of visual representations of networks and a practice of enacting networks as power (Hogan, 2021). The first ethical issue relates to the difficulties in a network ethnography to guarantee confidentiality, eliminate re-identification of individuals and the ensuing risks to participation. Given the approaches focus on a network of individuals who know each other there is a strong risk that even when data is fully anonymised those who are embedded within the network can, by combining different kinds of disclosed attributes, identify 'who is

who'. In inter-organisational contexts such as that of my study the risk of being identified can bring unintentional harmful consequences to participants' professional lives. When respondents anticipate such potential consequences the validity of the research may be affected as they will be less inclined to share their opinions (Maya-Jariego et al., 2021; Rudolph & Young, 2021). For example, one interviewee, after they had shared what can be considered as harsh criticism of a UN agency reiterated the importance of maintaining their identity concealed as they previously had a bad experience of being identified when participating in a research project.

Molina (2021) laments that many network researchers prefer safe and easy solutions such as to "completely decontextualize the data, stripping it of its richness and accepting the consequent loss of scientific value" (p.16). To address this dilemma, I've consulted my research aims to identify only the most relevant contextual attributes and I have made confidentiality a priority and placed participants' safety and benefit at the centre of my design. I have limited the individual level data that was collected and engaged in an ongoing review of whether additional layers of masking were needed to guarantee confidentiality when disclosing participants' personal data. For example, as I analysed the data I decided not mention the seniority of individuals nor the organisation that they worked for.

The second ethical issue arising in network ethnography is the unanticipated risks of network visualisations. A visual representation of relations may make visible patterns and connections that were previously concealed and may challenge organisations' official narratives and present "self-representations they did not anticipate at the outset" (D'Angelo & Ryan, 2021, p. 22). For example, D'Angelo's (2008) research with community organisations indicates that in an environment where being well connected is highly valued being shown as an isolated party can subsequently impact the organisations' ability to operate. As Hogan notes "We cannot merely ask for these networks and show them off without jeopardizing the people within them" (2021, p. 11). This means that I must be mindful about any potential negative impacts that visualisations can have on participants and remember that relational data is neither risk-free nor neutral (D'Angelo & Ryan, 2021).

I have decided to address this ethical concern by choosing to conduct the SNA and its visual representation using a bipartite network where policy events/programmes and public organisations are the units of analysis. I have foregone the traditional focus of SNA on obtaining individuals' names (Maya-Jariego et al., 2021) and focused on visually mapping a network of organisations and policies rather than a network of individuals. Organisations and policy initiatives are identified in the network sociogram as these nodes and ties are mainly retrieved from publicly available data. This provides a temporary snapshot of the policy initiatives and their implementors in Côte d'Ivoire. However, organisations are not individually linked to what interview participants say about the enactment process in the qualitative research as this could mean participants are easily identifiable. I believe that this will safeguard the confidentiality of individual participants whilst at the same time play to the strengths of network research in social sciences which is to capture the "fine balance between the individual and the system" (Robins, 2015b, p. 14).

Despite possible risks, visualisations have also been considered an asset or a means of empowering participants. They can "facilitate the awareness of interaction contexts, and can generate changes in personal behavior or new organizational dynamics" (Maya-Jariego et al., 2021, p. 62). I have kept these two outcomes in mind so as to present visualisations emanating from the data in ways that benefit organisations and encourage constructive dynamics between the network. I follow Maya-Jariego et al's advice which calls for researchers to "proceed in a responsible and respectful manner, so as not to "burn" the research resources" (p.62). By consistently reminding myself that the intended use of the data and the beneficiary of the information is the network itself I hope to present data in ways to minimise risk.

3.7 Conclusions

Following policies ethnographically that are mobile and mutate through trans-national and trans-organisational networks is a monumental methodological task and challenge. It is not uncommon for researchers studying such networks to incorporate previous professional or research experience of the networks to the fold of their analysis as part of a "longer term immersion in a field where diverse professional and personal networks can be followed over time" (Larner & Laurie, 2010, p. 220). By

opening this chapter with a reflection on my positionality, readers are better able to recognise how my background and motivations impact my analysis.

Despite the liberties and invitation to being exploratory that *following a policy* entails, through this chapter I have also tried to present transparency and reflexivity as to how I have selected and collected my data as well as interpreted findings within a post-structuralist framework. From a post-structuralist epistemological position, the findings presented in the following chapters are invitations to question our actions and positions within CP policy networks rather than conclusions or normative corrections. Even if my analysis aims to uncover how discourses have influenced how CP policies are enacted in Côte d'Ivoire, my own findings also exist within discourses that are embodied in my experience of the VAC field, its networks, and my “hybrid” positionality.

Writing this chapter I have tried to balance what at times seemed like contradictory positions: the academic discourse of quality, clarity and rigor and a post-structuralist stance where knowledge as socially constructed discourses cannot pretend to be conclusive. Rather than certainty, through this chapter I have tried to show congruency between my research aims, my positionality and the chosen methodological approaches. Throughout this thesis but in particular in this chapter where one must reflect on the processes for collecting and interpreting data, I have grappled with what Ball and Tamboukou (2003b) the problem of writing genealogy:

In the writing of genealogy, the traditional question of how the author/researcher can break down her data and give it meaning is no longer valid. Instead, the question is reformulated as: how, under what conditions and in what forms, can the genealogist ‘appear in the order of discourse?’ How will she reveal herself in the discursive context of that she is writing about? What different roles will she admit performing? Which institutional constraints will she accept and what rules will she have to obey?.. The problem here is not that she will have to try hard to excavate precious hidden meanings and ‘write them up’. It is, rather, the opposite: how will she navigate the multiplicity of meanings surrounding her research and arrive at something that can stand as ‘findings’ or conclusions or at least perspective—while avoiding closure? (p.16)

In the next chapters I therefore present my 'findings' as proposals and interpretations that have emerged to me during the research journey described above. 'Writing them up' is an invitation for others, in particular those in the field of VAC, to engage, contest and interact with me.

*"Hurry your steps towards the African Land,
Where a population waits for you in the darkness,
Doomed for a longtime with contempt and hatred,
Abandoned like a cursed society".*
(Désalmand, 1983, p. 109)

Chapter 4. Archaeology of education policies in Côte d'Ivoire

Previously, I analysed how a conceptualisation of 'CP as VAC' has undergone processes of standardisation and de-contextualisation, ultimately reaching a problematic impasse. I now shift my focus toward a serious consideration of the Ivorian context. Drawing inspiration from a genealogical approach, I conducted a documentary analysis⁶ to explore Ivorian education policy as discourse from 1885 to 2004. This is not an exhaustive account of the history of education in Côte d'Ivoire but rather an analysis of historical moments and *a priori*s that may have shaped how schools, teachers and policymakers engage with CP initiatives today.

With this 'detour' rather than viewing CP policies as isolated, a-historical events I aim to situate them within the historical conditions that shape their enactment today. I resonate with Butler's assertion that "the context is not exterior to the question; it conditions the form that the question will take. In this sense, the questions that characterize moral inquiry are formulated or stylized by the historical conditions that prompt them" (2005, p. 6). In particular, I locate CP policies as part of a long lineage of education policies that have been carriers of the development discourse.

Development discourse is operationalised by organisations, technologies and expert knowledge that work through "concrete, implementation of plans and programmes aimed at reaching a predetermined model" (Agostino, 2007, p. 201). However, it can be difficult to pinpoint because it cannot be tightly defined to specific types of programmes or organisations. Rather, as Sachs (1999) notes in his archaeology of development "They who pronounce the word denote nothing but claim the best of intentions. Development thus has no content but does possess a function: it allows any intervention to be sanctified in the name of a higher evolutionary goal" (p.7).

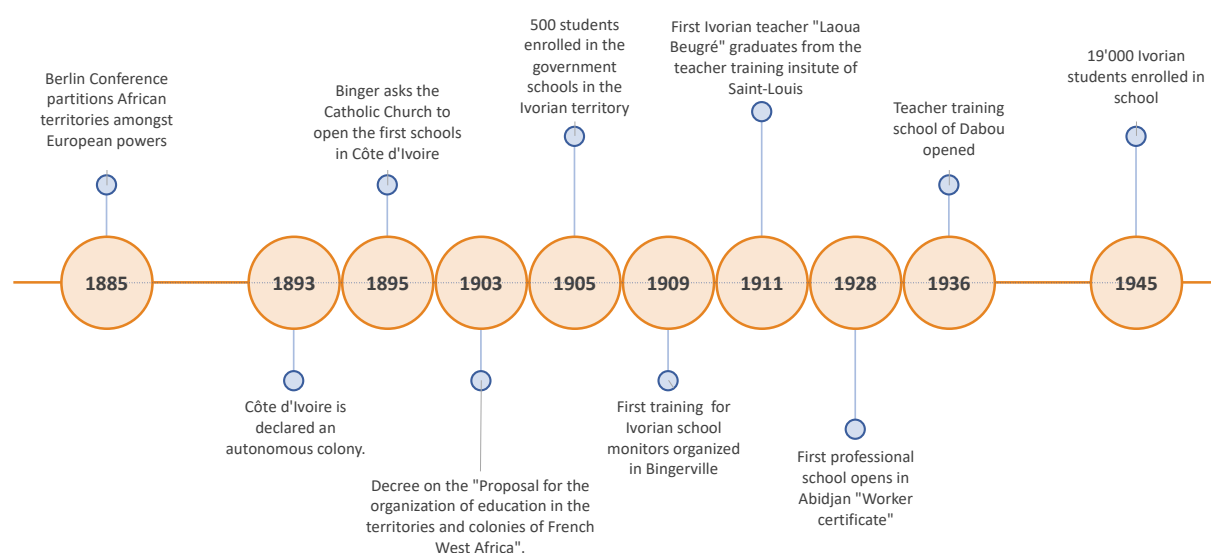
⁵ Hâtez vos pas vers la terre africaine / Où vous attend un peuple dans la nuit / Voué longtemps au mépris, à la haine / Abandonnée comme un peuple maudit

⁶ All translations from French are my own.

This moral high ground in the name of progress, complicates its critique, even as many acknowledge that it is “steeped in global and national postcolonial relations” (Radcliffe, 2015, p. 8). By examining the historical evolution of these discourses from colonial times, we can better identify the remnants of ‘othering’ that persist. This analysis adds nuanced layers of understanding to how CP policies are received, resisted or utilised by Ivorian policy actors in contemporary contexts. The chapter is organised in six chronological phases and concludes with a review of the discourses and unequal power dynamics informing my data analysis.

4.1 Education in the colonial project (1885 - 1944)

Figure 6. Timeline 1885 – 1945



The pre-colonial education of children in the Ivorian territory was largely disregarded by colonisers, who perceived it not as a means of progress but rather as the guardian of tradition, “a sort of sacred slave”⁷ (Hardy, 1929, p. 72). This neglect has resulted in limited contemporary understanding of the education framework prior to colonisation. Nonetheless, a robust system of learning existed, encompassing various practices commonly referred to as traditional African education (Boateng, 1983; Désalmand, 1983). Although this term is controversial (Mungwini, 2011), it describes an education paradigm intimately connected to community life and with an encompassing character that made education a responsibility of all community members. For many years this

⁷ “la gardienne de la tradition, une sorte d’esclave sacrée”

system ran in parallel to the French's establishment of schools. However, my analysis, focusing on internationally driven policies, commences with the initial touchpoint between national and international education actors marked by colonialism. This section explores what Amougou (2006) terms the “colonial schooling unconscious”⁸, that stems from the use of the education system in the colonial project.

Following the 1885 Berlin Conference, the French began building schools in Côte d’Ivoire to signal colonial control. In 1895, Governor Binger invited the Catholic Church to establish schools to counter existing madrassas and Protestant missions (Désalmand, 1983, p. 103). Although Côte d’Ivoire was given the status of an autonomous colony in 1893, militarily, France did not gain control of the region until 1925 and throughout this period, schooling was used strategically to control and ‘pacify’ territories. The arrival of a school in a village was of great symbolic significance as it meant that the French administration was in control of the area. It is therefore not surprising that communities did not adopt schooling passively. In territories actively resisting colonisation, sending one’s children to school was perceived by the community as collaborating with the enemy (Désalmand, 1983, p. 167). In Bouaké the school was burnt down in 1913 and a second time in 1917. Once a territory was ‘pacified’ chiefs continued resisting by sending their slaves’ children to schools pretending they were their own and these early institutions were referred to by locals as “hostage schools” (Dadié, 1957).

In 1903, a decree fixed the structure of the education system for the whole of West Africa and it remained largely unchanged until 1945. At its foundation were village schools whose main aim were to introduce the basics of spoken French, hygiene and mathematics. Regional schools established in important centres of the territory offered two additional primary years that allowed students to obtain an elementary school certificate in agriculture or manual labour. A European teacher ran these schools and supervised nearby village schools. (Désalmand, 1983) Children who were able to obtain this first formal certificate could access upper primary school enabling

⁸ “l’inconscient scolaire colonial”

them to become local administrative officials or advancing further into one of the regions' professional schools.

In theory open to all school-aged children, children of village chiefs were intentionally recruited. Hardy, director of education of the French West African territory from 1915 to 1919 and later head of the Colonial School in Paris, notes in his book "Nos Grands Problèmes Coloniaux", that at the beginning only children from people that did not "represent great social value" (1929, p. 83) would attend schools. This he found to be problematic because it would make the school unattractive to village chiefs.

Furthermore, as the administration began using youth who had attended schools as collaborators it also led to a "reversal of social values which compromised the stability of the whole community, because of a signalling error" ⁹ (p.83).

Schools in colonial Côte d'Ivoire not only signified a physical French presence but were also set up to supply the necessary labour for the colonial administration. A 1908 bulletin outlining the objectives of village schools emphasised that lessons should train the population "to usefully help Europeans in the rational exploitation of the country's resources"¹⁰ (1908 as cited in Désalmand, 1983, p. 161). Primary schooling focused heavily on the French language and agricultural skills, resembling to agricultural labour. By 1937, schools cultivated 90 hectares of coffee and cocoa, 72 hectares of cotton and peanuts and maintained substantial livestock resources, with practical work comprising over half of students' school hours (Désalmand, 1983, p. 183). Ekanza highlights that the French viewed schooling as "a necessary evil" for sustaining "the apparatus of economic exploitation, administrative and political oppression could not function without a minimum of native subordinate administrators" ¹¹ (2005, p. 111).

However, references of education as a tool for economic exploitation were often combined with a discourse framing schools as protective and favourable for Ivorian children.

⁹ "c'est ainsi qu'on aboutit en fort peu de temps à un renversement des valeurs sociales...c'est toute la stabilité du groupement qui se trouve compromise par une erreur d'aiguillage" (p.83)

¹⁰ "pour aider utilement l'européen dans l'exploitation rationnelle des ressources du pays."

¹¹ "l'enseignement est un mal nécessaire ; l'appareil d'exploitation économique, d'oppression administrative et politique, ne peut fonctionner sans un minimum de cadres subalternes autochtones."

The natives of our colonies being naturally clients of our metropolitan commerce, our first interest is to increase their numbers and to develop their consuming abilities; hence our interest goes hand in hand with the obligations that humanity bestows on us. Improving the living conditions of our subjects, protecting children is at the same time a humanitarian endeavour and clever business strategy...School is undoubtedly an efficient means of achieving this¹². (Minutes of the Administrative report of 1912-1913 in Désalmand, 1983, p. 157).

This dual narrative legitimised exploitative practices under the guise of altruism. Child protection and development discourse was used strategically by the colonial powers to soften their economic motives, reinforcing the colonial agenda while deflecting criticism. School itself also propagated the discourse of French benevolence and cultural superiority through an intentional moral curriculum. Hardy (1929) highlights that schooling distanced children from their families, thereby creating a moral void that schools were positioned to fill. He believed teachers should function as “directors of conscience” (p.100) for whom “the moralisation of their clientele appears as the most important element of their programme” (p.99)¹³.

Désalmand further argues that the education apparatus rendered colonisation more palatable by successfully cultivating affection for France. Texts from the time exhibit “a paternalistic attitude where the exploiter wants to make himself loved”¹⁴ (1983, p. 355). In one of the most well-known and used school textbooks, *Mamadou et Bineta* after a description of the beauty and power of France the text asserts that France treats Africans like their own children and claims that by reading these books children would “learn everything that France did for its colonies, for black children and their parents and that then, they would understand even better how much they must love it”¹⁵

¹² “Les indigènes de nos colonies étant tout naturellement les clients de notre commerce métropolitain, notre premier intérêt est d’en augmenter le nombre et de développer leurs facultés consommatrices ; et ainsi cet intérêt se trouve d’accord avec les devoirs que l’humanité nous impose à leur regard. Améliorer les conditions d’existence de nos populations sujettes, veiller à la protection de l’enfance, c’est faire à la fois œuvre d’humanitaire et de commerçant avisé...L’école est incontestablement pour cela un moyen efficace.”

¹³ “La moralisation de sa clientèle lui apparaisse comme l’article le plus important de son programme.”

¹⁴ “Il s’agissait bien de faire *aimer* la France. Nous sommes tout simplement en plein paternalisme : l’exploiteur veut se faire aimer.”

¹⁵ “Dans ses colonies, la France traite les indigènes come ses fils...tu apprendras tout ce que la France a fait dans ses colonies pour les enfants noirs et pour leurs parents. Alors tu comprendras encore mieux que maintenant combien tu dois l’aimer”

(Mamadou et Bineta, 1933 as cited in Désalmand 1983 p.417). This narrative reinforces the colonial ideology that positions France as a benevolent protector and civiliser.

These examples illustrate how already during colonialism the notions of development and protection of children were used discursively by external actors to make intervention palatable, even desirable. A Bulletin from the Governor General Carde in 1924 mentions the usefulness of teaching a redacted and modified version of history to the colonial project:

Should we not make Black people compare the unstable and bloody past of their country with the peaceful, tranquil, and fertile present? Should they ignore everything about France and the French...who precisely brought them this security and prosperity?...Through well-conducted teaching, we must bring the native to properly situate his race and his civilization in relation to others...It is an excellent way of mitigating this vanity that we criticise him for, making him more modest, while instilling in him a solid and reasoned loyalty¹⁶. (Carde, 1924 as cited in Désalmand, 1983 p. 407-408)

This citation exemplifies how colonial discourse actively and intentionally employed and encouraged 'othering' to justify and sustain colonial rule. The discourse constructs a dichotomy that positions the colonisers as civilised saviours and the colonised as inherently inferior. This 'othering' process not only legitimises the colonial presence but also seeks to erase the colonised own pride and dignity, what Carde calls “vanity” replacing it with a sense of dependency and loyalty. Using Galtung’s terms we can see how the education system was used to build a foundation of symbolic violence in which the direct and structural violence linked to colonialism started to ‘feel’ less wrong and more normal.

However colonial authorities were also keenly aware of the dangers schooling could bring and thus adopted a strictly minimum approach, visible in both how they conceived the curriculum and the schooling levels. There was a consistent push towards not intellectualising learning too much. Hardy warned that teaching too

¹⁶ Peut-on ne point faire comparer aux Noirs le passé instable et sanglant de leur pays avec le présent pacifique, tranquille et fécond ? Peuvent-ils ignorer tout de la France et des Français avec lesquels ils sont en relation journalière et qui leur ont précisément apporté cette sécurité et cette prospérité ?...Par un enseignement bien conduit, il faut amener l’indigène à situer convenablement sa race et sa civilisation en regard des autres...C’est un excellent moyen d’atténuer cette vanité native qu’on lui reproche, de le rendre plus modeste, tout en lui inculquant un loyalisme solide et raisonné.

much science schools would, “end up putting into circulation little pedants who believe themselves to be enlightened and who are as dangerous as they are unbearable”¹⁷ (Hardy, 1929, p. 41). The French West African governor Brévié justified a bigger push towards agriculture through his concern that locals having attended school and who could not find paid employment would become dissatisfied and could pose a threat to the colonial order.

Structurally, the schooling system was also built to appease those fears since Ivorian graduates could never be at the same level and obtain the same diplomas as French citizens. For example, locals training to become teachers could not obtain the required secondary school degree recognised in France. For teachers this created two levels a superior and a secondary cadre. The superior cadre was only available to French citizens and guaranteed a higher salary and hierarchical superiority. A French officer, in 1904 describes the logic behind this political decision, “it would be good to give different names to the European degrees and the local ones, if only to remove the unjustified hope that native teachers caress of getting, by an inadmissible assimilation, the same treatment as European teachers”¹⁸ (Rison, 1904 as cited in Désalmand, 1983, p. 345).

The French administration’s fear was not unfounded. Recruitment numbers from the period show that after initial resistance, buy-in from communities grew steadily as families actively acted upon the link between schooling and the possibility of a modern paid position within the new colonial hierarchy. By 1923 the administration no longer had to recruit students but rather it needed to enrol selectively and by 1935, classrooms were full of students avidly trying to reach the next schooling level. Enrolment increased from 500 students in 1903 to 4,500 students in 1924 and 19,000 by 1945 (1983, p. 268).

The effectiveness of education as a means of legitimising colonisation extended beyond just its discourse. The difficulty of disentangling the positive and negative aspects of

¹⁷ “Si l’on exagère de la part de la science, on aboutit généralement à mettre en circulation de petits pédants qui se croient des lumières et qui sont aussi dangereux qu’insupportable car leur esprit, encore obscurci par les nuages de leur mentalité originelle, demeure incapable d’assimiler nos abstractions.”

¹⁸ “Il serait bon, de désigner par des noms différents les diplômes européens et les diplômes locaux, ne serait-ce que pour enlever aux instituteurs indigènes l’espoir injustifié qu’ils caressent et que certains d’entre eux ont réalisé, de se faire accorder par une assimilation inadmissible le traitement des maîtres européens.”

colonial schooling arises from the fact that individuals who attended schools did indeed gain elevated social status at a time when traditional value systems were breaking down. Educational diplomas became critical for ascending the new hierarchical structure that emerged. Those locals who benefited from this educational system developed a vested interest in its continuation and reproduction, reinforcing its role within the colonial framework

It (the colonial school) educated (while deforming) a good number of 'petits noirs', especially those for whom social ascent could only pass through the school institution. And, in order to better illustrate the reproduction of the colonial domination of which they were its active agents, the persevering (or better the enduring) having succeeded in accumulating a level of educational capital - and not cultural capital - validated by the diplomas of the time, reserved for "advanced" Africans, have become schoolteachers, nurses, policemen...¹⁹ (Amougou, 2006, p. 77)

Few today would argue against the idea that education was a pernicious vector of colonial domination. However, the Ivorian experience of education as a colonising tool is multi-dimensional, complex and not neatly ascribing to a discourse of education solely as a vertex for domination. Creating an elite benefiting from schools was an efficient way of reproducing within local populations the logic of the new technologies of domination. As Amougou notes a description of the colonising project is incomplete if we pretend that “all relations of domination systematically exclude an active, even interested, participation of the dominated”²⁰ (2006, p. 115).

Furthermore, the benefits gained by some led them to espouse parts of the civilising discourse attached to education and helped to override criticism about the role of schools in the colonising project. For example, Akoto, former minister of education, in his account of colonial education describes Baulé resistance of the French as “a painful drama lived by the region before it could, it as well, open itself to education” (1987). In that same book the first French officials tasked with opening schools are described as

¹⁹ "Elle a formé, (tout en déformant) bon nombre de petits noirs, surtout ceux pour qui l'ascension sociale ne devait passer que par cette institution. Et, afin de mieux illustrer la reproduction de la domination coloniale ils étaient les support actifs, les persévérants (ou mieux les endurants) ayant réussi à accumuler un niveau du capital scolaire – et non culturel- sanctionné par les diplômes de l'époque, réservé aux Africains « évolués », sont devenus des maîtres d'école, des infirmiers ou des médecins africains..."

²⁰ "qui fait comme si toute relation de domination excluait systématiquement une prise de part active, voire intéressée, du dominé"

“fervently wishing to serve Africa” (p. 31) or “courageous” (p.39) and loving and giving the best years of their lives to Côte d’Ivoire (p.17), whilst locals opposing them are described as “hostile” (p. 41) or “virulent” (p.32).

What emerges from this analysis is a schooling project whose form, policies and discourses originate and are impacted by interests pertaining to France’s colonial ambitions. The analysis also highlights how utilitarian motives behind the creation of schools were often accompanied by a softening humanitarian and child protection discourse that positioned the need for a European style education system as good for the ‘natives’ and good for colonisation. This discourse was also able to flourish in part because of the political gains some locals had achieved through their assimilation of the education system. On the one hand their power was made legitimate through educational diplomas. But there was also a degree of interiorisation of the colonial schooling message that French civilisation was located at the top of a hierarchy of civilisations and that progress only consisted in getting closer to it. (Désalmand, 1983, p. 374)

4.1.1 Corporal punishment discourse and use in schools since the colonial period

Before transitioning to the next period, I would like to examine the modalities of violence, including CP, employed within colonial school structures and the discourses that surrounded such practices. It is well documented that CP, manifested as beatings, canings and floggings was a prevalent mechanism used by colonial rulers to impose their dominance (Amougou, 2006; Bernault, 2007; Dembour, 1992; Dwyer & Nettelbeck, 2018; Killingray, 1994; Ocobock, 2012). The whip or ‘chicotte’ emerged as a potent symbol of both the slave trade and colonial subjugation. As noted by Killingray (1994) “few Europeans doubted the need for corporal punishment as the most effective way of controlling and disciplining Africans. To the late Victorian mind Africa was still a place of ‘rude chaos’, the people child-like and societies disorderly” (p.202).

The CP of African adults was often accompanied with a discourse of them being “child-like people” (p.202). Another discourse of the time minimised the harm of CP by claiming that Africans possessed “an ability to bear pain” (p.202) which differed from

that of white 'races' stating that the "primate African does not feel" (Lugard, 1922 as cited in Killingray, 1994 p.202). More often, CP was legitimised by asserting that Africans recognised and even expected physical punishment as method of correction because they traditionally had always "inflicted brutal punishments on offenders" (p.202). Texts and accounts from that time confirm a discourse used by the colonial administration in which CP was portrayed as a preferred form of punishment by 'natives' than for example incarceration because Africans were already traditionally of a repressive nature (Brillon, 1980; Dembour, 1992).

In Bernault's (2007) review of punishment during the colonial rule she notes that CP was "imagined and imposed as hybrid sentences borrowing from African and Western punitive regimes in which measure, regulation and predictability would function as the imprint of white penal civilisation on local physical hubris" (p.81). The discourse used to justify CP portrayed it as a blended "new compromise between the violence of native repression and the kindness of colonial retribution" (p. 82). It depicted colonial authorities as respecting local punishment traditions and taming these so that they were less violent and more civilised. Discourse is not only used to cloak an act of dominance under a benevolent justification but also reverses the ownership of violence by calling it 'traditionally' African. Dembour's (1992) research with former Belgian colonial administrators highlights that they all justified their actions by arguing that CP had traditional African origins. She notes that they placed the responsibility on the Africans "who not only "invented" it, but who also "demanded" the authority (in this case the European) to use it" ²¹ (p.213).

As for CP in schools this discourse is still mobilised today in debates that use its origin to either favour or discredit the practice. One side argues that CP was a benevolent continuation of practices already happening to children in pre-colonial times, suggesting that CP is traditionally African. The other side contends that CP was a phenomenon introduced by colonial schools, implying it was not originally part of African traditions. The evidence is contradictory (Killingray, 1994, p. 30) and CP's relationship with the past is not clear (Bayart, 2008). Some like Amougou (2006)

²¹ Le responsable était l'Africain qui non seulement l'avait « inventée, » mais qui en plus la « réclamait en attendant du chef (en l'occurrence l'Européen) qu'il y recoure.

highlight the presence of elements (other than colonial domination) that made it possible for local communities to adhere to the use of CP in schools. For example, the fact that pain was used in initiation rites could have made its use in colonial schools to be interpreted as a continuation of these rites of passage that required sacrifice.

However, there is testimonial evidence that CP was used in schools run by Europeans (p.45) in a way that surprised children and that was different from what they lived at home. Dadié, one of the few Ivorian authors to leave an auto-biographical description of his days in school during colonialism wrote that when he was first taken to school in 1922, the children were beaten so badly that a couple of months later he ran away and rejoined his father (Désalmand, 2004, p. 243). In his second stint at a school Dadié illustrates the differences between the way Europeans and Africans used CP:

Suddenly the Director who after slapping one of our friends, rushes towards me. I jump out of the window near me. He barely had time to grab my loincloth which I left in his hands. He asked me to come back and fetch my loincloth. I refused. Then he began to trample on it, calling me a little savage. And here a fundamental problem arises. In Africa, a child threatened or beaten by an older relative must run away. To stand up and face him is to provoke him, to challenge him. Just like it's not polite to look adults in the eye. Insolence, effrontery. So, having ran away, having refused to take the beating, the Director put in my file a very bad assessment...'Clever, anti-French'²².

(Dadié, 1984 as cited in Désalmand, 2004, p. 244)

Although we cannot conclusively analyse whether there is any value to the colonial authorities' discourse of it being more humane than its traditional use, accounts like the one of Dadié make it seem unlikely. Perhaps what can be said through this account is that a particular form of CP, linked to colonial domination was introduced via schools and that it was different from what children traditionally experienced at home.

It can also be said that colonialism "muddled the disciplinary landscape" (Ocobock, 2012, p. 31) especially once Ivorian monitors adopted the new forms of CP in schools to

²² "Tout à coup apparaît le Directeur qui, après avoir giflé un de nos amis, fonce sur moi. Je saute par la fenêtre près de laquelle j'étais. Il eut tout juste le temps de saisir mon pagne que je laissai entre ses mains. Il me demanda de venir prendre mon pagne qu'il me tendait. Je refusai. Alors il se mit à le piétiner, me traitant de petit sauvage. Et ici se pose un problème de fond. En Afrique, un enfant menacé ou battu par un parent plus âgé, doit se sauver. Faire front, c'est le provoquer, le défier. Tout comme il n'est pas poli de regarder les grandes personnes dans les yeux. Insolence, effronterie. Donc, m'étant sauvé, ayant refusé de me faire battre, le Directeur mit dans mon dossier une très mauvaise appréciation... « Surnois, anti-français » "

express their newfound authority as part of the colonial hierarchy. Amougou (2006) explains that in the “Africa placed under the colonial yoke, where traditional honour is mocked and the identity of the Black population is relegated to the status of middle-age development, a schoolmaster or a monitor that symbolises the dominant power is considered an important person” ²³ (p.159). The fact that CP both in the wider society and in schools was gradually delegated to Ivorian hands further reinforces the discourse of CP as traditionally African that we still see today. Bayart (2008) identified this transfer as one of many colonial “hegemonic transactions” where:

The very application of the punishment was a point of negotiation in the political and moral economy of indirect administration since it was generally entrusted to an indigenous intermediary capable of interpreting the punishment by mitigating it or aggravating it, or even by diverting it for his personal benefit...²⁴ (p.143)

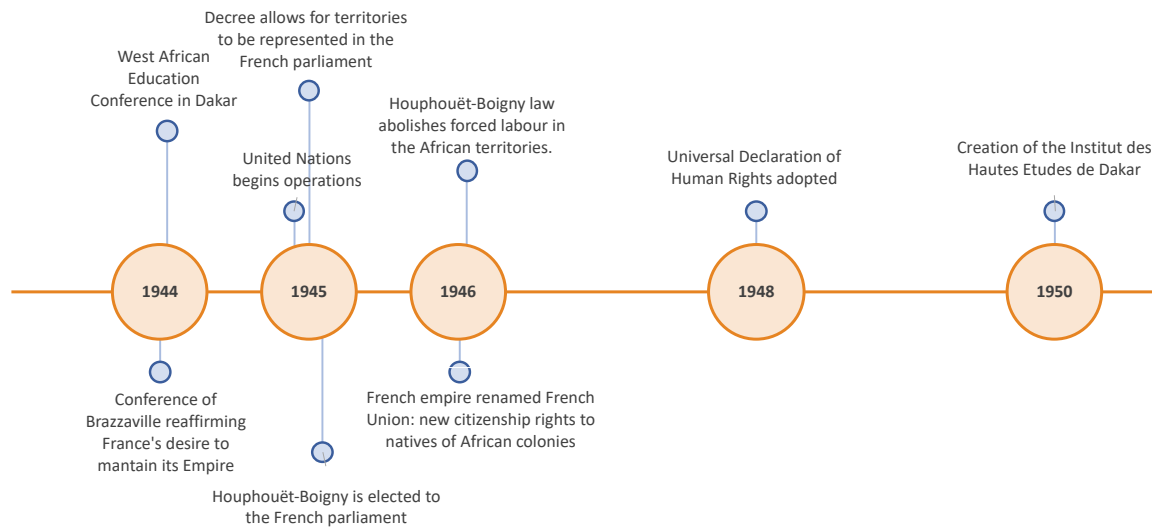
In conclusion, the discourse and use of CP in colonial school structures reveal a complex interplay between colonial power dynamics. Overall, the legacy of CP in colonial schools continues to influence contemporary disciplinary practices, and its relationship with the past remains a subject of ongoing debate and analysis. From the moment of the colonial encounter, a particular mode of CP as discipline in Ivorian schools was a constant and recurrent experience. CP in schools as a policy problem was not rethought until the introduction of ‘CP as VAC’ policies in the early 2000s.

²³ "Dans cette Afrique placée sous le joug colonial et où l'honneur traditionnel est bafoué, l'identité du Noir reléguée au stade de la sauvagerie moyenâgeuse, un maître d'école ou un moniteur...est considérée comme une personnalité importante..."

²⁴ "L'application même du châtimeut était un point de négociation dans l'économie politique et morale de l'administration indirecte puisqu'elle était généralement confiée à un intermédiaire indigène susceptible d'interpréter la punition en l'atténuant ou en l'aggravant, voire en la détournant à son profit personnel."

4.2 Between a no more and a not yet (1944-1953)

Figure 7. Timeline 1944 – 1953



The period immediately following World War II presented a series of changing circumstances that paved the way for greater agency and power to those Ivorians who had ascended the colonial hierarchy. Wilder (2015), describes this period as a hiatus between the no more and the not yet where structures had been sufficiently shaken to allow space to envision previously unimaginable possibilities of equality. The colonising discourse of European civilising superiority and benevolence was profoundly discredited by the war as “the myth of the White man, after 4 years of carnage, came out in bad shape” ²⁵ (Désalmand, 2004, p. 14). Global demands for independence grew louder, and the overtly racist discourses and actions from French colonial authorities, became increasingly untenable within the newly formed international world order of the United Nations. As Wilder (2015) notes “It was from within this very gap between liberation and freedom, between the no longer and the not yet, that metropolitan and colonial actors sought to fashion a new postwar polity” (p. 76).

In the Brazzaville congress of 1944, the new French leaders sought to respond on the one hand to the demands of the colonised elite for a new social order whilst reassuring the French settlers that their interests would be protected. It was a tenuous position of cognitive dissonance as the new government had no intention to give

²⁵ “Le mythe du Blanc lui-même, à la suite de quatre ans de carnage, est sorti bien mal en point de l’aventure.”

independence to its colonies but at the same time, had to justify a continuation of imperialism just as some, such as Simone Weil argued that "France could not claim to deserve liberation from Nazism without recognizing that its subject populations deserved liberation from colonialism" (Wilder, 2015, p. 83).

The solution was the promise, not of decolonisation, but of a strengthening of the bonds and ties (Bouche, 2000), a union. In a first instance France increased political representation of the colonies paving the way for six African deputies to sit in the National Assembly in Paris in 1945. In 1946, the French Empire was renamed the French Union and the Guèye law gave everyone in the union the status of citizen. It was also the first time, that Metropole France contributed to the educational budget of the colonies through the creation of the "Fonds d'investissement pour le développement économique et social des territoires d'outre-mer" (FIDES) (2000, p. 14). Under this new union logic, the adaptation and distance that previously characterised schools would need to give way to an assimilation of structures to the French model.

Education was identified as a key factor in achieving this new vision. In 1944 the Education Conference of Dakar, announced that schooling needed to change from an agricultural and strictly minimal focus to a system that would "direct and accelerate the evolution of African populations" ²⁶ (Cournarie, 1945). Speeches from the ensuing meetings emphasised French benevolence once again by saying that "no one wanted more than the French settlers to see the indigenous population evolve...no one wanted more than the settlers to see them study their civilising methods" (Rose, 1946 as cited in Désalmand, 2004, p. 18). However they also argued "that Paris was not made in a day, and that it wasn't a stroke of pen that could make millions of uneducated individuals, organised and conscious citizens" ²⁷ (p.18).

A French style education therefore became the gateway that would give Africans legal access to equal status. The impetus was now towards "a copying of the French

²⁶ "L'enseignement primaire élémentaire...a pour objet essentiel d'agir sur les populations africaines en vue de diriger et d'accélérer leur évolution."

²⁷ "Nul ne désire plus que les colons voir évoluer les autochtones...Nul ne désire plus que nous les voir étudier nos méthodes de civilisés...Mais Paris ne s'est fait en un jour, et ce n'est pas d'un trait de plume que l'on peut faire de millions d'êtres, incultes tout à fait, des citoyens conscients et organisés. »

institutions so as to provoke a rapid evolution of the minds”²⁸ (Désalmand, 2004, p.32). Despite the palpable racism in this assimilatory vision, the shift was undeniably supported by the African elite who are described as those most passionately asking for assimilation into the French system (p. 79). For the local elites, fighting for an assimilation of education programmes was a proxy political fight for power. It tackled head on the old power dilemma expressed by Hardy (1929) “should the French raise an insurmountable barrier between the positions of authority, reserved for Europeans, and the positions of execution, left to the natives?”²⁹ (p.153). Paradoxically demanding assimilation with French schooling was a means of fighting a discriminatory second-tier system that kept Africans from ever reaching powerful positions. Yet at the same time demanding French schooling also legitimised its civilising discourse.

Within the new discourse of equality under the French Union identical systems and diplomas represented the only way for the African elites to ‘legally’ access decision making positions. The main changes demanded by the African elite were an immediate abolition of rural schools, the creation of a secondary school in each territory, grants for African students to study in France and a university in Dakar. Grievances denouncing rural education and inexistant pathways towards decision-making positions are expressed in a teacher survey conducted in 1944 (Chafer, 1993). The introduction of rural schools had made teachers feel downgraded to “function as educators; they were blamed by parents for the fact that school was no longer a certain means by which their children secured employment and social advancement”(p.126). Apart from losing their status within communities they also resented the fact that their European counterparts were always their superiors, and that no real pathway existed for them to join the “cadre supérieur”. They complained that their European supervisors “often arrived at the age of twenty-two or twenty-three with no, or very little, colonial experience and never having had to take a class of fifty to seventy-five pupils” (p. 70).

²⁸ “un placage des institutions française en vue de provoquer une rapide révolution des esprits.”

²⁹ “Doit-on, par exemple, élever une barrière infranchissable entre les emplois d’autorité, réservés aux Européens, et les emplois d’exécution, laissés aux indigènes ? ”

Colonialists, such as Hardy (1929) argued that these demands for assimilation were only coming from “a few vanguard indigenous parties whose desire for culture hide petty bureaucratic dreams, the ambition to find a “position” and a desire to escape their family environment” ³⁰ (p.76). By labelling them a minority, colonists argued that the wider population preferred to maintain their traditional cultures and were generally “horried” of change (Hardy, 1929, p. 77). African teachers on the other hand, suspected the colonial administration of sabotaging education with some French teachers being accused of not teaching properly to confirm that Africans were not suited for academic education. One illustrative example of this dispute is the creation of the “League against Ignorance” by Ivorian teachers in which they attempted to “expand primary education provision by creating self-help schools outside the official system and staffing them with volunteers” (Chafer, 1993, p. 145).

In these last attempts to keep a monopoly on power, some in the French administration portrayed themselves as wishing to protect the Ivoirian culture through an adapted education and having the best interest of the wider population at heart. However, for the West African elite any mention of adaptation to a local context was looked upon with extreme suspicion as an excuse or strategy to keep them in their place and anything “labelled as local or traditional was perceived as the marking an inferior product... Local education, with its special diplomas, appeared to them as a condemnable survival of the colonialist regime” ³¹ (Désalmand, 2004, p. 79). Any policy that would refer to adapting school to the Ivorian context was therefore not received by Ivorian policymakers as neutral. The original focus of the French colonial administration towards adaptation rather than assimilation together with a strategy of preserving differences as “the first condition of a well-orchestrated domination” ³² (Désalmand, 1983, p. 402) was a deeply felt injustice by the elite that progressed to the highest echelons of education. As a result, French equivalence, parity and assimilation paradoxically became an act of defiance against the colonisation project.

³⁰ “trop souvent aussi, ce désir de culture cache de pauvres rêves bureaucratiques, l’ambition de trouver une « place » et d’échapper à l’empire du milieu familial.”

³¹ “ L’étiquette « local », marquant un produit de qualité inférieure...L’enseignement local, avec ses diplômes particuliers, leur apparaît comme une survivance condamnable du régime colonialiste.”

³² “ un optimum de différence est la condition première d’une domination bien conduite. ”

Suspicion was not unwarranted as in practice things changed with difficulty. For example, the decree giving all citizens of the French Union the right to vote maintained a system that overrepresented the white population and in which only Africans having certain school diplomas could vote, "approximately 120'000 voters out of a total population of some 18 million" (Chafer, 1993, p. 61). In education, a mandate that sought to align the training of local teachers with that received in France was largely sabotaged by simply not building any training institutes. Access to secondary schools was refused several times and when it finally became available it was highly guarded by difficult entrance exams.

Desalmand (2004) notes that after the Second World War, although power remained with France "the language of the coloniser becomes less franc" (p.189). Language changed from empire to union but "colonialism starts to advance with a mask on" ³³ (p.190). An example of this changing discourse can be found in a university bulletin of 1953 which clarifies that in history classes the term "colonisation would be replaced by that of collaboration" (p.190). The minutes of the National Assembly's Commission on Overseas Territories is another setting where the emergence of a discursive mask can be observed. This was a unique space where, for the first time, the principal figures of the colonial project met with the emerging colonised elite—such as Houphouët-Boigny and Leopold Senghor—on equal grounds as members of parliament. Marker's (2015) review of the Commission's meetings finds that while African leaders insisted on discussing openly the overarching structure of racial discrimination, their French colleagues responded, "by developing new code words and rhetorical strategies that deflected accusations of systemic racism and ultimately displaced the issue of race altogether" (p.2). Marker's analysis identified that the most efficient discourses were those that framed " 'colonialist' racism as fundamentally un-French; the drive to individualize and personalize racism; and the refusal to consider anything but discrete instances of discrimination" (p.16). His analysis points to the emergence of a French colourblind approach, that continues to influence French policy today. An approach,

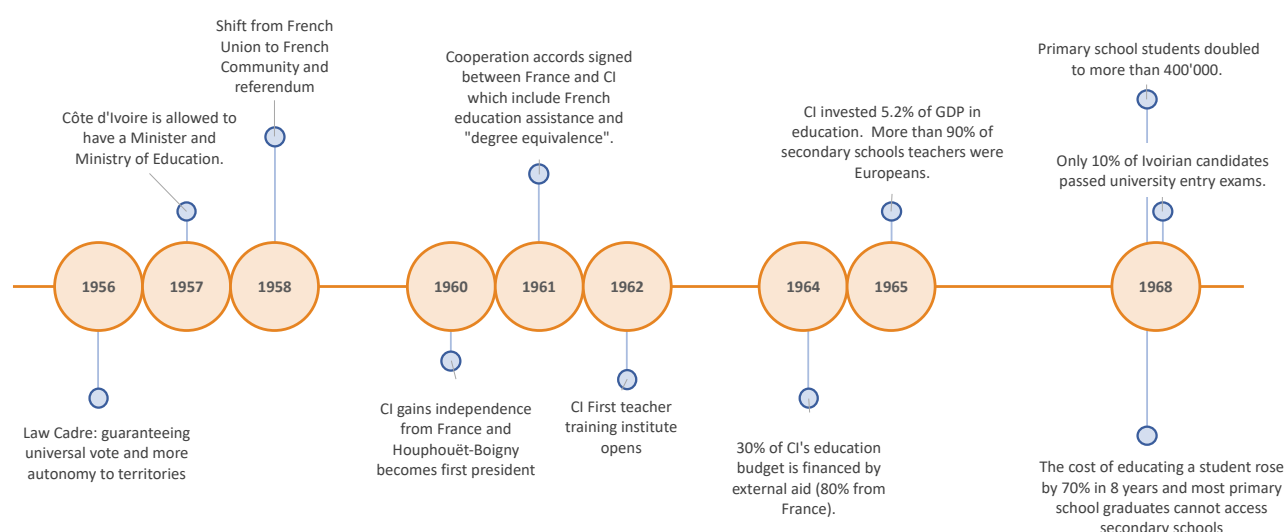
³³ "Mais c'est quand même à partir de cette époque que le colonialisme se met à avancer masqué."

that has been critiqued for overlooking the existence of structural racism and making racism a taboo subject (Caulcutt, 2023; LaBreck, 2021; Wilson, 2023).

The politicisation of external versus local culture within education, along with the strategic modifications in discourses to maintain power asymmetries, are integral components of the colonial schooling unconscious in Côte d'Ivoire. They support the idea that discussions on education policy, even in contemporary contexts, transcend mere technical debates about policy implementation. It is within this intricate colonial schooling unconscious—one that simultaneously embraced the promises of French education as a tool for progress and advocated for greater assimilation with the colonisers as a form of resistance—that the foundations of the Ivorian education system post-independence were established.

4.3 The Ivorian Miracle (1956 – 1968)

Figure 8. Timeline 1956 – 1968



By 1954, after the French defeat in Indochine change seemed inevitable. The numerous unfulfilled promises of equality became untenable for the French administration, particularly those regarding education. They struggled with a financial bottleneck where the demand and costs for a French style schooling system kept getting wider.

As more money was invested in education, so the demand for a French education increased, and this in turn generated an ever-increasing demand for more money to be spent on education. In this sense, increased expenditure on education was self-defeating, insofar as it could not hope to meet the growth in demand for education

which it was itself helping to generate... with the result that the metropole was called upon to make a virtually open-ended financial commitment. (Chafer, 1993, p. 113)

The second insurmountable financial challenge was the need to address the demand for mass education amid a severe shortage of qualified teachers. From 1957 and 1958 student enrolment surged by 50% and 40% of Ivorian teachers were new hires, the majority of whom "monitors" with only basic training (Chafer, 1993). Additionally, increasing calls for equitable compensation with French counterparts rendered the administration's practice of hiring Africans at lower wages unsustainable. The administration had been creating different hierarchical teacher categories to diffuse demands for parity of conditions, "by 1950 there were at least fifteen different categories of teacher in AOF for just 2000 teachers" (p. 133). Ultimately there was no satisfactory financial solution to pay teachers more and at the same time increase their numbers and no acceptable political solution not to do so.

As noted by Chafer (1993) the answer came largely through the adoption of the "Loi-Cadre" in 1956 which gave the territories autonomy to make their own decisions. Whilst this law is considered as a milestone of African emancipation it also became a mechanism through which the French maintained strategic power whilst resolving "an urgent need to take the French colonial administration out of the political front-line and transfer responsibility for unpopular decisions to Africans" (p.236). The French maintained control "over the pinnacle of the education system" (p.234) that is higher education, examinations and diplomas which sustained the need to teach in French. Leaving it to African leaders in charge of ensuring the organisation and running costs of primary and secondary schooling.

In Côte d'Ivoire the leading local political voice dominating this period was that of Houphouët-Boigny. He is criticised by some as a 'Francophile' too close to French interests (Amondji 1983) but many Ivorians respect his approach and success in achieving a peaceful transition of power. Whilst this is not the space to debate his actions, I would situate him as someone who during this period was betting on the side of a 'true' French Community. He was described as believing on "union with those French people of good will, incapable of betraying the civilizing mission of France, but

a true union in the absolute equality of rights and duties"³⁴ (Coulibaly, 1946 as cited in Chafer, 1993b, p. 73).

Houphouet-Boigny was fully invested in the idea of creating a true French union, where there was an absolute equality of rights. This was not a subservient vision but rather one that claimed its stake of development by recognising "the history of interdependence between metropolitan and overseas peoples and protect the latter's economic and political claims on a metropolitan society their resources and labour had helped to create" (Wilder, 2014, p. 2). Adopting a French education system and guaranteeing parity of training and working conditions with the French was a way to make the community a tangible reality.

When independence became inevitable, Houphouet-Boigny is described as achieving a negotiated independence in a spirit of friendship with the ex-coloniser. In contrast to some neighbouring countries' which advocated for radical independence, he signed the 1961 cooperation agreements with France that among other things guaranteed degree equivalence between the two countries. This quelled the deep-seated fear amongst the elite that independence would result in a second-tier education system. Leaders believed that "in binding post-independence Ivorian education to France, the country would avoid the deterioration of educational quality it had witnessed as a consequence of 'adaptation' initiatives during the 1930s" (Prosperetti, 2019, p. 7).

Houphouet-Boigny also followed through with his promise of equal pay for all African civil servants including teachers. In 1957 he, bypassed an African meeting to discuss a joint action plan and announced that Côte d'Ivoire would create parity between European and African salaries. This allowed him to consolidate political support and weaken an emerging nationalist movement taking shape within the teachers' union that advocated for a much more confrontational break from France (Chafer, 1993, p. 246). The incorporation of the educated class into a well-paid civil service became a tactical strategy through which Houphouet-Boigny neutralised any kind of opposition that could interfere with his rule.

³⁴ " Notre député est toujours pour l'union, il ne vit que pour l'union...union avec les Français de bonne volonté incapables de trahir la mission civilisatrice de la France, mais union vraie dans l'égalité absolue des droits et des devoirs..."

The period that followed independence is described as euphoric (Désalmand, 2004) in terms of expansion of education. Public primary school numbers went from 81'012 students in 1957 to 393'479 in 1970 and secondary school attendance grew from 3'393 students in 1957 to 48'022 in 1970 (p.316). In 1960, the first Minister of Education announced schooling would reach 100% of school-age children in 10 years' time. The enthusiasm was backed by resources with UNESCO reporting the investment in 1963 of 5.2% of the GDP to be "if not the largest, at least one of the highest [proportions] among African and even foreign countries" (Prosperetti, 2019, p. 7). This in part was made possible by a period of economic yearly growth of 7.5% during the 1960s (Mucie, 1973, p. 41) fuelled by an export economy.

However, the financial problems inherent to a model that copies the French education system remained intact. It made secondary schooling highly dependent on French personnel as not enough Ivorian teachers had the necessary diplomas to teach that level. The 1967 UNESCO report highlighted major bottlenecks in secondary education, noting that external aid, primarily from France, accounted for 30% of Côte d'Ivoire's education budget, covering 38% of secondary and 56% of higher education costs (Cerych, 1967). Notably, 65% of this aid funded well-paid foreign teachers, who made up nine out of ten secondary school staff.

Dependency was a double-edge sword. On the one hand it was an invaluable source of support but reliance on foreign teachers did not make economic sense. For each well-paid expatriate teacher that France subsidised through foreign aid, the Ivorian government gave France a contribution representing around 30% of the Ivorian education budget. UNESCO's report indicates that if Ivoirians were able to replace foreign teachers by Ivorian ones, they would be spending probably the same amount as they were now paying back France for each foreign teacher they sent.

their presence imposes significant costs on the Ivorian budget. Each French Technical Cooperation agent is housed at the expense of the government which, in 1965, also paid France 65,000 CFA francs per month per agent...an amount which exceeds the

*cost of employing a qualified Ivorian teacher equivalent (but which, for the moment, is not available).*³⁵ (Cerych, 1967, p. 28)

The UNESCO report concludes that the dependency on French teachers had no way of being eradicated unless the Government changed its politics of “an africanisation of personnel without a detriment to quality”³⁶ (p. 30) with quality being equated to equivalence with French diplomas. The remarks by UNESCO seem to reinforce the binary discourse that equated local to inferior and quality education to French technical assistance or at least to a similar enough copy. UNESCO's assessment is reminiscent of what the colonial administration foresaw as necessary in the Dakar Conference on colonial education in 1944:

*For African education to have a profound effect on the masses and to be an instrument of progress, it must be taught by qualified representatives of the society towards which we want to raise 'les noirs'. That is to say by teachers from France, or, at least by teachers who have suffered the deep and lasting imprint of our culture. Teachers capable of remaining in their original environment without being absorbed by it.*³⁷ (Désalmand, 2004, p. 31)

However, by the 1970s the original mantra that education must be equal to the one offered in France was showing its limitations. In 1968 the press described the fact that out of one thousand candidates who sat for the Baccalauréat exam only 10% had passed as a hecatomb that put into question the foundation of the education system (Prosperetti, 2019, p. 9). The Africanisation of the teachers was also insufficiently achieved as the French expatriate community was now double what it was before independence and held two thirds of the executive position (Mucie, 1973, p. 42).

The Minister of Education in 1967, Tanoh summarises well the historical conditions that explain the path taken until now and the need for a new approach:

³⁵ "Ainsi, chaque agent de la Coopération technique française est logé aux frais du gouvernement qui, en 1965, versait en outre à la France 65,000 francs CFA par mois par agent...montant qui dépasse le coût de l'emploi d'un enseignant ivoirien aux qualifications équivalentes (mais qui, pour l'instant, n'est pas disponible."

³⁶ "que l'africanisation du personnel enseignant ne se fasse pas au détriment de la qualité"

³⁷ "L'enseignement africain, pour avoir une action profonde sur la masse et pour être un instrument de progrès, devra être donné par les représentants qualifiés de la société vers laquelle nous voulons élever les noirs. C'est-à-dire par des maîtres de France, ou, du moins, par des maîtres ayant subi l'empreinte profonde et durable de notre culture."

*It is appropriate first of all to recognise that until now we have suffered from schooling instead of directing it. This is explained by the fact that after the colonial period we witnessed a helpful and inevitable but anarchic educational explosion, operated under the sudden pressure of needs and also under pressure, it must be said, from elected local officials or from populations who have long been frustrated with the right to education and by this very fact, impatient and thirsty to learn. The historical conditions of schooling in Cote d'Ivoire therefore explain, to a large extent, the weaknesses of our education system. These lie in the unsuitability of teaching which has unfortunately become a means of alienation and a break with the original community.*³⁸ (Mélet, 1970, p. 23)

Authorities began to recognise the limitations of their choice of seeking equivalence with France's education system. However, the difficulty of changing the complex relationship that Ivorians had with French schooling as the pathway towards progress made any reform an administrative minefield where impossible choices had to be made and where right choices could put in danger political careers. Coulibaly, a former teacher who became president of the Economic and Social Council justifies the actions taken during this period as follows:

*The new generations have not always understood the importance we give to the identity of training and diplomas... young people will understand that what they consider to be the result of alienation, was in fact, the only possible claim at that time. And that what may appear to them as a simple corporate demand was based on a fundamental requirement: the elimination of discrimination*³⁹ (Désalmand, 1983).

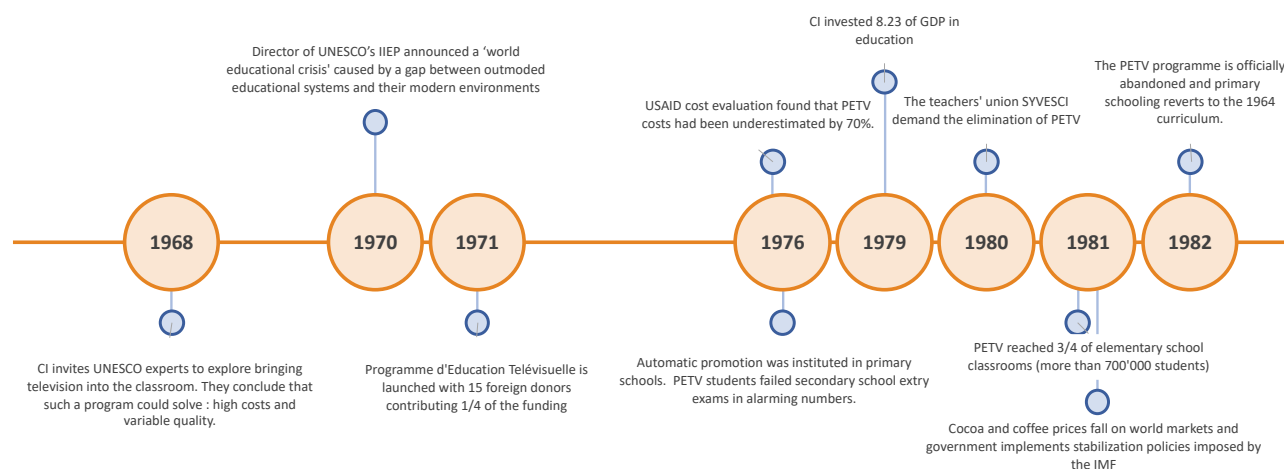
The next period under discussion will describe bold efforts by the newly independent authorities to not “suffer” from education policy but direct it through a temporary break from the colonial schooling unconscious that had driven them to copy the French system.

³⁸ "Il convient tout d'abord de reconnaître que jusque-là nous avons subi la scolarisation au lieu de la diriger« Cela s'explique par le fait qu'après la période coloniale nous avons assisté à une explosion scolaire salubre et inéluctable mais anarchique, opérée sous la pression soudaine des besoins et sous la pression aussi, il faut le dire, des élus, des responsables locaux ou de populations depuis longtemps frustrées du droit à l'instruction et par ce fait même, impatientes et assoiffées de s'instruire. Les conditions historiques de la scolarisation de la Côte d'Ivoire expliquent donc, pour une large part, les faiblesses de notre système d'éducation. Celles-ci résident dans l'inadaptation de l'enseignement devenu, hélas un moyen d'évasion et de rupture avec le milieu originel. "

³⁹ "les jeunes comprendront que ce qu'ils considèrent comme le résultat d'une aliénation, était, en fait, la seule revendication possible à ce moment-là. Et que ce qui peut leur apparaître comme une simple revendication corporative était fondé sur une exigence fondamentale : la suppression des discriminations."

4.4 From global leader to guinea pig (1968 – 1982)

Figure 9. Timeline 1968 – 1982



In October 1967 the International Conference on the World Crisis in Education brought 150 leaders to debate the idea put forth by UNESCO that there was a world crisis in education brought by a scarcity of resources and an inertia for innovating. The main problem was described as an increase in the masses' aspiration for a classical education instead of aligning their educational objectives with the development needs of societies (Coombs, 1986, p. 8). The international community, in particular UNESCO, touted technology as one of the key innovative ingredients needed to face this crisis.

Also in 1967, a UNESCO mission of specialists visited Côte d'Ivoire and concluded that bringing televisions into classrooms "could solve two of the country's biggest schooling challenges: high costs and highly variable quality. At record speed and in a radical break from their conservative stance regarding education, the Ivorian government with the international community embarked in a massive overhaul of primary schools through the "Programme d'Éducation Télévisuelle" (PETV). Though initially expensive, over the long-term PETV would lower educational costs by reducing the number of dropouts and making more efficient use of teachers" (Prosperetti, 2019, p. 11). One year later, the UNDP had accepted the project's financing proposal and a group that included the World Bank, UNESCO, UNICEF, the Ford Foundation, the French cooperation and the Government of Canada a group called the Abidjan Club financed 60% of the programme's costs its first year. IOs were excited of the potential

that televised education had to finally resolve the problem of insufficient qualified teaching personnel, but they also saw it as an opportunity to change the curriculum and educational approach without having to rely primarily on re-training teachers.

The Ivorian government saw it as an answer to two of its most pressing problems, school attendance rates and costs. It had reason to be excited as the initial forecasting estimated that PETV would allow the Government to reach 100% schooling rate by 1983 (Prosperetti, 2019, p. 11) and even some in UNESCO calculated that "one year of PETV instruction was equivalent to 1.44 years of conventional schooling" (p.16).

Tanoh, the Minister of Education re-assured the government as he included PETV into the education plan by saying:

The technical and pedagogical elements that need to be implemented have been costed with extreme precision, ...The cost of this program is compatible with the financial envelopes proposed by the education framework bill... On the other hand, the cost per student,... will be notable lower in the future, thanks to the improvements in teaching⁴⁰
(Pauvert & Egly, 2001, p. 41)

In 1969, a teacher training institute for televised education was created along with a production centre in Bouaké. In 1971, the first cohort of 20,500 students were learning under this new curriculum. Only ten years later in 1981 PETV reached 68% of the primary school population. But in 1982, the Government made a rapid decision to close the programme and revert to the traditional curriculum. The reasons behind this dramatic pivot are already well documented elsewhere (Désalmand, 1986; Pauvert & Egly, 2001; Prosperetti, 2019). However, I will briefly summarise the main causes as they are part of the schooling unconscious that can inform interactions between policymakers today.

Firstly, the programme did not fulfil its promise of reducing schooling costs. The price of replacing televisions by higher performing sets, replacing batteries more often than estimated and fixing faulty equipment meant that a student taught by PETV was one third more expensive than a traditional student. A USAID cost analysis in 1976 found

⁴⁰ "Les moyens techniques et pédagogiques à mettre en œuvre ont été chiffrés avec une extrême précision...Le coût de ce programme d'action est compatible avec les enveloppes financières proposées par le projet de loi-cadre d'éducation...D'autre part, le coût par élève...pourra être abaissé dans des proportions notables, grâce à l'amélioration de l'enseignement."

that the original planning study, which was nevertheless described as excellent, had underestimated the actual cost of the PETV by 70% (Prosperetti, 2019, p. 20). These unforeseen costs were piling up while the government was stepping into an economic crisis and as the initial excitement of donors was waning off. By 1975 international donors were only contributing to 16% of the programme's total cost and as Mucie's World Bank report notes "yearly costs for the maintenance and servicing of receivers run to nearly \$1,300,000, or twice the amount budgeted by the Government" (Mucie, 1973, p. 49).

A second reason for its failure lay in the way it was implemented: too rapidly, without sufficient buy-in from important stakeholders and with an external perspective that did not take into consideration what local users considered as important. Those developing the new pedagogical curriculum, "48 were French, nine were Canadian, and one was Belgian. The Ivorians hold the technical positions - light men, sound men, camera men - while the foreigners write most of the scripts, and direct" (p.55). Whilst a government commission to provide oversight of the televised material was set up it did not start running until 1973, two years after the televised programming had started (Leborgne-Tahiri, 2002, p. 6). The material was criticised as being stereotypical, incoherent and inferior to what was taught in traditional classes. One consequence of this external perspective is the decision to focus on the acquisition of oral rather than written French. A more localised approach would have engaged with parents' views that school is the place where children primarily go to learn to read and write.

The parents who had attended the colonial school had received training whose success was primarily due to their performance in spelling and written expression. They had great difficulty understanding that what had been presented to them as primordial had suddenly become secondary. More than one of them must have even thought that we were once again returning to a cheap form of education.⁴¹ (Désalmand, 2004, p. 350)

An external evaluation of the programme conducted warned that their survey indicated very strong resistance from both teachers and parents since they were

⁴¹ "Les parents des élèves passés par l'école coloniale reçurent donc une formation dont la réussite tenait d'abord aux performances en orthographe et en expression écrite. Ils eurent beaucoup de peine à comprendre que ce qui leur avait été présenté comme primordial fût brusquement devenu secondaire. Plus d'un parmi eux dut même penser qu'on en revenait une fois de plus à une forme d'enseignement au rabais."

primarily “worried to see their children begin learning to write as early as possible” (Grisay, 1978, p. 44) and recommended an information campaign was needed. One final element to note was that PETV also did away with examinations between primary school grade levels and automatically passed students (Mucie, 1973, p. 48). This eliminated the sunken costs of children repeating grades and increased school enrolment however the problem was transferred to the moment in which children still had to pass an exam to access secondary schools and school places continued to be limited. As the first cohort of PETV students reached this point Désalmand (2004) notes that their “education had ill-prepared them for the secondary school entry exams, failed them in alarming numbers” (p.344).

The changes also had a perverse effect on many teachers as they felt that they had lost their authority and purpose and that televisions devalued their position in society. Examinations in fact allowed them to see the fruit of their efforts and they were proud when students successfully passed. However, with the introduction of the new formula, teachers found that their efforts in conducting classes did not affect the outcomes. The presence of students who were not adequately prepared at the beginning of the year contributed to their discouragement (p.345).

Whilst pragmatically there are positive and innovative elements to be highlighted of the PETV experience what is clear is that despite these, a large-scale rejection of the programme was expressed by Ivorians. So much, that the investment was swiftly cancelled when pressure and dissatisfaction were perceived as too high. Désalmand summarises the experience as “too expensive, too foreign to Ivorian society, too heavy, implemented with too much haste, educating children to a model that parents did not appreciate and poorly known to the public” (2004, p. 352). However, he also acknowledges that the Ivorian government were “the only ones to have dared” (p.352) embark in such an ambitious project.

In parallel to the rapid implementation of PETV a less extravagant but just as ambitious reform project was being discussed. The “Loi de Réforme de l'Enseignement” was an effort to finally change the French styled structure and shift to a system more in-synch with the Ivorian context. The reform looked to create a longer schooling foundation of 9 years after which students would be able to access the

labour market with more competencies or progress towards technically oriented higher level of studies. This policy was debated extensively by all stakeholders but despite the law being adopted in 1977 by Parliament it never came into effect. The economic crises of the 1980s made the investments needed to change the system no longer feasible and it is also likely that the administrations' risk tolerance had diminished as the PETV experience was not turning out as expected. This home-grown reform that despite being ratified never saw the light of day is still often referenced as the only true national educational project by those that criticise the government of being too dependent on foreign influences (Désalmand, 1986, p. 135).

What resulted from these two enormous efforts was a return to an inadequate system marred with the same financial problems and social dissatisfaction. Historically we are also now reaching the end of what Assy (2003) identifies as the period of the Ivorian miracle and entering a period of economic crisis and financial restructuring.

The experience of daring and failing is also part of the schooling unconscious of Ivorian educational policymakers. Prosperetti describes the sentiment shifting from that of " 'global leader' to 'guinea pig'" (2019, p. 23). From the policymakers' perspective there was disappointment and a realisation that international support wanes after initial excitement, and that drastic changes can result in a loss of political capital. For communities, it reinforced the view that foreign initiatives were profiting and steering them away from obtaining the economic capital that diplomas continued to withhold.

PETV is also part of the schooling unconscious of international education experts. Although one can argue that given the mobility of individuals within these institutions there is less of a lasting impact from these experiences. However, PETV's failure had a negative impact especially on UNESCO's reputation as it:

represented the culmination of twenty years of research and the work of hundreds of the world's most qualified specialists. UNESCO's enormous gamble tarnished its brand of 'expertise', forcing its abdication of the politics of developing-world educational initiatives. (Prosperetti, 2019, p. 22)

A group of former UNESCO employees who were actively involved in PETV wrote a retrospective report 20 years after the programme's closure. In it, they defend the

programme and argue against the claims made of the inaccuracy of its cost (attributing this to an increase in teachers' salaries) or the foreignness of its content. They suggest that its demise was largely driven by a hostile fear and resistance to innovation by Ivorian society:

If the hostile opinion to the project is mentioned here, it is not so much in the aim of emphasizing its importance, but above all in order to draw attention, in this chapter devoted to "elements for reflection", to the negative irrational factors which always accompany innovative companies⁴². (Pauvert & Egly, 2001, p. 39)

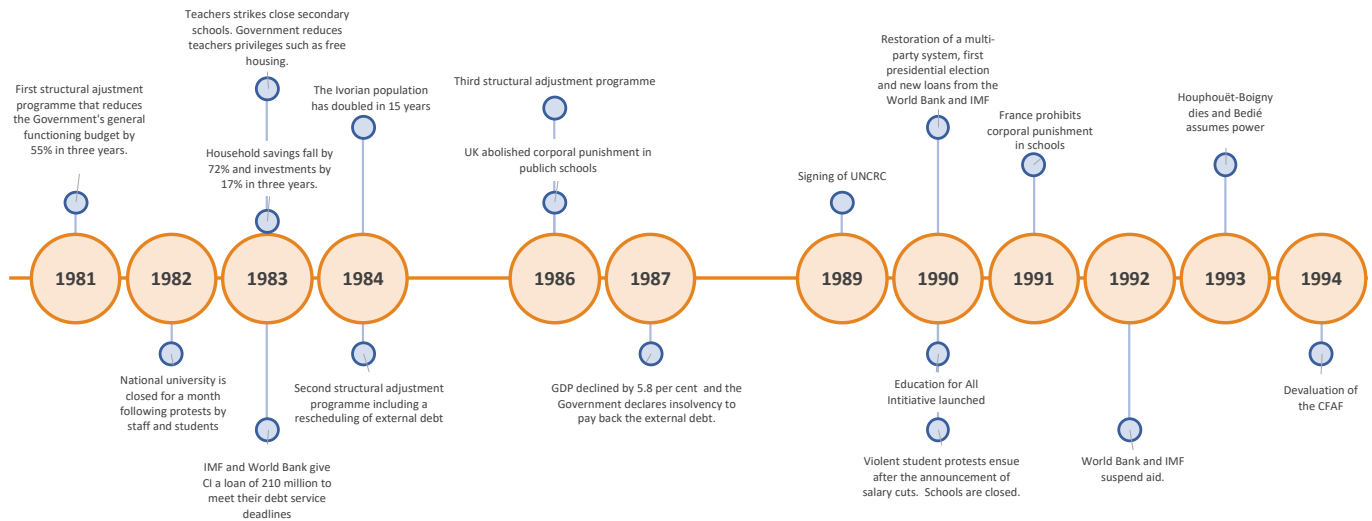
The discourse mobilised by former employees of UNESCO portrays the failure of the programme as caused by its innovative or progressive nature. There is also tendency in their paper to interpret local resistance to what was internationally considered as innovative as an unfair or a misjudged rejection. It labels the reception of the policy by the context as "hostile" and "fantasist" (p.39) rather than as a legitimate critique of a faulty or decontextualized implementation.

Ultimately, whilst the French colonial education project no longer existed, foreign influence was still exerted through different forms and structures. Decision-making on the ultimate aims of education, its content and modalities were still swayed by external ideas, funds and actions albeit through different discourses. Nationally, education choices were still constrained by the budgetary limitations, political pressures and the schooling unconscious leftover from the colonial experience. PETV as one of the first development initiatives in education since Ivorian independence adds to the schooling unconscious. Through its enactment a discourse that framed local concerns as unfounded or going against an innovative progressive objective were mobilised. Local resistance was pathologised, and there was a shift in blame onto the local population rather than addressing potential flaws of the policy enactment.

⁴² "Si l'opinion hostile au projet est évoquée ici, ce n'est pas tant dans le but d'en souligner l'importance, mais surtout afin d'appeler l'attention, dans ce chapitre consacré aux "éléments de réflexion", sur les facteurs irrationnels négatifs qui accompagnent toujours les entreprises novatrices."

4.5 Financial and political unravelling (1981 – 1994)

Figure 10. Timeline 1981 - 1994



The 1980s represented an exciting and ambitious decade for the international children's rights movement. Notably, France and the UK abolished CP in state schools, the Convention was signed in 1989 and there was a global declaration to achieve education for all. Conversely, for many countries including Côte d'Ivoire, the 1980s marked a period of financial, political and social unravelling. Transitioning from an economic miracle, the Ivorian system enters a phase of disillusionment (Assy, 2003, p. 437) or of "*Auzrodi, y'a drap*" which translates to "the beginning of the end" (Bailly, 1995, p. 35). By 1994, the GDP per capita had halved, real GDP growth reduced by 15%, the Ivorian population increased by 70%, the currency was devalued by 50% (World Bank, 1999, p. 7), public debt was at 219% of GDP (Saungwem et al., 2023, p. 66), primary school enrolment decreased (Proteau, 1996, p. 56) and Ivorians were mourning the loss of 'the father' of the nation, Houphouët-Boigny. This period also saw new international actors, such as the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) dominate all aspects of policy, including education.

Since independence the Ivorian government had relied on economic growth to cover public expenditure. However, this changed when the prices of coffee and cocoa became unstable. By 1980 the government was heavily indebted, prompting the IMF and WB to intervene with two loans in 1981. What followed was a back and forth of structural conditions attached to these and subsequent loans, impacting the

relationship between the Ivorian government and teachers, students and families as their purchasing power plummeted. I will not argue on the appropriateness of these conditionalities as extensive analysis and criticisms already exist (Berg et al., 1999a; Echimane & Niamkey, 1988; Ngaladjo et al., 1992). Instead, what is relevant to this study is to see how the enactments of these externally driven education policies impacted how education actors of the middle space related to each other.

During this period the modalities of external influence continue to shift away from using a physical presence to more indirect forms of power. For example, the number of French technical advisors, particularly teachers, drastically diminished. A WB report looking back at the impact of their support to Côte d'Ivoire congratulates itself in shifting this pattern when it says:

In those years, one could find almost no locals in the position of advisers; France provided most advisers in this prestructural adjustment period, when the Bretton Woods institutions were absent. ... this situation put French TA in a particularly influential position; dialogue between donors and the government was filtered to a significant extent through the screen of French technicians. (Berg et al., 1999b, p. 12)

Despite a reduced physical presence, external influence and power remained significant. Côte d'Ivoire went from receiving between 200 to 300 million USD per year in official development assistance (ODA) in the mid 1970s to a peak of 1.8 billion USD in 1994 (Berg et al., 1999b, p. 10). Over time, the focus of aid shifted from sectoral project support to broader political and economic reforms, such as market liberalisation and budget restructuring. Even if policies were enacted by local faces, they were strongly regulated by conditions which were primarily based on theories of the Bretton Woods institutions.

Outside technical influence remains strong, though its origins have shifted. In the era of structural adjustment, the IMF and the World Bank have become powerful advisers to the government. The Bretton Woods institutions' advice is built on an analytical and technical foundation that is usually very impressive, and hence influential in all circles, including that of local technical advisers. Little analytical and technical work is conducted by locals that is not subject to the intellectual influence of the Bretton Woods institutions. But while ideas in general and of reform ideas in particular

continue to be externally generated, local counterparts are more and more equipped with a capacity to develop homegrown reform ideas, and able to engage in real dialogue with their aid partners. (Berg et al., 1999b, p. 13)

The previous quote illustrates how the discourse of foreign expertise and superiority continues to shift. At this point there is almost a dissonance at play where foreign influence in the form of technical expertise is held to high regard but also moderated by a mention of local ownership and real dialogue. This corresponds with what Abrahamsen (2004) identifies as the development sector's move towards maintaining power under the guise of "partnerships" in which desired international reforms are portrayed as owned by countries themselves. It also alludes to Lie's concept of "developmentality" as a form of power used in donor-recipient relationships that is more "indirect, subtle and tacit kind of power than the previous direct coercion" (2015, p. 1) but that maintains power asymmetries. Thirdly it also coincides with the shift that Désalmand noted began after the Brazzaville Conference in 1944, where external power to make decisions is masked, becoming less explicit and passing hard implementation responsibilities to local policymakers despite maintaining high-level control.

The unresolved colonial unconscious persists in this masked approach. External actors often validate their proposals as rational and beneficial to locals, attributing any rejection or failure to a lack of local capacity or resistance to change. For instance, the WB attributes the origins of the country's financial woes to inappropriate expansionist policies fuelled by a climate of generalised euphoria (1999, p. ix). Their narrative downplays the impact of external chocs and structural constraints such as the currency's fixed parity with the French franc or the rise of the dollar. It also highlights that the Bank cautioned the Ivorian authorities about the overly ambitious nature of their public investment program. However, they argue that this warning was not well-received, with Côte d'Ivoire dismissing the Bank's concerns as excessively pessimistic (1999, p. xv). The Bank also acknowledged that, without the leverage provided by their loans, they lacked the means to compel the Ivorian government to heed their warnings, admitting they "did not sound the alarm sign with a lot of energy" (1999, p. xv). A lack of collaboration beyond conditionalities is not readily explored and there is

limited acknowledgement of the value in engaging with Ivorian's perspectives as a useful approach to build partnerships.

On the other hand, we also see that national actors' push-back and demand a genuine partnership akin to that of Houphouët-Boigny's desire to form a true union post-colonisation. National actors continue to navigate the power asymmetries and refuse to view themselves as passive players. An example is the Ivorian government's response to the WB's report "CI Revue de l'aide de la Banque mondiale au pays" in which it criticises the report for not acknowledging their active role. In its official comments the government noted:

*the Report presents CI in a rather unfavorable light... All the measures appear as decided or supported from the outside, the Government appearing as passive in the definition of the measures, or as an obstacle to change ... In the area of economic policy, only documents co-signed by donors are mentioned. No mention is made of the documents designed by the authorities...*⁴³ (1999, p. 79)

While one could dismiss this comment as oversensitivity to criticism, it also represents a demand to be recognised as a full and active player in the decision-making process during a challenging period. They criticise the report for not adequately acknowledging that the implementation of all these decisions were enacted by the Ivorian government and not without real consequences to the regime's stability and to the social conditions of the Ivorian population. This reaction exemplifies how the government identifies and responds to the disconnect between the development discourse of partnership and the concrete actions taken by IOs and it also highlights a sensitivity towards a discourse insinuating foreign superiority. The WB's report is perceived as portraying the Ivorian government as passive, dependent on external guidance, and incapable of making effective decisions without external intervention.

The Bretton Woods reforms focused largely on reducing public spending as a means of stabilising the Ivorian economy as it was thought this was primarily a temporary liquidity crisis (Truman, 2020). Teachers who had been able to maintain their

⁴³ "Toutefois, le Rapport présente la CI sous un jour assez défavorable... Toutes les mesures apparaissent comme décidées ou appuyées par l'extérieur, le Gouvernement apparaissant comme passif dans la définition des mesures, ou comme un obstacle au changement... Il n'est fait mention dans le domaine de la politique économique, que des documents co-signés par les bailleurs. Aucune mention n'est faite des documents conçus par les autorités..."

privileges in previous attempts to reduce salaries were no longer excluded from such cuts. As part of the first set of structural reforms the government announced it was taking away teachers' right to free housing.

The SYNESCI, the secondary teachers' union, decried the measure, particularly the humiliating effects of teachers having to leave their homes and the devalorisation of their profession. When the SYNESCI decided to go on strike it provoked a presidential decree that closed schools, outlawed the union, and threatened to fire and put teachers in jail. The president was steadfast in his decision indicating he was committed to the cut despite it being part of a structural adjustment conditionality. He was vehemently offended by the teachers' demands and publicly portrayed them as being ungrateful children who had for a long time benefitted from unduly generous salaries and who now in time of need refused to do their patriotic duty (Daddieh, 1988; Proteau, 1996, p. 156). The words used by the president to describe teachers are reminiscent to a father scolding his children and are still remembered by teachers today for their harshness as they were described as "selfish, without value and stupid" (Proteau, 1996, p. 160).

After the strike ended, the president adopted a more conciliatory tone and publicly forgave teachers for their momentarily misguided choices. However, the education policies that followed were directed on maintaining control through a focus on teaching patriotic values in schools and the implementation of a new school discipline called "Civics and Morality". The "Nouvelle Ecole Ivoirien" intended to keep youth in check by teaching respect to authority and by obliging teachers to follow strict party lines. School directors were tasked with keeping their teachers from become subversive agents influenced by external actors.

An interesting development of this period is that policies linked to patriotism and control made in the name of unity and cohesion are commonly described as 'Ivoirian' in nature. For example, the Minister of Education Keita told unions that they were welcomed to express their grievances but through 'Ivorian' style dialogues where "everyone could freely express the problems of the education system but without overriding the hierarchy in roles" (Proteau, 1996b, p. 172). An 'Ivorian' style of debate would respect the delimitations of authority figures in contrast to externally influenced

approaches that are disrespectful and lead to violence. In contrast confrontational dissent was attributed to foreign influences.

In this new era of growing opposition the word 'Ivorian' in contrast to that which is foreign is equated to respecting authority. As authority is being challenged and instability is a risk, the discourse of authority as part of the Ivorian culture is mobilised to keep people in line. Proteau (1996) argues that this view of authority is characteristic of the political sentiment of the time in which "any challenge is seen as a total subversion not only of the State but also of civil society, or rather, any attack on political authority is an attack on authority in general, that of parents over children, elders over the cadets, men over women"⁴⁴ (p.183). This use of the adjective Ivorian to describe respect for authority is reminiscent to the often-evoked difference between African and European children's' position vis a vis authority of elders. It also contributes to the discursive imagination of obeying authority as traditionally African.

In 1987, despite two rounds of structural adjustment policies the government defaulted on its debt payments and declared insolvency. It was no longer able to play its role of a generous provider and had to find new ways to exert its authority and control. In 1990, as a response to the negotiations for a fourth structural adjustment package the Minister of Finance announced cuts to government employees' salaries of 15 to 45% (p.100). University and high school students alongside teachers protested against the reduction in salaries, elimination of scholarships and in favour of instituting a multi-party system. Around 100 of them were detained and protests spread to other sectors of the civil service. This time despite threats from authorities the strikes continued, and the 1989-1990 school year was declared invalid (Bailly, 1995). As violence increased the IOs pushing these plans backtracked and told the government it should back down from its plans citing it had been "too hastily prepared" (p.81) and not sufficiently well-explained to the population. This despite two years earlier warning the government that "hard decisions on education policy should not be postponed" and that "although undoubtedly painful and politically difficult, adjustment policies would alleviate the

⁴⁴ "La contestation est perçue comme une subversion totale non seulement de l'Etat mais également de la société civile, ou plutôt, toute atteinte à l'autorité politique est une atteinte à l'autorité en généra~ celle des parents sur les enfants, des aînés sur les cadets."

burden of education and training on public budgets" (World Bank, 1988, p. 2).

Commentators from the time say the government was in disarray by this change of heart by international actors and were so "troubled by the remarks of their Western partners, that the Ivorian authorities no longer knew to which saint to turn to"⁴⁵ (Bailly, 1995, p. 81).

To restore order and peace, the government postponed its plans and accepted to conduct elections as a "survival strategy". To reassure international agencies it brought Alassane Ouattara, former IMF employee as leading the stabilisation and economic recovery programme. Once Houphouët-Boigny won the elections in October 1990, he named Ouattara Prime Minister. With re-established control and a new-found closeness to the Bretton Woods institutions through a government known as the "IMF boys" (Almas, 2007, p. 18) the conditions negotiated during this tense period are put into action at the beginning of the 1990-91 school year. These include the introduction of school fees, a freeze in teacher salaries, all new recruits hired at half the amount of previous salaries, a simplification of primary school programmes and a tighter selection into secondary and tertiary levels of education. Dissatisfaction and violent protests continued. Student politics were reinforced and became strongly linked to the political opposition forces.

In what seems like a different universe far away from the new multi-party process, the reduction in teacher salaries and the mounting political violence, an international conference in Jomtien mobilised the world to pledge to achieve education for all (EFA). In response, Côte d'Ivoire adopted a National Education Plan for All in 1992 announcing commitment to achieve a 90% gross enrolment rate. The Education for All movement or "brand" (Osttveit, 2014) was launched by UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank, UNDP and UNPF. Its Secretary General Osttveit (2014) refers to it as visionary and agenda setting.

The initiative was accompanied by a large monitoring apparatus needed to track EFA commitments. For example, one of the first indicators of success of the initiative was the number of countries that would create a government coordination committee and

⁴⁵ "Troublées par les remarques de leurs partenaires occidentaux, les autorités ivoiriennes ne savent plus à quel saint se vouer. "

an EFA branded plan with measurable indicators. In 1991 UNESCO organised in Abidjan an intensive training for civil servants of the region to teach them how to develop 'Education for All' projects using the process and language needed to adequately present plans to donors and secure EFA funding as international funding was mobilised to "help least developed countries implement their self-sustaining action plans they would have defined by themselves according to the broader perspective of basic education for all" (Damiba et al., 1991, p. 1).

This training activity and language is representative of a new modality of interaction between international and national education policymakers. Firstly, the long-held Ivorian goal of massification of education, criticised by the Bretton Woods institutions as overly ambitious, is rediscovered in international driven frameworks. Secondly Ivorian education middle space is trained to master and adopt the methods and language that respond to internationally specified objects to access funds that are reserved towards those frameworks. All the while these initiatives are described as "self" owned, sustained and defined. These actions are an example of a growing number of new technologies of power that are introduced as IOs gain a larger imprint in educational policies and as the national government becomes highly dependent on external funds to run its education system. Post-development authors identify this discourse of participation as a continuation of a colonial discourse that maintains foreign control, "rather than being coercive and restraining, this new modality of power is productive in working through, not over, the presumably subaltern recipients. This enables the donor institution to retain control and influence over the formulation and implementation of the policies it finances" (Lie, 2015, p. 235).

However, these new modalities are suddenly disrupted with the death of Houphouët-Boigny on December 7, 1993, ending his nearly 40-year leadership. Bailly (1995) suggests that Houphouët-Boigny's symbolic death had occurred earlier, during the violent protests in 1990. He notes that it was amid demands for a multi-party system that he lost his authority as "father of the nation". Memel-Fotê identifies this violent step towards democracy as a moment that disrupted and destabilised the Ivorian concept of authority.

*The father...we don't look him in the eyes; we do not speak to him out loud. He is barely even named. Suddenly, the parricide candidate looks him in the eyes, names him, speaks to him with insolence.*⁴⁶ (Memel-Fotê, 1991, p. 11)

These words echo Dadié's description of the 'traditional' way of reacting to CP by fleeing and not defying. That traditional sense of respect for authority seems broken at this moment and this loss also permeated to many other levels of society such as families and schools. For teachers, this erosion was gradual. Their authority diminished when automatic student promotion made their role feel redundant; when shrinking salaries prevented them from fulfilling communal obligations or maintaining higher-status housing; when the president publicly denounced them as ungrateful; and most significantly, when they ceased to be the gatekeepers of diplomas that once guaranteed social and economic mobility.

*We are thus witnessing a questioning of meaning, a clear crisis of values and the violence calls into question the professional identity of teachers: their self-image is deteriorating. There is a loss of clarity of the profession and the missions entrusted to the school are in reality impossible to carry out. As a result, there is a loss of confidence in the symbolic authority of the teacher*⁴⁷ (Vanga et al., 2006, p. 4)

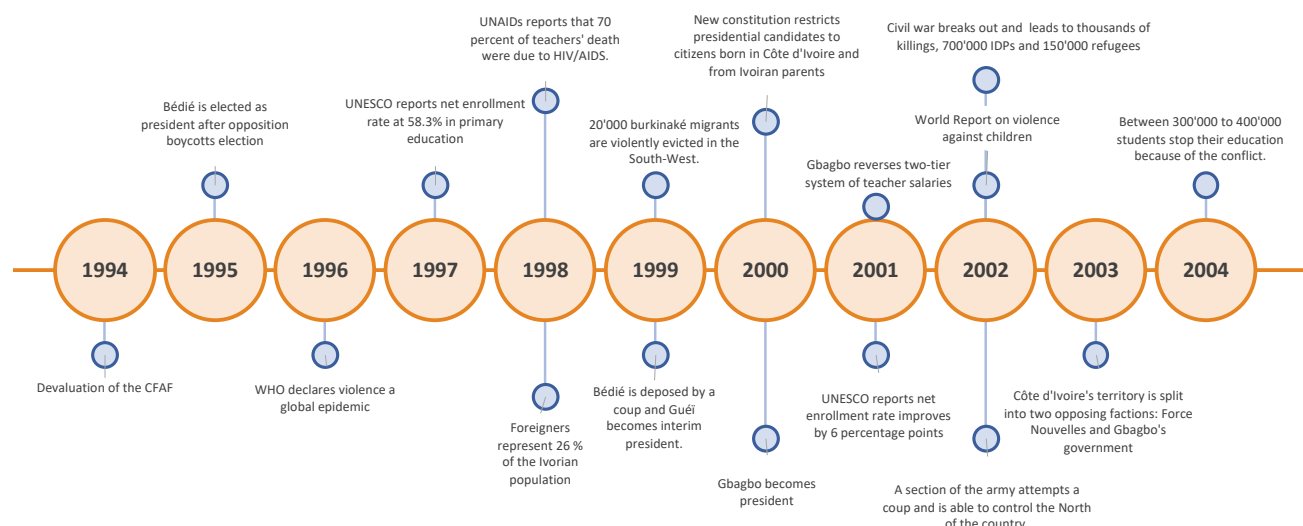
This period also illustrates strong discrepancies between the international ambitions brought forth by EFA and the Convention and the dire state of Ivorian education system. While the authority and status of Ivorian teachers is at its lowest point, international discourses of children's rights are introducing radically new ways of defining teachers and students' relationships. Secondly, the new international impetus to achieve education for all seems strongly at odds with the Ivorian political reality where this ambitious objective has fallen from the government's agenda for the first time.

⁴⁶ " Le père...on ne le regarde pas dans les yeux on ne lui parle pas haute voix est peine si on le nomme un coup voilà que le candidat au parricide le regarde dans les yeux le nomme lui parle avec insolence Il destruction de image et de la distance il démythification et désacralisation..."

⁴⁷ " L'on assiste, ainsi, à une remise en cause du sens, à une crise affirmée des valeurs et la violence remet en cause l'identité professionnelle des enseignants : leur image de soi se dégrade. Il y a une perte de lisibilité du métier et les missions confiées à l'école sont en réalité impossibles à réaliser. Comme résultat, il y a la perte de confiance en l'autorité symbolique de l'enseignant"

4.6 Projectisation, schools' broken promise and civil war (1994 – 2004)

Figure 11. Timeline 1994 – 2004



In January 1994, a month after the death of Houphouët-Boigny the West African Franc was devaluated by Prime Minister Ouattara before leaving the government. Soon after the devaluation, international funds restarted with for example 80 percent of the WB's \$360 million credit being disbursed in 1994. Throughout President Bédié's two terms in office, his administration was dependent on foreign aid and his tenures in office were characterised by a bustle of aid agreements, plans, projects and programmes.

The Cote d'Ivoire is one of the most "reformed" countries on earth...Between 1980 and 1998 the RCI signed 9 agreements with the IMF and received 22 policy loans from the World Bank... Between 1994 and 1997 the RCI was the World Bank's main policy reform customer...It is hard to think of a single major policy area, sector or institution that has not engaged in some reform operations. (Berg et al., 1999b, p. 69)

In the education sector, the WB's Human Resources Development Project focused primarily on reducing salary expenditures and reallocating resources toward primary education. UNICEF was the donor supervising the National Education Plan for All, which mobilised funds to early childhood education and girls' education. Some of its main achievements were the free distribution of school manuals from 1994 to 1997.

The World Food programme helped to increase the number of school cafeterias by 30% (Odounfa, 2003 p.7).

The Ministry also worked on a new education reform which was written into law N° 95-696 in 1995. Odounfa in her 2003 report to UNESCO describes the UN agencies and donors as the sources of encouragement for the government's revision of the education law (2003, p. 3). The influence and priorities of donors are evident with for example a non-discrimination framework attending to UNICEF's concerns for gender parity and the conditions of a "reasonable partnership" (p.3) between the private sector responding to the financial institutions' concerns over expenses. Lanoue (2004) presents a different perspective of international involvement, stating that financial aid was contingent upon the restructuring of the education system. This restructuring limited the state's autonomy in educational matters by imposing new standards, including the transfer of the education sector to private 'partners' (p.95).

A WB case study to analyse the effectiveness of aid given to Côte d'Ivoire states that education reforms were focused on "donor preoccupations much more than local. The specific reforms were crafted mainly by donor staff, who also acted as their chief champions" (Berg et al., 1999b, p. 48) and described the relationship between international donors and the government as a "bruising experience" (p.83) on both sides. On the one hand government is reported as perceiving IOs as "peopled by an arrogant staff, ideologically motivated, poor at assessing institutional conditions and constraints" (p.83) and international actors believing "suspect promotion of private interests and corrupt inclinations lie behind reform postures" (p.83). Power however was still strongly on the side of donors as the financial position of government remained tenuous with payment of debts absorbing 42% of expenditures. In February 2000 the WB refused to start a new aid programme because of a missed debt service payment (Country Information and Policy Unit, 2000, p. 9).

Tensions persist between external educational reforms and the priorities of the end users of education. For example, donors' desire to move expenses towards basic education was not shared by national education actors as the explosive figures in higher education were something that needed attention as university students had proven to be a volatile population that could affect the country's stability. So whilst

the shift was included within plans it did not happen and actually expenses to primary education as a percentage of the total education fell from 52% to 47% between 1991 and 1995 and primary gross enrolment rates fell by 7 percentage points (World Bank, 1999, p. 45). Unit cost of higher education did fall during this period but this was due to an explosive increment in the number of students and not because of a government re-direction of funds (p.45). So, despite international demands being enshrined in government processes, national actors were still able to resist them.

4.6.1. School as a social sacrifice and its broken promise

Because social mobility through secondary and higher education was integrated into “the social imagination of parents and had become the object of a 'social sacrifice'”⁴⁸ (Guth, 1990, p. 81), any efforts to reduce investment away from these higher levels were hard to accept. A clear example of clashes between social priorities for education and externally influenced policies is the quality impetus that the Minister of Education, Kipré gave to his time in office. The bottlenecks that had plagued the Ivorian system since its inception made secondary school a very selective process that relied heavily on exams that left most candidates out of the path to ever higher certifications that could be transformed into paid employment. As explained by Lanoue (2004), families had devised a series of strategies to keep their children in the schooling path at whatever cost. One of the most common ones was the parallel recruitment into secondary schools. When a student did not pass the entrance exam, parents who could not afford a private establishment would pay the head teacher to accept their child into the school ‘in parallel’ to the normal cohort. A student could attend classes although they were not officially registered and could also present the next two defining exams (p.97). Strategies to pass these exams included the buying of tests or of diplomas and these practices became so notorious that at one point France and other African countries no longer accepted Ivorian educational titles. Kipré took action in 1994 by securing with a heavy police force the examination centres and in that year only 7.8% of candidates passed their exam. The still remembered “Bac Kipré” was welcomed in the international circles and Ivorian diplomas were once again accepted

⁴⁸ “L’institution scolaire s’intègre dans l’imaginaire social des parents et devient l’objet d’un « sacrifice social » ”

but locally parents and students were outraged as “never had a minister ruined students and parents’ chance of obtaining their coveted titles to this extent” ⁴⁹ (p.99).

Families placed enormous faith in the promises linked to school diplomas. For instance, Ivorian parents at the time expressed that “school was like a religion that you have to have faith in and it is a major asset for success!” ⁵⁰ (Proteau, 2002, p. 211). Especially in an environment where everything could be negotiated and mobilising resources or networks was commonly used to obtain important goods, families were extending these same strategies to the education field. Lanoue notes that more than academic capacities “it was the lack of social and political capacities which was perceived as the factor of non-success” (2004, p. 104) in school. For those who could not mobilise economic resources, magic could also be evoked. For example, in Proteau's (2002) analysis of schooling trajectories he identifies that failing exams was often attributed to magic curses from jealous family members.

*For young wizards my age, when we go to school, they are happy to see us but deep down they are not happy. We will succeed and they will be unemployed. To be on an equal footing they prefer to cast a spell on us so that we fail in our studies*⁵¹ (p.190).

The paradox of a highly selective school system, a faith like desire to advance towards higher level diplomas and a rejection of policies that would favour primary levels of education is better understood in its historical and cultural context. Regrettably because communities adopted the technology of domination of school diplomas, they also lived its unfulfilled promises. Sending children to school since colonial times represented a departure from traditional structures. However, as communities began using schooling for social mobility, this decision still maintained the communities' imprint since sending children to school was a communal effort that mobilised family resources or networks. The benefits of a child's success in school were also reciprocated into communities through diverse duties and obligations from family members who were employed in the cities. However, when the link between studying

⁴⁹ " De mémoire d'Ivoirien, jamais un ministre n'avait à ce point «spolié» les élèves et leurs parents de titres tant convoités. "

⁵⁰ "L'école c'est comme une religion, il faut y mettre la foi ! C'est un atout majeur pour réussir !"

⁵¹ "Pour les jeunes sorciers de mon âge, lorsque nous allons à l'école, ils sont contents de nous voir mais au fond ils ne sont pas contents, nous allons réussir et eux vont chômer. Pour être sur un pied d'égalité ils préfèrent nous lancer un sort afin qu'on échoue dans nos études."

and employment broke or when those that had obtained paid employment had their salaries slashed during the economic crisis this community link became fragile. The same occurred when students were not able to successfully pass their exams and had to return to work in the fields.

The child's entry into the school world cuts ties with the sacred daily life of the village as well as with customary educational institutions. It is therefore a true "gift without return" that parents make by letting their child join the educational institution; however the presence of dropouts in the village shows that the gift was incomplete, that the sacrifice was not consummated. Integration into the educational institution was incomplete, but so was integration into the village. ⁵² (Guth, 1990, p. 81)

As the pillars and promises of this system began to collapse in the 80s and 90s the social tissue was also strongly impacted. Parental figures within families lost their authority when lower salaries would not allow them to respond to their immediate and extended family's needs. Rural communities also lost a cultural connection with those children who had been in school but now had to return to rural life. Finally, these children experienced rural work as a failure of their moral duty towards their community since, "when a child enters school..., parents put it in his head from the first year that he studies not to learn, but to become someone" ⁵³ (Guth, 1990, p. 88).

To follow through with this social sacrifice of sending children to school, many communities had sold their spare land to immigrants to pay for schooling as their children were destined to live in urban areas. As young people returned to villages communities now had no more land to give them. These societal changes have been identified as contributing to the mounting xenophobia, discontent and political violence that ensued. At the time, Guth notes that "the integration of school children into the village seems as difficult today as in the early days of schooling in Africa. The importance of the problem has, however, grown to worrying proportions" ⁵⁴ (1990, p.

⁵² "L'entrée de l'enfant dans le monde scolaire coupe les liens avec le sacré quotidien du village ainsi qu'avec les institutions formatrices coutumières. C'est donc un véritable « don sans retour » qu'opèrent les parents en laissant leur enfant rejoindre l'institution scolaire ; or la présence des déscolarisés au village montre que le don a été incomplet, que le sacrifice n'a pas été consommé. L'intégration à l'institution scolaire a été incomplète, mais l'intégration au village l'est aussi. "

⁵³ "Quand un enfant entre à l'école..., les parents lui mettent dans la tête dès la première année qu'il étudie non pour s'instruire, mais pour devenir quelqu'un."

⁵⁴ "L'intégration des scolarisés au village semble aussi ardue aujourd'hui qu'aux premiers jours de l'école en Afrique. L'importance du problème a cependant cru dans des proportions inquiétantes. "

83). In a book co-written by the now Minister of Education Mariatou Koné, she describes the instability and social fragmentation that was occurring during this period:

The school has, in a way, betrayed the Family to the extent that it replaces it...In developed societies, modernity is a consequence of the evolution of tradition. Change occurs by readjusting old structures to new contexts. In Africa, modernity of external origin is at odds with the old order. Society entered the consumer society by enduring it. The challenges are therefore more brutal and the effects more difficult to control... In traditional society, the legitimacy of authority and education was related to the solidity of the family core and the cohesion of the community. However, this core is today subject to numerous upheavals which disrupt its foundation and its functioning.

⁵⁵ (Kone & Kouamé, 2005, p. 183)

4.6.2. Civil war and the school system's collapse

In addition to a disruption of the social fabric, politically the situation was explosive. In 1995 the first presidential elections without Houphouët-Boigny took place. However, the electoral code that was adopted excluded the prime minister Ouattara from running as it established that candidates needed both parents to be Ivorian and needed to have continually resided in Côte d'Ivoire for the five years prior to the election. Protests ensued but Bedié was nevertheless elected in 1995 (Country Information and Policy Unit, 2000, p.6).

However, his term was cut short when in 1999 General Guei used a mutiny by soldiers over missed payments to depose Bedié. The first coup after 39 years of political stability was condemned by the international community while cheers were heard on the streets. Guei promised to hold elections in 2000 and not to run for office (p.8). Before elections a referendum on the electoral code confirmed the clause that only those candidates with both parents being Ivorian could run for office (p.28).

⁵⁵ " Dans les sociétés développées, la modernité est une conséquence de l'évolution de la tradition. Le changement se fait par réajustement des anciennes structures aux nouveaux contextes. En Afrique, la modernité, d'origine extérieure, est en rupture avec l'ordre ancien. La société est entrée dans la société de consommation en la subissant. Les remises en causes sont donc plus brutales et les effets plus difficiles à maîtriser...Dans la société traditionnelle, l'efficacité de l'autorité et de l'éducation était en rapport avec la solidité du noyau familial et la cohésion de la communauté. Or ce noyau est aujourd'hui soumis à de nombreux soubresauts qui perturbent son fondement et son fonctionnement."

On the 22nd of October 2000, presidential elections took place between Guei and Gbagbo. Gbagbo was declared the winner, but the General refused to accept his defeat whilst at the same time Ouattara who had been excluded from participating demanded new elections. Street violence ensued but Gbagbo was ultimately appointed president. However, clashes between supporters of Gbagbo and Ouattara continued to escalate in different parts of the country particularly in the north where legislative elections were not able to take place. These pockets of violence turned into a three-prong rebellion covering two thirds of the country just two years after Gbagbo's election. In September 2002, troops of a rebel group attacked three cities including Abidjan. During the attack Guei was killed, Ouattara took shelter in the French embassy and Bedié in the Canadian embassy. Whilst the rebellion was not able to take Abidjan they did gain control over much of the north of the country. Two other rebel groups took control over western territories. The rebels joined forces and formed a group called the New Forces (EASO, 2019).

Civil war had split the country into two zones and with it the Ivorian educational system. Around 300'000 to 400'000 students from both sides lost the 2003-2004 academic year, education infrastructure was severely damaged, and displacement of communities interrupted and overcrowded the schools in the South of the country. The international community was strongly involved in negotiating a recommencement of the school year that would include the rebel occupied territory (Chelapi-den Hamer, 2014). The Gbagbo government recognised that maintaining the control and the authority of a MoE that could officiate exams and diplomas was paramount. During the conflict the symbolic legitimacy of the education discourse was used and illustrates why the involvement of IOs in supporting an education system in the North which operated independently of the central government was met with negative reactions. Such actions were viewed as hostile and referred to as acts of war (Triplet, 2015, p. 41).

However, as the crisis evolved bilateral and multi-lateral organisations that had monopolised the policy field just a couple of years ago closed their doors. The French Development Agency suspended its projects, the WB also stopped its projects as the government was no longer able to repay its debts. Only UNICEF maintained a presence in the country mobilising emergency funds for education (p.36). Although

the relationship with UNICEF was tenuous as it sought to build and keep schools open in the north of the country the withdrawal of the big donors plus the legitimacy that a connection with IOs gave the government meant that the collaboration continued. UNICEF and other INGOs that mobilised conflict and emergency funding began playing a much more direct implementing role that had been until now receding since the Loi Cadre in 1956. During this period, they substituted the state's presence in the rebel held areas,

*the withdrawal of certain IOs and bilateral cooperation actually implies a weakening of the State and therefore the need for other organisations to replace it to maintain the education system. It is therefore possible to speak of a vicious circle, the effects of which have not diminished after the crisis, to the extent that State action is contested or at least circumvented by NGOs, which took action during the crisis. The post-conflict situation is therefore characterized by the difficulty for the Ivorian State to regain its full sovereignty in educational matters, all the more so since, to a certain extent, the fact of benefiting from international aid validates the State action...*⁵⁶ (p.36)

Before the conflict Gbagbo had implemented several important education policy reforms such as eliminating the two-tier salary system for teachers, reducing the government's subsidies to private schools and making the use of school uniforms optional. The relationship between teachers and the government was much closer than during past presidents and Gbagbo framed his party as the Government of Teachers in distinction to Houphouet-Boigny's Government of Farmers. In a marked distinction with previous administrations teachers thanked the president for ending the "wage-related apartheid" (E. Lanoue, 2004, p. 20) in the workforce. Although it is not possible to speculate what would have happened if his mandate had not been overpowered by the immediate needs of the conflict, his initial approach sought to re-evaluate teachers' role and was less conciliatory of IOs objectives than his predecessors.

⁵⁶ "Ainsi, le retrait de certaines OI et des coopérations bilatérales implique en réalité un affaiblissement de l'État et donc la nécessité pour d'autres organisations de s'y substituer pour maintenir le système éducatif. Il est dès lors possible de parler de cercle vicieux, dont les effets n'ont pas diminué après la crise, dans la mesure où l'action de l'État se voit contestée ou pour le moins contournée par les ONG, entrées en action avec la crise. La situation de post-conflit se caractérise donc par la difficulté pour l'État ivoirien à retrouver sa pleine souveraineté en matière éducative, et ce d'autant plus que, dans une certaine mesure, le fait de bénéficier de l'aide internationale valide l'action de l'État, autrement dit l'application de la doctrine des OI. "

By IOs he was said to have been “tolerated in the absence of being truly appreciated”⁵⁷ (D’Ersu, 2007, p. 88). It is at this complex moment of Ivorian history where I stop the historic contextualisation of this thesis. Civil war was raging and violence was at everyone’s doorstep, the government continued to be indebted and civilians felt the consequences in their livelihoods, any resemblance to formal schooling in rebel held territories was being administered and funded by IOs, schools in the South were overcrowded and under-invested, the elected government was not in speaking terms with its former colonial power who had deployed a military presence of 4’000 men (p.94). It is at this moment that the first CP international education policies began to be introduced.

4.7 Conclusions

Embracing the idea that “history becomes an internalised tradition” (Clignet, 1994, p. 110) in this chapter I have created space for a historical contextualisation of the education policy landscape of Côte d’Ivoire that includes a review of its main discourses and relationships. I have identified several key themes that helps contextualise my research data and its analysis.

The first is the existence of a “distinct psychological profile” (Désalmand, 2004, p. 352) where assimilation to the French school system and rejecting an adaptation to the local context was an act of fighting against colonial discrimination since equal diplomas were one of the only ways to achieve equality of power. However, schools were also part and parcel of the colonial project, so assimilation also meant accepting part of the logic of domination in which French cultural equivalence was linked to superiority. The ambivalence between maintaining parity with French degrees versus adapting and reforming the system to be more responsive to local needs has been a constant tension of policies. Leaving these choices unresolved has acted as a chokehold on the education system’s ability to strategise. What this colonial schooling unconscious might entail for my analysis is that if CP policies are perceived as an attempt to reform the schooling system to focus less on rigour or as an attempt at adaptation away from a classical curriculum then these may be experienced as an act

⁵⁷ “Toléré à défaut d’être vraiment apprécié. ”

of discrimination and viewed with suspicion especially when coming from external actors.

Secondly, it emerges that the government and communities committed religiously to the idea of education as development. Families placed enormous faith in the economic prospects that were linked to the obtention of diplomas. School completion became a social sacrifice that children and their families had to endure to succeed in the new order established by colonialism. However, those who succeeded in the educational path often did so through a community effort and their success later benefitted others through a practice of reciprocal duties and obligations to the community.

Contextualising education as this high-stake wager and sacrifice for families may help bring new light to common justifications of having benefited by CP as a necessary means that allowed them to reach the economic position they are in today.

The two previous themes have a big impact on the ups and down of the Ivorian teacher workforce experience. Whilst initially teaching was highly regarded, whenever policies made teachers lose their power as gatekeepers or facilitators of the economic promise linked to schooling their status and authority in society diminished. When the economic link between a school diploma and material prospects severed in the 1980s, this created not only a real reduction in the livelihoods of families but also a strong sense of progressive and aspirational deprivation. Teachers' status was also highly dependent on the government's policies that allowed them to have a higher living standard than the communities in which they taught. The high number of French teachers operating in the system meant that teachers had been able to mobilise the idea of "equality" with their French counterparts to have higher salaries and benefiting from living quarters provided for by the government. When all of this was forcibly changed after the economic crisis, teachers' livelihoods took a very steep fall and with it their place in society. Teachers' sensitivity to these experiences of loss of status along with the tumultuous employee and political relationship with government will also be key considerations when analysing CP policies.

A fourth theme emerging from the historical analysis is the presence of a constant power that is exercised by external actors. Although modalities, forms and discourses mutate and become less direct over time this external power is always present and

maintains strong decision-making abilities. Middle national actors however are not passive in this evolving relationship and look to interact as equal partners be it through a wholesale belief in the French Union or a radical introduction of televisions in schools. However, it seems that equal partnerships are limited to instances when the middle space agree with international experts. When disagreement arise either conditionalities are used or different opinions are labelled as local hostility, lack of capacity or unreasonableness. Most calls for contextualisation by local actors were not reciprocated by international efforts despite a growing international discourse on local ownership. Observing these past disjunctures between discourse and action is useful to identify continued asymmetries of power and how they shift and mutate.

Notwithstanding a continued lack of equitable partnerships in policymaking, there are emerging pockets of discourse in official reports that question the status quo of power and decision-making in policies particularly after the late 1990s. Faced with the ever dire economic and political crisis despite Côte d'Ivoire being one of the most reformed countries some begin to openly question whether there is more to policy enactment failure than local resistance. For example, Pegatien (1999b) in the WB's review of aid reforms in Africa analyses the context of the donor-country relationship as a possible culprit for policy failures, "Donors should distinguish between wishful thinking and real objectives. It would be wrong to give the CI a bad grade for failure to meet ambitious, externally-generated goals, especially when the effort to meet those goals distorts priorities, as in the social sectors" (p.84) Lanoue in an Education for All report argues that educational policies would benefit from a contextualised analysis that would truly consider the sociological demand for education and work with it instead of parachuting problems to solve.

Taking this complexity into account at decision-making levels could facilitate the programming of reforms... Currently, such a framework for developing education policies does not exist; it constitutes a major political and sociological wager since, prior to reforms, its objective would not be to "solve a problem" – that of the economic

*cost of education – but to understand, without stigmatizing, the relationship between Ivorian society and school.*⁵⁸ (2004, p. 107)

Finally, what emerges is that Ivorian policy actors engaged only marginally with international debates on VAC as the country was experiencing a very full and eventful reality of its own. The international community's objectives often seem at odds or not in synch with government and community's aspirations for education. During colonial times, assimilation versus adaptation was at play, when PETV was introduced, the new curriculum pushed for a less classical focus on writing pitting this against the desires of parents, and when the government was ambitious in its goals for expansion the IOs saw these as over ambitious and incoherent to the economic needs of Ivorian society. This was later reversed when after more than a decade of conditioning the government to reduce investments in education, the international community shifted towards an "Education for All" agenda just as Ivorians' own wish to expand education seemed the furthest away it had ever been.

A similar analysis can be made as the international field moves towards condemning VAC as a public health and children's rights crises just as the country enters its most violent and unstable period of its history. In the next section, I examine how these legacies of external influence, shifting priorities, and contested ownership continue to manifest in the present-day enactment of CP policies in Ivorian schools.

⁵⁸ "La prise en compte de cette complexité à des niveaux décisionnels pourrait faciliter la programmation de réformes... À l'heure actuelle, un tel cadre d'élaboration des politiques d'éducation n'existe pas; il constitue un enjeu politique et sociologique d'envergure puisque, préalable aux réformes, il n'aurait pas pour objectif de «résoudre un problème» – celui du coût économique de l'éducation – mais de comprendre, sans le stigmatiser, le rapport de la société ivoirienne à l'école et donc de fournir un cadre d'interprétation à ce rapport. "

CHAPTER 5. Corporal punishment policy network: structure and power

Building on the genealogical contextualisation of Côte d'Ivoire's education policy landscape, this chapter shifts focus to the present-day configuration of the CP policy network. I present both quantitative and qualitative data that contribute to analysing the structure of the network and its power dynamics. By adopting an approach focused on "researching whole networks" (Berthod et al., 2017) instead of individual case studies of policy moments, I examine power flows at the level of the CP policy network's structure through SNA.

I begin by detailing and analysing the policy events between 2003 to 2022 in Côte d'Ivoire where CP is mobilised as a policy problem, a period that directly follows the historical account concluded in the previous chapter. Next, I map these policy events alongside the organisations that participated in their enactment to create a bi-partite CP policy network. I then present the results of the different network structure measures. Finally, I triangulate these findings with qualitative documentary sources and post-structuralist discourse analysis from semi-structured interviews with national middle space actors. This mixed method approach provides a deep understanding of how power is distributed and perceived across different events, discourses and actors.

5.1 Identifying the CP policy network: a focus on policy events

At first sight the policy events where CP in schools emerged as a problem seemed easy to identify such as the Education Ministerial Decree of 2009 prohibiting CP. However, as I searched for data on this event's origin and its subsequent follow-up, I came against a Matryoshka doll effect where a policy event would give way to new iterations of an initiative thus multiplying the number of policies and broadening the CP policy domain. I did not encounter a linear trace of policy initiatives seeking to prevent CP in schools but rather a complex and diverse web of events that together contributed to the emergence of CP as policy problem in the Ivorian context. Furthermore, CP as a policy problem took numerous forms, confirming Peck and Theodore's observation that as the problem becomes "embedded in both networks and within multiple 'local' milieux, the 'thing' that is being followed is evidently not itself an immutable object" (2012b, p. 24).

To identify the policy events that belonged within the boundary of the Ivorian CP policy network and subsequently analyse them as a whole I used the approach described as following “network enacting ‘objects’ ” (Berthod et al., 2017, p. 308). This entails following and analysing the documentation produced by and about the policy events, such as reports, presentations, budgets, evaluations, media articles and promotional material (Annexe 2). Through this analysis I identified a total of 24 policy events where preventing teachers’ use of CP was included within the scope of the initiative. This policy event list is summarised in table 2 and serves as the network boundary for one of the two types of nodes of the policy network presented in Section 5.2.

Table 2. Policy events included in the CP network boundary

Policy Event	Date	Brief description and link to corporal punishment in schools
Rewrite the Future (RtF)	2005-2010	Under StC strategic global challenge "Quality Education for Children Affected by armed conflict", this programme was designed to focus on access and quality of education, the protective role of education and the financing of education. In Côte d'Ivoire its main objective was to rebuild damaged schools, ensure access and prohibit CP by teachers. Some of the main activities were: • Advocacy to enact a governmental ban on physical and humiliating punishment in schools. • Piloting of a code of conduct in schools which included prohibiting CP. • Pre-service training module on "Children's rights and alternatives to corporal punishment" to be incorporated into the Pedagogy curriculum.
Ministerial Decree against CP	2009	Ministerial Decree (N°0075/MEN/DELC) prohibiting public and private school teachers’ use of physical and humiliating punishments. It also notes that teachers who violate the decree will be subjected to a disciplinary sanction.
Education Programme for Peace and Tolerance (EPPT)	2004-2006	A global initiative by UNICEF to support education systems of countries affected by conflict. It was the first programme which introduced the notions of tolerance, non-violence, conflict resolution and children's rights in primary schools. One of its main outcomes was to popularise the notions of children's rights in schools.
Education in Emergencies & Post-crisis Transition Programme (EEPCT) - Child Friendly Spaces	2006-2011	A \$201 million dollar contribution from the government of Netherlands supported UNICEF in 39 countries to advance the global agenda for education in crisis-affected contexts. In Côte d'Ivoire it sought to build and rehabilitate schools in the rebel held part of the country. It also incorporated a Child Friendly Framework an approach which included the right to protection through non-violent discipline. In Côte d'Ivoire the programme led to the creation of 200 child friendly schools.

Policy Event	Date	Brief description and link to corporal punishment in schools
Learning for Peace (PBEA)	2012 -2016	A continuation of the EEPCT programme, this programme was also funded by the government of the Netherlands and implemented by UNICEF. Its overarching goal was to build peaceful societies by strengthening the role of education in peacebuilding and integrating peacebuilding within the education system. In Côte d'Ivoire this included the continuation of the promotion of child friendly schools and the development of Peace Messenger clubs in primary schools to address violence.
World Programme for Human Rights Education / EDHC	2005 - 2014	Programme set up by the United Nations to advance the implementation of human rights education programmes. The first phase (2005-2009) focused on human rights education in the primary and secondary school systems and the second phase (2010-2014) in higher education and on human rights training programmes for teachers and educators. In Côte d'Ivoire this resulted in the creation of a new school discipline, Human Rights Education and Citizenship. The MoE integrated this new discipline to its curriculum. The curriculum included modules on children's rights and their right to be protected against violence including CP.
Competency Based Curriculum Reform and Teacher Training Reform	2012	UNESCO and the Francophone International Organisation popularised the notion of 'skills based education' in much of francophone Africa in 2006. An analysis of the Ivorian curriculum by one of the approach's main contributors Phillippe Jonnaert and an evaluation which found deficiencies in the current system based on "objectives" led the Ivorian government to reform its curriculum and adopt a skills based approach by 2011. Included in this initiative was a module on alternatives to corporal punishment and the integration of a children's rights and a positive discipline module meant for the teacher training curricula.
Mapping and Analysis of child protection sectors in West Africa	2010	Following from a consensus emerging in the international development community around the need for a 'systems approach' to child protection, UNICEF, StC and Plan International asked Child Frontiers Ltd. to map and assess national child protection systems in five countries in West African countries. In Côte d'Ivoire this led to a mapping and analysis of the system, sponsored by Ministry of Family, Women and Social Affairs (MFFAS). The document identified that the education system generated child protection problems because of its persistent use of corporal punishment.
National Child Protection Policy and Plan of Action	2014 - 2018	The first national policy on child protection is developed with the aim to coordinate the disparate efforts in terms of child protection. For the education sector it recommended action points such as adopting the teacher code of conduct, putting in place mechanisms in schools to signal cases of violence, integrating into the teacher training curriculum a module on child protection, training 1200 school staff on practices which are protective of children and conducting a national study on violence in schools.
2014 Ministerial Decree Code of Conduct	2014	Ministerial Decree (N°0111 MENET/CAB) prohibiting use of physical and humiliating punishments by any employee of the MoE. It officialises a code of conduct for all MoE employees.
Ministerial official guidelines "Protect Children in Schools"	2015	As a complement to the National Child Protection Policy, the MoE produced their own official guidelines which described the responsibilities of schools in relation to child protection. A section is dedicated to "education maltreatment" or the "whip pedagogy" that explains why teachers use it and arguments against its use.

Policy Event	Date	Brief description and link to corporal punishment in schools
Study on students' wellbeing and safety in schools	2015	A national survey financed by UNICEF was commissioned to better understand violence against children in schools. It found that half of students were hit by teachers despite a ban on CP.
Mid-Term Education Action Plan (PAMT)	2012 - 2016	The plan was developed with technical and financial partners to access the funds available through the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). The Plan's second objective included improving education and teaching quality. It set the foundation for the pre-service teacher training reform by including tasks such as the revision of the teacher training curriculum, the creation of skills-based framework for teachers and the training of teacher trainers on this new teacher training curriculum.
Emergency Basic Education Support Project (PUAEB)	2012 -2017	The programme financed by the World Bank through the GPE was a USD 41.4 million project. It included support to the teacher training reform through and the development of a new training curriculum. The new curriculum included revised modules on positive discipline, children's rights, and alternatives to physical punishment.
Sectorial Plan Education	2016- 2025	The continuation of the PAMT this document sets out the educational agenda for 2016 to 2025 in an effort to coordinate investment by the technical and financial actors. One of the plan's success indicators is the proportion of students who experience corporal punishment by teachers. It aims to strengthen its action against school-based violence by raising awareness of the rules already in place and by training teachers on methods and approaches in education for a culture of peace.
Educate in Peace, Learn without Violence	2017- 2018	Brief educational and behavioural intervention funded by UNICEF and UBS Optimus Foundation and led by a Swiss NGO, designed for teachers to reduce the use of violence as an educational method in their classrooms. 1'600 teachers were trained.
Pathfinder Country	2018	Côte d'Ivoire became a Pathfinding country with the End Violence Against Children Fund thus making a formal, public commitment to comprehensive action to end all forms of violence against children including CP.
VAC Survey	2018- 2019	National survey on children's experience of all forms of violence in Côte d'Ivoire. It found that 3 out of 10 women and men (18-24) thought that it was necessary for teachers to use corporal punishment.
Campaign "Reimagine CI without VAC"	2021	A media campaign led by UNICEF and funded by the Government of Canada to raise awareness on VAC including corporal punishment. It included a televised series called "Orange Sucrées".
Global Civil Society Strengthening Programme	2017 - 2021	The programme led by Save the Children Sweden and funded by SIDA aimed to develop CSO's capacity to apply child rights-based programming and to fund a strong civil society that would demand the fulfilment of children's rights by holding states accountable. In Côte d'Ivoire this resulted in initiatives and awareness campaigns advocating against physical and humiliating punishment and violence free schools.
Advocacy for law prohibiting physical and humiliating punishment	2022	A priority advocacy objective of Save the Children in Côte d'Ivoire was the lobbying for the adoption of a law that specifically prohibits physical and humiliating punishment of children and which would oblige perpetrators to follow a positive discipline training.

Policy Event	Date	Brief description and link to corporal punishment in schools
Improving the quality of teacher education in sub-Saharan Africa	2013-2017	The project was launched with the aim of addressing of a lack of teacher training, using information communication technology to improve the methods in teacher training institutes. It was financed by the government of China and led by UNESCO. In Côte d'Ivoire this included an online version of the module on alternative practices to physical and humiliating punishment.
Francophone Initiative for in-service training of teachers (IFADEM)	2014 - 2023	A project financed by the French development agency to provide hybrid in-service teacher training. Although the main objectives were improving the quality of education of basic skills it also included examples of how teachers and directors should handle use of corporal punishment by peers.
Children's Rights and Quality Education	2019 - 2021	Project, led by the International Cocoa Initiative which used a "bundle" of different interventions with the aim to improve the quality of education. The project found that participating teachers were more likely to reject the use of violent discipline and students in participating schools reported significantly less physical violence. The project was deployed in 5 regions and reached 2,200 students.

Whilst individual genealogies of these policy moments fall outside the scope of my study, to further analyse CP as a mutating policy problem it is useful to examine these policy events collectively and alongside their associated documents. For instance, the quantity and breadth of initiatives summarised in table 2 indicates that in Côte d'Ivoire the social life of CP school policies was prolific, mobile and mutating in a relatively short time span. In addition, the review of policy events reveals that CP was central only to a limited number of initiatives such as the Ministerial Decree and the national survey on school wellbeing. Even these initiatives were the result of prior multi-component policy events rather than stemming from a concerted policy push from network actors to eliminate CP in schools. It appears that CP in schools has often been an element subsequently 'added' onto programmes focused on different education policy issues such as teacher training, school enrolment or curriculum reform. Interested parties seemed to 'piggyback' CP onto other policy events when the opportunity became available. Furthermore, the analysis also shows that CP emerged and developed within a busy policy landscape where CP initiatives frequently co-occurred, not only with each other but also with a variety of other VAC or educational policies that did not explicitly address CP, such as policies on gender-based violence or extending obligatory schooling. Notably, many of them also coincided with periods of civil unrest in Côte d'Ivoire (2002-2007 and 2010-2011).

To better understand the implications of CP emerging within a crowded policy landscape, often appearing peripheral to other priorities, I examined how ‘CP as a VAC’ discourse was mobilised, resisted, or reconfigured across the network documents generated by these policy events. Rather than applying a rigid coding framework, I approached these texts with a genealogical sensitivity to how power and ownership were articulated through language, paying close attention to the discursive strategies that shaped what counted as a policy problem. This included tracing how certain framings of CP enabled or constrained particular forms of action, in line with Bacchi’s (2000) assertion that “the frames... affect what can be thought about and how this affects possibilities for action” (2000, p. 50). Through this lens, I identified four key thematic gateways through which CP emerged as a policy concern: school access, peace education, teacher quality, and child protection.

*5.1.1. **School access:** Emergency partnerships to reestablish school access enable the emergence of a discourse of CP as a violation of children’s rights*

The first gateway through which CP emerged was via policy initiatives primarily aimed at restoring school access and rebuilding educational infrastructure during and after the Ivorian political crises. Notable examples include Save the Children’s (StC) *Rewrite the Future* and UNICEF’s *Emergency and Post-Crisis Transition Programme*. Although these initiatives were initially focused on improving access, documentation reveals that concerns about the quality of education, particularly the teaching environments being re-established, prompted a more explicit engagement with CP. In this context, CP surfaced not as a primary objective, but as a secondary concern gaining visibility as IOs’ priorities evolved.

For example, StC revised the objectives of its initiative to include a strong focus on prohibiting CP in schools despite it not being part of its original global nor national mandate. As the organisation began managing rehabilitated schools, it became increasingly difficult to ignore the routine use of CP by teachers in the very institutions they were sponsoring. This shift was not only driven by field-level realities but also reinforced by broader international influences. StC Sweden, which led *Rewrite the Future* in Côte d’Ivoire was a major donor to the *Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children* and had actively contributed to the *World Report on VAC*

published one month prior to the initiative's launch in Côte d'Ivoire. Similarly, UNICEF, which initially focused on infrastructure and access, gradually embedded its Child Friendly Schools framework, grounded in children's rights, including the right to protection from violence, into its programming.

While the Ivorian government welcomed these initiatives as much-needed investments in school infrastructure, especially during a time of political crisis when other external funding had left, it did not enter these partnerships with a CP agenda in mind. As Romsaas Wang, the global head of *Rewrite the Future*, explained, "the structure itself (school building) was simply a starting point for aid, and that it can still be invested in many other, intangible education assets..." (Hashim, 2010). In the Ivorian context, some of these "intangible education assets" that accompanied infrastructure investments included advocacy and training efforts that introduced a children's rights-based discourse.

The adoption of a children's rights-based discourse unfolded gradually, as it was not the language initially used by government officials. For instance, an analysis of local press coverage of *Rewrite the Future* reveals a contrast in how the programme was framed. Ling, Director of StC-Sweden in Côte d'Ivoire, consistently described the initiative using a children's rights language. In contrast, the education minister, Bleu Lainé, portrayed the programme as a response to urgent needs around school access and overcrowding, referring to it as "a breath of fresh air for the village of N'Douci, where there is a strong demand for schooling" (Cissé, 2007).

However, in later programme documentation, StC explicitly acknowledged the need to shift national discourse from a focus on access to one grounded in children's rights in order to advance its CP objectives. A key moment in this shift occurred in April 2009, when the organisation hosted a training on children's rights and CP for senior officials in the Ministry. Although the event was intended as the final step toward adopting and rolling out a national teachers' code of conduct, media coverage framed it as a seminar aimed at sensitising and persuading officials of the importance of a children's rights approach. This intent was made clear in Ling's opening remarks at the event:

There seems to be a need to raise awareness and train the higher levels of this Ministry to garner their engagement in the promotion of children's rights...Your (the MoE)

engagement will be determinant to finalise the programme because the responsibility to promote children's rights throughout the Ivoirian education system will fall to you with our assistance. ⁵⁹ (Bédé, 2009)

In this context, Ling's statement can be read as a strategic attempt to shape the behaviour and actions of Ministry officials in alignment with the goals of promoting children's rights. By addressing the Ministry directly and in public “*Your engagement*”, she constructs a narrative that frames them as the responsible actor for advancing this agenda. Her public interpellation assigns the Ministry a specific role and identity: that of guarantor of children's rights. Through this discursive move Ling not only calls on the Ministry to act but also seeks to embed the ‘CP as VAC’ framing within their institutional identity and responsibilities. Training, awareness raising and public interpellation function as mechanisms for transferring ownership of the CP policy problem to the government. It also positions StC as a technical expert that can assist the government to achieve its mandate.

Before engaging Ministry leadership, StC also had to cultivate internal alignment with the rights' discourse among its own local staff. In September 2008, international staff from StC Sweden facilitated a two-day capacity building workshop in Abidjan to train local employees on the importance of adopting a children's rights-based approach fully. A report from the workshop illustrates how this policy event aimed to reframe the issue of CP in schools through this lens. For instance, in one group exercise, local staff were asked to complete the right column of Table 3 to differentiate their current approach and encourage a shift towards the preferred rights-based approach.

Table 3. Group Exercise: main features of a rights-based approach

Other perspective	Rights perspective
Private charity (it could be for a particular a group of people)	Rights based organisation (the organisation can be for everybody)
Voluntary	Mandatory (It is mandatory for the State to respond to rights violation)

⁵⁹ “il apparaît nécessaire de sensibiliser et de former la haute administration de ce ministère sur ces questions d'intérêt national pour obtenir son implication dans la promotion des droits de l'enfant, ...Votre engagement sera déterminant pour la finalisation du processus en cours. Car c'est à vous que reviendra avec notre assistance.... ”

Welfare, alms, charity	Rights
Partial goals, example, 80% of children are immunised, aim to deliver services to the largest number of people	Inclusive goals. All children have the right to proper health care.
Hierarchy of needs, some needs are more important than others, for instance, food before education	Indivisibility of rights
Needs vary according to the situation, the individual and the environment	Universality of rights. All rights are the same for all children, wherever they live.
Providing welfare services (object of needs)	Rights holders, subjects of rights
Determination of needs is subjective	Rights are for everyone
Children deserve help	Children have rights
Governments ought to do something but nobody has definite obligations	State has the primary obligation and they are fully accountable and responsible.
Given scarce resources some children may be left out	Rights are for all children. Universality and equity of rights.

(Bhandari, 2008, p. 24)

Table 3 highlights how the rights-based perspective promoted by StC introduces a framework grounded in the principles of universality, indivisibility, and state obligation. It asserts that all children, regardless of context, are entitled to the full spectrum of rights, and that states are the primary actors responsible for guaranteeing these rights. In this framing, rights are not negotiable or subject to prioritisation, they must be realised in full and without delay. Whilst it offers a strong ethical and legal foundation, its universalist logic can clash with the realities of enactment in resource-constrained or politically fragile settings mobilised by the national middle in the first column. This tension is central to understanding how certain discourses, like ‘CP as VAC’ gain traction, while others are sidelined.

This workshop serves as a concrete example of how meaning is constructed and mediated by discursive struggles that unfold within policy events. It also illustrates how the normalisation of discourse “passes through hegemonic interventions whereby alternative understandings of the world are suppressed, leading to the naturalisation of

one single perspective (Jorgensen & J.Phillips, 2002, p. 37)". Framing CP as a problem of children's rights was just one of many possible framings, yet it was the one that was privileged through this set of policy events. Naming the problem in this manner influenced future policy actions and rendered invisible others.

These events were particularly effective in institutionalising the 'CP as VAC' discourse because they facilitated the success of a policy event that irreversibly anchored this discourse in the Ivorian landscape: the 2009 Ministerial Decree prohibiting CP in schools. Interview data directly attribute the ban to lobbying by these organisations, "*Oh, the decree was taken... because of lobbying by Save the Children who was concerned by the issue*" (Pierre, M.Gov.Edu); "*Yes, I link it to Save, the decree in 2009*" (Fofana, M.Univ.Edu); and "*It was inspired by Save the Children and the 2014 one was inspired by UNICEF*" (Daouda, M.Gov.Edu). Despite efforts to shift ownership to the government these statements from national middle actors continue to position international organisation as the originating actors of the ban and as those concerned with CP as a policy problem.

Alassane ⁶⁰ (M.INGO.Edu), recalled that the drafting of the ban followed a study visit to Sweden organised by StC for Ivorian officials:

So they were able to work at headquarters with the advisors of the Rewrite the Future program or of children's rights issues and we went to meet something that exists in Sweden which is very impressive, it is the Ombudsman who is the mediator for children. ...And then we went to meet deputies who worked on the issue because they were practically the first in Europe to take measures on the rights of the child and physical punishment. And so we visited all these people. When we returned, the legal advisor gave the report to the Minister and he drafted the decree. The draft decree was accepted. We had discussions, it's true, to improve the content as we wanted and the Minister signed the decree.

Alassane illustrates how StC leveraged its symbolic power, organising learning visits to meet international Swedish experts, to influence the government towards adopting its preferred policy solution: a CP ban framed within a children's rights-based discourse.

⁶⁰ All interviewees have been given pseudonyms and translations from French are my own.

Alassane's use of the phrase "*as we wanted*" indicates a continued sense of control by the INGO over the outcome. It suggests that the INGO had specific goals and expectations for the decree, which were ultimately met. Notably, the decree opens by citing the Convention as its legal foundation, further embedding the children's rights discourse into the national policy framework.

The influence is echoed by Pierre (M.Gov.Edu) who described the ban as "*a Christmas gift*" for IOs and Yaya who mentions it acted as "*a very nice coat of paint*" (M.Gov.Edu), both suggesting that the ban was adopted to satisfy international priorities rather than governmental ones. Despite middle space actors expressing a lack of real ownership of the ban, the process of drafting and signing the decree nonetheless commits the government as the guarantor of children's rights. It institutionalises, in an official document, a government identity that aligns with the expectations embedded in the "CP as VAC" discourse.

Overall, the analysis of this first gateway shows that initially the government welcomed IOs to work on school infrastructure and access. However, these same interventions resulted in Cote d'Ivoire's ban on CP in school settings, an event that marked a first step in the institutionalisation of the 'CP as VAC' discourse.

5.1.2. Peace education: Efforts to deal with students' violence introduce children's rights permanently in the school curriculum

A parallel gateway through which CP emerged as a policy problem was the promotion of peace education and the idea that schools were key sites for fostering conflict resolution and non-violence. These policy initiatives aimed to instil values of tolerance, peaceful coexistence, and respect for authority among students, particularly in response to widespread concerns about youth involvement in political unrest. As one report noted, "All the crises that Côte d'Ivoire has experienced since 1990 have started in schools or were amplified by schools" (Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2016, p. 9). This framing resonated with the legacy of President Houphouët-Boigny, who championed peaceful negotiation and deference to authority as core Ivorian values.

As reflected in the *Education Programme for Peace and Tolerance*, the main aim was to equip " teachers and the national community with knowledge and values in order to

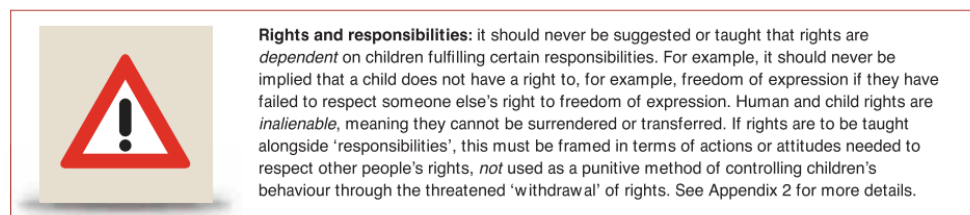
encourage students to adopt behaviour of peace and tolerance" (MEN, 2011, p. 3). The initiatives initially focused on introducing the concept of human rights, democracy and non-violence and were intended to modify students' violent behaviours on the backdrop of their involvement in the political crises.

A key turning point was the transition from civic and moral education to a new subject: Human Rights and Citizenship Education. This subject became the institutional home for teaching children's rights to all Ivorian students (Insiata, 2021). This official national curriculum now required teachers to deliver lessons on children's rights including the right to be protected from CP (MEN Ecole Numérique, 2023). However, these were concepts which did not necessarily correspond to the discipline rules and behaviour expectations in Ivorian schools at the time. They also diverged from the governments' original intent for peace education to foster respect of authority figures such as teachers. Similarly to the first policy gateway, a focus on children's rights was not part of the government's initial agenda when first engaging with these policies.

Through this new school subject infused with children's rights content school staff started to experience a discursive conflict between these modules and the expected behaviour of students in classrooms. An Ivorian teacher surveyed at the time expressed that, "by constantly talking about rights to their students, this posed a real problem for her. As a teacher, she attached more importance to the child's duties and responsibilities. She warned that if they were not careful, the child would grow up with the idea that he only had rights and this was dangerous"⁶¹ (Insiata, 2021, p. 270). Whilst teachers' desire to also focus on children's responsibilities would have been a congruent approach as per the African Charter's interpretation of children's rights, I did not see any documentary evidence of the time that brought this to the fore. On the contrary, documents used by international agencies espoused an approach that discouraged this nuance. For example, in their Children's Rights Education Toolkit, UNICEF warned that a focus on duties alongside rights might give the wrong

⁶¹ "A force de parler chaque fois de droit à nos élèves, cela me pose un véritable problème. En tant enseignante, j'accorde plus d'importance aux devoirs et aux responsabilités de l'enfant. Si on y prend garde, l'enfant grandira avec l'idée qu'il n'a que des droits et ça c'est dangereux."

impression that rights were somehow dependent on children complying with certain behaviours or duties.



(UNICEF, 2014, p. 76)

Framing rights as inalienable made them clash with discourses of reciprocity and children's responsibilities. The warning sign in UNICEF's text gives a clear direction of how the concern mentioned above by the Ivorian teacher should be addressed, it "should never be suggested" that rights were dependent on responsibilities. Whilst UNICEF's positioning was meant to safeguard children from violence this stance could also be perceived as discouraging conversations on contextualisation.

Both gateways, school access and peace education, although not initially designed as CP interventions allowed for the pre-conditions of a child rights discourse to take hold. They introduced to the policy landscape stringent guardrails on the inalienability of children's rights which were reinforced by formal bans and school curriculum that reduced the space for discussion or contextualisation. Finally, these first introductions of 'CP as VAC' and as a policy problem were not characterised by an endogenous motivation of government, teachers or communities. They set a particular direction to the framing of the problem as one aligned to the mainstream discourse of 'CP as VAC'.

5.1.3. Teacher quality: Training on alternatives to corporal punishment within a wider quality teacher training agenda

The rising tensions coming from teachers' experience of the new children's rights content and the new regulations banning CP in schools were meant to be resolved through a different set of policy initiatives focused on teacher training. Initiatives that sought to improve the quality of teaching were the third gateway through which CP as a policy concern continued to be manifested particularly via a focus on training on children's rights and positive discipline. Teacher quality was a major motivation for shifting the Ivorian school curriculum into a new "skills-based approach" promoted

largely by UNESCO and Canadian academics (Aka, 2020; Cros et al., 2009; Roegiers, 2008). Pierre, an education government official described this policy event as another example of international actors providing external solutions to an Ivorian education problem:

It was the approach that was in vogue, one must recognise that. It was the approach in vogue, and we were once again invited by many partners to adopt it...we had our Belgian and Quebecois partners selling it as if it was the new panacea! (M.Gov.Edu)

The adoption of the approach is framed as a response to the influence of external partners as authoritative voices, rather than an independent decision of the government. By stating "*one must recognise that*" Pierre acknowledges the government's susceptibility to the prevailing trends and external pressures.

As the teacher training curriculum was being adapted to reflect this new method, StC created a module on children's rights and alternatives to physical and humiliating punishments. They successfully advocated for the Ministry to incorporate it into the new teacher training module on pedagogy and the module became an official part of the Ministry's pre-service teacher training curriculum. By being able to officially integrate their approach in a government document this policy event reinforces the government's role as an engaged and responsible party in enacting the 'CP as VAC' discourse. However, the module reads as an "add-on" and it illustrates the limits of true government ownership of the discourse at the time. For example, the imprint of StC is prominent with the organisation being referenced by name 37 times. It is also used as the source legitimising the new knowledge on school discipline:

For many of them (adults), punishment does not constitute violence. But Save the Children, which relies on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), thinks the opposite. For this NGO, physical and humiliating punishments are an integral part of the broader issue of violence in education. ⁶² (MEN / Save the Children, 2010, p. 30)

⁶² "Pour beaucoup d'entre eux, la punition ne constitue pas une violence. Mais Save the Children qui s'appuie sur la Convention des Nations Unies relative aux Droits de l'Enfant (C.D.E.), pense le contraire. Pour cette ONG, les punitions physiques et humiliantes font partie intégrante de la vaste question de la violence dans l'éducation. "

The text constructs the identity of StC as a knowledgeable and authoritative entity on children's rights, contrasting it with the local adults who do not view punishment as violence. This reflects Foucault's concept of knowledge and power, where instead of contextualised argumentation it is the authority of StC and the Convention that shapes what is considered legitimate knowledge about children's education and discipline.

Through this gateway positive discipline was introduced as the alternative to a discipline system relying on CP. However, it did not take hold as a known alternative within the teacher community. Most interviewees that discussed teacher training on positive discipline, noted that it had been insufficient, *"The implementation consisted of sprinkling just enough training so that it doesn't move forward. They call you for three days and then, well, you go home. No evaluation, no follow-up to see how we can improve and install new behaviours"* (Pierre, M.Gov.Edu). Pierre's description of the training constructs a narrative of an ineffective, unengaged and unaccountable process that did not truly aim to sustainable changes in behaviours. The phrase *"sprinkling just enough"* suggests a minimal effort and lack of commitment from those managing the trainings and a disempowering top-down approach *"they call you"*.

Throughout these years pre-service and in-service teacher training was a general and constant struggle that many policy events tried to address but none with a great deal of satisfaction (Aka, 2020; UNESCO - CFIT, 2014; UNESCO, 2018). In reality, the introduction of what was supposed to replace CP, positive discipline, was competing with the complex overhaul of the entire teaching system, from one organised around knowledge objectives to a curriculum based on skills. Furthermore, it is important to reiterate that these mayor reforms were introduced during what was arguably the most severe socio-political crisis in Côte d'Ivoire's history. It was in this "the deleterious and corrosive context" that a "new educational philosophy whose voracity in terms of availability, motivation, material, educational and infrastructural resources contrasted with the crisis situation" ⁶³ (Aka, 2020, p. 6) was enacted.

⁶³ "introduite dans le système éducatif alors que la CI connaissait la plus grave crise sociopolitique de son histoire. Tous les systèmes de référence de l'État avaient été bouleversés...C'est ce contexte délétère et corrosif qui a servi de cadre à l'introduction d'une nouvelle philosophie pédagogique dont la voracité en termes de disponibilité, de motivation, de moyens matériels, pédagogiques et infrastructurels contrastait avec la situation de crise."

So, although these policy events helped institutionalise ‘CP as VAC’ even further, few teachers received adequate training to adopt these new methods. Teachers were primarily left with a perceived over-emphasis on children’s rights and an imposed ban on their known method of disciplining introduced by the previous gateways.

5.1.4. Child protection: Policies protecting children from violence in all spheres

The final and fourth gateway for CP policies emerged from advancements in the child protection field. These policy events aimed to foster inter-ministerial cooperation with all government entities involved with children. The newly established national child protection policy and action plan identified schools “as a generator of child protection problems” (Krueger & Canavera, 2010, p. 106). Consequently, CP prevention policies were integrated into a broader, government-led child protection effort which included a code of conduct, national child protection guidelines for all employees of the MoE and a ministerial position statement about child protection in schools. Additionally, child protection initiatives led by the Ministry of Women, Family, and Children, such as the VAC Survey and efforts to ban CP at home, further reinforced the importance of addressing the practice in schools as a policy issue.

The influence of international actors to set the agenda is still visible in the documents produced by these policy initiatives. However, in contrast to the other gateways where their involvement is described in neutral terms and critique is self-reflective and mild, in these policy events international power starts being called into question more strongly. For example, the MoE’s position statement noted how it was external influences and pressure that had put the issue on the table, “violence in the school environment by adults is a major concern which, under pressure from groups promoting children’s rights, including donors, is gaining momentum: this includes primarily corporal punishment and humiliating punishments” ⁶⁴ (MENET, 2015, p. 15). Whilst in the above quote the word “pressure” does not necessarily carry a negative connotation it does represent a shift from the institutionalisation of the ‘CP as VAC’ discourse happening in the previous gateways. In this gateway the critique of external

⁶⁴ “La violence en milieu scolaire du fait des adultes est d’ailleurs au centre de préoccupations qui, sous la pression, des groupes qui promeuvent les droits de l’enfant, y compris les bailleurs de fonds, prennent de l’ampleur : il s’agit notamment des châtiments corporels et des punitions humiliantes”

influence to set the agenda is present in the policy documents themselves and not just in my anonymised interviews. For instance, in the final report of the mapping of the child protection system of Côte d'Ivoire, the document spends considerable time critiquing external organisations ways of enacting policies:

this allows donors to impose themselves (even if this “imposition” represents goodwill on their part). This imposition is manifested in the implementation of initiatives targeted on specific and “fashionable” themes... The logic of donors focuses on short-term results quickly achieved and the counting of children and beneficiaries (Krueger & Canavera, 2010, p. 106)

Like Pierre's mention of policies being mobilised because they are “*in vogue*”, this citation once again critiques policy solutions that are mobilised because they are “*fashionable*” while not necessarily relevant or effective. The document critiques that donors' priorities, irrespective of whether their intentions are good, shape what is considered important or valuable in detriment to identified local needs. It places a donor-centric logic that values immediate, quantifiable outcomes in contradiction with a desire for long-term, sustainable change.

An additional difference to the other gateways is that the ‘CP as VAC’ discourse's level of influence is reduced. For instance, the MoE's position paper not only recognises how previous CP policy events have been done hastily but it also critiques how they have been dissociated from other governmental needs and priorities such as maintaining quality whilst a massification of education.

The question of corporal punishment and other humiliating punishments, although having been the subject of some initiatives or perhaps even because it was the subject of more or less hasty initiatives that not entirely endorsed by the education system, allows us to glimpse the broader question of the quality of education which is strictly linked to the question of its generalisation ⁶⁵ (MENET, 2015, p. 15).

In the citation above the problematisation of CP in schools is framed alongside issues like quality of education and overcrowding. CP is justified as a policy problem, not

⁶⁵ “La question des châtiments corporels et autres punitions humiliantes, bien qu'ayant fait l'objet de quelques initiatives, peut-être même du fait qu'elle a fait l'objet d'initiatives plus ou moins hâtives et peu entérinées par le système éducatif, laisse entrevoir la question plus vaste de la qualité de l'éducation qui est strictement liée à la question de sa généralisation.”

because it goes against children's rights but rather because it hinders Ivorians' desire to give all children access to quality education and school diplomas. Additionally, the text also calls into question or admits limitations in the true ownership of past CP policy events by saying they were "not entirely endorsed by the education system".

The discourse present in this MoE documentation also provides a much more contextualised view of the prevailing use of CP. It grounds the practice in parents' expectations of education as a means to social mobility – recalling what was analysed in chapter 4.

For families' vision of school, it is important to understand to what extent school is conceived as a means to social advancement of the family and the group (strategy of upward mobility)...In this vision the consideration of school education as a means to contributing to the development of the child through...freedom of expression, remains relegated to a secondary position...Strong methods would thus be tolerated and often considered ...Effort, discipline and submission are considered more important qualities for academic success than intellectual and creative abilities⁶⁶ (p.17).

This illustrates how, in contrast to those policy documents promoted by international actors in previous policy gateways, these documents are open to consider context and initiate a much-needed dialogue on CP that was discouraged previously. They address the contrasts and tensions that exist between social mobility and child 'development' as two different educational goals which underpin the competing and unresolved discourses. The discourses used throughout this gateway make space for explaining how families' vision of school as a means of social advancement shapes their expectations of what discipline is acceptable. Their prioritisation of "academic success" in the form of a school diploma encourages a preference for "discipline and submission" and "strong" methods over "creative abilities" and "freedom of expression" of children.

⁶⁶ " Pour la vision de l'école qu'en ont les familles, il est important de comprendre dans quelles mesures l'école est conçue comme un moyen d'instruction de l'enfant en vue d'une ascension sociale de la famille et du groupe (stratégie de mobilité ascendante) ...Dans cette vision, la considération de l'éducation scolaire comme moyen contribuant à l'épanouissement de l'enfant par l'éclosion de l'ouverture de son esprit...et la liberté de jugement, reste largement en second plan...Les méthodes fortes seraient ainsi tolérées et souvent envisagées ...L'effort, la discipline et la soumission seraient considérées comme des qualités plus importantes pour la réussite scolaire que les capacités intellectuelles et créatrices. "

In this section, by adopting a focus on all CP policy gateways simultaneously, I have highlighted the interdependence but also differences of efforts to prevent CP.

Through this approach CP policy events are contextualised in a complex web of needs, priorities and discourses rather than seen as isolated and distinct initiatives. In the next section I will take a closer look at the network as a rich tapestry of relationships between the many different organisations participating in these policy events using social network analysis. By placing actors' decisions and experiences of the policy enactment process in this whole network perspective I hope to offer a more holistic analysis.

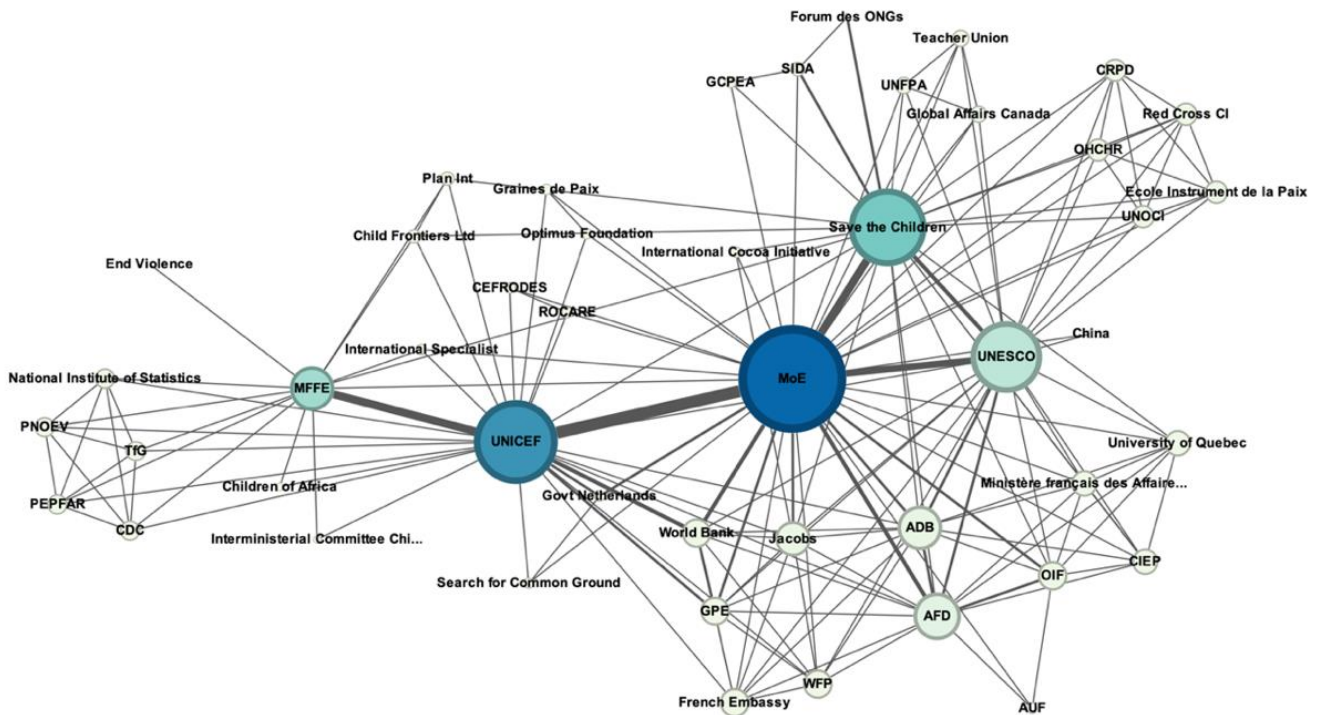
5.2 Visualising the CP policy network

Figure 12 illustrates the CP policy network as a bipartite graph, visualised using Gephi's 'Atlas 2' algorithm. The larger blue nodes represent the policy events described earlier and the smaller grey nodes denote the organisations that participated in the events. A total of 46 organisational actors were involved in these policy events. As discussed in chapter 4, organisations were connected to a policy event if they participated in it under numerous capacities. The participation of an organisation was identified through the documentary analysis and network ethnography. This complex visualisation underscores the notion that addressing CP in classrooms is a policy problem that often sits within and depends on wider educational agendas. The proliferation of events depicted in the graph highlights the dispersed nature of these enactments and the wide array of organisational actors contributing to them. The MoE perhaps unsurprisingly, as the responsible party for what happens in schools, is the most well-connected organisation in the network having participated in 17 of the 25 policy events. This is followed by UNICEF who participated in 15 policy events, StC in 9 and the Ministry of Families, Women and Children in 7.

Figure 12. CP policy network as bipartite graph



To delve a bit deeper into who is most involved in these policy initiatives and who is at the centre of the network I transformed the bipartite network into a one-mode network by linking the organisation nodes to each other if they had a common policy event node and weighted their connection to the number of times they shared a policy event. This was done through the MultiMode Networks Projection plug-in in Gephi. The resulting organisation to organisation network, illustrated in Figure 13, has a density value (the ratio of the actual number of connections to all the possible connections) (Zhang et al., 2023) of 0.168. This is an indication of a low-density network that is not tightly connected with only 16% of all possible connections being present. Given that the documentary analysis found that CP is often an add-on to bigger initiatives the lack of connection is perhaps unsurprising as actors are not coming into the policy domain necessarily bound by a similar commitment of reducing CP in schools but find themselves there with other priorities.



By calculating the degree centrality or the organisations who have the most connections in the network (represented in Figure 11 by the size of the node), we can see a replicate of the findings above. The MoE has a degree of 35, followed by UNICEF with a degree of 27, StC with a degree of 25 and UNESCO with a degree of 23. However, being the most connected does not necessarily mean that an organisation is at the centre of the network as we can have many connections but in a peripheral part of the whole network structure. A different measure that can give a better indication of the importance of the position of an organisation within the network is the betweenness centrality which measures how often a node lies in the shortest path connecting all other nodes in the network. Organisations with a high betweenness centrality often act as gatekeepers, intermediaries or brokers. Once again, we can see a major role being played by the same 5 organisations. In Figure 13, a darker shade of blue represents a higher betweenness centrality. From these findings we can say that the policy domain of CP in schools is a loosely connected network of organisations with 5 major players: the MoE, UNICEF, StC, UNESCO and the Ministry of Women, Family, and Children.

5.2.1 Questioning an apparent centrality of the Ivorian government

The SNA graphs show that the MoE is both the most highly connected organisation of the network and is also the actor with the highest betweenness centrality meaning it is the organisation through which we could get the fastest to all other actors of the network. A more central and connected role can suggest a higher degree of influencing capital with the underlying logic being that if an organisation is more connected to others it is less dependent on any specific organisation to broker connections for them and if it can quickly access other players in the network it is a valuable channel for communication (Ireni-Saban & Borohowitch, 2017). However, in this case connections between organisations occur when they have participated in the same CP policy event without distinguishing the type of role played. Therefore, this central position can be deceiving as it does not tell us much about the type of ‘central’ role the MoE played. Its central position within the network could indicate that it is an organisation with decision-making and agenda-setting power regarding the inclusion of CP as a policy problem. However, its central position could also simply indicate its role as an obligatory pass-through because schools fall within its mandate.

To analyse this, I examined the qualitative data, which indicated a clear tendency supporting the latter hypothesis. This hypothesis posits that the centrality of the government does not lie in a decision-making role but rather in its function as a default organisation engaged in receiving, officiating, or implementing tasks. For instance, individuals in the middle space often described the MoE as being present but not the initiator of CP policies nor the one giving directions. In the exchange below for example, UNICEF is given an active role not only of disbursing funds but also in giving instructions, knowing what it wants and even changing the end policy product. In contrast the MoE although called a stakeholder to all of what UNICEF does is portrayed in a more passive role as the official receiver of an end product.

Lucia: And the Ministry, did it participate in (name of policy event)?

Idrissa: Yes, the Ministry, yes, because everything UNICEF does, the Ministry is involved. But there was no money from the Ministry for the data collection, no. But the end result was presented to the Ministry... In all honesty, there is no collaboration as such. UNICEF knows what it wants so it is looking for someone who can do that

job. So there was no cooperation, UNICEF told us: "These are the terms of reference, this is what we expect." So we produced it, we did a draft and they told us "No", they would like us to frame it differently. (M.CSO.Edu)

What Idrissa recognises as an *"honest"* assessment of enactment is one that places the MoE at the centre but only as a receiver of an end product that is driven and even modified by organisations like UNICEF. The term *"honesty"* resurfaces in Thomas's reflection where he acknowledges a lack of active role of the government, *"We need to be honest, generally it comes from over there since we are developing countries...generally when partners leave everything stops. I can say that 80 to 90 per cent of projects come from donors who support us"* (M.Gov.Edu). The repeated use of the term honesty by different actors suggests they are engaging in a critical and self-reflective questioning of the power dynamics at play. In these cases, an honest assessment highlights that in contrast to an ideal scenario where government ownership would be in the driving seat, the great majority of CP policies are not nationally driven.

Documentary analysis of the policy events confirms this as all the policies' origins can be traced back to an international initiative even if some then mutate and take a very local face. A telling example is the development of the new human rights-based school subject which despite being an initiative favoured by the government, external involvement was seen as undermining its legitimacy and effectiveness. As one report notes, the team was *"dominated by IOs to the detriment of local players,"* which compromised both the *"democratic character of the module, but also the philosophy which underpins it, and consequently reduces its chances of success"* (Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2016, p. 15). The experience echoes the development of the televised school curriculum described in Chapter 3 where the exclusion of local voices was described not only as morally problematic, but also as a practical barrier to long-term acceptance and sustainability.

Pascal, another government actor noted that even when national middle space actors were given the opportunity to participate in the framing of policies this occurred in a constrained way: *"Even when we participate ... there is already a skeleton that comes, we are only filling it. So, we can't say that it really comes from here, since the major*

activities come from there, we only adopt" (M.Gov.Edu). By suggesting that the framework is already predetermined, Pascal is highlighting a power dynamic where local actors only have limited influence over the foundational aspects of projects. The phrase *"we can't say that it really comes from here"* reflects a sense of disempowerment and contrast to what 'should' happen.

The interview data also suggests that middle space individuals recognise that it is international organisation who have and employ power in the form of resources to launch these initiatives and that the "power to decide over the distribution of resources is unevenly distributed" (Galtung p. 172). For example, government participants explained that whilst sometimes when they identified needs they would get buy-in from IOs they were unlikely to act independently from them.

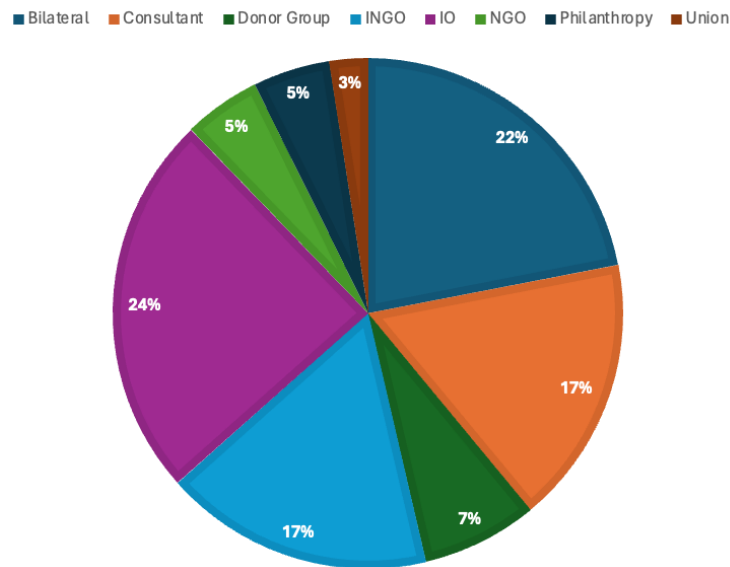
We identify needs, then it's developed and submitted to the partners. When we have the approval of the partner, at that moment, we roll out our programs. But when there is no support, there are no resources, so we cannot lead them. And if we, as a Ministry, decide to carry out the activities, it is really sporadically. (Affoué, F.Gov.CP)

As long as partners do not provide the means, the State does not do much. (Pascal, M.Gov.Edu)

Data on aid funding flows confirms the perception that the monetary engine of educational projects is unanimously IOs and funders (Ministry of Education of Cote d'Ivoire, 2017).

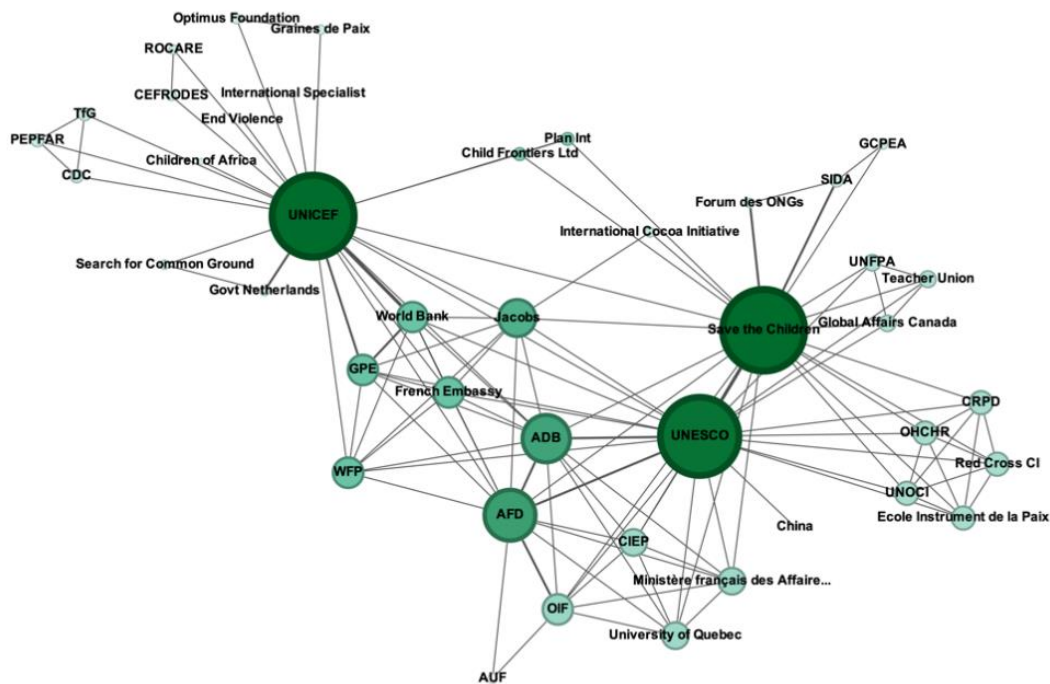
So, whilst at the centre quantitatively if not contextualised through other methods this network visualisation can be deceiving. I therefore decided to analyse the data by excluding national government actors from the network analysis to better understand the power exercised by the other types of organisations that make up the network and whose exchanges and relations might hold greater agenda-setting power. By doing this, 41 actors remained out of which 63% are IOs, bilaterals and international non-governmental organisations.

Figure 14. Network organisations by type



When excluding governmental organisations, the network continues to be loosely connected (density 0.145) but presents a different structure where UNICEF and StC now play similar influential roles in terms of degree centrality (size of the nodes indicates number of connections).

Figure 15. One-mode network without government actors



In figure 15, UNICEF, StC and UNESCO all have similar values of closeness centrality, a measure indicating how close they are to all other actors in the network (the average

distance from a given starting node to all other nodes in the network). This measure indicates that they are potentially playing the role of connectors or gatekeepers to other parts of the network. Qualitative data reinforces this idea. UNICEF for example was identified as acting as a powerful gatekeeper to other funders:

Idrissa: The Ministry followed the donors. It was something that was driven by the past relationship with UNICEF. And since they are the ones who sign or endorse requests for other sources of funding, the Ministry is obliged to follow. You know that we have a lot of our education budget that comes from UNESCO, UNICEF, donors. So, they have the possibility, since they are the ones putting their hands in their pockets, to impose a certain number of things. (M.Univ.Edu)

Karim: It is often the donors that decide because UNICEF is an executing agency. So the donor, when he comes to give his money to UNICEF, he says: "I want it to happen like that" and UNICEF must be able to respect these terms of reference. (M.Gov/IO.Edu)

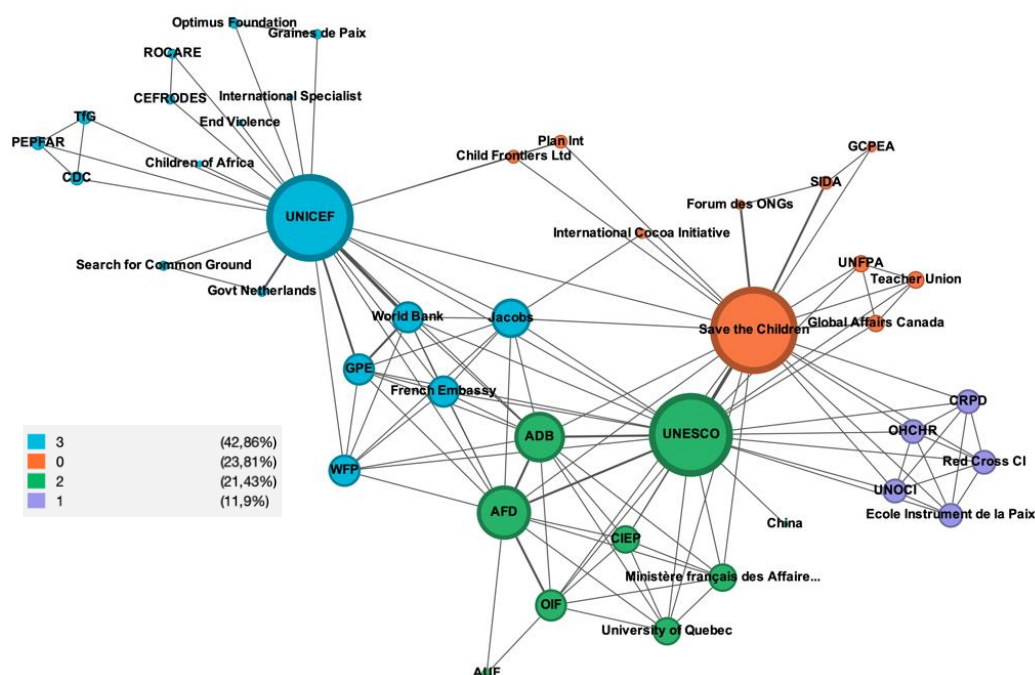
Bakary: There is great involvement from UNICEF and there really is a right of veto from UNICEF. (M.Gov.CP)

Idrissa's phrase "*obliged to follow*" indicates a lack of agency on the part of the Ministry, suggesting that decision-making power lies with the donors who have the funding and with UNICEF that controls who can access funds. The metaphor "*putting their hands in their pockets*" normalises that financial control gives legitimacy to their ability to dictate terms. A normalising or legitimising of this power imbalance because of funds is also present in Karim's description that UNICEF "*must be able to respect these terms of reference*" and as an executing agency it cannot act otherwise as it is bound by the directives of the donors. Finally, Bakary's statement explicitly mentions UNICEF's right of veto, which is legitimised by their significant involvement and financial contributions. This right of veto underscores the authority that comes with providing funds.

Through eliminating the governmental nodes, we can also identify whether different communities or cluster of organisations exist within the network. This was done by running an analysis of the modularity of the network which identifies whether some groups of nodes are connected more densely to each other than to other groups of

nodes in the network. It is a way of detecting communities within a network by calculating the fraction of connections that fall within the given groups minus the expected fraction if the connection were distributed at random (Blondel et al., 2008). High modularity means that the connections amongst that cluster are denser and fewer outside of the cluster. The analysis detected four different communities.

Figure 16. One-mode network without government actors - modularity



By referring to the policy event mapping and documentary analysis these groups seem congruent. For example, the actors in purple show a clique of the humanitarian and peace-oriented participants of the network that were active only at the beginning of the tracked period and only in one policy event, the creation of the Human Rights and Citizenship subject matter. They share common goals and a “humanitarian” culture that probably facilitated exchanges. The green cluster, includes most of the francophone actors, comprising UNESCO whose HQ is based in France. These are actors who were mostly involved in the curriculum reform and teacher training policy events which given the Ivorian school system’s link to the French education system is unsurprising. The largest cluster in blue includes a wide variety of smaller actors who are primarily linked to UNICEF but also includes the strongest concentration of donor groups such as the Global Partnership for Education and the WB. The shape of this group can suggest that UNICEF plays a broker role between a large concentration of

funding related actors and smaller implementation players. And finally, the orange group shows a distinct ecosystem of actors brought together through a Swedish influence present both through SIDA and StC Sweden and with a strong thematic interest on CP.

This network mapping provides a birds-eye view of the structure which binds relationships, roles and power distribution of the CP Ivorian network. The power imbalances within the network, in particular those related to the unequal financial distribution of resources for enacting CP policies impacts how the government's central position plays out during the enactment process. I have identified that the government's centrality is not necessarily reflective of an agenda setting role with regards to CP as most policy events in the network originate from IOs and are tailored to their objectives. Rather than playing a central coordinating role government is described as following the multiple objectives set by international actors. However not being the originators of these policies does not mean that they do not develop ownership nor that they do not play an active role. In the next sections I will delve deeper on the different nuances of how national middle level actors experience the network structure and its power imbalances.

5.3 Experiencing the CP policy network: national middle level actors' perspectives

5.3.1 Low network connectivity experienced as lack of coordination and collaboration

The SNA identified a weakly connected network structure with a large number of policy activities and organisations. This type of structure could indicate that CP policy efforts lack coordination and collaboration and that certain actors act as brokers and gatekeepers. The interview data suggests that the weak network structure is indeed experienced as uncoordinated and inefficient. The idea of truthfulness or honesty as in citations from section 5.2.1, is used again through the word “*frank*”, this time by Sophie (F.IO.CP) to recognise that the ways of working together within the network are not ideal.

We are not frank. What I mean is that we should work better in synergy because the relationships are not...I mean we (name of IO), we are very open to really integrating others, but then we realise that there can be initiatives which are perhaps carried by others, ... and on the ground it really creates a lot of cacophony, ... Afterwards you can see a project which is initiated by an international NGO or a partner ...that does not fit with the vision, and for which people spend a lot of time on. And in the meantime, the resources are not sufficient. If we worked together, we would maximise existing resources much more. I mean we expect good governance, but we ourselves cannot agree amongst each other and we look for the government partner to do that.

The language used by Sophie, such as “*frank*”, “*synergy*”, and “*cacophony*”, frames the discussion in terms of transparency, cooperation, and disorder. Her choice of words underscores the contrast between the ideal state of collaboration and the current uncoordinated situation. Her statement “*We are not frank*” is a moment of self-reflection, acknowledging a lack of transparency within the network but this admission contrasts with her subsequent claim that “*we are very open to really integrating others*”, which presents a more idealised image of the organisation she works for. This contradiction highlights a tension between her personal experience and the organisation's projected identity that might not be fully realised in practice.

Sophie also reflects that it is unfair to expect the normative ideal of good governance and coordination from the government when it is not something that IOs are modelling themselves. According to Sophie they also struggle to achieve internal consensus and effective collaboration and the phrase “*we ourselves cannot agree amongst each other*” is another example of self-reflection of the interpersonal and organisational tensions that hinder effective collaboration. She believes that their lack of collaboration and of shared ways of working or priorities becomes a self-perpetuating practice because it sets a bad example copied by governmental players. Sophie continues:

The partner (government) is observing, and they benefit. If we don't get along, it says: "Wait, I'm not refusing a project. If they send me a project, I'll do it. Afterwards, I'll go to the other partner. I do not report to the other what I have done with the other etc". If there really was, I mean an information circuit which was strong, which was correct and that we could plan interventions so they complemented each other in a locality...

We would know who is where, who is doing what. We would ask how are we complementary to the action of the other and not recreate the wheel. I think it would be a big advantage for us...Just last week, we had a meeting with the Ministry of Family and we have programs...see these meetings we do them individually, that means that UNICEF, with its program will meet the Ministry, then UNFPA as well, UN Women will go to meet them, but we are all working on the same targets!

Sophie gives a concrete example how their network practices privilege separate and bilateral lines of communication with the government. The description of government as benefitting suggests that she holds the perception that officials aim to take advantage of the disjointed efforts and that they might not value efficient coordination. In contrast an idealised state of coordination is described as potentially being “*a big advantage for us*” referring to international actors. The framing implies that coordination would not be something government actors would favour, preferring and encouraging partners to operate in silos.

Similarly, Mamadou, a child protection government official, referred to the lack of coordination as their only “*sin*” and identified it as the primary obstacle to achieving their objectives. The use of the word “*sin*” implies that this way of working might be openly recognised as serving the self-interest of organisations or individuals rather than the overall social change objectives. This religious connotation suggests a moral failing, implying that the current practices are not just inefficient but ethically problematic.

When we analysed our assets and realised that we have everything: human resources, intelligence, the minimum of structures, strategies and everything. We had everything but we had only one sin. One thing we don't get right. It was coordination. (M.Gov.CP)

Mamadou goes on to reflect why coordination was so difficult to achieve, noting that the lack of coordination seems inherent to the way the policy network structure is built. However, in contrast to Sophie, he describes a network in which competition also amongst international actors incentivises maintaining a few important gatekeepers who guard their own access to resources:

I have the impression that there is competition between the (financial and technical) partners and this competition between the partners has a negative impact on us.

Maybe they have the same donors? Maybe they have something else, but I don't know. But they compete with each other. Everyone wants to assert themselves. Everyone wants to say that it was me who did it here. I was the one who managed to help this. So where we think of coordination, they divide and conquer. They aim to get their result. They work to have their financing.

The repetition of "everyone wants to" emphasises the pervasive nature of competitive behaviour among partners and how this behaviour percolates from IOs to the other actors of the network. This language suggests that competition is a systemic issue rather than isolated incidents. The phrase "they aim to get their result" frames the IOs' actions as goal-oriented but self-serving. This representation contrasts with the ideal of coordination, where actions would be aligned with collective objectives.

Several other interviewees confirmed that by working in isolation, each international organisation was protecting the power they had in different parts of the policy network. This made them want to "assert" themselves as the organisation who made a difference to a policy problem. For instance, Sophie (F.IO.CP) noted that whilst her organisation was well-known and did not have to demonstrate its worth, it was possible that for other smaller organisations in need of financing there was a disincentive to collaborate with others. Alassane (M.INGO.Edu), also notes how working in isolation was incentivised by a desire to own policy wins even between different programmes within the same organisation:

I think that what we should have done that we failed to do is that we did not coordinate our action with that of the Protection program. That was really a problem, it was felt even in our teams because the coordinator we had for the Education program was very, how can I put it, very jealous of his work, he wanted to show that his program worked. So he really did not want to involve the coordination of the Protection program.

Once again, there is a self-critical reflection on the lack of coordination through the phrase "we should have done that we failed to do". Alassane's admission highlights a gap between the ideal collaborative action and the actual practice. Jealousy is framed as a barrier to effective coordination, suggesting that individual pride and competition can undermine collective goals.

Similarly to Alassane, Mamadou (M.Gov.CP) notes how even within different government departments there existed practices that siloed efforts. One way organisations protected their access to project funding was through cultivating a special relationship with a funder or the executing agency. This happened either through personal connections or by being fluent in those funder's requirements and budget practices. These practices were in the self-interest of that department's financial health but detrimental to the wider goals of protecting children.

I admit we stumbled. People did not agree because the initial resistance was still present and everyone was protecting something. "Ahh...if I know a financial partner's system of funding and with this partner we are good friends and he trusts me today thanks to him we implemented X. If I stay in close contact it will continue to support me and I will bear the name of the X policy and I will continue to work separately with the partner and I will have my funding." But we will not have helped the children of Côte d'Ivoire.

The phrase "*I admit we stumbled*" is another example of a self-reflective admission of failure, highlighting the challenges of working in collaboration within the network despite knowing this would be a better course of action. Special and direct relations between an international organisation with access to funding and government departments are often formalised through bespoke government staff positions. These individuals' job is to act as coordinators for the external organisation's activities within the government. As hybrid positions, they sit within Ministries and were identified as good for bilateral coordination because all information becomes centralised.

So the coordinator is there to ensure synergies. It is true that (name of IO) cooperates with the Ministry but (name of IO) and (name of IO)'s staff are not aware of all of the internal workings of the Ministry. So the coordinator is there to tell (name of IO), for this activity should include these departments...It is there to help implement the (name of IO's education activities. (Badou, M.Gov/IO.Edu)

The phrase "*the coordinator is there to ensure synergies*" suggests an ideal of collaboration and integration. However, this is followed by a clarification that "*It is there to help implement the IO's education activities*" which positions the Ministry as a facilitator of the IO's agenda rather than an equal partner. And whilst these positions

could be a positive example of coordination between an external organisation and the government, as a practice, dedicated staff for specific IOs might also re-enforce silos if we consider the network as a whole. For example, when each international organisation has a specially tailored government staff to help facilitate their objectives this does not provide any incentive for sharing information or collaboration between themselves. Furthermore, within the government this creates 'experts' on the working cultures of international agencies who might be hesitant to share the access to power this conveys. It also makes bigger organisations that can afford these positions have an emboldened gatekeeper role as they have a privileged communication channel to the government.

5.3.2 Perceived consequences of uncoordinated policy work on preventing CP

Most interviewees indicated that the enactment of policies in a fragmented manner, where each organisation sought to safeguard its own power or influence or aimed to assert its role in achieving success was detrimental to the attainment of policy objectives. This tendency to prioritise individual organisational interests over collective goals not only hindered effective policy enactment but also had personal repercussions for some participants. For instance, Karim (M.Gov/IO.Edu) described how policies often became personalised to the individual in charge of its coordination and he perceived others sabotaging them to prevent individuals from claiming success.

There were frustrations and even central directors who said: "The (name of policy event) initiative, these are the stories of Mr. X... They thought it was my personal matter because in fact, that's also the problem. Often, we link a concept to an individual. That's not it, we have to see the universal side of it. When we talk about children's rights, it's everywhere. We often say: "No, this project is for him." No, the project is not for an individual, a project is made to improve the conditions of everyone. They often personalise problems. The moment they personalise, they put themselves in a position of boycott. And that is common. This thing must not succeed, even if it is good, it must not succeed because it is in his name. So then, we are no longer in science. Often, we are faced with all of this.

The statement "*we have to see the universal side of it*" illustrates the struggle to shift the focus from individual or organisational ownership to a broader, more collaborative

perspective. For Karim it was frustrating to have to face barriers that were not allowing “good” things to succeed, noting an emotional and personal toll. When individuals went against the established network way of working in silos either by trying to coordinate or pull initiatives under one comprehensive programme they faced strong opposition. They were branded as rebellious, problematic and a nuisance by other network actors that did not understand why they would want to do things differently, *“I am considered rebellious. People find me difficult because during a meeting I say to (name of IO), for example, ‘No, what you are sending is not how we see it’ ”* (Mamadou, M.Gov.CP).

Individuals that tried to work differently also encountered resistance from IOs as they often sought to regain control of collaborative efforts. For example, in the case described below despite a collaborative and government owned approach to developing a response plan an international organisation is perceived as blocking efforts by taking over the process through hiring a consultant that will finalise the work.

There is (name of IO) which is there, there is (name of INGO) which is there, there are other structures which are there, and by remaining in the toss-up of who must do what, who has the authority, who does not have the authority we are left in the void. We began a process of developing a response plan, we developed priority areas, all that. Where are we today? At point zero! Then we learned that (name of IO) had recruited a consultant to further develop a response plan. Well, all that means that today we haven't moved yet. (Bakary, M.Gov.CP)

Bakary positions various entities as being present and fighting over authority. He critiques a power dynamic where unclear leadership and decision-making authority hinders collective and effective action. He reveals how the government authority which had begun a process is overwritten by other actors through the introduction of an expert consultant to restart the work. Bakary, positions himself as a critical observer of the situation, expressing frustration with the lack of progress caused by the power struggles. The word frustration was commonly used by middle space actors to express their experience of working in an uncoordinated and piecemeal manner, *“It is frustrating. When you are a civil servant it is frustrating”* (Drissa, M.Gov.CP).

Negative consequences also went beyond the personal experiences and frustration of individuals. For example, Mamadou (M.Gov.CP) below notes that “*following funds*” in the form of uncoordinated initiatives of external organisations without a holistic vision or policy goal had not yielded positive results despite good intentions.

Our country, has always highlighted issues of protection of children and women. Unfortunately, these were scattered initiatives. These were well-intended initiatives, things that came from everywhere that we were trying to catch up with. These were projects, these were programs which were often imposed by donors because we did not yet have a global framework to organise national coordination in matters of child protection. And when you have a partner, simply to illustrate... if you have a partner called (name of INGO), he comes up he says "I have funding to deal with schooling issues and you follow it... Then you have another partner who comes, called (name of IO). I have funding for issues of vulnerability of female children HIV/AIDS and you follow him and that was how we followed everyone and then there was nothing that was organised and coordinated.

Mamadou does not accuse organisations of foul play or having bad intentions but highlights that this uncoordinated way of working meant they were simply “*catching-up*” and “*following*” others’ “*imposed*” priorities and not working towards what was actually important. This sentiment of working to achieve misguided objectives is also strongly found in the final document of the “Mapping and Analysis of the Child Protection Sector” policy event. The document warns that lack of coordination and of a holistic vision puts the system “*at risk*” as donors are accused of exploiting it for their own individual policy wins:

We note that donors do not seem to be devoting themselves to a systematic or deep understanding of the mechanisms already established but rather are making the most of specific components of the system already in place for their sectoral objectives. The most important framework to guide their actions is undoubtedly the CRC. Coordination between donors shows considerable gaps. Donors have invested significantly in child protection initiatives in Côte d'Ivoire, but through a lack of national coordination and the imposition of their priorities and approaches, they are putting the overall system at risk to achieve sectoral results.

The assertion that donors are "*making the most...of the system...for their sectoral objectives*" seems to suggest an exploitative use of national resources to achieve external priorities. Moreover, the reference to the Convention as the "*most important framework*" guiding donor actions places a preference for established international norms as misaligned with local needs or realities. This preference can be seen as a form of hegemony, where the dominant discourse of children's rights, as framed by IOs, is seen to dictate the priorities of local actors. The document also underscores the consequences of this misalignment between donor objectives and local needs, suggesting that the imposition of donor priorities can jeopardise the integrity of the child protection system. The notion that donors are "*putting the overall system at risk*" highlights the precarious nature of such interventions, where the pursuit of results for donors may come at the expense of comprehensive and sustainable solutions.

What these quotes suggest is that national middle level actors identify risks or significant downsides to the network's usual way of working, which prioritises small individual wins for network organisations over significant but complex change needed for children's wellbeing. It takes a toll both on the individuals working in that system and in the system's ability to function. The frustration over a lack of a systems approach resulting in short-term and perishable initiatives was so often expressed by middle space interviewees that it became one of my most populous inductive codes.

This sentiment was particularly salient when individuals reflected on the real impact of the Ministerial decree banning CP, a policy considered as externally imposed and incomplete. Two individuals did express that the decree banning CP was necessary even without an adequate follow-up because it made teachers take notice of the issue and perhaps moderate their use of CP.

At a certain point, we needed to stop it. Because, we said to ourselves, "Awareness raising, the time it takes, the teachers will continue to hit". So the authority said: I am exercising my authority, and I am making the decision, "Stop me that right now!" And well, when it comes to the law, everyone is fearful. Everyone is wary. It helps to reduce, to attenuate the thing and now, awareness raising can start...(Badou, M.Gov/IO.Edu)

However, many others, felt this was done too hastily, without sufficient consultation and most importantly without the necessary follow-up. The process was described as

“brutal”, “imposed”, “something that fell unto them” or not “sufficiently ripe”. Marc who was a teacher at the time of the 2009 decree described that the message teachers internalised was that they were being labelled unfairly as tormentors for children and that all they did for students was going unappreciated.

We understood it in the following way. That the teacher was considered a tormentor for the child without considering all the efforts we did for children...we had the impression they were saying teachers were too mean...so for those mean teachers we must write up a text... Yet we could have proceeded differently to bring teachers to behave correctly with students (Marc, M.Gov.Edu)

The language used by Marc such as “*tormentor*” and “*mean*”, articulates a sense of victimisation and illustrates how the ban was perceived as framing teachers in a starkly negative view that contrasted with his perspective that teachers' efforts were not being adequately recognised. The phrase “*we must write up a text*” suggests a bureaucratic response to the issue, implying that formal regulations were chosen as the solution to perceived teacher misconduct. This language highlights the tension between punitive approaches and more nuanced, supportive interventions. The phrase “*we could have proceeded differently*” indicates an awareness of alternative approaches that could have fostered a more constructive dialogue between teachers and policymakers, emphasising the need for a nuanced understanding of discipline in educational settings. He notes that there could have been other policy choices made to reach that same objective, suggesting that it was not the objective that posed the problem but rather the chosen approach.

A profound feeling of not being recognised and supported to change was compounded by a suspicion of the external origin of the policies. For instance, Keba (M.CSO.Edu), shared that the network's over reliance on external organisations made teachers suspicious that the ban was one of the many external impositions or foreign trends followed by the government. He refers to IOs' techniques of training and taking officials on international trips as evidence of their influence in setting the agenda and the policy choice of the ban as a necessary solution.

The criteria which are identified as being criteria of violence against children generally come from outside, and as our country is always in a position of financial demand,

support from our systems which is totally extroverted. The Ivorian education system has influences from Belgium, Canada and France. We have all these influences at the same time in the system and we change the programs depending on where people have gone for training today. From Canada, they came back with what they think they found to be extraordinary, etc. So all of that comes into play and we experienced it as something that was imposed on us even though we were aware that it was also due to the fact that there were exaggerations.

The phrase "*what they think they found to be extraordinary*" implies scepticism towards the imported ideas and practices recalling the PEPTV experience of the 70s.

Furthermore, the Ivorian system's dependency on foreign aid makes him question the local validity of the criteria with which VAC is defined. Keba notes how a distrust of the ban's international origins and a history of the Government following trends that had not worked before, are all complexities "*that come into play*" in teachers' experience of the policy enactment process and perception of the ban as "*imposed*". Yaya (M.Gov.Edu), described how amongst colleagues in the Government the external origin was also mentioned to discredit the ban or to simply leave it without the necessary actions to enforce it.

One must admit, this is one of the limits of our school administration. Yes, we publish rules and then well, once we have answered to that then it's good. There is no follow-up, there is no work to accommodate the actors to these new models. That's it. Because you can't believe that by saying it... you can't content yourself just to say it... Maybe it wasn't all very ripe. The idea had not reached a critical mass of actors to move towards this. Every time we launch something, we're told "Ooooh, it's a white thing.

Yaya "*admits*" the inadequacy of merely stating policies without ensuring their practical adoption, critiquing the superficial and limited approach of the CP ban. The phrase "*it wasn't all very ripe*" suggests that the ideas and policies were not fully developed or ready for implementation. It highlights how the premature nature of the initiative and the lack of readiness among the actors made the ban easily discredited as a "*white thing*".

Mistrust of external actors' role in the promotion of the ban and a top-down and superficial enactment were intensified by what some actors identified as a poorly

communicated message on children's rights at the time. Jaqueline (F.CSO.CP) for instance labelled communicating the message of children's rights without due consideration to duties a "sin" committed by civil society.

It was very poorly conveyed. There were organisations who came to promote children's rights which were not well known in Africa. ... people thought that by advocating rights, duties would certainly not be overlooked because it was duties that were more accentuated at the family level. So it was the way of conveying the message that really failed... The CRC focused on the rights of the child. But the African Charter placed emphasis on rights and duties. This means that African politicians had not hidden our needs. But we focused our campaigns on the CRC which means that one part of the message went missing, it must be said...we have sinned somewhere. It was overlooked by actors of civil society and then the Ministry, and now today, it is something we need to address.

Jaqueline regrets the fact that civil society adopted the Convention's framing of the issue and used the dominant discourse on children's rights messaging that was favoured by IOs. She continues "*there is also the way of conveying the message. ...civil society has sinned on this point. Because the message can be good, the message can be excellent, but if the messenger or the way of writing the message is not appropriate, the message will not get through*". She is not disagreeing with the message but with the framing used, noting the gap between the intended message and how it was received in context. She admits having "*sinned on this point*" suggesting the communication strategy a moral failure and regrets not having used a message that had already been contextualised by African politicians.

In hindsight several middle space actors expressed that the discourse they used was not helpful and they wished they had approached it differently. Their regret in using the discourse is not because of a disagreement on its values but because of the distrust it caused in communities. A distrust that today made it harder to reach their goals of reducing CP, "*So there is this breakdown in trust. So we are no longer likely to listen to you because we listened to you the first time and it was detrimental to us since things were not explained as they should have been*" (Nathalie, F.CSO.CP).

What these middle space actors expressed is that policy enactment that is piecemeal, uncoordinated, justified via a children's rights framing and easily traced back to foreign priorities, the type of enactment which was privileged by the CP network structure, had tangible negative effects on the acceptance of the ban. These enactment characteristics acted as diversions that discredited the ban entirely even when there was a recognition that some teachers were using violence in unacceptable forms and a possible collective agreement that some measures were needed to curb excessive violence. The chosen approach and discourse are identified by middle space actors as causing concrete difficulties in achieving the overall objective of preventing CP in schools. Eric (M.Gov.Edu), summarises the unintended consequences well:

What was a bit of a shame was that after signing the order, as I now manage a project, I now understand that the project ended at (name of INGO) level, there was no more funding. So there were not enough trainings,... the project having certainly ended, there was no longer any funding to continue the expansion towards primary school teachers... The teachers then said: "Well now, they tell us not to hit the children anymore, they can do what they want, we have become the slaves of our children. » Madame Camara, who was the minister at the time, they said about her: "Ah, the children of Camara, we don't touch them! " And so, it was really distorted, if I want to be polite, but really it was perverted, they said: "We don't touch the children anymore, they can do whatever they want." But that is the lack of information and training on the decree itself. The decree was issued and disseminated but there were no campaigns or training for teachers on the ground. And so for people it became reduced to the fact that they must no longer touch the children. You arrived in the classrooms, the children are unruly, they do what they want and the teachers are there, they say: "Ah, we don't touch children anymore, otherwise you go to prison, otherwise the UN will come and get you because you hit a child. » However, the information that we provided, that we gave to the CAFOP teachers, and the training that was provided and the decree itself says that we must not hit children, we must not hit them or brutalize them, we should not inflict humiliating punishments on them but there are alternatives.

Eric starts by mentioning that now he understands that the ban on CP was a limited and time-bound policy event and that the external organisation advocating for it would not be able to support the long-term actions needed for change. Today he is

aware of this because he is now in charge of an externally funded project but at the time this was confusing. These realisations of how internationally originated policy events worked was something that several other participants mentioned. At the time of their enactment many middle level actors lacked clarity on why and when support would run out. One can imagine that being lobbied strongly and passionately to take action against VAC to then have those advocating not continuing the necessary efforts might have been confusing if individuals lacked visibility on the constraints of this particular way of working. Alassane (M.INGO.Edu), for example recalls an exchange he had with a government middle level actors that illustrates the confusion over the roles, responsibilities and commitment of external actors:

He actually told me this last time: "You didn't continue the training." I said, "But no, it's not up to us to do it. We did it as part of a program, if you are interested, look for funding. It was I who came to you with the financing, you didn't even have to look. It was I who came to tell you -Listen, you have an activity that will take you six months or a year, we will finance that for you.- ...So why aren't you looking for funding? (name of IO) is there, (name of INGO) is still there".

Had government middle level actors understood at the start the level of support available would they have taken different approaches? While it is difficult to determine retrospectively, possessing this knowledge today certainly provides these actors with a different perspective. This knowledge on the network structure and ways of working can open up possibilities for alternative strategies and counter work in the enactment of CP policies.

The second part of Eric's quote illustrates the concrete negative impact that choosing a CP ban without guaranteeing the necessary follow-up over other possible policy solutions had on creating adherence to the idea of banning CP. The language used to describe the teachers' reactions, such as "*slaves of our children*" or "*the UN will come and get you*" carries strong negative connotations and illustrates teachers' real sense of disempowerment and frustration. Overall, Eric describes that enacting the ban as a result of a short-term external project rather than as a result of a comprehensive government plan meant that teachers and communities received mixed and incomplete messages about its intentions and insufficient training or accompaniment.

He refers to the message and the intention behind the ban as being so “*perverted*” that it had the unintended consequence of making teachers disengage entirely from their work in maintaining school discipline.

Eric’s reflection exemplifies well how actors are aware that the structure and power disbalances of the CP policy network negatively impacted the chance of success of efforts seeking to prevent CP. In this case, a concrete policy win such as a ministerial ban was favoured over sustainably changing the workforce’s understanding of CP. The ensuing consequences of teacher disengagement reinforced a negative reaction to CP efforts that might have been avoided. National middle space actors, while reflecting on policy enactment, demonstrated a keen awareness that the prevailing network structure incentivised fragmented efforts and minimal collaboration and that this contradicted with an idealised vision of policy work. They attributed this to the necessity for actors to showcase their individual contributions and policy successes to legitimise their role in the network, which often comes at the expense of collective action. They lamented that this way of working often meant that a systemic approach to social change was a lost opportunity. Of even greater significance, they identified concrete ways in which badly enacted initiatives were counter-productive to efforts seeking to build long-lasting behavioural change that would prevent CP in schools.

Mamadou (M.Gov.CP) below articulates a desire to break free from this way of policy enactment and blames external organisations as those resisting change:

And this is what we are fighting for. We want to get out of that. We say it! We shout it loud and clear but the partners always want to stay in that. So for me it's questioning them but why are you focusing on that? They answer: “No, it was our country that told us to do it, another country gave us funding for that.” But we've been told this for years! We are not comfortable with it. It doesn't suit us. We don't want that.

His resistance language suggests that the struggle is not merely about rejecting specific policies but is emblematic of a broader resistance to the power dynamics that dictate what is considered legitimate knowledge and action. His insistence on questioning the partners' focus is meant to expose how following external priorities is not conducive to social change and to reveal the contradictions of accountability and ownership in

development practices. The insistence on articulating their own terms of reference and objectives signifies a demand for recognition and respect for local knowledge systems.

Overall, the analysis suggests the presence of a strong frustration with how the network structure confines the agency of individual middle level actors from working differently, perhaps more efficiently towards preventing CP in school classrooms. Middle level actors' "cognitive and strategic 'margin of manoeuvre'...(that is, their capacity to know and act with relative autonomy)" (de Sardan, 2020, p. 61) in other words their agency is perceived to have significant constraints. As illustrated above by Mamadou's emphatic language and repetition of "*we've been told this for years*" and "*we don't want that*" this is a long-standing issue triggering deep-seated frustration with a lack of change. Despite individual will being present throughout the middle space, the network's structure tends to thwart individual efforts to do enactment differently. An exchange between Marc and Daouda, two education government middle space actors, illustrates the dismay and frustration as they noted that the network kept repeating the same mistakes.

Marc: Everyone knows that the choices we make lead to repeated failures of the programs that are initiated. Everybody knows it. What motivates people to keep going in this way?...

Daouda: That's a big question...we're waiting for the answer. All of us. Lucia we are waiting for the answer. (laughter)

Whilst I do not claim to have answered this complex question, the data suggests that part of the answer lies in the inherent constraints present in the type of CP policy network structure enacting policies. A dispersed and weakly connected CP policy network in which IOs dominate the resource landscape, limits the individual agency of the national middle space to collaborate more transparently towards collective goals. The dominance of IOs often leads to a top-down approach, which may not always align with the local context and needs. Consequently, the national middle space finds itself in a reactive rather than proactive position, limiting its capacity to innovate and adapt policies to better protect children in school environments. By making these structural constraints visible middle level actors might be able to collectively decide to change

policy enactment practices that they identify as hindering the objective of preventing CP in school classrooms.

5.4 Conclusions

In this chapter, a network perspective was adopted to deepen understanding of the power dynamics and relationships shaping the enactment of CP policies in Côte d'Ivoire. Mapping the policy network revealed how CP emerged and evolved as a policy problem through four key gateways: school access, peace education, teacher training, and child protection. Each of these gateways introduced “a priori” conditions, such as the discourse of children’s rights and the framing of government as the primary duty bearer of those rights, which then had a profound influence on which policy solutions were legitimised and prioritised.

However, these normative framings were not part of the government’s original rationale for engaging with these policy areas. CP became a policy issue not because it was initially identified as a national priority, but because it was weaved onto existing initiatives by international actors. As documented in Chapter 4, international organisations have consistently shaped Côte d'Ivoire’s education policy agenda, and CP was no exception. Agenda-setting and material power remain concentrated in the hands of international actors, who used policy events to frame CP through a children’s rights lens. Although the MoE appears central in the policy network, its role was more reactive than directive, consistent with a long-standing pattern of externally driven reform. Policies like the CP ban were enacted to satisfy with international expectations, and lacked the sustained follow-up and local engagement needed for meaningful implementation.

Lack of national ownership cannot be attributed solely to differences with local understandings of authority, discipline, and educational success. It was also contextual because these reforms were introduced amongst multiple competing crises of resource intensive curricular reforms, damaged school infrastructure and an overcrowding of classrooms due to conflict and a new policy of obligatory schooling. All of this compounded by the fact that the educational system before the civil conflict was already reeling from a decade of underinvestment in the eighties.

The legacy of externally driven reforms has also shaped the structure of the CP policy network itself. The network is loosely connected, competitive, and often uncoordinated. The proliferation of short-term, donor-funded initiatives with limited integration into a coherent national strategy reflects a broader historical pattern of “projectisation” in Ivorian education policy. This structure incentivises individual organisational visibility over systemic change and limits the agency of national middle actors to coordinate or sustain long-term efforts. Collaboration is further discouraged by the perception that access to resources depends on maintaining “special relationships” with donors often based on shared language, frameworks, or priorities. This fragmented and externally oriented structure has had tangible consequences. The short-term vision of CP policy enactment, combined with the dominant ‘CP as VAC’ discourse and a lack of sustained engagement with teachers and communities, was identified by middle space actors as counterproductive. Rather than fostering change, it generated mistrust, resistance, and confusion, ultimately undermining efforts to reduce CP and improve children’s wellbeing. Whilst many individuals expressed wanting to change these ways of working the weight of the network structure made collective efforts difficult to sustain.

However, the analysis also revealed that policy events emerging from the child protection field engage differently with the ‘CP as VAC’ discourse. These initiatives represent a more critical space that calls for a reflection on the actions of all network actors in the policy enactment process, “A first step in the right direction would be for all those involved in the field of child protection (including the government, UN agencies, NGOs, and donors) to conduct a self-assessment” (Krueger & Canavera, 2010, p. 108) . It is also a space that stretches the children’s rights discourse to include a discussion on context, cultural differences and a consideration of parental expectations of schools. It does not shy away from the need for in-depth debate on CP, as illustrated in the Ministry’s guidelines, “bringing this question to the forefront (CP) and leading a substantive debate can only be beneficial to the education system as a whole” ⁶⁷ (MENET, 2015, p. 15).

⁶⁷ “Mettre au premier plan cette question et mener un débat de fond ne peut qu’être salubre au système éducatif comme un tout.”

In sum, the historical and contextual conditions in Côte d'Ivoire have shaped CP policies in ways that go far beyond their formal content. They have influenced how CP is framed, how policies are enacted, how they are received by key actors, and how they are contested. Understanding these dynamics is essential for designing more contextually grounded, collaborative, and sustainable approaches to preventing CP in schools. In the next chapter I will continue to deepen this understanding by examining the micro-level, embodied experiences of national middle space actors. By exploring how these individuals personally relate to CP both as a social practice and as a policy issue Chapter 6 adds a critical layer of analysis that considers how lived experience, memory, and bodily knowledge mediate the enactment of CP policies in Côte d'Ivoire.

CHAPTER 6. Corporal punishment as violence: embodied perspectives of national middle actors

In chapter 5 I adopted a bird's eye view of the Ivorian CP policy network to analyse how power was distributed across policy events and organisations. I also zoomed in to explore how individuals from the national middle policy space experienced working within such a network structure. In this chapter, I continue zooming in to focus on these individuals' embodied experience of CP and of enacting CP policies that have largely privileged the 'CP as VAC' discourse.

Research focusing on the embodied lived experience recognises that the body and its senses are not merely passive receivers of policy but active sites through which meaning is made, negotiated and contested (Leigh & Brown, 2021). As Pillow argues (2003), attending to the lived, embodied experience of policy actors challenges the traditional “*‘view from above or from nowhere’, the seemingly objective and neutral position, vs acknowledging its own embodied, subjective position in the policy process*” (p.153). Because CP happens in the body and is also inflicted through an adult's own physicality a focus on the embodied experience of Ivorian policy actors adds an additional and important layer of context.

In this chapter, I explore how policy actors' embodied memories of CP, whether as receivers, witnesses, or enforcers, interact with the 'CP as VAC' discourse and shape their engagement with CP policies. Embodied knowledge, shaped by personal histories, cultural norms, and institutional practices, mediates how actors interpret, internalise, or resist policy discourses. These embodied experiences, in turn, contribute to the formation of the policy actor's subjectivity. Drawing on Ball's (2015a) conceptualisation of policy as discourse, I argue that policy does not merely prescribe action but also constructs particular kinds of subjects. In this sense, the enactment of policy is simultaneously a process of self-formation. By examining how the embodied knowledge of the middle space functions as a site of both policy experience and meaning-making, this chapter adds a critical layer of analysis to understanding how CP policies are interpreted and enacted in practice.

6.1 Experience of growing up with corporal punishment

All middle space actors interviewed shared personal childhood experiences of being disciplined through CP and/or witnessing it in the classroom. Although CP was recognised as a normal occurrence in schools all interviewees recalled it as a difficult ordeal. To describe their experience they used terms that unequivocally linked it to violence such as war, prison and weapon. For example, Assane (M.INGO.CP) compared the act of going to school to going off to battle because of the fear it induced, *“We had a phobia of school because when you went it was like were you're going to war”*. Karim (M.Gov/IO.Edu) compared school to a prison *“When you go to school you are already scared the whole time you are at school. The school is like a prison”*, and referred to teachers' whips as weapons used to keep the classroom quiet *“You stay calm because the teacher is reinforced by the chicotte, he has a weapon”*. Most interviewees described CP occurrences vividly, recalling noises, specific days of the week it happened more frequently, the techniques used and the specific reasons for it happening.

My teacher for example had his chicotte which he called mosquito....when he waved it around, you heard the noise it was like mosquitoes flying around. Many children dropped out of school because of this. (Thomas, M.Gov.Edu)

So at school, Monday mornings were terrible days. Days that really scared us because they were the days when we had to recite all the lessons. (Assane, M.INGO.CP)

For example, in CM2, I remember... there were days when... uh it was Mondays;...the teacher had a way of dressing and when he dressed like that we said: Ah today it's going to get hot! (Mariam, F.Gov.CP)

We had to go out and cut the chicottes ourselves and then he selected the good chicottes, the most flexible and he kept them in the corner...(Karim, M.Gov.Edu)

At the time when I was in primary school, there was a lot of physical violence.... Everything revolved around punishments, kneeling, crawling with the elbows, being subjected to beatings, slaps, punches to the head. (Fofana, M.CSO.Edu)

Instances of particularly severe and unjust CP were recalled intensely. For example Eric (M.Gov.Edu) said one specific occasion would *“mark him till his death”* and he still

talked about it with his classmates of the time, “ *It was terrible ! When I remember that image, it makes me shiver. I wonder to this day how it could have crossed someone's mind to hit children like that*”. Fofana (M.CSO.Edu) recalled witnessing a teacher beat one of his classmates to such a degree that he broke the student’s arm, “*and of course, the parents agreed to this...They had a green light*”.

Overall, the data suggests a strong recognition and agreement that they experienced CP in schools as violence, in particular excessive displays and abuse of its use. In my fieldnotes I marked being surprised by the middle space's overwhelming embodied experience of ‘CP as VAC’ and an initial impression that there seemed to be no divergence from the international discourse. The vivid accounts of the violence they experienced in schools meant that at first glance I was drawn to assume a unanimous rejection of CP’s use in classrooms and an unproblematic adherence to the international ‘CP as VAC’ discourse. It was easy, almost natural, at this point to interpret their jarring accounts of violence as fitting squarely with the discourse that was most familiar to me. I experienced firsthand Bacchi (2015), Foucault (1980) and Scheurich's (1994) warning that policy problem framings can become preconceptual moral fields that limit and affect what can be thought about, thus making different interpretations almost invisible.

6.1.1 Adding nuance and “la pesanteur du terrain” to the corporal punishment discourse

Despite the embodied experience of CP as violence described above, further analysis of the data suggests important differences between the conceptualisations mobilised by middle space actors and a discourse which relied on children's rights. Similar to research on children’s perceptions of CP in the African context (Archambault, 2009; Fay, 2017; Twum-Danso, 2013), participants of the middle space also differentiated between excessive forms of CP, which they could easily identify as violent, and other uses that were not identified as belonging to the same ‘violence’ category. They mobilised an understated quest for nuance and contextualisation which felt subtle because one could easily limit the analysis to participants’ vivid accounts of CP as violent acts. It is understandable to see how these subtleties and divergences might be overlooked in superficial interactions between national and international

policymakers. Yet when analysing the data in more detail there is also complexity and a contextualisation of this embodied experience that does not fit neatly with the dominant discourse in which all acts of CP are VAC because they are a violation of children's rights. Instead, the data shows that participants differentiate between acts of CP, identifying some as violent and others as less so. For example, Alassane (M.INGO.Edu) considered himself fortunate not to have experienced CP in school because his mother was a known school director. Yet, in the same sentence, he explains never being hit he also mentions he had "of course" been whipped sometimes.

I was in one school and my mother was the principal in the other school. So the teachers were a little bothered to touch me...I don't remember being hit at school. Of course, from time to time a blow with a stick because you made a mistake in mathematics but that's all, it wasn't bad. I was protected by that.

He considers himself as having been protected from violence because whatever CP he experienced was not "bad" or done with malicious intent. "*Mechancete*" which can be translated as meanness or maliciousness was a word used often to distinguish the experiences of CP which were violent from those that were not "bad". Participants frequently described teachers perpetrating violence as being *méchant* denoting that they considered not only the severity of the physical act but also the teachers' intentions behind acts of CP to label them as violent. Affoué (F.Gov.CP), for example notes *méchancete* as being the distinguishing factor that made her experience of CP violent.

Ah, it was difficult! It was difficult because I couldn't bear the chicotte. I was afraid of the chicotte. At one point, I remember, I was in primary school, I almost dropped out, because I had a teacher who was mean. In fact, with him it was meanness, it must be said. It was meanness...Often there were even students who prayed that their teacher died. I promise you! Yes at school, there are some who prayed. I remember certain conversations with our classmates at school when we were, "Hey if someone can come and tell us today that the teacher is dead because he was so mean".

Her repeated emphasis on "meanness" and the extreme reactions of the students, including prayers for the teacher's death, underscores the teacher's abuse of power, which went beyond discipline and into cruelty. A malicious intent was commonly

used to identify an act of CP as violent and to differentiate it from other instances of CP that were accompanied with different more positive intentions. This differentiation suggests that interviewees did not necessarily navigate their experience of CP through a complete adherence to the 'CP as VAC' discourse which would constitute any CP as violence because it represents an abuse of children's rights. Rather they made use of nuance, grey areas and stepped away from binary thinking by offering different interpretations of mild uses of CP that were combined with a positive intent from teachers or caregivers.

However, through the prism of the dominant framing of 'CP as VAC' interviewees' descriptions of a tempered experience of CP feels dissonant and could be perceived as justification of violence or of adherence to a cultural relativist perspective. To understand the subtleties in the experience of CP beyond the dichotomy of universalists and cultural relativists positions I find it useful to refer back to Galtung's definition of violence, as that which grows or maintains the gap between the actual and the potential. Most instances of CP that were clearly identified as violent were those where interviewees expressed that the act had inhibited them from achieving their own or their classmates' full potential. For example, Demba (M.Gov.Edu) links the whip as having stunted their ability to express themselves orally, *"It is the very fear of the chicotte that has made us perhaps lose certain oratorical skills. Because eh, the fear of making mistakes.. you are afraid that if you make mistake the teacher will hit you. So you might as well not open your mouth to speak"*. Others, linked acts of CP to classmates abandoning school and missing out on the social mobility that was assumed to come with receiving a formal education. For example, Badou (M.Gov/IO.Edu) described that a particular "mean" and violent teacher had for years decimated the progression of children in his village because all students would leave when they were due to enter his class. This had left the village without any government leaders or civil servants.

However, when interviewees attributed a positive outcome to an act of CP participants had a harder time condemning it as violence. When the intent or result of an act of CP was linked to discipline, school rigor, firmness or positive long-term consequences interviewees spoke about these acts differently. For example Bakary (M.Gov.CP),

linked CP with a desire and engagement from teachers for students to do well in schools. *“For teachers, it must be said that we suffered this corporal punishment, especially when you arrive in class and you didn't not know your lesson. ... So it was a way, I tell myself, it was a way for them to bring the individual, the student towards excellence”*. Whilst Bakary still recognises the pain and suffering attached to CP he makes a distinction because the act aimed to have student's best interest at heart.

Similarly, Thomas (M.Gov.Edu), recalled that his father whipped him when he refused to go back to school and he expressed being grateful for his father's firmness in keeping him in the education track even if this came with CP. He also recognises that a physical and painful act took place but his perception of it as a violent act is less equivocal.

I told him "No. I'm going to the village, I'm not going to school anymore." He whipped me and then I stayed. I went to school. If I had gone with him to the village, I would not be here today. So, I mean that you often have to be firm... Well, maybe he did the wrong thing to whip me, maybe he did the right thing? But... today I think he did the right thing. Otherwise, if he had gone to the village with me, there was no school in the village. I would have stayed back, I would be an old man...because when I arrive in the village today, my friends, those of my age, they are old. They are old. Well, I say thank you to my father because he was firm with me. So, in education, there must be firmness too. Not too much indulgence. Love it is true but with firmness.

Thomas rationalises his father's action as a necessary firmness that ultimately led to educational success. The contrast between his current success and the fate of peers who remained in the village serves to reinforce the perceived necessity for this type of discipline in order to achieve educational goals. He also positions caregivers perceived need for CP within a broader discourse that equates educational attainment with social mobility.

Eric (M.Gov.Edu) also makes a clear distinction of a type of hitting that can be non-violent when he explains that a valid reason or teaching intention makes a difference. *“Personally, I say that I did not experience violence as a child. I don't know it myself. My father beat me only once in my entire childhood. But that day that he hit me, I knew that he had the right to do it”*. The distinction between violence and a single instance of

being beaten suggests a framing where occasional CP is not equated with violence, but rather with discipline and correction. By an acceptance of his father's "right" to hit him Eric suggests an internalisation of societal norms that legitimise such actions as appropriate or non-violent in certain cases.

These examples illustrate how when describing their embodied experience of CP interviewees do not rely on a rights-based discourse to frame CP as VAC. Instead, middle space actors engaged in a discussion of CP as violence by talking about it as a contextual act inextricably enmeshed within realities and conceptions of childhood that are specific to their communities. For example, in the passage below Pierre (M.Gov.Edu) begins with setting the limits or the ethical trap that the 'CP as VAC' discourse can have for discussion and for contextualisation. He uses the word "binary" and "in the absolute" to suggest that this discourse does not make space for lived realities. From his own experience in the north of the country he describes how contextual realities can help explain differences in perceptions on the utility of some acts of CP. He presents a complex and sophisticated picture that describe CP acts as violent and unpleasant experiences but nevertheless possibly useful in their own contexts.

Ethically, if you are for or against violence, the answer is binary: yes or no... But the living conditions ...this makes it all more or less relative. You know, for example, the people at home, in my region, the education they give you.... (Laughing) it gives you the ability to overcome a certain number of obstacles. It is in your best interest to have endurance...For example, if you have to do agricultural work and you complain about all the time you hurt yourself well... So you have to be able to withstand the sustained effort and even the violence of the work. And so it is for your own good. (Laughs) It is therefore for your own good for your social effectiveness when training you not to succumb to pain, to violence, etc... So from that perspective, we are obliged to accept it. Or in any case we understand well, a certain... indifference, right?... That a certain tolerance to violence, it's welcomed.

The citation highlights the tension between ethical stances on violence and the practical realities of living conditions. Pierre does not deny that violence as per the dominant discourse of CP is taking place but rather, he seeks to explain it through the harsh contextual realities in which these practices take place. He suggests that

communities' harsh living conditions means that teaching children how to endure pain is considered an important life lesson in order to be prepared and resilient in the face of their future livelihood. Learning to be resilient in the face of violence is "*for your best interest*" and therefore good parenting would work towards this. Context, he says can explain why there might be an "*indifference*" to certain levels of CP, or even a welcoming of sorts, that does not exist elsewhere, especially where children will not need to experience hard labour. He continues, "*You know if you see this like that, in absolute terms, I want to say that in places where technology and modernisation have not separated physical work from men's lives then we are obliged to accept a certain degree of suffering*". Pierre's use of the phrase "*obliged to accept*" indicates a lack of agency and choice that recalls Galtung's approach where to define violence one must consider what is possible in a certain context. Pierre's conceptualisation of CP moves beyond "absolute" or abstract terms by considering the structural violence that makes direct acts of violence seem like the best choice for children's wellbeing.

National middle level actors such as Pierre have an embodied understanding of the harshness of the context. They understand not just rationally but through their lived experience what this harshness feels like and why caregivers believe it is an important life lesson to teach one's children how to endure difficult and sometimes painful experiences for their future success. Even if hard labour was no longer identified as present in the environment a different participant also recalled that CP in schools was understood as a necessary sacrifice to achieve the result of a good job thanks to school completion. This echoes once again with what I presented in chapter 3 regarding a strong Ivorian expectation that the main objective of schooling was to obtain paid employment. Therefore schooling and the experience of CP could be perceived as a rite of passage or as a necessary experience that required pain and sacrifice to secure a good livelihood.

We had a certain hope because at the end of the day we would have a job, a profession. We weren't keen and we didn't want to go to school. Of course they forced us, because at that time, we were seriously beaten. We were beaten, we were tortured and everything but we understood that it was for our own good. We suffered this martyrdom and we did our best.

Moussa (M.CSO.Edu) expresses that there existed a tacit understanding that this “torture” and “martyrdom” was for everyone’s own good. As children many of those interviewed were some of the first in their families to go to school so the sacrifice it represented was not just regarding CP but also the separation from the familial context. Succeeding in school was a high-stake activity that would make a monumental difference in their own and their families life trajectories in the new order established after colonialism. Considering the pressure that families such as Moussa’s experienced when schooling became the primary pathway to succeed helps contextualise how CP is perceived in the Ivorian context.

Bakary (M.Gov.CP) also talked about a continuing expectation that African children need to develop the capacity and resiliency to recognise the good intent that an act of CP might be trying to convey. Outside of “abusive” uses of CP, he identifies other instances of CP that although unpleasant, act as teaching opportunities for children to learn to control their emotions, appease their anger and to respect those in authoritative positions.

No...at the start you have rage. Frankly at the start you have rage, you're angry. You tell yourself that either the teacher or the parent is not trying to understand you. So at that moment you have rage but... you can't do otherwise. You can't do otherwise because in Africa, respect for the parent or the elder is very important. So whatever your level of anger, you have to be able to swallow it and then see the good that the adult wants to offer you. It's not like over there where you live where they realise that the child is like everyone else. Here, it must be said that most children manage to develop a resilience mechanism. Not everyone but we succeed, we make efforts not to react no matter how angry we are.

He describes African children as being expected to understand that an act of CP has a good intent and that it conveys something good that the adult is seeking to “offer” the child. Bakary distinguishes them from Western children “over there where you live” whose society does not expect from children the same kind of behaviours towards older members of the community or to control their emotions. In his context he feels, “you can’t do otherwise” recalling once again Galtung’s approach where what is possible is inextricably linked to defining violence. Bakary, identifies that the lessons of respect

to elders and overcoming anger transmitted and acquired sometimes through CP are useful and valued skills for Ivorian communities that children must learn. This is similar to Fay's (2017) findings about the importance in Zanzibari culture of teaching mutual respect through different codes of good manners and ways of behaving. Inculcating this type of respect or good manners, even if at times through CP, is seen as act of love and care that will protect children and allow them to live harmoniously in their communities. Wells and Montgomery (2014) also suggest that in contexts where resources are constrained everyday violence in children's lives might be deployed to access social recognition, to be someone within that community. Thus, as Bakary suggests, CP is not only a disciplinary tool but also a culturally embedded practice through which social belonging are shaped.

In interviewees' narratives there was not necessarily an insistence that acquiring these important cultural skills and values could only happen through CP. Quite the contrary many expressed that as times change these methods are becoming less effective in instilling the objectives of hard work and respect, *"there is really a clear divide between the older generation and the new generation. Our children do not like being forced, conscripted, or compelled; there is already a culture of democracy in the minds of the children"* (Moussa, M.CSO.Edu). But actors did express a desire to respect the fact that the values which communities were trying to instil through this method were important even if they were different from those values preferred in Western societies. As Nathalie (F.CSO.CP) below explains, the desire to consider context is not a wish to discriminate but a desire to take contextual values and realities seriously. She expresses a desire for policies to break free from a dominant discourse that often imposes a normative view of the universal child that may not be applicable across different contexts. She is advocating for a nuanced understanding of childhood that respects and acknowledges these differences, rather than imposing a one-size-fits-all approach.

There is the African child and the European child. It's not discrimination, but they have different realities. Really different realities. If the African child goes to Europe he can behave like a European child because it is a reality. But once he is in Africa among Africans, we have to analyse the context, the African context

A call by middle level actors to consider context does not imply that they disagree with the policies' intent to move away from CP and reduce violence in school classrooms. The analysis suggests that there is a strong common ground that could be mobilised for the enactment of policies that aim to reduce violent disciplining in schools. However, the data also shows that national middle space actors find value in a more nuanced perspective and discourse than that which was enacted through the CP policy events and dominant child rights discourse. These actors expressed a desire to recognise that, while CP could be a harmful and painful experience, policies seeking to eliminate it should not dismiss that the codes and norms that accompanied CP were valuable to communities. These values such as building resiliency, striving to succeed despite hardships and setting boundaries for respectful behaviours in the community were linked and useful to communities' social objectives for their children, even if they differed from Western values of child centeredness and play. Furthermore, they express a desire for policies to recognise that wanting to instil these values represented acts of love and care by caregivers and teachers. By embracing this complexity, middle space policy actors provide a sophisticated perspective that takes into consideration both context and communities' aspirations for their children. Their understanding and discourse provides different opportunities to bridge the binary between universalist and cultural relativist positions, such that both contextual realities and local aspirations are considered while seeking to change CP practices.

6.2 Embracing 'CP as VAC': an embodied experience of change

In addition to opening different ways of framing the CP policy problem, the embodied experiences of middle space actors provide an important caution against the tendency of the 'CP as VAC' framing to override contextual nuances. Bakary (M.Gov.CP) for example lamented that the messages of IOs to, "*treat children well, children must flourish, non-violence towards children without taking into account, I say to myself, without taking into account the weight of the terrain*" could be highly problematic. I appreciate how he expresses the importance of context through the wording of heaviness or weight "pesanteur" because it refers us back to the body. One can imagine feeling a tremendous weight or compression applied to the body by the contextual realities and history which impact our actions. De Sardan uses a similar analogy when

he refers to the “*revenge of contexts*” in policy enactment as the negative consequences arising from the “*potential mismatch between unique, complex local contexts and standardized, imported instruments*” (2020, p. 58).

National middle level actors’ embodied experience of CP and of the enactment of CP policies makes them great observers of this “*pesanteur*” or “*revenge*” of the context. As the frontline policy workers that received the ‘CP as VAC’ policy message from international actors they experienced the mismatch firsthand. Many shared with me the dissonance and tensions that happened to them personally before becoming engaged actors of the policy network. They described how at the beginning they did not adhere to the ‘CP as VAC’ message and it was only thanks to the gradual process of being involved in projects that they changed their perception. Badou (M.Gov/IO.Edu) for example notes that he would be lying if he said that he had been immediately onboard, “*I didn’t understand at first. No. (pause) No, I didn’t understand. If I would say that I did it would not be true. I did not understand. It came progressively...because of what we do*”. For him understanding CP as VAC took time and happened gradually through his involvement in the policy work. Pascal (M.Gov.Edu) reinforces this idea by referring to middle level actors like himself as the first “beneficiaries” of the CP policy events, “*We are the first beneficiaries. We benefit first and then we now pass it on to others; (Laughs)... Really our way of seeing things has changed diametrically*”.

During interviews participants shared unprompted very concrete examples of how this diametrical change in perspective happened. Pascal (M.Gov.Edu) for example links his involvement in managing a CP policy event directly with his decision to no longer use the “chicotte”. He was able to observe in his own son the effects that the fear of being hit had on his behaviour and ability to speak and realised CP might be counterproductive to his childrearing objectives and might be hindering his child’s potential. This realisation sparked by his involvement in a CP policy event forced him to find other ways of interacting.

Me, I think, at the beginning when I wasn’t in this project... I take for example my son, I was really tough but there came a point, when I asked him questions, even when he had the answer, he was afraid to speak. "What if what I’m going to say if it’s not

correct, will they hit me?" So I had to do work on myself, I said "Hey from today onwards, I won't use the chicotte anymore".

Pascal could even recall the specific training activity that helped him realise his own 'mistakes' and decide to change. This exercise employed by UNESCO used his own embodied experience of CP as a starting point to reflecting and changing his practice.

For me, there is one particular exercise that I did with our project administrator at UNESCO, the 'Safari into the Past'. The Safari into the Past' is an exercise that is done with your eyes closed and takes you back to reliving your childhood. And when you go back into the past and then come back to reality, you understand that there are many, many kinds of mistakes that we have made ourselves and that we no longer want to make and that we don't want our children to do them either. So these kinds of exercises, these are really exercises that have benefited us a lot and given us many transformations.

Participants recalled the importance of being given the opportunity and safe space to re-assess not only their beliefs but their own 'violent' acts. For example Badou (M.Gov/IO.Edu), below describes the feeling of shame that accompanied these trainings.

Yes, it's, it's... I'm saying it eh, we were... we were quite ashamed at first, of having done certain things uh at the level of... our professional career. We were completely ashamed. And then afterwards, we said that it's true. I remember that.

His use of the expression "I will say it" indicates that courage is still required to acknowledge having committed violence as CP. Adopting the 'CP as VAC' discourse requires individuals to rethink or perhaps feel compelled to 'admit' experiencing and likely perpetrating violence before changes in perception can occur. In contexts where CP is so prevalent this framing forces many individuals into a "cul de sac" where they have to see themselves as violent rather than as loving parents or educators as part of the transformation process. National middle level actors have a unique perspective of this process because they have lived it themselves. They have experienced, in their bodies, the feelings that the discourse brings to the surface, such as shame and dissonance. They understand the importance of addressing these feelings to ensure the message is received correctly. Badou (M.Gov/IO.Edu) notes several elements needed

for a change of perception on CP: time, opportunities to try out the new learnings, exchanging with peers and other network actors and having a safe space where to reflect on past “mistakes”.

They need time, they need to be confronted with situations... So uh, this attitude that I have today, it didn't come like that. It's over time, by living experiences, by exchanging with actors on the ground, by referring to our past, to the mistakes we've made and everything.

These policy enactment recommendations come both from the perspective of a policy actor and from his embodied experience of changing himself.

Having lived through this transformation, national middle level actors are also familiar with the kind of counter arguments that teachers and communities will use to test the new discourse. For example, Badou (M.Gov/IO.Edu) notes how when he and his colleagues started to embrace the new discourse their loyalty to African values were questioned by others who were not part of it.

We who are in this process, our other colleagues look at us and say, "Have these people lost their minds? ...You over there do still have your head? Are you still African?"... Not because we are no longer African. We have been made aware and we are sensitive to the issue. We appropriated all these things. To understand that, in fact, it is the ideal of education

The fact of being questioned as "still African" shows how embracing CP as a policy problem is linked to broader debates about cultural identity and authenticity. It puts into question individuals' sanity and their loyalty to their communities. It situates CP policy enactment and narratives within a larger context of post-colonial and post-development discourses, where the tension between tradition and modernity or local and foreign are central themes. It recalls the colonial schooling unconscious presented in Chapter 4, where labelling something as Ivorian or African carried different connotations and meanings in relation to power. Here, Badou's tries to defend the appropriation of new ideas by challenging this binary, suggesting that cultural identity is not static but can evolve and incorporate new perspectives. At the same time his reference to an “*ideal of education*” recalls the development discourse which places “international” standards as a form of normative progress.

Other middle space actors keenly aware that a perception of the policies as “Western” would raise suspicion and derail the conversation into the above-mentioned binary mobilised culture to legitimise CP school policies by demonstrating a “closeness” of “africanness” of concepts and ideas mobilised around CP. They noted the importance of addressing this risk by contextualising the framing of policies using African social values, traditions and social objectives for children. Eric (M.Gov.Edu) for example would argue, *“But you can see that it’s not a white guy who came to write that. Ancestrally in our customs, in our languages, we say that the child needs support. He needs affection. He needs help to flourish. He needs to play...it is a wrong interpretation of our culture. In fact if you analyse our culture scientifically you will not find anything written that says children should be hit”*. By referencing the ideas as being rooted in local knowledge Eric seeks to mobilise a sense of cultural ownership and give back the power to produce knowledge that would be missing if it was written by *“a white guy”*. He is also challenging the remnants of the colonial discourse that placed harsh CP as African mentioned in Chapter 3. Eric goes on to further argue that this softer view of children is African by mentioning how in the Malinké language a child is called “deni” which literally means “little one”. He argues *“You don’t have that in French, nor in Spanish. The French say: “un enfant”. It is missing all these emotional significance around the word. When I say “deni”, I mean “the little one”, the one who needs support, the one who needs affection”*. By highlighting the emotional connotations naturally present in the word “deni” in comparison to the French term he seeks to underscore that being non-violent and kind to children is authentically African.

Other interviewees used their own “African” identity to legitimise the idea of CP as unAfrican. For example Kanga (F.IO.CP) recalls how she often used her own experience where despite being raised in a Muslim family from the North her father’s authority did not rely on the whip. She contrasted it to her neighbours’ father who did use it and whose children were nevertheless very misbehaved to imply that values of African good behaviour and success were not linked to CP. Similarly to explain to communities that non-violent discipline was already a part of the oral culture in Ivorian societies, Drissa (M.Gov.CP) mobilised the fact that his grandmother disciplined him without CP but rather used stories.

When I was little, when I went to my grandmother's house on vacation in the village, ... she didn't beat us. I told them: "But you here today, do you tell stories to your children?" It is my grandmother who never went to school that when there was someone for example who was fighting, ..., she immediately made us sit down and with the imagination, she told us tales and towards the end she explained that we must not fight without having used violence.

When challenged that the CP as VAC were “white” ideas he counter argued by saying that even his uneducated grandmother was able to discipline without CP by using a recognised African tradition. He reverts a possible questioning of his own Africanness by asking “*do you tell stories to your children?*” and putting into question their use of African traditions.

Despite these individuals’ advocacy and contextualised enactment of the policies middle level actors recognise that adherence to the discourse is an unresolved debate. They note that true change would require much more investment and time beyond what they can individually do. Drissa (M.Gov.CP) for example notes, “*We have to raise awareness, we have to work... But this is the work of a whole program. It's not a two-year project that's going to change that. It's a whole program that takes up the entire chain*”. Many interviewees expressed disagreement with the fact that the government opted to push through prohibition without ensuring sufficient explanations and deliberations amongst all those involved.

And this is where I do not agree with the government that made the decision without being able to carry out public awareness campaigns. We said 'Hey, we don't hit children anymore' That's it! But no, we need to say 'We no longer hit children because, because...! And explaining this is what we must do, this is what you must do as a teacher. This is what you need to do as a parent, etc. We bring everyone together, uh...and then, well, we move forward together. (Moussa, M.CSO.Edu)

As Moussa notes there was insufficient communication and explanations of the good intentions and reasons of these actions. Having gone through a process of gradual change themselves many expressed conviction that with good explanations communities would be favourable to this change. However, they lamented that most teachers and communities did not benefit from the type of open and safe spaces and

prolonged activities and processes that had helped them progressively change their views because the enacted policy events primarily focused on prohibiting rather than explaining, gaining adhesion and building complicity with those that needed changing. Actors also expressed that by leaving the debate unresolved but pushing through policies prohibiting the practice this re-enforced the perception that the intentions and objectives of the initiatives were imposed and foreign. It exacerbated binary thinking and suspicion.

The debate that occurred was well people put it on the cultural level... In fact, the fundamental thing was this: "They must not come and impose the things of white people on us. When a child messes up, you have to whip him so that he understands. White children, you can talk to them, they can understand, but black children, no. When you talk to them, they don't understand unless you whip them". So that was the argument. In this confrontation, was signing a decree not proving them right that they aligned themselves with those that wanted us to be lax with children? This debate took place but the minister ended up signing the decree and as I said, we did not have the necessary support to raise awareness around the decree. Because the community aspect is important! It's when the teacher says to the parents: "Ah yes but the minister says not to hit the children anymore, they can do whatever they want now." Parents who are in rural areas say to themselves: "But the minister is spoiling our children."... But they did not tell the parents that at the same time as they tell us not to hit them, here are what they offer us as alternatives. Everyone has forgotten the alternative aspect. We remained on the ban on punishments. (Eric, M.Gov.Edu)

Eric describes communities understanding the CP policies as a “confrontation” that was situated in a discussion not merely about child discipline but also about cultural identity, authority, and the implications of external influences on local practices. By not giving sufficient space and time to resolve these concerns before signing the decree this decision reinforced the impression that policymakers were siding with a “white” discourse. Furthermore the efforts needed to gain adhesion after the ban was taken were not enacted. This incomplete enactment meant teachers were strongly aware of what was taken away as a mode of discipline but not familiar with any proposed alternatives to classroom management. This incomplete message led to the belief in

communities that authorities were promoting an absence of discipline and authority in schools and that they were “spoiling” children.

Middle space actors expressed great frustration with how a misguided enactment led to a miscommunicated intent of the policies which in turn fomented strong resistance. Kanga (F.IO.CP) noted that the way of delivering the message was culturally inappropriate.

They do not explain...the spirit and intention of the decree. Hardly anyone knows it! So, some people will tell you, "The white people came, maybe we needed money. They said, they will give us the money, take this and they took it". So, straight away, people are resistant to that. And that blocks a lot... In our culture we say: it's the way of expressing something that will make it be accepted or not. So, if you tell people, it's a decree, you have to apply it, he will tell you yes. But he doesn't care about the rest. But if you would have explained it to him and explained why they took this decision it is different...

Kanga emphasises the importance of explaining the “*spirit and intention*” behind the decree, something that was hardly known. The assertion that “*if you would have explained it to him... it is different*” underscores that effective and culturally appropriate communication for policy acceptance was lacking. According to Kanga the way the message was communicated not only failed to bring people together, it also created suspicion as per the intent and reasoning behind policies being enacted. Although I did not find any direct evidence to back the belief that policies were enacted as a direct conditionality to other external aid it does fit with the network findings that the power imbalances within the CP network structure are not conducive to fully autonomous decision-making by the government. When taking into consideration the long-standing disbalance in agenda setting power and its historical roots in colonialism one should reasonably expect that miscommunication and lack of involvement would arise suspicion from teachers.

Many interviewees also noted that messaging to communities was often expressed in a manner that was perceived as accusatory. Pierre (M.Gov.Edu) compared the CP accusatory discourse from IOs with the discourse received on child labour.

And we, usually, are a little surprised by the brutality of the verdict on work and the worst forms of child labour. I remember in 2001 or 2002, when this problem suddenly arose like that, we were all helpless! And even if we agree that children, their place is in school, etc. But when we portray it as a crime! Suddenly you are criminalised! (laughing) It's a little off-putting, it's a little off-putting.

By portraying a failure to respect children's rights as a crime, the discourse focuses on individual culpability rather than on structural issues, such as poverty and lack of access to quality education. Pierre describes the messaging being felt as surprising, sudden, brutal and criminalising and its effect on receivers as discouraging and inciting a feeling of helplessness. His inclusion of himself in this sentiment reinforces the idea that the embodied experience of national middle level actors of the 'CP as VAC' discourse provides valuable insights.

Other participants identified the messaging suggested that parents did not love their children and were violent. They argued that this wording was not conducive to fostering openness to change. For instance, Assane (M.INGO.CP) observes that the way policy events communicated about CP made parents feel accused of not loving their children.

It makes you feel guilty. Are you saying that we educate our children, whom we also love, through violence? So, there is a series of questions that remain unanswered because there is not yet a frank discussion so that we can express ourselves on this... But if we go, head-on with harsh words, we are the ones who lose because we don't have the words to convince them

He argues that the messaging was simplistic and the "harsh words" inefficient because they caused advocates to lose the battle to change people's perspectives. Assane also emphasises that need for communities to be given the opportunity to express themselves and discuss the issue of CP openly, something that is hard when the language used is accusatory.

Idrissa (M.CSO.Edu) goes further and argues that this accusatory language could be perceived as having an undertone of Western superiority. For example, he notes how the discourse insinuates that there exist correct "Western" models of how to love

children and that the policy messaging imply that under-developed societies such as Africans and Latinos love their children less:

It will be mean what I am going to say, but it is a construction for us Africans, with a thought for the underdeveloped, you also the Latinos, where there is the impression that we love our children less than the children of the Westerners and that there would therefore be a model of love in which those who love their children do not hit them and those who do not love them, hit them.

He situates his critique of CP policy enactment in a broader post-colonial critique where Western norms are often positioned as superior, creating a dichotomy between 'civilised' and 'uncivilised' practices of child-rearing. By using the expression "*It will be mean what I am going to say*" Idrissa pre-emptively signals that this post-development critique is a sensitive and perhaps controversial position to have in the context of our interview. However by including my own identity as not Western and 'Latinos' as group that like Africans are also 'othered' by these discourses he feels more comfortable expressing this view.

Overall middle space actors lamented that the CP policy messaging, one that used language that assigned blame to individuals and carried undertones of a colonial discourse were making their job on the ground extremely difficult. Additionally, this messaging was backfiring. For example, Affoué (F.Gov.CP) notes how communities would immediately be wary of any policies using a rights based language, even banning certain organisations from working in their villages.

We have had difficulties when we go into communities to address the issue of children's rights... But if we say, don't do it because children have rights and straight away they are wary. The communities are defensive, they say: "You are coming to turn our children against us"... When you go to the communities, to the villages, when you talk about children's rights, I don't want to cite NGOs here, but there are children's rights NGOs, when they arrive in the communities, they are banned because they no longer want to hear about them. When they come they only talk about children's rights.

Affoué illustrates an observation that is present throughout the middle space, that the current usage of the rights discourse was not conducive to communities opening and

considering changing their practices. They expressed having to work very hard to overcome that first automatic rejection attached to the dominant discourse. Having had the opportunity to go through a largely positive experience of engaging with the CP as VAC discourse middle space policy actors lament that the larger population did not benefit from the same kind of safe space and accompaniment needed to embrace such change. They critique the lack of opportunity for teachers and communities to express themselves and debate the discourse. And finally, they warn of the unintended consequences or revenge of the context that the 'CP as VAC' discourse has on adult's willingness to consider changing their practice.

6.3 Unintended consequences and ensuing backlash

Middle space interviewees also warned that by prohibiting CP in such a sudden manner and by using a simplified discourse of children's rights this had fuelled the perception that eliminating CP endorsed a lack of discipline. By unintentionally weakening important societal values such as academic hard work and respect for teachers CP policies are perceived as having unintended negative consequences on school quality. Many middle space actors believed that teachers had given up and neglected their duty of helping children grow and learn as a reaction to feeling that their status and authority was taken away by CP policy events.

I tell myself that teachers see the bans or the codes of conduct that are applied to them as a sword of Damocles over the head... they no longer want to get involved in education apart from teaching. Everything else, they don't care anymore, because they says to themselves, "If I do that, it will turn against me. So, I don't care. At the end of the month, I have my salary, I come to complete my course hours and then I finish, I go home. The rest doesn't interest me". So there's that. It must be said that yes, there is that, it's a bit of a lack of communication.

Yaya (M.Gov.Edu) describes teachers feeling that CP policy events are like an ever-present threat that can fall upon them at any time they try to exert their authority or manage the classroom. The risks of being reprimanded or accused by CP polices as abusive or violent means they prefer to give up and neglect discipline all together, *"Slowly the teachers also take advantage of this to completely abandon the children,*

because they say to themselves: “If I hit your child, well, they will come... incriminate me. ...they even risk firing me” (Moussa, M.CSO.Edu).

Interviewees describe a perfect storm of different contextual elements that could have led many teachers to “demissionné” or disengage partly as a reaction to CP policy events. To start, as described below there was an incomplete accompaniment for teachers to shift their discipline paradigm.

But today, the student has rights in the same way as the teacher. I believe that this balance too is not accepted. There must be a deliberation, and the teacher must always remain the great master who is above and authorises everything and the one below is that who must endure everything. This changing of paradigm is not accepted.

As Fofana (M.CSO.Edu) mentions the ‘CP as VAC’ discourse represents a significant paradigm shift of the power dynamics of the school classroom which are in turn likely grounded in deeper patriarchal power dynamics of the wider Ivorian society. However this attempted paradigm shift was not an endogenous process at the time CP policies were enacted and teachers were not involved with this change, nor was this a wider societal debate at the time. Additionally, the enactment of this shift through a top down and imposed manner that relied on threats to get teachers to comply seemed to contradict the spirit of this change of paradigm. The perceived accusatory messaging within CP policy events also left teachers, who as a workforce had already been stripped from a privileged position and had a difficult relationship with government, feeling once again blamed without an acknowledgement of their hardwork. There was also an inattention to mainstreaming alternatives ways to manage the school classroom. This meant teachers were at a loss as to how to continue achieving their objectives of academic rigor so engrained in the Ivorian education system and through which Ivorian society bestowed them their status. Finally, one should remember that many of these policies were enacted during and closely after civil strife that upended amongst other things the education system.

Teachers giving up is as Moussa (M.CSO.Edu) notes seen as a “*real problem*” that worries the Ivorian middle space. It touches, as described in Chapter 3, upon an important objective that Ivorian society bestow upon the school system, that of academic success.

This is a real problem and it contributes to the decline of our education system! You understand? The teacher actually thinks that he has been stripped of his armour of authority, of the one who commands, of the one who dominates the child. And so, he can no longer do anything, he is afraid of the sanctions that will come from the administration. So, as he doesn't want to get in trouble, he prefers to stay in his corner. But, this is a serious error. The teacher must not stay in his corner, it is his role to educate this child. Whatever he can do to be able to educate him decently, he should be able to do it. He must not resign. It's a kind of resignation when you do it this way, you understand?

Teachers giving up means that students are left to their own devices without a rigorous path to academic success. The link between the academic success dependent on the authority held through CP is also felt by parents. Sophie (F.IO.CP) for example describes that parents even if they would not like the child to be disciplined through CP are hesitant to making teachers know this because they feel teachers will then “give up” on their children and not pay them the attention needed to succeed in schools.

The teachers have resigned. When the parent tells him, I wouldn't want you to hit my child, he no longer looks at the child. He no longer considers the child in class. He says: “You, you are a risk, if I touch you, I have problems.” So he puts him aside and will no longer follow him correctly. So, the parents themselves are reluctant to go to school to say things because they tell themselves that, if I say something, the teacher will perhaps get angry, and then he will no longer follow my child correctly in class. Because there have been certain cases which were noted like that.

A consequence of an insufficiently contextualised enactment of CP policies seems to be an apparent losing dichotomy between giving up CP or guaranteeing academic success. This means CP policies are perceived as equating to a lower quality school experience and higher risks of failing on the race towards obtaining school qualifications. They are not perceived as helping families reach the objectives they aspire for their children. Middle space actors thought that addressing this false choice between giving up CP and discipline needed to be addressed.

But doing it this way, we're going to render the child stupid, you understand? Teachers must get up to speed, retrain and say to themselves, "What is needed in this new dynamic? What should I do to reconcile the two cultures without me hitting the child,

but so that I can adopt other behaviours so that the child can still study in a good environment?" That's what teachers...that's the reflex they must have and not say, "No, as we no longer hit the children, well the children they will walk all over me and therefore, I will stay like that and watch". This passive attitude is negative and I can't bear it! (Moussa, M.CSO.Edu)

According to interviewees teachers and parents equated giving up CP with leaving the school classroom without rules or discipline and so the ban was a major destabilising factor to the Ivorian education system. The incomplete enactment of CP policies left a void on how to correctly deal with children's behaviours and prohibiting CP was experienced as leaving adults empty handed and with no tools to exercise pressure to guide children to work towards objectives society considers are in their "best interest". Middle space actors note that the education community experienced strong distress and confusion about how to correctly use authority and discipline to educate children. A couple of interviewees mentioned how Ivorians have watched on television how unruly and 'overprotected' European children are able to disrespect their parents with social services intervening on behalf of children when parents seek to enact discipline.

Because we also see what is happening in Europe. The rights of children are so strong that we see through TV shows the children who dare shout at the parents. Who insult the parents and once the parent tries to do something a little bit strong, we see the social worker who intervenes because the protection of the child is high. So it's also scary, we don't want to get to that, because with us here a child remains a child. A child is someone or something that obeys a higher entity. So there is this fear that what happens in Europe will also happen here. (Bakary, M.Gov.CP)

The fear that what happens in Europe will also happen locally underscores an assumption that strong children's rights undermine social order and cohesiveness. Bakary's assertion that "*it's also scary*" indicates a deep-seated apprehension about the potential erosion of authority and discipline within families.

This fear and void of what discipline should look like is fuelling a series of backlash and calls for CP to be brought back whenever teachers are faced with situations they would have resolved primarily through CP. For example, students' unruly behaviour or lack of studiousness can be quickly attributed to the prohibition of CP. Affoué

(F.Gov.CP) below describes a recurrent situation where secondary school students make the decision to go on holidays before the official dates. They do this by becoming violent and throwing stones to make everyone vacate the school premises earlier.

The children have become uncontrollable. We could say that we can no longer control them. And so, the teacher says to himself, does he have any leverage? He finds himself helpless because he no longer has any means of pressuring the students. And when you tell a student: "You're going to be punished, and you will have a detention". He doesn't really care, eh. He comes home banging the wall. Even teachers are threatened because students have knives and they can threaten staff. So, at the school level, security even at school is compromised. Recently we had students who went on vacation before... early leave. Nobody can do anything about it, that's it...So, there is the culture but there is also the situation teachers are faced with, because the children say to themselves they can do anything. They are not sanctioned. At some point it becomes anarchy and it's real eh. ... Discipline is no longer achieved, that it is something that must be said.

The mention of students carrying knives and threatening staff highlights a significant breakdown in traditional power hierarchies within the school setting, where teachers are no longer seen as authoritative figures. Affoué's use of the phrase "*it is real eh*" and "*it is something that must be said*" serves to underscore the urgency and gravity of the situation. It also is a request for honest dialogue and recognition of the complexities involved in maintaining discipline in schools.

Whilst student violence also occurred in the eighties and nineties, before CP was posed as a policy problem the data suggests that the dominant child right's discourse can easily be used as a scapegoat to explain why Ivorian youth might be engaging in violent behaviour. The CP ban has also been blamed for causing falling academic grades in international tests. Yaya (M.Gov.Edu) shared how in the main national education conference a link was made between low PASEC scores and the banning of CP and this was being used to argue for a reversal of the CP ban. He warns that we must not be fooled because this sentiment is still strong and the prohibition of CP is not a won debate.

We must not be fooled...I attended in 2022 the restitution of the National Conference on the State of the Art of Education...and the spokesperson for a thematic commission...a university professor, from Teacher Training Institute...intervened. He was brilliant, his intervention was brilliant and the commission that he chaired and of which he was the spokesperson called for the return of corporal services. He was strongly applauded. Strongly applauded.

Extricating the correlation between prohibiting CP, its unintended consequences and the educational outcomes is beyond the scope of this study. However what is important to note is that teachers' behaviours and parental expectations of how discipline should be carried out in schools is impacted by a perception that there is a negative link. Despite there being a constellation of factors that are contributing to the current state of the Ivorian education system the above-mentioned policy enactment missteps make the prohibition of CP an easy target to blame. Contextualising CP policy enactment would need to take these elements into consideration as *"ignoring or underestimating the specificity of each context can backfire and generate unintended consequences"* (de Sardan, 2020, p. 58).

6.4 Conclusions

In this chapter I focused on how the embodied experiences of national middle actors can provide important insights into the barriers and opportunities of CP policy enactment. Their perspectives as both active members of the policy network and as individuals understanding the particularities of what CP means in Ivorian society give them a unique perspective. The analysis suggests that the value statements embedded in policy events that portray CP as a violation of children's rights are experienced differently between a body that has never experienced being physically disciplined or has never inflicted it than someone that has. Furthermore, this embodied experience is lived, perceived and defined in different ways according to the cultural context where it occurs. Considering policies in the context of the specific embodied experiences of national middle level actors is a way to explore discursive alignment or misalignment beyond a "rational" exercise and make room for the uniqueness of the Ivorian experience of CP.

In the data I found that widespread and harrowing personal childhood experiences of CP, provide a strong point of alignment with the dominant CP as VAC discourse.

However despite a general agreement on the violent nature of CP and a rejection of its use in classrooms, I also identified an underlying quest for nuance in understanding the use of CP in Ivorian society. This includes differentiating between excessive, clearly violent forms of CP and milder forms not necessarily perceived as violent. The intent behind CP acts was a significant factor in how they were remembered with malicious intent often what made an experience perceived as violent.

Middle-level actors, who have firsthand experience of the mismatch between unique local contexts and standardised policies, are valuable observers of the “*pesanteur*” or “*revenge*” of the context. Through this unique position they identified a series of enactment problems such as a narrow focus on prohibition, use of accusatory messaging and an insufficient accompaniment and space for debating the change in paradigm. They identified these problems as fuelling unintended consequences such as teachers giving up on discipline altogether and Ivorians perceiving a link between prohibiting the practice and issues such as lack of discipline, rising student violence, and falling academic grades.

In this chapter I note that middle space actors are staunch advocates for the elimination of violence in schools and have embraced the change of paradigm in relation to CP. At the same time, they are well poised to work within the complexity of Ivorian CP experiences and understand firsthand the importance of considering personal narratives and cultural contexts when enacting policies related to CP in schools. Their voices and experience bend the universalist versus cultural relativist binary and remind us that “*we must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one; but as a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies*” (Foucault, 1976 p. 128). Involving these voices, straddling between both worlds, more intentionally as agenda setters and decision-makers in the CP policy network could open new possibilities that might prove beneficial to achieve the ultimate objective of improving children's well-being in schools. Possibilities that the current binary and discursive framing might be rendering invisible.

CHAPTER 7: Ownership and participation as power

Previously, I described how national middle space actors mobilise conceptualisations of CP that both align and diverge from the ‘CP as VAC’ discourse. Shaped by their experiences as recipients and/or administrators of CP within Ivorian communities, their embodied perspectives offered important nuances and distinctions from the dominant framing of CP policies. They also hinted to a range of potential strategies for CP prevention efforts to prosper.

Building on the foundations from chapters 4, 5 and 6, this chapter examines whether or not national middle space actors experienced a sense of ‘partnership’ and ‘ownership’ over CP school policies. Over the past three decades, these terms have become embedded in the formal language of international aid (J. H. Sande Lie, 2015), reflecting a broader shift in how donor-recipient relationships are framed.

‘Partnership’ has emerged as a preferred term, with donors increasingly claiming to “no longer seek to impose their vision of development on poor countries but instead wish to be partners in strategies determined and ‘owned’ by recipients themselves” (2004, p. 1453).

However, post-development scholars have critiqued this discourse, arguing that such terminology often masks persistent power imbalances. Terms like ‘partnership’ may obscure the continued influence of donor agendas, even as they avoid overt displays of control (Esteva & Escobar, 2017; Gibson-Graham, 2009; S. J. Matthews, 2010; Sachs, 2024; Ziai, 2015). Drawing on Foucault and Bourdieu’s concepts of power, Lie (2015) conceptualises this particular way of exercising power as “developmentality”, a form of symbolic power, that legitimises international knowledge over others through discursive practices in the development field. This perspective highlights the disjunctures between participatory rhetoric and the enduring reliance on conditionalities and foreign expertise (Arce & Long, 2000).

In this chapter I explore how different forms of power are perceived and activated by middle space actors by analysing their engagement with the discourse of ‘partnership’ and ‘ownership’ and looking for disjunctures. I analyse how sentiments of imbalance over ownership are expressed and how they differ depending on an actor's intersecting identities and positions.

While post-development critiques emphasize that concepts of ownership and partnership may be used to maintain decision-making power they also note that they oblige donors to engage in a much more “active process through which... to get its own policies acknowledged as those of the recipient”(Lie, 2015). This new discursive turn employs techniques of *inclusion*, *cooperation* and *negotiation* where middle space actors can play a new and decisive role. Whether these techniques or discourses are simply means to enact the policies desired by international players depends on how individuals engage with the techniques and how power is activated in their encounters.

In this chapter, I draw on more recent post-development thinking that shifts away from simply critiquing development discourse towards curiosity to explore how “discourses can be contested by actors’ deviating practices, and that a discourse is not as powerful, hegemonic and totalizing” (Ziai, 2007 p. 59). I conclude by discussing the creative breaks or ‘counterwork’ examples found in my research.

7.1 Heterogeneous experience of network power dynamics

Analysis of the data revealed a key factor influencing whether actors perceived unequal power distribution within the network as unjust or even as a form of violence: their professional background. Child protection actors expressed significantly greater concern about power imbalances, viewing them as obstacles to effectively addressing CP. In contrast, while education actors acknowledged these imbalances, they were less troubled by them, often framing the external power as instrumental in achieving their institutional goals.

7.1.1 Perspectives from the education middle space

Beginning with the perspective of education actors, interviewees clearly identified the presence of power imbalances in financial and decision-making ownership of CP policies. However, they rarely expressed these imbalances negatively. Instead, they often described external actors’ directions and resources as beneficial. They used terms such as “*support*” or “*help*” to refer to donor-initiated policies and described themselves as “*benefiting from*”, being “*accompanied to*” or “*being trained to*” implement these initiatives.

For instance, the funds from projects are often referred to as alleviating the education system's pressures. Eric (M.Gov.Edu) noted, "*UNICEF intervenes in the most vulnerable zones. I often say that the state looks over the majority...UNICEF says 'Hey careful! What about the remaining 30 per cent?'*". The prospect of losing these resources is expressed with fear, as they are seen as crucial to the system's functioning. Actors expressed doubt they would be able to continue without them, "*We can't afford it! The state does not have the resources. This is the reason why partners come in and help us find funds*" (Badou, M.Gov.Edu). The unequal distribution of resources and the education system's dependency on these funds is not questioned nor discussed as unjust. Instead, it is referred to as the very reason why international partners are needed and why they are an important and helpful actor in the policy system. Pascal (M.Gov.Edu) for example shared "*They are very important in our system...if UNICEF leaves...it is not 100% certain that we will be able to play that role. I think we always need each other so that children can succeed*".

The fact that financial ownership gave international donors a say on how these funds should be used is expressed as legitimate and the normal nature of the CP policy system. Alassane (M.INGO.Edu) suggests that the link between an INGO "*having*" or "*owning*" a project and maintaining decision-making powers as apparent when he says "*Yes, (name of INGO) of course gave the direction because it is them who had the project. The implanted it here so we executed*". CP projects are often described as belonging to '*them*' referring to international actors and the national middle catering to those needs and priorities through execution and implementation of policies. Alassane also talks about packaging and offering CP projects to donors tailored to their needs, "*For example, the Japanese told us: 'We want to work on Abengourou. » We said: 'Okay...This is the package we offer you'*".

Nevertheless, whether education interviewees perceived a disconnect between the agenda-setting power of international actors and national priorities, a disjuncture, often depended on their proximity to international decision-makers. Those whose roles were more dependent on international funding or oversight were the most likely to emphasise the ease of collaboration and alignment of agendas, often portraying the

relationship as harmonious and mutually beneficial. In speaking of the MoE's action plan Badou said:

They don't have contradictory visions especially since the government's action plan corresponds to what (name of IO) decides to do...so when (name of IO) says I will do this, the Ministry recognises their own priorities in their actions and sees that (name of IO) comes to help manage that aspect of the plan. (Badou, M.Gov/IO.Edu)

This statement underscores an alignment between international actors and government's priorities, suggesting a seamless integration of global frameworks into national policies. Such alignment, often achieved when international actors fund ministries to draft their action plans, can also be interpreted as a manifestation of governmental power, where the state effectively integrates international agendas into its policy framework. In this case, the power wielded by international actors is not repressive but rather productive by shaping the identities and priorities of national actors in accordance with international norms and expectations.

The alignment of priorities is also often facilitated by the recruitment of former government staff within the ranks of international actors. For instance, Alassane (M.INGO.Edu) described how his previous background within the Ministry gave him extensive insider access, which enabled the seamless integration of a particular CP policy into the national agenda.

With the Ministry, it went very well because ... that was the advantage of (name of policy) and even in (HQ country) they say it, ... I really had an important background and I knew everyone. I knew everyone at the ministry level, really everyone. When I say everyone, really everyone, the minister and all that, I had no problem. And the central directors who were there, some were younger than me and so they really respected me. We got in easily.

Alassane emphasises that his insider position gave the policy event a strategic advantage over other initiatives, allowing them to “*get in easily*” and successfully include the programme's goals in the government agenda. His observation that even the headquarters office acknowledged this advantage highlights a level of recognition and validation that extended beyond his immediate context. By referencing the

European country, he further enhances the perceived prestige and credibility of his professional identity, reinforcing its value in achieving policy success.

Education middle space actors whose roles were not directly dependent on international actors but who nonetheless worked closely with them, such as high-level government officials did not portray priorities as entirely aligned. However, they expressed an understanding and empathy toward the fact that financial support often came with externally driven objectives. Their only critique centred on the lack of contextualization or prioritization of policies by international actors. While they did not dispute the importance of the CP issue itself, their concern lay in how it was positioned relative to other pressing educational challenges within Côte d'Ivoire's economic and political context. As Pierre (M.Gov.Edu) explained, *"In absolute terms and on a value scale, we can say that the problems they ask us to fix are real problems. Now, when you transpose them to our context, even if they are real problems, it can seem that some are of greater priority"*.

Yaya, a different official exemplified this tension in the choices he needed to make regarding striking a balance between quantity and quality of the system.

In my opinion, partners are thinking about quality, and we are not going to say they are wrong. The end goal is that, the objective is not to park students in schools. The objective is to make sure we give them the means to finish their schooling and to finish well. And it is quality that will give you that. But again, when you have the case of massification and then somebody comes to talk to you about quality well you first have to eat potatoes and then you will eat something else...(M.Gov.Edu)

Yaya is empathetic and expresses value alignment with international priorities through phrases like *'we are not going to say they are wrong'* or *'the problems that they ask to fix are real problems'*. However he notes how context should also be part of their considerations when deciding how and when to address international priorities. He offers a nuanced stance that seeks to navigate both national realities and international expectations, highlighting the importance of contextual sensitivity in policy prioritisation.

Finally, middle education actors farthest away from the international sphere such as local education academics and teacher representatives were more likely to insist on the

inconveniences of the financial imbalance. Keba for example discussed how he believed that international pressure and particularly the risk of having funding withheld meant that government was disengaging from its responsibilities.

Côte d'Ivoire benefits from many funds...it is a good thing that we must welcome because donors put a lot of money in our country but at the same time this allows for conditions...The State was obliged to follow, they think 'If we don't do it, there won't be any more resources to our disposal...And we are waiting for donors to give us cars. Japan gave ten cars...so the system is totally extroverted, and the state has gradually disengaged... (Keba, Male.CSO.Edu)

Keba's critique remains framed within a discourse of gratitude towards donors' resources by using phrases such as “good thing”, “we must welcome” and “benefits”. Rather than attributing the negative consequences of power imbalances to donors, Keba directs criticism toward the Ivorian government. While acknowledging that the government is “obliged to follow” it is also depicted as being passively “waiting for donors” rather than taking charge. Keba acknowledges structural limitations while simultaneously questioning the government's agency and responsiveness.

Education middle space actors often justified this state of play, or at least made it feel not wrong in ways reminiscent of the symbolic power sometimes present in development discourse. For instance, through phrases like “since we are a developing country” (Pascal, M.Gov.Edu) actors mobilised some of development's discursive continuities from colonialism such as the idea that divides “the world into a progressive, superior part and a backward, inferior part” (Ziai, 2015, p. 33) in need of Northern expertise. For instance, when Demba (M.Gov.Edu) reflected on why certain CP policies were not effective he questioned the capacity of the national middle by saying “Maybe we don't have the intellectual capacity to do it”. He also described international actors' input as a legitimate technical mandate in the education system, and their interventions as their obligation or their duty, “They are one of the most powerful children's donors in the education field. They do a lot for education. So they can't not talk, give direction regarding how to improve methods and teaching strategies...”. Likewise, Karim (M.Gov.Edu), legitimised the imbalance citing national

actors' lack of expertise needed to produce valid knowledge such as writing reports and project proposals.

They don't know how to do it. That's the question. That's why very often, all you see as activity at the ministry is from the NGOs. It's the IOs who come to tell the Ministry: "This is necessary". People don't know how to do it. Because how does the Ministry work? They are teachers, 90% of them...are all teachers. So they have not learned these things, how to make a request, how to apply for financing, identify your objectives, your plan of action, resources, the progress of activities and all that. If people haven't been trained, they can't do it.

Karim also resorted to narratives around government corruption, ineffectiveness or lack of political will: *So, for the funds to be properly used, they go through (name of IO), because if it went through the government, it is not certain that it would arrive to the beneficiaries. That is certain".* Any discontent over the ineffectiveness of projects that existed was largely directed back to the lack of competency and willingness of the national government and national leaders.

Unfortunately, when the project ends, people also put the rest in a drawer because they do not have the means to continue. I think that there is also a question of political will... I think that the projects that are the best we should have been able to release funds to support them. (Pascal, M.Gov.Edu)

It was Ivorian leaders and not international organisations who were most often the focus of frustration among education middle actors, regarding the inefficiencies in CP policy enactment. Overall, these actors did not express strong objections to the decision-making power wielded by international actors or suggested this could be different. Instead, they appeared to accept these imbalances as inevitable, shaped by their reliance on external funding and by internalising a discourse that positions Côte d'Ivoire as a 'developing' rather than a 'developed' country.

Galtung's key reflection that, "when the actual is unavoidable, then violence is not present" (p.169) offers a useful lens for interpreting what mitigates their experience of unequal structural power as violent or unjust. From the perspective of the education middle space actors, unequal power relations were not seen as barrier to effective CP policy enactment. Aware of their limited resources, they viewed international support

as necessary and largely beneficial. Instead, they attributed their limited impact to two main factors: a lack of mastery over development knowledge and a perceived absence of political will among national leaders.

The appropriation of a development discourse that includes narratives around a lack of national expertise and poor governance is not uncommon. Ziai (2015b) argues that the appeal of this discourse in the 'developing' world lies partly because the identity it offers (as less developed) is more appealing than the dehumanising narrative of colonialism (as uncivilised), "This discourse constructs them no longer as inferior subjects but as equal participants in the 'development race' "(p.40). Ziai's observation recalls the analysis I presented in Chapter 4 regarding Ivorians' aspiration to model their education system as close as possible on the French one. I argued that this should not be interpreted simply as a Francophile tendency but rather understood as a rejection of colonialism's fundamental premise of natural inferiority. By striving to meet European development standards, Ivorian leaders were asserting their right to equality. However, this pursuit also entails engaging with the colonial continuities embedded in some development discourse, such as an interpretive framing that sees the Other "as a backward version of the Self" (p.220) and "unable to effectively govern their own affairs, so that the former come to help them" (p.36).

The active appropriation of this discourse by education middle actors may help explain their limited engagement with more radical interpretations of 'ownership' and 'partnership.' Post-development authors note that when the discursive turns of partnership and local ownership are not co-opted or robbed of their critical edge they necessarily call into question the "universal superiority of expert knowledge" (p.79) and have the possibility of unsettling or changing power dynamics. In the quote below Alassane for example engages with these potentially disrupting elements of the discourse up to a certain level (the level of programme coordinator) and then reverts to the underlying logic underpinning some development discourse that international trusteeship is needed to guarantee progress.

If after five years, (name of INGO) is not able to appoint a national to the position of coordinator, it is because they have failed. Because the objective was also to improve, to strengthen the skills and capabilities of national staff. ... But we knew that there

was one position that we could not touch, it was that of the Country Director. That's international. ... if he's not from the country, he's more comfortable defending the objectives and rights of the organisation. That's the first thing. And then, that puts him in a neutral situation. He intervenes not because he is from a particular region of the country but because it has to be done. There is this neutrality which guarantees the implementation of the program. Third reason is the skill level. Internationally, he is bilingual, he speaks English correctly, he also speaks French. And then he has a level of experience that the Ivorians do not have, it is not long since we started working internationally. (Alassane, M.INGO.Edu)

In this passage, Alassane accepts that it would represent a failure if the INGO were unable to upskill an Ivorian national to the level of programme coordinator. Yet, he simultaneously supports the idea that the organisation's highest position should remain occupied by an international expert. He argues that Ivorian candidates currently lack the expertise and competencies required to navigate the complexities of the international development arena, though he concedes this may change over time as more Ivorians gain sectoral experience. At the same time, he maintains that international experts are inherently more rational and neutral in their pursuit of universal development goals. Their perceived ability to operate in an a-contextual manner, unburdened by local social dynamics is framed as a safeguard for effective implementation. This justification implicitly endorses the idea that international trusteeship would always be preferable and recalls Fairhead's (2003) observation that in some development discourse there is a "bureaucratic stewardship, which claims objective 'rationality' in resource management, gains rights to usurp personal control, and to suspend it until people in social action themselves become 'rational'—in other words, indefinitely" (p.100).

Yet, notwithstanding the middle space actors' recognition that their participation in CP policy events was mostly confined to the realm of executors of programmes designed by external parties, they simultaneously expressed a strong sense of collaboration. For example, Pascal notes how *"In the elaboration of programmes, (name of IO) helps us. Today they have a project called... ummm, « right, life and future" and therefore, as part of the implementation of this project, we work together"* (M.Gov.Edu). Although the project is still being identified as owned by the

international organisation “*they have a project*”, Pascal describes himself as an active participant in the enactment of important and exciting policy events. Similarly, Eric despite being brought in to implement an external project he still saw himself as being in the heart of the action.

In fact, I was at the centre of this project with (name of INGO)! They had a big project.... In 2008, the department of pedagogy was approached to see to what extent we could integrate all these notions linked to the theme of respect for the child, their rights and all that so that we have a healthy learning environment. (M.Gov.Edu)

Yaya (M.Gov.Edu) also describes how the external origin and push for the CP ban did not preclude him from participating and feeling ownership of the policy. He calls the cooperation with international actors as making him excited and him ‘signing up’ to take part in these interactions.

So it was indeed (name of INGO) who approached us, but there was already maturity. There is a maturation period. When I arrived as (position) in 1994, the education cooperation program between Côte d’Ivoire and (name of IO) was in its infancy. I don't really know why, but it really excited me. I found committed agents. We signed up for this and inevitably, at some point we came across this type of topics concerning corporal punishment.... And so when (name of INGO) came to make the proposal to us it was the right time to make this encounter. This is why it (the ban) did not suffer from long debates and the Minister agreed to sign the decree that we proposed to him with the agreement of (name of INGO). (M.Gov.Edu)

Yaya describes how a gradual building of cooperations with international actors inevitably led to discussing issues of CP. Throughout his long career in the Ministry this actor experienced the shift described in chapter 5 from international policy events focused on building school infrastructure for access to events that aimed to shift what happened inside school classrooms. He attributes the ease with which the ban was signed by the Minister without “*suffering*” from long debates to this past and now ‘mature’ partnership that started with international actors building needed schools at a moment of crisis.

Education middle actors also expressed a strong sense of owning the objective of eliminating CP in schools. Participation in trainings and workshops was frequently

referred to as a form of collaboration which helped create strong ownership of CP policy events. As implementors of these initiatives, these individuals usually benefitted from direct access to training on VAC issues from the international agencies initiating the policy, often in international venues. Through a post-development lens one can interpret these forms of participation as part of the more active process IOs now need to use to indirectly influence government actions. For instance, Karim shared how after attending a regional training organised by an IO, there was a recommendation for the participants to translate the international concepts and agenda of children's rights in school to the local context.

I followed the training in (name of city) in 2010...organised by (name of IO). The recommendation is that each participant should develop the "child-friendly" approach in their country. So when I returned, my goal was to implement it but then the post-election crisis started. (M.Gov/IO.Edu)

In this case, the IO did not use direct power to oblige countries to implement its approach but rather invited different actors to an international venue to train them on it. The seminar ended with a "*recommendation*" from the IO for participants to promote this approach in their home countries which seemed to be effective as Karim assumes this task as his own goal. Another actor, Alassane (M.INGO.Edu) noted how education policies were swayed depending on where officials would travel to for a training "*we change the programmes depending on where people have gone for training today. In Canada, they came back with what they thought was extraordinary*". Yaya on the other hand describes how learning trips were also used to thank government officials for their collaboration, "*I know that the main partner of all of this, (name of INGO), organised a field visit, a sort of prize for a certain number of ministry officials...so that they could go and see what it was like on the ground in (name of European country)*" (M.Gov.Edu).

A different education actor, Demba (M.Gov.Edu), when I asked him who decided which topics were included in the new Human Rights and Citizenship school discipline, explained that he felt that government had the ultimate decision-making power of what was included. However, he notes how trainings provided by international actors allowed them to make better decisions by providing them with

new knowledge. He notes that for topics they did not have previous knowledge about, for example international human rights, external trainings were needed in order for them to decide whether to include them or not.

It is us who...decide whether or not such mention, such content can be integrated into the program... But, the problem is that we cannot decide...to integrate the contents if we ourselves do not master them, if we do not know their merits. For example, we took content related to international humanitarian law, we were trained by the Red Cross. We took content related to entrepreneurship, we were trained. So at least we had notions in terms of entrepreneurship. Even human rights content, we were trained because... we were given at least the minimum, the basics to be able to produce these elements of content. So that's how it works. (M.Gov.Edu)

Demba's description of "how it works" offers a compelling example of how international actors use training sessions as a means of exercising governmental power, what Ziai describes as the ability to "structure the field of possible action of others...through the production of knowledge" (2015b p.17). Through trainings international players are able to introduce CP policies that they have already crafted internationally without coercion, instead fostering a sense of ownership by shaping what participants will consider as possible or legitimate courses of action. For example, Yaya recounts how he asked an international expert he met at a regional training hosted by an IO to help them with the reform and she steered them in the direction of the most current initiative being launched by the IO as the main solution to their problems, "And so it was she who came and told us, "You cannot start any other way than with a skill based framework!" (M.Gov.Edu).

International actors exert influence without overtly violating the principle of local ownership, as the final decision-making authority, at least in theory, remains with national middle space actors. This dynamic resonates with Foucault's notion that "this relation of power leaves the individuals untouched as subjects of their action although it influences and governs them" (p. 17). Demba captures this paradox poignantly when he reflects: "It is us who decide... but the problem is that we cannot decide... to integrate the contents if we ourselves do not master them." His statement illustrates

how power operates not through direct imposition, but through shaping the conditions under which decisions are made.

Overall, data from the education middle space actors did not show that the disjuncture between the developmental discourses of local ownership and actual practices based in unequal power was perceived as problematic. Through a combination of financial dependency, an appropriation of elements of the development discourse that favour international expertise and an efficient use by IOs of trainings to influence the local agenda, education interviewees narrated positive experiences of participating and owning CP policies.

7.1.2 Perspectives from the child protection middle space

In stark contrast, child protection actors, irrespective of their closeness to the international sphere, experienced and described the unequal power in the CP network negatively and as a process laden with built-in structural and symbolic violence. Through their narrations they strongly rejected any sign of continuities between the colonial and development discourse (although not of the idea of development itself) and engaged fully with the non-hegemonic possibilities offered by the concepts of partnership and ownership.

To start, they candidly expressed international monetary dependence of CP efforts as an unequal distribution of resources with direct and undesirable consequences. They were unanimous about the downsides of being reliant on external finances and expressed this reality as a social injustice they should fight against. In contrast to education actors feeling that ownership was joint despite conditionalities, child protection actors did not express donors' conditionalities as useful. The power attached to the unequal ownership of resources was directly linked to inefficient, undesirable and even dangerous efforts that failed to eliminate VAC and CP.

We have the feeling that the States feels obliged to accept the projects that they propose because we already receive funding from Europe. And sometimes even if the project doesn't suit them, they don't express openly but do so just in rumours. But it is the population that suffers and sometimes it even gets turned into law. (Jaqueline, F.CSO.CP)

Child protection participants described how conditionalities and limited decision-making power constrained their ability to implement activities they believed would have the greatest impact or to carry them out in ways that would be truly effective. While education actors tended to accept donor-driven targeting of specific regions or groups as standard practice, those in the child protection middle space expressed frustration. They criticised donors for narrowing initiatives to siloed, predefined categories of children that aligned with external priorities, rather than adopting a more holistic approach that considers the broader spectrum of children affected by violence. They were not able to agree with the approach of just treating certain children depending on who the donor was, *"Ferrero will tell you that their cacao is in the region of Soubré, so in relation to their responsibility, they fund interventions in that zone and they will focus solely on children involved in the production of cocoa...if we narrow targets we will have less impact!"* (Drissa, M.Gov.CP). Others critiqued that donors were not willing to fund true behavioural change campaigns to transform people's beliefs about CP and preferred financing activities that were easier to count, *"It is very limiting...they love to finance activities where we can count things, we treated 5,000,000 children that type of activity...if we put the money to create a REAL campaign, you will see that things would change"* (Philippe, M.CSO.CP).

Finally, another group of child protection actors critiqued that when the power to decide how to distribute resources was so far away from the contextual realities the problems chosen were often outdated, *"The intermediaries are often times over there in Geneva. They say, 'We know Côte d'Ivoire, these are the realities over there.' And the realities that you know are already outdated!"* (Nathalie, F.CSO.CP). Nathalie challenges the tendency to favour international over local knowledge when she critiques the power dynamic where international intermediaries, based in Geneva, claim to possess an expertise about the realities in Côte d'Ivoire. She critiques donors' assumption that external actors can fully understand and represent local realities, suggesting that knowledge must be continuously updated and grounded in lived experiences. Ultimately, she is questioning the "hierarchisation of different types of knowledge (and sometimes also cultures and values), with one type (universally

applicable expert knowledge) being privileged and the other (local, unscientific knowledge) denigrated” (Ziai, 2015b p. 223).

Sometimes the direct conditionalities inherent in the financial structural power were very hard on the actors themselves because they were required to personally put themselves on the line. For example, by obliging them to push back or critique the government aggressively in order to comply with what the funders wanted to achieve. Such was the case of a national civil society organisation that was created by an INGO as a way to ‘localise’ or outsource government advocacy efforts. Whilst previously this INGO did government advocacy directly, discourses of ownership meant that they shifted to financing these actions through local civil society actors.

It was really very very difficult and myself I was very badly perceived by the people of the Ministry. "Oh look that one is making speeches". It was really very very difficult. And at the same time you have X next to you that gave us funding saying "Listen. Push! Push! If you don't put more pressure we will pull out the funding. (Philippe, M.CSO.CP)

Misalignment of objectives between what international donors want and what the national child protection field believes it needs is a recurrent theme that is not present in education interviewees. Overall child protection actors engage differently with the promise of partnership and local ownership in development discourse and many identified financial autonomy as the only true potential pathway for ownership. Actors could not reconcile power relations ever changing until the structural unequal distribution of resources would be addressed and they rejected that development’s new proposal of a "partnership" and “ownership” was possible if international actors maintained structural power:

When we will manage to be self-sufficient I don't think we will need all the partners. We will conduct our activities ourselves. But as long as we have an outstretched hand, signalling we can't do it alone, it will be difficult. Because when a partner gives their money you have to also consider his objectives, what the partner wants. And if the partners does not agree with your plan, this creates problems. (Bakary, M.Gov.CP)

Bakary calls into question the need for international actors at all beyond their financial resources. He directly challenges the discourse of international expertise as legitimate and necessary and instead portrays it as creating problems.

Overall, child protection interviewees strongly rejected the discourse of international technical expertise as a justification for limited local participation and external control over decision-making. This critique was most clearly directed at the figure of the international consultant. Often brought in to meet donor requirements around reporting, planning, and accountability, these consultants serve to operationalise externally imposed procedures that are not necessarily embedded in national actors' working practices. Because donor funding is contingent on adherence to these specific modes of operation, national middle space actors are compelled to acquire technical knowledge that aligns with donor expectations, knowledge that is often framed as the exclusive domain of international experts.

The need for the 'legitimate' expertise held by international consultants can be considered as one of the technologies used to continue to control and limit the power given to the national middle. Whilst education actors lamented that this expertise was lacking nationally, child protection actors argued the opposite. For instance, Drissa used the fact they were not dependent on consultants as proof of their ability to deal with CP policies themselves unlike other countries that could not comply with international requirements alone.

All the other countries used consultants. But it was me that wrote it, with my team we developed the country report for Côte d'Ivoire...Everybody was surprised when we said "No it was not consultants it was the young man that wrote it. What I mean is that we have the human resources. I have no doubts about that. (M.Gov.CP)

By giving the example that local capacity exists despite everyone's "surprise" Drissa highlights the tendency to underestimate local expertise and the status quo that keeps power with international consultants. Similarly, Mamadou mentioned how the consultant figure was mobilised because of international actors' disbelief in their national capacities, "At that time, they thought we were not smart enough to manage that, so they sent us someone international. But afterwards I chased all the international consultants out (laughter)" (M.Gov.CP). He highlights a sense of imposed inferiority and external control, reminiscent of a colonial discourse, where decisions about local capacity were made by external actors without fully recognising or valuing local potential.

These actors did not necessarily reject the legitimacy of this type of knowledge but rather they rejected the need for international consultants to produce it by proving that technical capacities were found in house. One of the techniques they used to claim further ownership of the policy enactment process was becoming fluent and proficient in the technologies that the development discourse uses, such as international reporting and monitoring. Actors described undertaking intentional processes of learning to be able to take ownership of the policy enactment process. Mamadou for example described how he sought training in results-based project management to be able to shift the decision-making inequalities between a government ministry and international donors.

I remember when I started working I didn't have a computer and I wrote my projects by hand which I submitted to my manager. And then she would say to me 'But we don't have the means we don't have anything'. So we waited for the funds and the ideas of the international partners to activate us. I'm that guy that gets labelled as a rebel. They say, "He refuses to align like the others do." I said, "No I don't stay in line!" The responsibility for the protection of children in Côte d'Ivoire is part of the sovereign role of the state. It is the responsibility of the state and not of the profitability of a partner who comes to tell us: "Take this. Do that." At the end what do we have when the partner makes his report and then who goes to justify himself somewhere else. What do we gain? Nothing at all. That which he wanted to have as a goal, as a result he obtained it and then he leaves. So in 2007 I did my first results-based management training. I assure you at first I didn't understand anything (laughter). (M.Gov.CP)

Staying “in line” for him meant catering to donor’s needs and priorities and being content with the benefits this system might provide to those individuals participating in it. He rejects the role of implementor and executor that waits to be “activated” to cater to those needs. He also places the responsibility of children’s wellbeing as being “owned” by the Ivorian state through its right to sovereignty of its territory. It is only after learning the language and legitimate knowledge used by donors that he was able to rebel and approach donors with his own demands.

Once again faced by the figure of the international consultant his mastery of the development discourse allowed him to subvert the donor's requirement of a consultant's presence to serve his own needs:

The consultant that arrived told us: 'This and this is what we need.' and I said 'NO, here are OUR terms of reference. This is what WE want to explore and this is what WE want to achieve according to our needs.' And we gave him our terms of reference with specific objectives and results he needed to achieve. I even went further than that and asked him for deliverables! (laughs) And when the consultant got to work we did not let him do it alone...We were very satisfied. Whether the donor was or was not satisfied, it is us who want to address our problem and it is us that are asking for something. (Mamadou, M.Gov.CP)

Mamadou was able to enact power and carve out ownership of the policy enactment process by learning the parameters used by the development discourse to demand a greater portion of partnership. He is amused by his audacity to switch roles with the 'international expert' by "even" asking him for deliverables and making him cater to their terms of reference. However the gains were not always seamless, and this particular actor eventually stepped away from the policy process he was leading because international actors and some of his middle space colleagues fought against this process where he demanded that true ownership to define strategies stay in the hands of the government.

Bakary recounted an incident in which an international consultant was brought in to disrupt a policy process that had been gaining momentum under national leadership. He described a collaborative effort led by national actors and inclusive of international organisations that culminated in a five-year strategy with clearly defined priority areas. However, this nationally driven process was halted when an international organisation commissioned a consultant to revise the plan and outline the next steps. Bakary interpreted this move as a deliberate act of interference, accusing international actors of using the consultant to "give it their own direction" and questioning their true commitment to collaboration and partnership.

We were meant to then write an action plan but then the partners interfered and want to give it their own direction... and there is a consultant who was recruited for that. So the question that arises is what happens to all that we had done in the workshops to develop the strategy? It all goes into a drawer. And now we do not know where we are in the process. (M.Gov.CP)

Actors expressed anger when ownership was taken away and were quick to pinpoint the discrepancies between the promises of local ownership made formally by the development discourse and their controlling actions.

Are we still at the colonisation stage? Are we at the stage of recolonisation? Are we at the stage where we want to impose our point of view unto people? It doesn't suit me. I'm a technician. I work in a technical field and I give technical ideas but I don't know what the ideas are behind the partner's head... We want to get out of that. (Mamadou, M.Gov.CP)

Mamadou's comment above powerfully spotlights the colonial continuities he perceives are present in the actions of external partners and his complete rejection of them. Similarly, Bakary identifies this misuse of power from international partners when he critiques how they exercise ultimate veto power. Mamadou goes even further, questioning the sincerity of international actors' commitment to solving the problem. He suggests their motivation lies elsewhere, rooted in an accountability that lies outside Côte d'Ivoire, than in a genuine desire to protect children, "*Only (name of IO) knows what it is protecting, what it wants to achieve. Why (name of IO) wants to maintain the system in the way it works now only (name of IO) knows*" (Mamadou, M.Gov.CP).

Across the interviews, child protection actors consistently positioned the Ivorian state as the rightful bearer of responsibility and ownership over CP policies. They expressed a clear desire for national actors to play a central and autonomous role in the policy network. However, they also pointed to the unequal distribution of resources and the imposition of external conditionalities as an inhibiting factor to respond to this duty. As Bakary explained, "*The state must carry out their activities without too much involvement from (international) partners. If the state manages to mobilise its resources, to put in place all the mechanisms necessary to be able to be autonomous, I think we will be able to move forward*" (M.Gov.CP).

Yet, when child protection actors pushed for alignment with the principle of local ownership, they often faced resistance. These actors reflected on how when they called for true ownership they were cast as a nuisance seeking to destabilise the established dynamics of the policy enactment process. In such moments, international

consultants became a convenient mechanism to reassert control and redirect the process in line with international priorities.

Despite their frustration these actors do not reject the goal of some kind of “development” that includes eliminating CP. Instead, they demand full ownership over how this goal is defined and achieved. Their frustration is targeted at the exercise of governmental power by international actors who, in their view, intervene to reassert control. Their dissatisfaction resonates with what post-development authors identify as an inevitable contradiction when the discourse of local ownership of development is confronted with continuing conditionalities:

The transfer of the right to define development to the partner in the South becomes farcical when the other partner determines the conditions, sets the agenda or decides what sound economic policies look like...donors want to maintain control over their resources for reasons of national interest or out of accountability towards the taxpayers. Another is that the expert knowledge questioned by these ideals is closely linked to the identity of those working in the development industry. (Ziai, 2015b p.93)

This is not to say that child protection actors dismissed all forms of international engagement. On the contrary, some valued particular relationships and encounters. Kanga, for instance, recalled one of the few international consultants she found genuinely helpful:

It was (name of IO)...which had recruited the consultant, who at the time came from Italy or Brazil because she said her origins were from two places...We found that she was one of the rare consultants that they sent us who was competent on the issue because she took her time to explain herself. I said to her: “But how do you know all that? “. She told me: “I’m Brazilian and then, I’m Italian, Sicilian, so we have a lot of realities that are close to yours. So this allows me to understand. (F.IO.Edu/Prot)

This consultant relied not on the usual legitimate international knowledge to work with Kanga but rather she mobilised her own diversity as Brazilian and Sicilian to make contextual and local knowledge valuable rather than the underlying problem. Kanga also notices that the consultant took her time to make herself understood and created a space for genuine dialogue.

Another example of a positive encounter where ownership was maintained despite international involvement is Mamadou's account of why the Ivorian government chose to become the first francophone country to conduct the VACs survey.

I mean when we started talking about it, it was (name of IO) who approached us to say it was important. It's true that we had analysed the cartographic features of the national child system, but we had to have data because this would accompany the whole decision-making and strategic component, etc. So, when we really saw the scope of this survey and what it could do, it's true that we advocated for it. But it wasn't easy because for a country to accept that there is violence and that we will prove it through indicators which demonstrate that this violence exists, it has not been easy. We were asked questions such as: Why us? Why do we have to do it? ...Why didn't other countries do this? Does that mean that we are more violent here than elsewhere? It was this kind of questioning but afterwards when we were able to demonstrate that ...with this, it could make it possible to mobilize more resources to be able to support all projects. Then it was well accepted. (Mamadou, M.Gov.CP)

From the policy event analysis in chapter 5 we know that both the child protection system cartography and the VAC Survey mentioned in the quote above are policies originating externally at the international level. Despite acknowledging their external origin Mamadou found these initiatives useful and describes taking ownership of them so much so that he advocated for them to the national higher ups despite it being a difficult sell. The above description is very different to Yaya's account as an education middle space actor, which explained ownership of the CP ban despite the policy's external origin. In the education field ownership was attributed to the policy because of a mature relationship with international actors that allowed them to avoid debating the contentious elements of the policy. In this case Mamadou sees the opportunity to debate, critique and question as key to obtain true ownership of the policy. Only after going through these conversations and still identifying the policy's value did it get accepted. Whilst both the StC's CP policy ban and UNICEF's VAC survey were pre-conceived in the international arena, their journey towards local ownership played out very differently.

However, one could argue that when international actors offer pre-conceived policy events such as the VAC survey "governmentality" is still at play. The initiatives already

frame the problem in such a way that they steer actors into one type of ‘solution’, normally the one being offered. It exercises power by structuring and limiting what is seen as possible fields of action. For example, Nathalie describes how international training on positive discipline is what influenced her to see this as the solution to CP whilst admitting that she had not explored other options, *“There are several approaches that exist. But I admit, I will recognise that for the other approaches I am not documented. Because I think that with positive discipline since I had participated in the training, I find it really something quite complete”* (F.CSO.CP). Her limited documentation on other approaches and the direct link between international training and adopting positive discipline, illustrates how power elevates certain forms of knowledge as a *“quite complete”* policy solution.

7.1.3 Exploring further the heterogeneity of experiences

The analysis indicated that education and child protection middle space actors perceive power imbalances within the policy network differently. Child protection actors, regardless of their proximity to international institutions, openly voiced frustration that power was still held internationally. In contrast, education middle actors appeared more accepting of this dynamic, instead directing their frustration toward the Ivorian government, which they hold responsible for sustaining internationally funded pilot initiatives. Unlike their education counterparts, child protection actors required a bigger say in the decision-making process of CP policies to develop a sense of ownership. They also more explicitly challenged the dominance of international expertise and advocated for greater freedom to debate and shape policy directions.

These contrasting perspectives suggest that perceptions of power as either oppressive or acceptable are shaped by whether existing dynamics support or hinder actors’ goals and objectives. For education actors, their relative acceptance of power imbalances may be linked to the chronic budgetary constraints the sector has faced since its inception. As detailed in Chapter 4 most resources are allocated to salaries and expanding the system’s physical capacity. The pressure to keep the educational system operational by preventing teacher strikes and accommodating an increasing student population is acutely felt. For instance, Yaya describes the immense pressure to the

system but also to him personally when schooling became compulsory in 2015 against a backdrop of an influx of students who had missed years of schooling, a need to rebuild destroyed infrastructure, and a depleted teaching workforce:

It feels like a Sisyphean job because every time you feel like nothing happened but things did happen! But it's the number of classrooms, of students, of new teachers...There is the question of choice. You have thousands of children outside the school system, your option, your priority is to integrate them? Or do you start thinking about how you are going to immediately offer quality that will exclude others? (M.Gov.Edu)

For education middle space actors, a first sign of success is to keep the education system afloat, “*when there is no strike, we are at peace*” (Karim, M.Gov.Edu).

Conversely, child protection middle actors’ definition of success is ultimately linked to something different from the status quo. Success occurs through a reduction of violent acts against children which can only happen through a systemic approach which seems to be at odds with the current network structure. As Mamadou states, “*Let us strengthen the system! By strengthening the system we give weight and strength to all the actors and all the actors evolve together rather than strengthening a single actor*” (M.Gov.CP). The different fields seem to expect different types of outcomes from their CP policy work. Whilst CP efforts in the form of limited projects might ease budgetary pressures for education actors, child protection actors see this as a fragmentation of efforts that works against their system change objectives. The child protection middle wants to mobilise policy events towards a national driven agenda focused on impact rather than quick policy wins.

This divergence in aims and in the level of critique directed at international practices was also evident in the documentary analysis presented in Chapter 4. The CP policy gateway led by the child protection field called for a cohesive, cross-cutting approach from the outset, which clashed with the network’s usual fragmented mode of operation. It also began with an intentional focus on all types of VAC. In contrast, education focused policy gateways treated CP as a secondary objective to other original policy aims such as increasing school access, limiting students’ involvement in political violence or improving the teaching quality.

The quotes below illustrate this contrast by comparing two actors in similar professional roles reflecting on the same policy event. Alassane, an education INGO actor, described lobbying the government to achieve the programme's objectives:

I explained to people that we had succeeded in passing this decree. They asked me: "How? » I said: "Well because we started on the principle that we have to lobby." When we lobby, we have to determine the people who are influential, ...when we went to present (policy event) to the Minister of National Education...we had a big ceremony here at the Ivoire Hotel where we had children parade, we did a lot of stuff... And that's how I was able to get from the minister that we must do this, we must do that. (M.INGO.Edu)

Through his insider background he was able to achieve the policy objective of the programme and could label and showcase the event as a success. The ceremonial aspects of the lobbying effort, such as the parade and presentations, also illustrate the performative elements of policy enactment, where symbolic actions are used to garner support and legitimise initiatives.

In contrast, Philipe, his counterpart in the child protection field, questioned this approach. He critiqued the practice of “*pushing*” pre-set INGO agendas without adequate contextual analysis:

Generally this is what happens : "Well listen. We have a project that (name of INGO) will finance". (Name of INGO) it has set its agenda until 2030 and when it ends up in the agenda we have to make it operational in the projects. Do you see? And often the contexts of African countries are different. Côte d'Ivoire spent practically... more than 10 years of crisis between 2000 and 2015-12. Was it favourable to push for initiatives? It is only now that we feel the calm, that people have space to think about a certain number of things. But when we were talking about the 2000s until 2012 it was a difficult situation. And when they put programs into our agendas, it's difficult. (M.INGO,CP)

Philipe does not refer to achieving the IO's agenda as a success. Instead, his critique points to the potential pitfalls of externally driven agendas that do not fully account for local contexts and complexities. He highlights a lack of agency for local actors, who are compelled to implement programs that may not align with their immediate needs or contexts just because they are part of an international organisation's agenda. In

hindsight Philipe questions whether the policy's effect was actually "*favourable*". He emphasizes how conducting policies without a proper situational analysis affect not only their feasibility but their appropriateness and highlights how this makes the situation on the ground "*difficult*".

Ultimately education and child protection actors expressed differing views of the power distributed within the CP policy network. Education actors, constrained by budgetary pressures and the urgent need to maintain system afloat, perceived the influence of international actors as welcomed support. In contrast, child protection actors, driven by the imperative to reduce violence against children, view the same power dynamics as obstructive. They advocated for a systemic approach that transcends piecemeal projects and that would measure success by a reduction in violence. This divergence highlights the heterogeneity of the national middle space and shows that contextual factors, such as the nature and history of these fields diversify people's experiences of power and of the policy enactment process. The analysis also begins to uncover the influence that the policy network structure has in the enactment of CP efforts and in the experience and actions of the policy actors involved.

Crucially, these differences underscore that governmental power in the form of development discourse is not a monolithic experience. It is plural and relational and constantly reshaped through interaction with diverse realities, contexts, and knowledge systems. International actors may introduce new concepts of ownership and participation, or individuals like the Italo-Brazilian consultant may mobilise different ways of working. The result is neither a complete overhaul nor a full continuation of dominance by the international arena, rather the emergence of new possibilities. Since power is relational and not held by only one side, the national middle as it interacts with these discourses also exercises power by appropriating, resisting and mutating. In the next section I continue exploring how the middle space exercises power through the concept of ownership.

7.2 Different avenues for ‘counterwork’ and why greater ownership matters

In this section I focus on the diversity of counterwork that occurs when middle space actors interact in the policy network and express a feeling of ownership with the idea of eliminating CP in schools. Counter work according to Lie, “denotes the process that unfolds when different systems of knowledge intersect, conceptualized as the rebounding effect of knowledge in its diversity” (in Ziai, 2007 p.58) . As noted in the analysis above the middle space is not powerless when it participates in the CP policy network but rather it participates bringing with it a diversity of experiences and knowledge. The result of this encounter is not an either/or positioning suggested in a binary thinking (for or against CP, for or against development, for or against children’s rights, for or against international actors). Arce and Long (2000) call counterwork the study of “analysing creative breaks within the premises and contours of orthodox concepts”(p. 10). In this section I present the ‘creative breaks’ that the middle space actors offer when expressing power in relation to enacting CP policies to increase their effectiveness.

7.2.1 Taking context seriously

To start, the data shows that Ivorian middle space policy actors believe it to be critically important to better align CP policies with local cultural and socio-economic realities. Context in terms of local values and the environment and history is a central issue. They affirm that it is crucial for policies to acknowledge the value that Ivorian communities give to CP in childrearing and to take the embodied experience seriously into consideration.

When you ask him he will tell you "It's because I love my children that I hit them", because that's how he materialised in his childhood subconscious the love of his parents for him. "If my dad didn't love me he wouldn't have hit me when I did stupid things. It's because he loves me, because he wants to follow me that he hits me like he did". (Nathalie, F.CSO.CP)

For the middle actors, grounding policies on why Ivorians use CP is not perceived as first step towards legitimising the practice but rather as a necessary step towards installing change, “The community believes that violence is something very important to

educate a child...We need to understand them" (Assane, M.INGO.CP). This starting point differs from the 'CP as VAC' discourse which puts children's rights at the origin of the policy problem and seeks to avoid anything that seems to question their inalienability. The middle space is suggesting departing from this 'universal' starting point and putting culture and context at the centre.

However this departure is not mobilised to legitimise CP through culture but rather to find ways to change the practice more effectively and sustainably. Jaqueline for example highlighted the need for sociological and anthropological studies of the Ivorian culture similar to those which she believes Europe bases its childrearing practices on. These studies on culture would help them develop policies that fit with the unique characteristics of the Ivorian population. She notes,

I know that in Europe there are studies on different population that have been done, on the Gauls and their ancestors and on how they behave... but have we taken the time to do that in Africa?... We should not obscure local culture otherwise we will always have a decreasing impact... each population has their own words, their temperament, their personality or their character. (F.CSO.CP)

In calling for the use of anthropological research to avoid obscuring local culture in the development of CP policies, Jaqueline challenges the notion that such policies are universal and ahistorical. Instead, she makes visible their roots in European historical and cultural contexts, thereby de-essentialising them and legitimising the inclusion of local cultural perspectives.

Like Jaqueline, Kanga resists the a-cultural enactment of CP policies and urges external actors to reconsider this approach. She critiques the assumptions embedded in international consultants' methods, particularly the belief that their 'technical' expertise is universally applicable, regardless of local context.

When the consultant comes, he tends to impose what he knows. But we tell him that there are realities that you, as a consultant, coming from elsewhere, you are not supposed to know. So, you should let people open up to you so you immerse yourself in the realities ... because there is also the culture. There is culture that counts. ... So, if you don't absorb it... you can't say because this is how it happens there, it must necessarily happen like that here. (F.IO.CP)

She describes how middle space actors resist by encouraging international consultants to welcome and soak in the differences in culture. She invites consultants to adopt a position that would allow locals to “open up” to them and have a say. This position would require them to admit that there is legitimate knowledge which is particular to the context that they do not possess. It unsettles the position of consultants as experts of universally applicable knowledge and values because it is calling for some “renunciation of theorizing from uncontextualized hypotheses (which) removes initial security, but offers greater if more frustrating challenges” (Arce & Long, 2003 p.7) .

One way that the middle actors are already actively contextualising CP policies is through their endorsement and mobilisation of the African Charter over the CRC. They do this to address communities’ concern about an overemphasis on children’s rights and a perceived erosion of their authority. The African Charter “departs from the premise that rights and duties inevitably exist concomitantly” (Save the Children Sweden, 2012 p.22) by including children’s responsibilities as part of the rights framework, something that CP policy documents would discourage.

They have a problem. They cannot understand why children are given so many rights and they do not understand their duties. Whereas, we have a charter. The African Charter ... also defines the obligations of the child. Not just rights. So that means that Africa or African countries recognise that children have rights, but that they also have duties that they must be able to respect and which will allow a balance between the parents, teacher and student. Otherwise if they only have rights and they have no duties, that somewhat biases the education that we want to instil in them. (Affoué, F.Gov.CP)

Affoué is not suggesting using the African Charters’ mention of children’s responsibilities to legitimise the use of CP when children are not obeying. Rather she wants to use it to contextualise the discussion so that it includes caregivers and teachers’ concerns over a reciprocal exchange between adults and children around behaviour and ensuring that children grow up with a balanced understanding of their role in the community. For middle space actors, the African Charter’s dual emphasis on rights and duties offers a more culturally resonant framework, one that considers the desire by communities to maintain social cohesion and respect for authority. As

discussed earlier, middle space actors are reacting to their observation that the promotion of children's rights in Africa was one-sided and often failed to adequately stress the importance of duties, leading to misunderstandings and conflicts between parents, teachers, and children. They argue that the equal focus on duties and responsibilities, that the African Charter offers will address communities' concerns over the erosion of authority and discipline, which are seen as essential for a well-functioning school environment.

When referring to the African Charter they also mobilise a sense of ownership because they see that the work of contextualisation was already done and advocated for by African leaders to address their communities' needs. When Jaqueline notes, "*The African politicians, have not hidden our needs*" the word 'hiding' is used again to show resistance to an a-contextual approach to policy enactment that seems to want to avoid tackling the complexity and richness that a situated application of policies inevitably brings. The African Charter's departure from the CRC by including children's responsibilities is also a way to make a legitimate space for the "pesanteur" that communities which differ from a Western middle class livelihood need to contend with.

This is why I congratulate the African Charter which has contextualised the rights of children ... because they have not systematically aligned themselves with the CRC. They took on many aspects but they had the merit of adding what is specific to Africa with regard to children. Since not all parents have the means, ... If you are 15 years old and you can take on a responsibility of your size you must be able to do it. Otherwise the mother will die of exhaustion and you will remain an orphan at a young age. Well, the African charter has been adapted to the reality of Africa and that is what we are asking of the organisations. It is good to work in the humanitarian field... but you should not do humanitarian work for what you imagine to be good but for what is closest to reality. (Jaqueline, F.CSO.CP)

With the above quote Jaqueline is rejecting the idea that policy enactment must follow what external actors imagine being best for children's wellbeing "systematically". Here the underlying tenant that externally driven development efforts are automatically working towards achieving a "good life" is being resisted and that claim of universal

applicable knowledge rejected. Advocating for contextualising the children's rights framing on the different realities of communities is seen as a welcomed pushback by the African Charter. Whilst the resistance does not veer into wanting to accept CP it does express a desire for leaders not to systematically accept things from abroad but to exercise power to adapt and contextualise.

The analysis also shows that middle space actors would like CP, its roots and causes to be better analysed in context. Interviewees resist the tendency to tackle this issue in isolation without considering the economic and structural factors that foster its use.

Because in Europe, a child first is not missing any great needs... And sometimes, in the village, we will be able to talk about the rights of the child but the parent does not have the means to offer his child a meal, perhaps a day's meal. It is a headache for him. He is already psychologically stressed and therefore his reactions can be conditioned by his life situation. (Jaqueline, F.CSO.CP)

Jaqueline's demand not to separate rights from context is not to pave the way for cultural relativism that might encourage parents to use CP as a traditional value. But it is a request for policy to take into consideration the complexity in which this problem sits. This was particularly salient when interviewees discussed teachers' use of CP. They often noted that policies asked too much of teachers given their working circumstances, the lack of training support, the violence present in the wider society and the high numbers of children in classrooms. Too many children in classrooms was identified as the main problem without which it will be hard to expect teachers to follow the ban's guidance.

As long we have the numbers we have in a high school of 8,000 students, it's a comedy! And there are insufficient number of rooms, the classrooms are not enough. So as long as we have that...and as long as we don't have the discipline that we need. That doesn't mean that they should use the chicotte. No, we have rules that we manage to enforce, but how do we enforce rules, then? (Yaya, M.Gov.Edu)

Yaya's use of the expression "It's a comedy" expresses how teachers are placed in an untenable position that does not seem to take their reality seriously. Pascal, similarly, expresses how 'solutions' offered by partners which are not adapted to their realities automatically set them up for failure at implementation. For example, Canadian

experts were ‘supporting’ them to adopt the ‘differentiated pedagogy’ a method that asks teachers to adapt their teaching style to an individual child’s needs as an alternative approach to exercise teachers’ authority.

If the teacher knows that in a class, students’ competencies cannot be homogeneous and that each child has a specificity, he will automatically know how to provide support. But when he doesn’t know, there is a nervousness that sets in the teacher and immediately, he uses the chicote. And well this, we are fighting so that it can take shape...Unfortunately the problem we have in Africa and particularly in Côte d’Ivoire is the overcrowding in classes. And so it is difficult to apply the “differentiated teaching method” as is done in Canada. Canada, I think, is the champion in this area. (Pascal, M.Gov.Edu)

Pascal describes “fighting” to enact a solution offered by the external partner. At the same time, he also recognises that the solution is not feasible in the Ivorian context. His reference to Canada being the “champion” of this approach reinforces the binary framing of developed or successful countries versus those struggling to apply solutions correctly. It recalls the experience of previous educational policies such as the PETV where inevitably “After the desire results fail to appear, the insufficient implementation of the policy advice...is made responsible and bemoaned” (Ziai, 2015b p.44).

Some actors resisted the piecemeal approach by adopting a holistic view of how violence against children should be talked about in CP policy events which resembled the Galtung’s violence framework presented in Chapter 1. Keba, below makes an explicit call to see violence in school classrooms as a complex whole where structural violent conditions are part and parcel of the CP problem. He suggests that the approach should address the complete range of violent experiences that are hindering children’s wellbeing.

There is even a violence that we do not talk about, it is the violence of the environment around the school... there are also overheated classes, overcrowded classes. It’s a kind of violence that creates pressure in the class. There are elements that exert a certain pressure on the child because he is in an environment where, in a class where we must have 40 students, we have 100... So these, I think, are elements that ‘we must take into account as being psychological violence which means that the child cannot develop all

his capacity because he is in an environment which itself exerts a certain pressure... We must not reduce the notion of violence to what we perceive immediately... So all of these are elements, I think, that we need to add to these studies, that we need to take into account from now on so that we have a panoply, a slightly broader range in this approach. (Keba, M.CSO.Edu)

He accuses the network of “*not talking about*” cohabiting types of violence and advocates against limiting the notion of violence to direct violence that we can quickly observe. Keba is mobilising a wider conceptualisation of violence that includes structural violence when he describes the environment exerting “*a certain pressure*”. By adopting a more holistic notion of violence he believes this would allow for a “*panoply*” of approaches or creative breaks to address the problem.

However, linking the overcrowding of schools and the wider societal violence as some of the root causes of CP does not make the former a problem easily resolved by development initiatives. It is not a problem that as Ferguson says “meet the needs of ‘development institutions’ where the policy problem is framed as a “promising candidate for the only sort of intervention a ‘development’ agency is capable of launching: the apolitical, technical ‘development’ intervention” (Ziai, 2015, p. 225). When middle space actors asks to include in the problematisation of CP the wider context and the structural issues that set up the conditions for underqualified and stressed teachers they are calling for a way of working that is different from the one currently offered through the CP policy network structure. These claims make visible the limits of searching to improve children’s wellbeing through development’s way of working that favours short term policy projects and divides problems into separate and a-contextual issues.

Overall, the analysis reveals that advocating for context is a way for middle space actors to exercise power in the CP policy network. This power is not exercised to legitimise CP through tradition but rather it is resisting the acontextual, one-size-fits-all and siloed approach currently mobilised. They emphasise the importance of understanding the embodied experiences, cultural values and contextual realities surrounding CP in Ivorian communities. As they make these claims they are also mutating some of the underlying basic tenants of the dominant discourses.

7.2.2 Communication matters

Closely related to the above demands to include context, middle space actors also exercise power by advocating for a different approach to communicating the CP message to teachers and communities. They urge policy actors to begin from a place of respect for local ways of life, rather than confronting or dismissing them. This involves recognising that when a parent or teacher uses CP, it is often rooted in a deep concern for the child's wellbeing.

The way of approaching communities on these sensitive issues is as if we were telling them: "Everything you do is bad, everything you do is bad." And that's how people feel... When you have the texts and then you say: "We don't hit a child. If you hit a child you go to prison etc." .. Well, often it's those kinds of feelings, it's because people are frustrated. They're frustrated of being told that basically you're not a good father because you didn't do it how you had to do it or you weren't a good mother. (Sophie, F.IO.CP)

Sophie notes that currently CP policy enactment does not start from a stance of respectful engagement that acknowledges the good intentions behind a parent's or teacher's use of CP. Rather policies have mobilised a way of communicating that makes users of CP feel put down, accused of not loving the children in their care, of not fulfilling their educational role correctly and threatened for doing what they have always done. Once again, the embodied experience of the CP message, what it makes people feel, is brought to the fore as an important element to consider in the enactment process. Badou for example notes that disrespecting and shaming those that are committing CP is not a principle of the way he works, *"It's a value for him. When you reproach him for that, you call his values into question. Now, the principle of protection is not to target those who are involved in violence. It is not to pit them against you. It is to have them with you"* (Badou, M.Gov/IO.Edu).

Badou's way of working requires accepting that some people see value in CP. However, this is a difficult position to adopt if policies ask actors full alignment with the 'CP as VAC' discourse. It creates a dissonance related to the discursive power of 'CP as VAC' which "limits what is sayable and provides certain conceptualisations of an object while excluding others" (Ziai, 2015, p. 20). It rattles the development discourse's

tendency to assume a “universal conception of a good society” because it introduces knowledge claims that “are outside the discursive formation, and are judged to be useless from the perspective of this discourse.” (p.43). However, the diversity within the national middle allows for a creative break outside of the realm of the ‘CP as VAC’ framing.

Following this creative break and starting from a place of respect, middle space actors used several tactics to bring communities to embrace change. An overwhelming majority argue that CP policies need to expand the activities that encourage listening and dialogue with and amongst communities. Philipe suggests that enactment needs, “multiple... awareness-raising actions... Go into the field, and not necessarily reject what people say. Go listen to them. Go listen to them and then after try little by little to make this change through explaining”. (M.CSO.CP)

Dialogue through respect was considered essential because it was seen as building the trust necessary for communities to be open to the possibility of changing their own frame around CP. In the narrative below, Mamadou describes how a true and effective dialogue implied abandoning the usual development apparatus which included slides, presentations, computers and an air-conditioned room.

I will give you the example of a capacity building session that I had to do... I assure you I prepared my slides to present them well. I arrive in the room and... the group of the people I see shows me that my audience is not just anyone. They are not employees of an administration, they are not executives of anything. They are villagers. There are some who don't even know how to speak French...They are all cocoa farmers. In the training room with air conditioning they are cold. I said “We are cold! Turn off the air conditioner. Open the window for me.” My computer was all set-up with the slides I had prepared. When I look at the people I don't know what I'm going to do with my slides! (Laughs) I don't know. I started an informal conversation which lasted 5 days! At the end of the 5th day no one wants to return to their village. Everyone wants to stay. They say “Monsieur what you told us, those people had come to tell us that. But we chased them away. But you, your way of talking to us has touched us. (Pointing to his heart.) You need to tell us more. We still want to know more. (Mamadou, M.Gov.CP)

Through this different way of relating to the community he was able to discuss with them in such a way that a once rejected idea they had “*chased*” away was now embraced with excitement. Mamadou, through this example is suggesting that the development’s traditional approach to communicating and not the CP message is what is causing enactment problems. When communities experience the CP message through a different type of communication through respectful dialogue centred around their values and needs they are keen to encourage more of this different way of working. They even are able to take ownership and participate with ideas about how to get others to change and improve the policy enactment process.

They can advice you to say: “Well, the way you explained to us we understood. Maybe you have to explain it like that to everyone, because often you are up there, people are down here. We don't always have the same visions. You how you understand the issue, you think that because you understand the other understands, but that is not necessarily true. So, you need to be able to explain to people what you mean by ‘child protection’, ‘violence in schools’. (Kanga, F.IO.CP)

As per Kanga’s example we can see that middle space actors do not observe an insurmountable animosity towards efforts that ultimately are suggesting changes in communities. When engaged with respect communities are also active and exercise power by encouraging the field to adopt this different way of working.

Through this different way of working the middle space mobilises both knowledge acquired in their interactions with the international sphere and their own local and embodied experiences. For example, they mobilise respect and local and international knowledge to “*demonstrate the opposite of what they think so to convince them*” (Badou, M.Gov/IO.Edu) or to talk until “*we can find an opening*” (Nathalie, F.CSO.CP) in their thinking. This way of workings seeks to create space so that communities can consider different possibilities and perspective about their use CP.

For example, in these dialogues middle space actors described helping communities challenge their beliefs around CP by presenting examples of children who have been derailed from their studies by the use of CP. Nathalie for example facilitated a TV debate where those in favour of CP ended up acknowledging “*It's true that I too abandoned my studies because I was whipped. I fled because I was whipped*” (F.CSO.CP).

This illustrates how they are able to facilitate a creative break to communities' own discursive framing on CP thus opening a middle or new terrain between universalists and cultural relativists discourses.

In these dialogues the middle space advocated for a strong emphasis on what was being proposed rather than what was being taken away. Alassane for example focused on what was being offered to keep individuals engaged, *"The approach here is to have them with us. So what are proposing? ... The idea is to have them, to maintain them so that they can participate in this discussion....So, for me the discussion is the approach"* (M.INGO.CP). They also were keen to explore approaches that were not focused on getting people to accept abandoning CP through a children's rights framing but rather through an approach focused on children's wellbeing, *"we don't even need to mention the term "children's rights"... we need to have... innovative approaches that will make it possible to communicate children's rights to parents... because who wouldn't want to see their child be fulfilled?"* (Affoué, F.Gov.CP). For this they also mention mobilising examples of children who have flourished without the use of CP as *"success stories"* (Philippe, M.CSO.CP). These examples showcase to users of CP the different avenues available to achieve their own goals of respectful and educated children. They then introduce and encourage adults to test and try out different approaches.

For some in the middle space respect also includes spending time in those communities where you want to encourage change. Mamadou below notes how *"the community"* is not a theoretical concept but rather it is made up of real individuals that they need to involve and spend time with face to face.

We had the advantage of being confronted to these arguments but in person where whoever is speaking to you is sitting in front of you! Whoever is there has status in the community! Whoever speaks to you has an audience in the community...With all the respect he has and all the arguments that accompany this position he defends it. Because unfortunately it is the way of bringing the message and the novelty that makes things accepted or causes things to be rejected. ... When we come and we set up our tent in the schoolyard to sleep there because there is nowhere to sleep because we are seen as those who came to change the lives of the children in the village, change the rhythm of life of the community. Those that see negative in everything! When after a month and a half 2 months someone says to us "Sir, why are you sleeping here? Come

and sleep in my house. That which you are bringing here it is good! It is that we want. We didn't know." And we are going with the way of life of this community to show them that it can evolve positively in their interest. (Mamadou, M.Gov.Prot)

Spending extended time within communities is described as a key advantage that distinguishes these actors from those who arrive with the intent to “*change the rhythm of the community*”. By engaging in practices uncommon in the development field such as “*sleeping in the school*” he provides an expression of counterwork. This form of immersion reflects an embodied policy enactment, where policy is not merely theorised or relies on discourse alone but it is lived, negotiated and felt through sustained presence and relational engagement. Through this prolonged exchange and through this sharing of everyday realities they are able to demonstrate how changing traditions like CP can be in the community’s best interest. Mamadou articulates a position where he draws upon his own embodied knowledge of development’s history of disruptions when changes are brought to communities to intentionally enact CP policies differently.

7.2.3 Training, training, training

The same dialogue intensive and face to face approach is identified as indispensable for teachers to achieve the goals of CP policy events. The primary request from the middle space was to mobilise CP initiatives that would support rather than penalise teachers. This included pre-service and in-service training, as well as calls for general coaching and support. As Drissa stated, “*we must first start with the initial training in the CAFOPs, we must give them the bases. Then, when they are on the field, we need continuous things....We need coaching, real coaching*” (M.Gov.CP). Like for communities, the middle space advocated for prolonged dialogues, accompanying teachers and demonstrations of alternative methods.

They argued that policy events should have as a starting point seeking to understand the value teachers attribute to CP to then provide other, potentially more effective possibilities. Starting from their needs in the classroom teachers should be supported by policies so that they don’t feel like CP is their only choice to do their job well, demonstrating to them that “*you are not obligated to use this approach*” (Drissa, M.Gov.CP). The example below describes how training and testing alternatives to CP

play out in the real life of teachers. When teachers are told to abandon CP they are unsure how to maintain authority to manage their classrooms. They need space and time to test out new possibilities.

And so, when we tell them, “No. No chicotte!”, the teacher loses all his authority. He no longer knows what he must do since he is used to imposing silences with the chicote. Gbagba” (noise of la chicote). When we say “No, no more of that”. He says, “Oh, I don't know how I'm going to work anymore”. And so, when we come to strengthen their capacities and tell them, here is how you can establish positive discipline. He says, “Oh yes, but I never thought about it”. There was a CAFOP intern, a primary school teacher, who was taught positive discipline. She goes on training, her head teacher tells her, “Drop it, it can't work”. But, when she was in a position of responsibility, she had her class. She said...”I'm going to try”... She began to make the children responsible, to discipline them according to the method of positive discipline. Two months later, she can leave her class and go to her colleague's classroom. She does it on purpose to see if it can work. She's there for 2 minutes, no sound. She took her phone, she called her teacher, to tell him it worked (Badou, M.Gov/IO.Edu)

Badou describes a situation where CP policy enactment is centred around a teacher's need to manage a classroom so that students learn in a disciplined environment rather than centred around the inalienability of children's rights. It describes a gradual process through which after training, teachers must test it out for themselves to see if it is applicable to their realities, often facing disbelief from other colleagues. The middle space sees this approach as facilitating a more constructive way of changing teachers' practices.

However, they also recognise that teacher training is an expensive endeavour and one that donors are not keen to finance, “*There was not enough support because all donors concluded that teacher training was part of the sovereign role of the Ivorian state*” (Eric. M.Gov.Edu). Kanga describes how trainings for externally driven policy events are prohibitively expensive to scale because IOs use a mechanism in which they move all teachers to the training venue and pay them high allowances and hotel stays.

Nevertheless, middle space actors described different examples and proposals of how to engage in creative breaks to navigate these financial constraints. Kanga notes that after being blocked by these high budget figures she sought alternatives to their

traditional way of working by consulting the Ministry on best way to conduct teacher trainings. The Ministry was quick to propose with an alternative more cost-effective mechanism that internally they used regularly, the “pedagogical days”.

But, by virtue of exchanging, of dialoguing, I said...”We must train 500 teachers, but the money we have is not sufficient. Is there anything you can suggest?” He says: “Ah, but yes, we can offer ‘pedagogical days’”. I say: “Ah but yeah, we hadn’t thought about that”. He says even with the pedagogical days, instead of 500 we would be able to train perhaps 700, 800 even. (Kanga, F.IO.Edu/Prot)

Through dialogue and government engagement instead of working in isolation Kanga was able to find a solution to her training budget cap. This small example suggests that there could be multiple unexplored possibilities for making teacher training more accessible by redistributing power within the network.

Another creative way that the middle space exercised power to work towards their priority of teacher training was through tagging this priority unto seemingly unrelated international policy events. For instance, Demba notes that to continue training teachers on the new “Human Rights and Citizenship” curriculum they would “*take advantage*” and add their trainings within donors’ new priority content.

For example, when a project came with a theme, ... we took advantage of the integration of this theme in the different disciplines to provide our training before talking about the theme which was being integrated... It was a win-win partnership since the ministry took the opportunity to continue the extension of EDHC discipline. The partner was also happy that the theme he supported was integrated into a discipline as important as EDHC. (Demba, M.Gov.Edu)

Whilst Demba portrays this as a win-win situation one can only imagine the potential if actors mobilised their power in such a way that financial priorities would work together towards supporting teachers to change their CP practices. Imagining ways to achieve sustainable financing aligns with Karim’s thinking around how to ensure continuity to essential initiatives such as teacher training. He emphasises the need for the middle space to gain new technical knowledge and ambition to advocate their own government for budget allocations through official mechanisms.

In fact, we need to advocate the government. We need to be able to continue the issue, to have additional funding to continue. But many directors are content with their operating budget. However, we need a development budget. That is lacking. They give you a position, you just content yourself with your assignment, maintaining the cars, buying fuel, cleaning the offices, buying furniture, computers and then there you are sitting there. The project from which you benefited, how are you going to sustain it? You don't have the competency to argue on this point so that creates gaps in the project's management. So they can talk to international partners, they come and talk but they say: "The State must play its role". But there is a whole mechanism for the State to play its role. The representative of the State who is there must be able to know that there is a mechanism... (Karim M.Gov/IO.Edu)

The creative break Karim is proposing disrupts the development discourse but not through disrupting the way international actors work but rather by seeking to change what the national middle space expects from their own government and shifting the development mindset inwards. This inward turn also reflects a form of embodied policy consciousness as Karim speaks from lived experience within the bureaucratic apparatus. His call to action is grounded in the everyday realities of navigating state systems, and in recognising the latent potential of national middle space actors to become agents of transformation rather than conduits of donor agendas.

7.2.4 Shifting participation, shifting ownership, shifting power

One final way the middle space expressed power within the network is by advocating for decision-making processes to be closer to the recipients of CP policies. For instance, there were several interviewees underlining the need not only to better support teachers but also to have them at the centre of the policy enactment process. Additionally, there were critiques about the lack of consultation with those most concerned by the CP ban before its implementation. Moussa contends that consensus should have been sought before enforcement, rather than imposing the policy event in a dictatorial manner.

We take a decree and like a dictator, well the parents must accept. Well that can't work! They will undermine the decision. And the decision is not going to be implemented properly. You have to clarify it first and when everyone agrees, then,

that's it...Since we have agreed, then that one who breaks this law, that's what he's exposed to. (Moussa, M.CSO.Edu)

Philipe also critiqued how this unilateral approach was not efficient as it lacked the necessary buy-in of the most important stakeholders, teachers. He identifies the participation of teachers as crucial because they can describe the situation in classrooms, offering a practical perspective that can inform the enactment of laws.

It's not about coming to pass a law. And then here you go, we have passed the law and it is over! No, that's not going to work! It's not going to work. But when we want to pass the law, we must call the actors, those who use the chicotte. It is them who need to be involved in the process. Those who supposedly use chicotte are teachers. ... they will describe the situation for us... we want to understand what the situation is that you are experiencing in class...We can do seminars where we invite them, they will intervene, they will say, this is the situation that presents itself. (Philipe, M.CSO.Prot)

Overall greater participation by teachers in the process is highlighted as necessary and indispensable. Taking it one step further middle space actors also advocate for handing power to communities to find solutions themselves. They describe how after dialogues place CP as a possible problem that the community would want to address then the process continues by asking communities themselves what they think the solutions should be. “So, it’s a bit of negotiation, a lot of explaining to get people to understand. And then we ask them, ‘What do you think we can do to fix it?’ They themselves offer things that are not always what you expect” (Kanga, F.IO.CP). Actors are open to communities coming up with different ways of addressing the issue and see this is a long and unpredictable journey. For example, Assane notes how the approach needs to be flexible, “The idea of imposing ideas doesn’t work. So, this approach is really flexible and puts the community at the centre of the discussion process and the organisation as a facilitator of change” (M.INGO.CP).

Others such as Nathalie take the claim to ownership even further and argue that community ownership is the only way to achieve sustainability of the CP effort.

So you cannot come into a society to find a problem, propose a lasting solution without the contribution of the population itself and denying the realities of the population itself. Because you're leaving... when you even involve the population in the

development of these solutions, when you leave the population itself will take over because it is them who made the proposals based on their realities. (F.CSO.CP)

Nathalie's description of initiatives coming into a community to "find problems" and prescribe solutions that are not in-tune to the contextual realities and hence fail is similar to Ziai's (2015) description of the "cycle of the development gaze" (p.44). According to Ziai the field usually engages in a cycle that starts with a deficiency diagnosis of a community by external actors. It then goes through "a cycle of diagnosis -prescription and promise- disappointment – new diagnosis, etc., in which new concepts emerge regularly" (p.44). Nathalie is proposing a break from this approach by bringing the local stakeholders in the development of solutions.

Similarly, when asked what he would have done differently regarding CP policy events, Assane notes that he would have involved the community also in conceiving the projects. His proposal would represent a "creative break" from only having internationally pre-conceived policy solutions as part of the suit of possible actions to improve children's wellbeing.

I would perhaps have done it differently by involving from the start, uh... the leaders, the parents, the children in the very design of the projects. This way I directly integrate their perceptions, their visions of what do we do. Of how to drive things. And I think, that way, they will be willing to accept the deployment. They will be ready to make themselves available to support the process. Because right now they think that these are prefabricated things that are being imposed on them. So, the idea is to succeed in mobilising them around the development of a concept that comes from them; so they will be ready to accept it. (M.INGO.CP)

When asked to reflect about different ways of working middle space actors were not shy in mobilising the more progressive versions of the "ownership" and "partnership" discourse. They identify shifting ownership as an effective measure to improve children's wellbeing in schools. However, it is important to note that these calls to have communities and teachers owning and deciding the process do not necessarily describe how middle space actors work but it does point towards possible directions that they might take if they felt they had the opportunity. Nathalie below for example lays out the paradigm that the middle space would like to move away from:

All these IOs tended to come with their objectives and to thus implement activities according to their priorities,But we will always have this rupture that at some point will make the population say to themselves "(Name of IO) take your bags and then leave because it our country. It is our children, it is up to us to educate our children and it is not up to you to educate our children. (Nathalie, F.CSO.Prot)

The paradigm where ownership of the CP problem and the solutions is carried by IOs is being critiqued as unsustainable. It is described as causing a “*rupture*” of trust between those wanting to help and those who are labelled as needing help. Power in the form of external ownership and decision-making is strongly identified as posing a problem for efficient policy enactment. Nathalie predicts that this way of working will make the communities eventually reject any support or proposals from the international sphere.

Other interviewees already describe situations where visible ownership of policies by international actors is causing a disjuncture pushing targeted stakeholders to reject CP efforts. For example, Thomas comments that the visible ownership of policies by international actors, symbolised by their logos, creates a sense of external imposition rather than ownership. Thomas notes how protagonism of international actors in combination with a misunderstanding of the CP policy network by targeted stakeholders blocks his activities and breeds frustration.

They would first need to work to be accepted to be able to convey the message we would like to convey and if (name of IO) immediately sets itself up as the protagonist they will not be in favour ... And what is often unfortunate with us when you send a document to a teacher that he maybe sees a logo...he says: “But you get the money and then you come and tell us to work for free”. And that too is one of the causes which often block our activities. So, we really experience this with a lot of frustration. What else can we do?

Logos reinforce a perception of external ownership which in turn makes those being asked to take part in well-intentioned initiatives feel as if they are being asked to work towards international actors’ priorities without compensation. Badou also describes several examples of how IOs logos give the impression to policy recipients that the outcomes ‘belong’ to and ‘benefit’ international actors. In the example below he notes

that by putting this particular international organisation forward as that who said change should occur the message gets distorted to such a degree that education inspectors threaten that teachers who do not abandon CP will be punished by that organisation.

When there are certain interventions and we say '(Name of IO) says that... (we should respect children's rights)", we are distorting the issue. No, it is not (name of IO) saying that this is how it should be. They certainly give us the funds so that we come and explain to the community, but it is not (name of IO) that is saying this. So the approach of putting (name of the IO) at the forefront to say it is (name of IO) that wants us to do this and if you don't do this they will come and find you here...You will hear teacher inspectors or directors: "If you don't do what we told you to do (name of IO) will come and find you here". Well no, (name of IO) is not the police, they are a partner who comes and talks about our way of doing things for our own good. (Badou, M.Gov/IO.Edu)

Even in policy initiatives that might seem less controversial like those involving the building of latrines, water pumps or schools, logos continue to distort communities' sense of who owns and who benefits from the end products.

When (name of IO) finishes to build a classroom or water wells, will (name of IO) use these? No... it is not because they are visible, because we put their logo that they benefit from it. It is you that benefits! It is not for (name of IO)...And so not to have problems directors say "We won't use it so then it won't break. That way when they come back they will see it is in good state". We build latrines and they say 'Oh no, the children will get them dirty it is not worth opening them' so they stay closed. When they hear we are coming for a visit in the school they open them. (Badou, M.Gov/IO.Edu)

The quote underscores how the current paradigm of policy enactment distorts community ownership by fuelling a perception that the benefits are for IOs rather than for themselves. The presence of logos and the anticipation of visits from the organisation to control, create a performative aspect, where the community maintains the appearance of using the facilities without genuinely integrating them into their lives. The visibility and branding of IOs in combination with a lack of participatory

approaches further entrenches the perception that development is something done to communities rather than with or for them.

The complexity of the “ownership” of policies and in particular policy successes can be further observed in how IOs de-personalise work but elevate organisational identity. For example, Alassane shared how the government’s decision to honour a former IO director for their work in the CP network surfaced strong tensions. He recalls how when the country director was leaving, the government and other national middle level actors took the initiative to honour and recognise this individual’s hard work.

It was not (name of INGO) that was decorated, and in the rules of (name of INGO), none of the staff must be decorated in a personal capacity. It is the organisation that is rewarded, it is the organisation that is decorated.... So when we decorated X, when they went back there, they didn't like it. They didn't like it at all. And so, they pushed them a little into a corner...It was very badly seen because the rules are that it should be the organisation that is being congratulated. ... But there, they were decorated on a personal basis. (M.INGO.Edu)

Here the middle space’s wish to attribute some ownership to the individual having done the work was not compatible with the IOs’ way of assigning success. Policy successes are not owned by those on the ground rather they should be attributed to a de-personalised international entity. However, this way of working is not necessarily conducive to building relationships of trust needed for collaborative policy work. It also can suggest the IOs may struggle to shift and share power of CP policies if they have an interest in keeping full attribution of success.

Yet these critiques and disjunctures are not suggesting a total break from international involvement and the development enterprise. Instead like Nathalie narrates below, there is a request to international actors to change their way of working so that they are congruent with their own discourse, “like they say it here”.

If (name of IO) comes with this overall objective to work, as they say it here, to work so that children can be born, grow and flourish. That they come to Côte d’Ivoire with this overall objective and involve the population: "In your opinion, how can we ensure that children can be born in good health?" The population itself will give these realities. "We want the child to be able to flourish. At the heart of traditional society, how did

children flourish?” By associating them, we can work on that.... So it must be said that they will involve the population. (F.CSO.CP)

When Nathalie demands IOs to truly embrace their “*overall objective*” of working towards Ivorian children’s wellbeing there is an openness to work differently. To work in a way that allows communities affected to define and identify ways towards that vision that suit them. It is arguing for an approach in which genuine support would follow what the population itself identifies as the good life. It asks of the international sphere to accept that there is a diversity of perspectives of how a child is “*able to flourish*”. It is arguing in favour of a diversity of knowledge and an acceptance that communities possess important development knowledge, that is “knowledge about what a good society looks like and how it can be realized” (Ziai, 2015, p. 62).

7.3 Conclusions

In this chapter I have critically examined how power is perceived and exercised by the middle space throughout the enactment of CP policies. These actors, shaped by their embodied experiences as well as their unique positions in the policy network offer perspectives and ways of working that differ from those traditionally used in the development field. The analysis underlined that the middle space is not a homogenous field with differences between actors engaging from the child protection or the education field being the most salient. Child protection actors, expressed openly their frustration over the structural imbalances in power embedded in the policy process. Conversely, education actors, while recognising the power imbalances, were more accepting due to the immediate benefits they perceived receiving from these partnerships.

The analysis also focused on moments of creative breaks what post-development authors term “counterwork”. It therefore probed whether giving more power and space to the national middle might facilitate policy enactment that has a greater impact in improving children’s wellbeing in classrooms. The middle space offered insights which challenged the binary framing of ‘CP as VAC’ in particular through vindicating an approach that valued local culture and context. Through the process of appropriating, contesting and negotiating the “CP as VAC” discourse middle space actors also bended many of the tenants of the development discourse such as expert

knowledge, universal standards of a good life and siloed perspectives on direct violence. They also questioned the timid and partial engagement with the concepts of ownership and participation.

By embracing the diverse perspectives and knowledge systems within the national middle space, there is potential to create more sustainable and impactful CP policies that truly resonate with the Ivorian context. Concretely, enactment would shift towards incorporating respectful dialogue with users of CP, continuous training and coaching for teachers, a focus on local realities and community empowerment. Whilst it is impossible to tell whether 'better' outcomes would be reached an approach that makes more space for the diverse possibilities offered by the national middle's experience would surely enrich policy actors' understanding of the complex processes shaping teachers' use of CP.

CHAPTER 8: Conclusions

At the start of this thesis, I detailed how my personal research motivations stemmed from a series of frustrations I encountered while navigating the intersection between internationally driven school CP policies and their enactment in Côte d'Ivoire. On the one hand, teachers often shared that they endured policies feeling misunderstood and resentful of being compelled to adhere to external aims that failed to account for their realities. Conversely, stakeholders in the international community frequently voiced their dissatisfaction with initiatives that had little to show in terms of impact despite significant effort and financial investment.

This impasse is corroborated by data indicating that CP remains widespread in Ivorian schools notwithstanding multiple international policies aimed at its prevention and a global trend towards its legal prohibition (Balliet, 2024; MENET-CI / UNICEF, 2015). Additionally, there has been a notable backlash against the idea that CP constitutes a violent act that negatively impacts children's education (7info, 2021; Kautcha, 2019; RTI Info, 2021). As an international development worker from the Global South I found it hard to engage in dialogue that could both address contextual and structural concerns and critique the practice of CP by teachers. Efforts to hold space for these two paradigms often left me feeling "restricted by the discursive field" I worked from which skewed discussions towards "individual injury and cultural oppression rather than structural violence" (Merry, 2006 p.48).

An underlying objective of this study was thus to find new frameworks for understanding why the practice remains resistant to change. To kickstart this process, my literature review acted as problematisation of the systems of knowledge, power relations and discursive practices that allowed CP to emerge as a policy issue. A genealogical analysis of the international development literature in Chapter 2, revealed that a 'CP as VAC' discourse anchored in children's rights and epidemiological approaches, had evolved into a dominant and normalised "regime of truth". The analysis also found that this discursive framing significantly influenced strands of CP research within international development which tended to espouse a "dominant consensus thinking" and an "uncritical" position (Reynaert et al., 2012) concerning the value of defining 'CP as VAC'. The ensuing programming, policy and legislation

supported by this work further institutionalised (Stammers, 2016) the discourse as universal and as unproblematic regardless of context. Documentary analysis in chapter 5 found that this discourse was strongly present throughout Ivorian CP policies.

Additionally, my literature review also examined academic works addressing this uncritical stance and dominant discourse. Scholars such as Parkes et al. (2015b), Maternowska et al. (2017) and Heise (1998) have sought different ways to overcome the theoretical *cul de sac* where an overemphasis on individuals acts and a disregard for structural drivers has left the field with limited knowledge of what actually works to prevent CP in schools. Critiques by Burman (2019), Hopkins & Sriprakash (2016) and Pupavac (2011b) have deconstructed and exposed the power dynamics perpetuated by the promotion of a conceptualisation of childhood that while appearing a-contextual is fundamentally Western and can be part of a colonial discourse of ‘othering’. Finally, authors like Twum-Danso (2008, 2009, 2013), Archambault (2009b), Payet & Franchi (2008b), Fay (2017b) and Turner et al. (2024) have investigated the complex and nuanced ways in which communities and children themselves conceptualise their experience of CP, ways that are non-binary and are steeped in relations and contextual significance.

To build from these authors’ work and advance the field’s understanding of CP in schools in the context of Côte d’Ivoire, my study employed theoretical frameworks and methodologies looking to address three main limitations found in the ‘CP as VAC’ discourse: its binary framing, its inability to incorporate contextual or structural drivers and its neglect of how power relations impact CP policy enactment. The research questions guiding the study reflect these concerns:

1. How have contextual and historical conditions shaped school CP policies and their enactment in Côte d’Ivoire?
2. What conceptualisations of CP are mobilised by Ivorian middle space actors and how do these align with or diverge from the dominant CP policy discourse?
3. How is power exercised in the enactment of school CP policies and how do middle-level policy actors experience these power dynamics?

8.1 Contributions to the field of VAC

8.1.1 *Bending binary thinking to allow for new conceptualisations of CP*

In chapter 2, I highlighted that when faced with a persistent use of CP even after policies are heralded as successes (Webley, 2012), literature espousing the dominant discourse of ‘CP as VAC’ often attribute failure of these policies to insufficient data or to local cultures or governments refusing children their universal rights. Conversely, critics can be quick to reject initiatives employing rights discourses as serving the interests of powerful international actors (Merry, 2006; Stammers, 2016). So, to start, this study strived to if not escape, at least bend the binary tendency to explain CP policy limitations in dichotomous terms or as an entrenched binary problem between universalists or cultural relativists.

By applying a Foucauldian inspired problematisation approach to CP policies as well as a post-structuralist epistemology and a post-development lens I sought to de-essentialise or de-normalise and step out of the binary implicit in the ‘CP as VAC’ policy discourse. Stepping out is uncomfortable as suggesting any alternative views on CP defies the prevailing discursive norms of accepted truths. Furthermore, as Ziai (2015a) notes there is a social character to discursive rules whereby acknowledging shared truths signals an “adherence to a certain group” (p.14) in this case the international development field. I therefore spent considerable time in Chapter 2 analysing the *a priori* and historical conditions that led to its adoption. I concluded that the ‘CP as VAC’ framing is just one of many possible discourses we could use in policy enactment. It is a discourse with a specific historical and contextual origin which has created and maintained particular power dynamics amongst participating actors. The analysis revealed concrete limitations of the discourse in aiding certain communities to get closer to the goal of improving children’s wellbeing at school. In particular, its binary framing has been identified as functioning “not just a discussion stopper, but a thought-stopper” (Putnam, 2008, p. 44) and as a discourse which does “not help us to protect children on the ground” (A. O. Twum-Danso, 2008 p. 1).

This study therefore contributes to the field of VAC by offering an epistemological position and theoretical framing that by considering policy as discourse can adopt and extend discursive rules in ways that may allow for conceptualisations of CP that are not

as dichotomous. It contributes to the broader call for an anthropological critique of “hypernormative human rights” (Goodale, 2006) and an “anthropological ‘third way’ in relationship to human rights” (p.490). Through the concrete case of CP school policies in Côte d’Ivoire, I’ve provided a tangible example of what such a critique could look like and the possible benefits of this approach when facing “wicked” problems (Kimball et al., 2023; Rittel & Webber, 1973).

Having laid the epistemological groundwork, in Chapter 6 I challenged binary thinking by analysing the nuanced and embodied ways CP is conceptualised by national policy actors situated within the ‘middle space’. In this thesis, the middle space comprises national policy actors who operate within the intermediary layers of the policy network—those positioned between decision-makers and intended beneficiaries. It includes mid- to senior-level civil servants, programme officers from both national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs and INGOs), and family and teacher representatives. Collectively, these individuals form a complex and dynamic “middle space” that is instrumental in mediating between policy formulation and local implementation.

Although often referred to as translators that “negotiate between local, regional, national and global systems of meaning” (Merry, 2006 p.39) their role in the enactment of policies is often overlooked (Parkes, 2016). Their perspectives can be taken for granted, assumed to align seamlessly with international discourses (Archambault, 2009) or reduced to the status of key informants consulted intermittently. To date, there are no studies, to my knowledge, that centre the embodied experience of national middle-level actors as a legitimate source of expertise, particularly in navigating beyond the binary of universalist and cultural relativists views on CP.

My analysis in Chapter 6 revealed that these actors are not merely intermediaries translating between discursive fields; they also inhabit both worlds. Their lived experiences expose them to the “truths” of both international and local discourses meaning they have experienced CP as both protective and harmful. This dual knowledge means they are in a prime position to propose innovative conceptualisations of CP that expand possibilities to prevent it that move beyond the alternatives typically found in a ‘CP as VAC’ discourse. Moreover, they are also

uniquely placed to identify the constraints within discourses and policy enactment that inhibit different conceptualisations of CP to flourish, as well as to articulate the negative effects that binary conceptualisations can have on children's wellbeing.

Therefore, another important contribution of this research is its positioning of national middle space actors, and particularly their lived experience, as a valuable source of expertise and knowledge. Further research of the actors occupying this middle space as policy enactment experts could help identify non-binary strategies to make the practice of CP in schools less resistant to change. This research could further uncover specific cultural, social, and institutional factors that sustain CP practices. However, I would argue that a more transformational approach would be to hand over power allowing those nationally enacting CP policies to conduct and publish their own CP policy research. Handing over power in the form of research ownership has great potential to contribute to expanding the knowledge and discursive possibilities on CP and thus to lead the way for more effective and sustainable solutions. One of the main limitations of this study is that power still lays externally with me.

8.1.2 An expanded definition of violence with context at its core

This study also contributes to the field of VAC by showing how a broader definition of violence can encompass not only direct and physical acts but also structural and symbolic dimensions of CP. This approach aligns with and extends the work in the fields of violence against women, violence against children, anthropology and peace studies which have been intentional in their use of different methodologies to describe acts of violence or CP in ways that seek to include complexity, context, and structural and symbolic violent components that sustain acts (Heise, 1998; Laurie & Shaw, 2018; Maternowska & Potts, 2017; Parkes, 2015; Pells et al., 2018; Tao, 2013; Wells & Montgomery, 2014). By adopting Galtung's (1969) definition of violence as that which impedes an actual state from reaching its potential state, alongside Paulson and Tikly's (2022) adaptation of this framework for the education sector, this study offers a "capacious definition" (Laurie & Shaw, 2018, p. 9) that works well to accommodate the nuanced needs of national middle space actors.

For example, some national middle space actors sought out complexity to define violence according to the intentions behind an act of CP at a specific structural and cultural context. Yet it was not possible to cater to such demands using the definition in the 'CP as VAC' discourse beyond binary thinking as such requests would be classified as belonging to a relativist argument. However, I found that this was a false choice as calls for nuance or complexity were not sought to excuse or promote such behaviours but to make visible those factors that made CP seem like the only possible or best option for teachers to help students reach their potential state. By applying Galtung's violence framework to identify what was not allowing the actual state of classroom relationships from becoming more nurturing and with less acts of physical punishment I was able to consider elements brought up by middle space actors such as teachers' lack of training on how to manage classrooms or the mismatch between positive discipline alternatives and the Ivorian classroom conditions, the curriculum demands or parental expectations. Applying this definition shifts policy discussions and actions from enforcement of rules to addressing the elements, structural and symbolic, that are creating the conditions in which physical punishment might seem like the most viable option to help children learn.

Moreover, this expanded definition responds to their call to reframe discussions around community aspirations for their children's education rather than the idea of children's rights. Galtung's conceptualisation offers not just a different way to convey the message so that communities receive it better, it opens up an evaluative space where stakeholders can articulate the possible and desired potential state for Ivorian children in classrooms. In a certain sense it includes in the conversation around violence an asset framing perspective of what is the achievable and desired state for children. This vision is inherently context-dependent, emphasising the need for a feasible potential state grounded in cultural and contextual realities rather than based on a 'universal' vision of childhood.

Paulson and Tikly's reinterpretation of Galtung's framework underscores that all types of violence -direct, structural and symbolic- can be rendered visible, particularly through considering the lived experience of those involved. They argue that the line between visible and invisible forms of violence, is fluid and "that invisibilisation of

violence is an active and power-laden process. Theoretical and analytical attentiveness to violence in research can help to visibilise violence and challenge the ways in which it is made invisible in the everyday and in analysis” (2022, p. 20). The theoretical framework employed in this study actively seeks to make visible the structural and symbolic violence that underpins direct acts of CP by positioning context and community aspirations for their children, as inextricable to the definition of violence. This approach is both comprehensive and contextually nuanced, offering an opportunity to understand CP within educational settings beyond binaries and individual acts.

8.1.3 The effect of power in policy enactment

Finally, in the violence against children field “there is little evidence on the policy processes that can more effectively address violence” (Parkes et al., 2020 p.1) and there are “few studies that provide evidence evaluating these processes, or the effectiveness of their outputs” (Parkes et al., 2016 p. IX). This study contributes to addressing this research gap by conducting a network ethnography of CP school policies in Côte d’Ivoire with a particular focus on the distribution of power within the enactment process.

Initially, this involved examining the historical and socio-political contexts that shaped Ivorian CP policies. Through a genealogical approach this study provides new insights into why these policies’ “origin story” and lingering discourses may hinder their effectiveness. For instance, in chapter 4 a historical analysis or “archaeology” of education policies revealed that, although modalities have evolved since colonial times, external actors have constantly exercised a power to set the education policy agenda. Partnerships with national policy actors have historically been unequal, affecting the timing, nature and intention behind policies. The analysis found that CP policies were introduced at a moment that aligned well with international agendas and external organisations’ strategies but less so with the historical context experienced by Ivorian authorities, communities and schools. In the mid-2000s when CP policies were introduced, teachers’ status in communities was at its lowest levels having lost initial privileges from the government and this was compounded by an increasingly

untenable working environment where schools were either closed, destroyed or overcrowded because of political violence.

Furthermore, there was a perception among parents that CP policies were an attempt to weaken educational quality by international actors. This sentiment is partly rooted in their historical experience of two-tiered educational policies that has since colonial times been used to limit Ivorians' access to power. For many who had managed to overcome the structural barrier towards equality via education, CP was perceived as a necessary sacrifice children needed to endure to reach their potential state. Policies carrying a 'CP as VAC' discourse were received by many as a continuation of these historical *a-prioris* as they were enacted largely blind to the idea that "rights can have an ambiguous relation to power" (Stammers, 2016 p.71).

In addition to the historical analysis, my research employs policy and social network analysis (SNA) to provide a greater understanding of the power dynamics and relations present in the enactment process of CP policies today. This study is the first to my knowledge to conduct a network ethnography to the issue of CP and VAC in schools. It is inspired by strong developments (Hodge et al., 2020) in the education field that use policy network analysis to explore education's "networked governance" (p.3) and a focus on relationships and power. Through a SNA mapping I was able to identify where power concentrated within the network structure revealing how power dynamics favoured the emergence of certain knowledge and solutions for CP. The mix of both the SNA and qualitative analysis, in chapters 5 and 7 found that the power to set the agenda and make decisions is unevenly distributed and that the network structure contributes to concentrate this power primarily with international organisations. This network structure was also found to incentivise short-term policy wins over systemic change and prioritise organisational gains over collaboration.

Research plays a crucial role in introducing new conversations and possibilities into the realm of possible actions commonly considered as international development. Making networks and their structural power relations visible through research is a part of this endeavour. By experimenting with creative methodologies, this study has challenged current discourses whilst keeping a pulse on where power lies in policy enactment. By focusing on national middle actors and their access to power within the

network, I have sought to reveal alternative policy enactment processes that may currently be overlooked or discouraged by the network structure. As the VAC field continues to evolve and mature beyond a dominant discourse frame, it can benefit from methodological developments used in the wider education and policy field such as network ethnography.

8.2 Implications for policy and practice

Reflecting on his research on movements and human rights, Stammers (2016), encountered a similar dilemma to the one that motivated this study. He observed that among those either advocating for or against using a rights-based framing for social justice movements, “there was no way that either side would ever be able or willing to draw from the full range of evidence so as to create an effective and holistic analysis. Could I do anything to bridge the gap, or find a way of bringing together these competing forms of analysis?” (p.84). In the context of CP in Ivorian schools, adopting a theoretical and epistemological stance that moved beyond binary thinking enabled me to identify how national middle space actors were already engaged in efforts to bridge this divide. Rather than being polarised, their perspectives often converged around shared goals, particularly the desire to improve adult–child relationships in classrooms was a potentially powerful unifying mission. My exploration of the counter-work and counter-thinking already enacted by national middle space actors offers concrete examples and implications for bridging apparent “competing forms of analysis” (p.84) and for improving policy and practice.

8.2.1 From suffering from a “revenge of contexts” to having context being an ally to prevent CP

Considering context, seems risky through the ‘CP as VAC’ discourse, but as recounted by many national middle actors, not having done so has already proven harmful. The analysis in Chapter 4 and 5 suggests that having introduced CP policies at a moment that aligned well with international agendas but less so with the historical Ivorian context hindered their impact. Furthermore, the analysis in Chapter 7 indicated that the language used by CP policies and the narrow type of interventions mobilised have created resentment and distrust in communities that is now hard to overcome. The

appropriateness of timing and messaging in context should be a primary consideration when complex policy changes are being introduced.

In my analysis I also showed how the policies through which the problem of CP was introduced were usually addressing pertinent and pressing concerns of the Ivorian educational authorities. For example, this included programmes aiming to re-build destroyed schools or creating a citizenship curriculum that sought to address the political unrest and youth violence. Using these efforts as gateways to include a ban of CP through a children's rights discourse whilst efficient as a policy win did not necessarily translate to a reduction in the use of CP and a betterment of children's wellbeing in school classrooms. A contextual enactment of CP policies would need to have weighed these aspects more thoroughly.

The requests of national middle space actors to contextualise come from a place of a deep contextual understanding that CP is not something that happens in isolation. Instead, it is understood as an act that is perceived as violent or not in relation to a multitude of structural and symbolic violent processes that sustain it. In their own personal reflections of experiencing CP, the national middle mobilised the intention behind an act, its severity and perceived usefulness in achieving the desired social goals for children in that specific context to define violence rather than a child right's discourse. They argued that working with communities through this broader violence lens and revisiting whether acts of CP were useful and/or the best option to achieve their goals for children's wellbeing and success was a more efficient strategy than insisting on a discourse that by its framing had difficulty incorporating contextual realities and aspirations.

The middle space expressed the inclusion of context in CP policy efforts not as a gateway for tolerance of VAC but as an indispensable ally to successfully improving classroom relationships. They used their own embodied experience of renouncing CP, to explain how making space for context, debate and reflection did not inevitably lead to tolerating CP. Moreover, they gave examples of how engaging in debate and providing space for reflection that took communities' values and aspirations for their children as a starting point could lead to a gradual disuse of the practice. They also felt confident in their competencies to facilitate these discussions with communities and

teachers but noted that policies did not allow for these long-term processes to take place.

Making space for context and historical continuities was also shown to bring to the fore the presence of structural and symbolic components that make the use of CP appear useful in context, such as severely overcrowded classrooms, lack of teacher training and a crisis on relationships with authority. Enacting CP policies through a discursive frame and violence definition that allows and even necessitates community discussions on desired social goals for children might result in very different policy actions than those implemented today. It might direct our gaze and attention to policy solutions that seemingly adjacent to direct acts of CP might be necessary precursors to a sustainable decline in its use.

The effects of stepping out of the ‘CP as VAC’ discourse and addressing context are of course unknown and would be dependent on the intentions of those facilitating the process. However, at our current impasse, it would be exciting to explore the new possibilities that following the lead of committed national middle space actors would open up for not only reducing CP sustainably but for the wider goal of a better classroom experience for children in the Ivorian context. With their guidance, or better yet with their leadership, contextual consideration can become an integral part of better CP policy enactment. This study reinforces the argument that considering historical and socio-cultural context is indispensable to sustainably address direct acts of CP in classrooms and that we must work towards a definition of violence that allows policy actors to do this.

8.2.2 Situating CP policies as a continuum of external education interventions and of a colonial schooling unconscious

In this thesis I have shown that the context where CP occurs is crucial, and so is the historical and relational context of the policy landscape where these initiatives exist. Policies are not isolated or context-free, they are part of a long legacy and continuum of external interventions between actors seeking to exercise their power. In chapter 4, I explored the history of relationships and discourses preceding and influencing the enactment of CP school policies. In Côte d’Ivoire, schools and educational policy have

a complex past, beginning with colonial relationships marked by violent power dynamics. Ignoring this origin story and the ‘colonial schooling unconscious’ (Amougou, 2006) carries risks. For instance, if efforts to eliminate CP are perceived as lowering the quality of schooling, they can evoke memories of colonial attempts to maintain power by keeping Ivorian education inferior and separate from French standards. Past efforts to adapt schooling were often resisted by parents who feared that changes might hinder their children’s success in French-style exams, which were essential for securing stable employment. Learning from these past mistakes could help policy actors understand that CP might be seen like a necessary trade-off or sacrifice if it is perceived to help children succeed in their education. Consequentially a perceived loss of teacher authority and commitment due to the ban could be viewed as a threat to the high stakes placed on school diplomas. Shifting towards a contextualised enactment of CP policies would be sensitive to addressing these parental perceptions and work alongside other factors, such as classroom management techniques, to prevent the feared vacuum of discipline.

Another way in which situating CP policies in a larger continuum of external interventions could prove beneficial to their enactment is through an analysis of any shared discourse between CP policies and remnants of colonial discourse in the development field. I have argued that discourses defining the ‘other’ as lacking compared to a Western universal have been historically present in educational policies and in the ‘CP as VAC’ discourse. Initially, colonial documents openly used foreign superiority to justify interventions in Côte d’Ivoire’s education sector. As these ideas became incompatible with the emerging human rights’ discourse, the messages were modified and sometimes masked. Yet data in chapter 5 and 7 reveals that many in the national middle space still felt that underlying messages of this discourse were present and exercised through the use of international experts or consultants, a recognition that agendas were set by external donors, and internalised justifications of why relying on external support was inevitable.

However, it was the criminalising messaging used by CP policies when addressing communities and teachers that was identified as having the most negative consequences. It was noted how an underlying messaging of ‘othering’ and failing to

live up to the Western standards of love and childhood made caregivers quick to reject the proposals. Actors in the national middle highlighted that the way policies communicated their messages and justified their relevance was counterproductive. Many of these actors had an embodied understanding that these messages were perceived by communities as disrespectful, othering and shaming, especially when conveyed by IOs. National middle space actors had either initially rejected the policies in the same way or were confronted by communities when trying to use those messages. The idea that “words matter in policy and planning” (Brink & Metze, 2006) is not new. However, by triangulating a social network analysis of CP policies with interviewees’ reflections of their embodied experience enacting CP policies this study highlights how discourses embedded in policy messages have real effects on either advancing, maintaining or worsening the objective of better classroom relationships. These effects should galvanise those of us working in international development to be braver in accepting that the field still carries traces of colonial discourses and ways of working. Ignoring or dissociating from this historical context can have implications for the success of policies and leave us blind to how we might contribute to its continuation. There should be a more thoughtful accountability of international initiatives that goes beyond ‘good’ intentions or a perceived separateness from a colonial history of unequal power and domination.

Greater accountability could begin by taking into consideration any externally sponsored initiative as part of a continuum of externally driven interventions. With this framing, it would be necessary to analyse how a proposed intervention is different or similar to past efforts. It would also require us take into account whether favouring that policy would displace or deprioritise alternative possibilities for action. Greater accountability would also require evaluating the ‘othering’ effects of a policy event’s discourses. It might also indicate the importance of intentionally elevating the embodied experiences and expertise of the national middle space in crafting respectful and effective framing and communication during the CP enactment process.

8.2.3 Network of relations and structural power

Both from the historical and the social network analysis of the CP policy network I identified a constant presence of power that is exercised by external actors. Although modalities and forms have become less direct over time these actors continue to maintain a stronghold on the power to set the policy agenda. I also identified how national actors have never been passive in this evolving relationship and have been quick to appropriate more novel development concepts such as local ownership and participation.

However, the structure of the network, that is, the way organisations involved in CP policy relate, connect and exercise power was found to discourage collaboration or coordination despite individuals' desire to act differently. In chapter 5 I described how protecting an organisation's power in the network by limiting connections and communication with others through, gatekeeping or favouring "special relationships" seems to be built into the structure. The analysis also suggests that the network structure incentivises short and easy to measure projects over systemic and complex programmes as organisations felt a need to attribute gains to their individual organisation's actions to guarantee their growth or survival. Whilst many individuals expressed wanting to change these ways of working, the weight of the network structure made collective efforts difficult to sustain.

Concretely this means that the ideas of local ownership and participation are often held back by these network characteristics. It will take more than individuals wanting to interact differently when the pull of the structure's incentives is not favouring collaboration but rather favours a protection of organisations' power. For example, when individual middle space actors who recognised the failures of normal CP enactment demanded to work differently through interministerial working groups, government owned processes and long-term visioning to end VAC they experienced a backlash from forces in the network to regain control. Nevertheless, attempts that demand more collaborative ways of relating within the network have the potential to transform how power is distributed as they can start to modify how organisations relate to each other within the network structure. Encouraging and allowing more of

these different ways of relating to flourish could lead to power being used in more generative ways.

However, in addition to encouraging more middle space individuals within the network to feel empowered to work collaboratively the field can also think about what could be done structurally to distribute power differently and to incentivise different forms of power. Having made the network visible, the sector could reflect on what network structures would be conducive to the kind of collaborative, contextual and long- term work that is really needed to prevent CP and not just quick policy ‘wins’. What changes would get rid of incentives to keep policies short-term, focused solely on direct acts and isolated from other actors’ efforts? Analysing and introducing changes to the network structure might kickstart changes that are expressed through development discourses of local ownership and participation but that are proving hard to implement in relation to CP.

8.3 Some limitations

It is necessary to acknowledge that context and networks are dynamic and in a constant state of flux. Although I have tried to give the Ivorian context a central role in my thesis, context is not “an organisational or cultural container, but rather a dynamically integrated system of relations” (Brink & Metze, 2006 p. 44) . Many other contextual elements, actors and policy events are relevant to understanding how CP policy was enacted in Côte d’Ivoire. My research is limited in the scope of the network structure it mapped and interrogated. I had to leave out many relevant voices due to capacity, space and time constraints. Furthermore, I had planned to conduct follow-up conversations with my interviewees but was not able to do so due to limitations in my own capacity and the Covid-19 pandemic. This restricted my intention for middle space actors to feedback into my analysis. So, I offer this as a first diagnostic and a first cross-cultural conversation that would greatly benefit from future contributions from diverse voices and perspectives.

I also want to acknowledge again that my own discourses and embodied experience frame this research. Whilst I have tried to be as transparent as possible as to the different elements that make up my research position, I want to reiterate that my outsider status impacts my analysis, observations and the directions I am suggesting in

these concluding words. Furthermore, this study's interpretations would likely be very different if this research would have been conducted by someone closer or part of the Ivorian community. Some of the reasons that explain why I had the opportunity to conduct this research can be found in the privilege I have enjoyed as part of the unequal power dynamics of the CP policy network structure and of the development field. By adding to the research on the Ivorian context from this outsider perspective I might also be reinforcing the gap between the actual and the potential. So, I offer this academic work in a decolonial spirit of listening carefully (Schulz, 2017) and with an invitation and hope for it to be steered in different directions and useful for cross-cultural dialogues necessary to improve school classroom relationships.

8.4 Failing better through dialogue, shifts in power and accountability

If violence is that which sustains or grows the gap between actual and potential states (Galtung, 1969; Laurie & Shaw, 2018; Paulson & Tikly, 2022), in this case that which sustains or increases CP in Ivorian primary schools, then I have explored whether our current framing and way of working is part of the problem. By problematising how CP came to be introduced as a policy issue I hope to contribute to an ongoing conversation of what is possible in context and who are the legitimate stakeholders that need to lead these discussions. I have explored what a framing of CP in schools that invites context and complexity, can contribute to better policy enactment. I've also exposed some of the limitations of our current ways of working. Finally, I have learned from the embodied experience and expertise of national middle level actors and highlighted some of their 'counterwork' already present in the field.

As per my epistemological framing this is not meant to provide alternatives free from power or discourses. Power is always present and relational and can be used to exercise control or dominance but also to generate new ways of interacting. My focus on middle space actors has allowed me to begin exploring what it would mean for the policy network structure to shift some of its power to the national middle. What would more decision-making power to these 'middle' perspectives offer in terms of preventing CP in schools?

Ultimately, we don't know what more middle ownership of CP policies would look like although the analysis of qualitative data in chapters 5, 6 and 7 provides some ideas. It suggests that enactment should be slower, not necessarily dependent on legislation, it would seek a long-term and collaborative engagement, it would focus on community led efforts, and its messaging would address local concerns. It would require numerous debates and conversations about what is possible and desirable in communities. Perhaps it would foment dialogues that might resemble evaluative spaces for cross-cultural reasoning described in my introductory chapter (Barnett, 2008; Parekh, 1999; Paulson & Tikly, 2022; Twum-Danso, 2011).

Embracing these possible alternatives would require those in the international development field to let go of needing to control the direction and end results of policies. Shifting power is likely to mean that policy priorities might not occur as per international strategies and objectives of the moment. Perhaps middle space actors might seek to focus on reducing student to teacher ratio, perhaps a ban would start by focusing on “unfair or excessive” (Turner et al., 2024 p.12) punishment and neglect, or perhaps efforts would start by implementing that long overdue reform of the education system so that it fits with the Ivorian reality. Local ownership might require accepting that ‘CP as VAC’ might be talked about in ways that does not suit the dominant discourse and it might not be a policy priority when the international field wants it to be. But perhaps this might still get us closer and faster to our aim of better classroom relationships.

Truly shifting power however would mean that international actors would not attempt to tinker and/or impose solutions that fit with their objectives as I have shown can happen under the guise of local ownership. It would compel international actors to question the intentions and effects of these practices and become much more accountable about their involvement. Accountability mechanisms are not about criticising the efforts of an international field inhabited by individuals that work tirelessly to prevent VAC, rather it is about encouraging interactions and ways of working that are mindful of the ever-present power dynamics. It would require discussions and dialogue to re-assess the role, position and distribution of power held by the organisations in the name of whom individual policy actors work for. This

would not necessarily entail an end to external organisations' presence in the network. The national middle space was quick to identify benefits and instances of collaborative ways of working, but greater accountability would include these relations as components that need to be debated and planned for during the policy enactment process.

Whilst we cannot control true debate, we can engage in it. Shifting power would need to accept that. Another possible added benefit of shifting power and positioning cross-cultural reasoning in the policy enactment process is that those currently holding decision-making power in the network would model the kind of accountability and power relations that should also be expected by those newly receiving it. More power for the middle space is no guarantee that CP policies would be enacted differently as these actors might still need or want to respond to different network structures that incentivise a hierarchical or dominant way of relating to communities. However, encouraging a frame that not only uses the discourse of local ownership but also values cross-cultural dialogue and is in the habit of conducting power checks of network relations might offer new possibilities. In a certain sense it would allow us to continue exploring and to perhaps "fail better" (Ball, 2013, p. 38) in our policy quest towards improving children's experience of school.

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Annexe 1. Interviewee list

Pseudonym	Gender	Type of organisation	Field
Mariam	Female	Government	Protection
Bakary	Male	Government	Protection
Philipe	Male	CSO	Protection
Mamadou	Male	Government	Protection
Sophie	Female	IO	Protection
Kanga	Female	IO	Prot/Edu
Affoué	Female	Government	Protection
Pascal	Male	Government	Education
Thomas	Male	Government	Education
Assane	Male	INGO	Protection
Mireille	Female	INGO	Protection
Badou	Male	Government/IO	Education
Moussa	Male	CSO	Education
Demba	Male	Government	Education
Jaqueline	Female	CSO	Protection
Nathalie	Female	CSO	Protection
Keba	Male	CSO	Education
Tiemele	Male	Government	Education
Pierre	Male	Government	Education
Marc	Male	Government	Education
Daouda	Male	Government	Education
Yaya	Male	Government	Education
Fofana	Male	University	Education
Drissa	Male	Government	Protection
Alassane	Male	INGO	Education
Karim	Male	Government/IO	Education
Idrissa	Male	University	Education
Eric	Male	Government	Education

Annexe 2. Documentation of CP policy events

- DREN Abidjan. (n.d.). *Code de Conduite de l'enseignant en matière de protection de l'enfant*.
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Annexe 3. Semi-structured interview topic guide

Themes and questions	Notes
Introduction • Personal introduction of researcher • Description of the project • Overview of consent form	
Warm-up questions : Personal background and participation in policy event	
• Could you tell me a little bit about yourself and your role within your organisation? • I am particularly interested in understanding more about the X initiative and the role it played in addressing corporal punishment in schools. Could you describe it to me? <i>Possible probes</i> • Participant's Role • Objective of the initiative • Can you give me examples of aspects that were successful? Unsuccessful? • What were the biggest obstacles during the implementing process? • Describe the collaboration between partners for the X initiative? • Is there anything you would have wished was different about the implementing process or the initiative itself?	<i>Questions will need to be adapted to the nature of the policy event(s) in question.</i> <i>This section will help to strengthen the SNA. It will be important to take note on partners or other individuals involved for snowball sampling.</i> <i>This section should also start questioning the relationships between partners.</i>
Ideological context: perception of CP in schools	
• Do you think eliminating corporal punishment from schools should be a priority issue for the Ivorian education system? Why or why not? • In what ways do you think cp impacts children's learning? Can you give me examples? <i>Possible probes</i> • Discuss the 2009 Ivorian ministerial decree prohibiting physical and humiliating	<i>Understand whether perceptions on the prevalence, problematizing and negative consequences surrounding CP and violence in general are shared by actors.</i>

punishments of children in schools (including cp). What do you think motivated the Government to pass such a decree? • For those teachers that use it, why do you think they do so? Would you categorize this as child abuse? • Some teachers I have talked to feel that many initiatives seeking to reduce VAC in schools put too much focus on children's rights in detriment of teachers' ability to teach. Why do you think they feel this way?	
Personal experience: corporal punishment	
• Remember the way you were raised. While you were in primary school can you give me examples of how you were disciplined? <i>Possible probes</i> • Can you remember how you felt when you were disciplined in this way? • For what misbehaviors were you punished for? • When X punishment was used on you as a child. Did that method work, how did it affect you or change you?	
Personal experience: positive classroom management examples	
• In your opinion what does a well-managed classroom look like? • Could you describe for me positive classroom management examples you've observed in schools of Côte d'Ivoire? • What do you think made this possible?	
Vignettes	
I would like to share with you a facebook post that exemplifies some of the debate around eliminating the use of corporal punishment. It is a facebook post from the UNICEF Côte d'Ivoire office.	

Éduquer sans violence,
Éduquer avec amour.

unicef 
pour chaque enfant

What does this post make you feel ?

What parts of this text do you agree with? Why?

Which parts do you disagree with? Why?

Now I would like to show you some of the comments this post elicited.

Éduquer sans violence,
Éduquer avec amour.

unicef 
pour chaque enfant

J'aime Répondre 2 ans Modifier

Le mal est que vous appelez toutes les formes d'éducation traditionnellement connues "éducation" avec violence... Pourtant, elles ont fait leurs preuves... Qu'avons-nous comme enfants et société avec ces nouveaux concepts d'éducation ???

J'aime Répondre 2 ans

N'importe quoi

J'aime Répondre 2 ans

Merci de bien rédiger le sujet car je trouve des insuffisances à de tel réflexion

J'aime Répondre 2 ans

Oui éducation sans violence, mais l'initiateur doit être bien outillé et doit remplir toute les conditions je veux parler du niveau d'études de ces enseignants

J'aime Répondre 2 ans

What do these reactions make you feel?

Which parts of this comments do you agree with? Why?

Which parts do you disagree with? Why?

I would like to show you one last set of comments, an exchange between UNICEF CI and an Ivorian facebook user. What do this exchange make you feel? How would you describe this exchange around corporal punishment?



Conclusion

Thank you very much for your time and for sharing with me your perspectives. Is there anything else you would like to add or ask?

I will be transcribing our interview and I will share it with you via email. If you have the availability, I would then like to schedule a second shorter interview with you in which we could discuss the transcript. Would this mean something you would have time for?

Once again. Thank you very much for your time. If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to get in touch with me.

Annexe 4. Participant Consent Form

Institute of Education



UCL

Policy enactment as cross-cultural dialogue: how policies on violent discipline in schools circulate and change among middle actors in Côte d'Ivoire.

Participant Consent Form

If you are happy to participate in this study please complete this consent form by ticking each item, as appropriate, and return to the research team:

- 1) I confirm that I have read and understood this information sheet, and have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions, and have had these questions adequately answered. ☐
- 2) I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason. ☐
- 3) I know that I can refuse to answer any or all of the questions and that I can withdraw from the interview at any point. ☐
- 4) I agree for the interview to be recorded, and that recordings will be kept secure and destroyed at the end of the project. I know that all data will be kept under the terms of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). ☐
- 5) I agree that small direct quotes may be used in reports (these will be anonymised). ☐

Name:.....

Signature: Date:

Name of researcher:.....

Signature: Date:

Annexe 5. Participant Information Sheet

PhD Research

Policy enactment as cross-cultural dialogue: how policies on violent discipline in schools circulate and change among middle actors in Côte d'Ivoire.

My name is Lucia Quintero. I am a Mexican doctoral student at the Institute of Education, University College London and I would like to invite you to take part in my research project, *"Policy enactment as cross-cultural dialogue: how policies on violent discipline in schools circulate and change among middle actors in Côte d'Ivoire"*.

I have previously worked in Violence Against Children (VAC) programming and policies and have conducted project evaluations in Switzerland, France and Côte d'Ivoire. Through my doctoral studies I am hoping to find out how policies and programmes on VAC are interpreted and understood by the different actors involved in their implementation.

I very much hope that you would like to take part. This information sheet will try and answer any questions you might have about the project, but please don't hesitate to contact me if there is anything else you would like to know.

Why am I doing this research?

Many studies have looked into which programmes successfully change teacher behaviours, however sustainable and large-scale initiatives are hard to find. Research also shows that many actors disagree with some of the global premises and approaches to tackling violence in schools such as corporal punishment.

Those who are tasked with implementing policies and programmes on VAC have valuable experience in manoeuvring these dilemmas however their views have not been heard in a research context. Through speaking to policy actors such as yourself I hope to better understand the opportunities and challenges current efforts to eradicate corporal and harsh punishment in Ivorian schools encounter when implemented. I will speak to actors throughout the policy/programming process to understand how they each understand VAC and how they experience and relate to other actors within this space.

Why am I being invited to take part?

My desk research of policies and programming in Côte d'Ivoire or your partners (snowball sampling) have identified you as a significant actor. Your experience and expertise on VAC in schools is important.

What will happen if I choose to take part?

If you decide you would like to contribute, I will contact you to set up an online interview at your convenience. The interview would centre around your experience and views on initiatives that have tried to eradicate corporal and harsh punishments in Ivorian schools. Our discussion would take no longer than an hour and I would ask your permission to audio record it. After the interview, I would provide you with a copy of the transcript of our discussion. I would also invite you for a second unstructured interview to continue our dialogue. This interview would be shorter (30 minutes) and would only take place if you had continuing interest and time to participate in the research. Agreeing to a first interview does not oblige you to participate in a second discussion. At completion of my research, I would provide you with a summary of my results which I would gladly discuss with you.

Will anyone know I have been involved?

Your participation will be strictly confidential. I will not inform anyone of your participation in the research. Your identity will be pseudonymized and I will not disclose neither the name of the organisation you work or worked for, your position, name, nor age. I have used a privacy by design approach in which pseudonymisation along with a very limited collection of personal data provides low risk of re-identification. Any data that would allow re-identification (such as contact information and audio files) will only be accessed by myself, will be stored in an encrypted and secure location and will be deleted upon completion of the PhD. This project has been reviewed and approved by the UCL IOE Research Ethics Committee and the National Ethics Committee of Côte d'Ivoire.

Could there be problems for me if I take part?

While there are no risks in participating in the research, it is possible that when discussing your own position with regards to childhood punishments distressing experiences could be evoked. I would like to assure you that if any of the questions make you feel uncomfortable you are entitled to stop at any point.

Do I have to take part?

It is entirely up to you whether or not you choose to take part. I hope that if you do choose to be involved then you will find it a valuable experience.

Contact for further information

If you have any further questions before you decide whether to take part, you can reach me at lucia.tamez.19@ucl.ac.uk or by phone or whatsapp at-----.

If you would like to be involved, please let me know using any of the above contact details.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Kind Regards,

Lucia Quintero

Data Protection Privacy Notice

The controller for this project will be University College London (UCL). The UCL Data Protection Officer provides oversight of UCL activities involving the processing of personal data, and can be contacted at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk

This 'local' privacy notice sets out the information that applies to this particular study. Further information on how UCL uses participant information from research studies can be found in our 'general' privacy notice for participants in research studies [here](#).

The information that is required to be provided to participants under data protection legislation (GDPR and DPA 2018) is provided across both the 'local' and 'general' privacy notices. The lawful basis that will be used to process any personal data is: 'Public task' for personal data and 'Research purposes' for special category data.

We will be collecting personal data such as: ***[name, email, phone number and work affiliation, nationality]***. Your personal data will be processed so long as it is required for the research project. If we are able to anonymise or pseudonymise the personal data you provide we will undertake this, and will endeavour to minimise the processing of personal data wherever possible.

If you are concerned about how your personal data is being processed, or if you would like to contact us about your rights, please contact UCL in the first instance at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk.

Annexe 6. Ethics Approval : Comité national d'éthique des sciences de la vie et de la santé (CNESVS)

MINISTRE DE LA SANTE, DE L'HYGIENE PUBLIQUE
ET DE LA COUVERTURE MALADIE UNIVERSELLE

REPUBLICQUE DE COTE D'IVOIRE
UNION-DISCIPLINE-TRAVAIL



COMITE NATIONAL D'ETHIQUE
DES SCIENCES DE LA VIE ET DE
LA SANTE (CNESVS)

US DPT OF HHS REGISTRATION #2 : IRB00011917

Le Président

N/Réf : 009-22/MSHPCMU/CNESVS-km

Abidjan, le 21 FEV. 2022

Mademoiselle Quintero Tamez Lucia
Investigatrice Protocole de Recherche
Institute of Education University College London
[Redacted]

OBJET : Autorisation de mise en œuvre du protocole de recherche intitulé:
« Mise en œuvre de politiques comme dialogue interculturel : comment les initiatives sur la violence à l'encontre des enfants en milieux scolaire circulent et changent parmi les acteurs intermédiaires en Côte d'Ivoire ».

Mademoiselle,

Le Comité National d'Ethique des Sciences de la Vie et de la Santé (CNESVS) a examiné votre demande d'autorisation de mise en œuvre du projet cité en objet.

Le CNESVS tient à vous présenter ses compliments pour la conception de cette importante étude.

Un avis favorable a été émis pour l'utilisation de ce protocole.

En raison de la pandémie du Covid-19 nous vous recommandons très vivement de respecter les mesures de protection prises par le gouvernement ivoirien tout en assurant le maintien de la santé des participants à inclure.

Toutefois, il faut noter que la validité de cette autorisation est d'un an (1) à compter de la date de signature. Par ailleurs, je vous saurai gré de bien vouloir transmettre au CNESVS une copie du rapport de cette étude dès la fin de sa mise en œuvre.

Je vous prie d'agréer, Mademoiselle, l'expression de mes salutations distinguées.

[Redacted Signature]

Dr Louis PENALI

Comité National d'Ethique des Sciences de la Vie et de la Santé
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