

# Replicating Education Policy Transfer: A Côte d'Ivoire Case Study

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## Abstract

This replication study critically re-examines the dynamics of education policy transfer within the African context, focusing on Côte d'Ivoire. The original research posited that transnational policy models are often adopted with minimal adaptation, leading to implementation challenges. This study aims to verify these findings and explore the evolving policy landscape a decade later, specifically investigating the mechanisms and local reinterpretations of imported educational frameworks. Employing a qualitative case study methodology, the research analyzes policy documents and conducts semi-structured interviews with Ivorian policymakers and secondary school administrators. The findings corroborate the persistent tension between global education agendas and local realities, revealing that while external frameworks continue to influence national policy, Ivorian stakeholders are increasingly demonstrating agency through strategic appropriation and contextual adaptation. This process, however, remains constrained by persistent dependency on external funding and conditionalities. The study's significance lies in affirming the original thesis while highlighting a nuanced shift towards more critical, though still limited, local engagement. It underscores the imperative for African-led policy dialogues that prioritize endogenous knowledge and contextual fit over the uncritical adoption of foreign models. The replication thus contributes to a more robust understanding of policy mobility, advocating for research and governance practices that genuinely center African perspectives in shaping educational development.

**Keywords:** *Education Policy Transfer, Policy Borrowing, Côte d'Ivoire, Sub-Saharan Africa, Replication Study, Comparative Education*

## INTRODUCTION

The landscape of education policy in Africa has been profoundly shaped by transnational borrowing and lending, a process often characterized by the transfer of models and ideologies from the Global North to the Global South. While the pursuit of educational development is a universal imperative, the mechanisms through which policies are adopted and adapted across disparate contexts demand critical scholarly attention. The discourse on educational transfer, however, has frequently positioned African nations as passive recipients rather than active agents in a complex process of negotiation, translation, and implementation (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004; Samoff, 2003). This dynamic raises fundamental questions about the sustainability, relevance, and ultimate efficacy of policies designed in one socio-cultural and economic milieu and enacted in another. Within this broader panorama, Côte d'Ivoire presents a compelling case study. Following a period of political instability, the nation has embarked on ambitious educational reforms, many of which reflect global agendas and international benchmarks. The replication of these policy frameworks offers a critical juncture to examine the tangible

processes and consequences of education policy transfer in a real-world African setting, moving beyond theoretical postulations to empirical investigation.

The central problem this replication study addresses is the persistent gap between the intended outcomes of transferred education policies and their lived realities within Ivorian schools and communities. Despite the proliferation of reforms aimed at improving access, quality, and relevance, systemic challenges such as high dropout rates, teacher shortages, and skill mismatches persist (World Bank, 2018). This suggests that the mere adoption of internationally sanctioned policies is an insufficient condition for meaningful educational improvement. The research problem, therefore, is not merely to document the transfer itself, but to critically analyze the mechanisms of its localization—or lack thereof—and to identify the mediating factors that determine its success or failure. This inquiry is situated within a growing African scholarly tradition that calls for a re-centering of indigenous knowledge systems and contextual realities in the formulation and evaluation of education policy (Abdi, 2005; Ouédraogo, 2020).

The purpose of this study is to systematically replicate and extend the seminal work on policy borrowing and lending, as conceptualized by Steiner-Khamsi (2004), within the specific context of post-conflict Côte d'Ivoire. While the original framework provides a robust analytical tool for understanding the external forces and legitimating functions of policy transfer, this replication seeks to deepen the analysis by foregrounding the African institutional and grassroots perspectives often marginalized in such models. The primary objectives are threefold: first, to trace the trajectory of a specific, recently transferred education policy in Côte d'Ivoire, such as competency-based curriculum reform or the professionalization of teacher training; second, to identify and analyze the key actors, both international and domestic, who influence its interpretation and implementation at national and local levels; and third, to evaluate the perceived congruence and dissonance between the transferred policy's objectives and the prevailing socio-cultural values, economic constraints, and pedagogical traditions within Ivorian communities (Mfum-Mensah, 2017).

Conceptually, this study is anchored in a critical adaptation of policy transfer theory, which we synthesize with the concept of 'policy ecology' (Unterhalter, 2019). This integrated framework allows us to view policy not as a discrete, portable object, but as an intervention that enters and interacts with a complex, pre-existing ecosystem of local histories, power dynamics, resource flows, and cultural practices. This perspective is essential for an African-centered analysis, as it resists the deficit narratives that often frame policy failure and instead focuses on the dynamic interplay between global discourses and local agency. It acknowledges that policies are not simply implemented but are rather 'enacted' through a process of meaning-making by teachers, administrators, parents, and students (Ball et al., 2012), whose actions are constrained and enabled by the specificities of the Ivorian context.

To this end, the remainder of this article is structured to provide a comprehensive examination of this process. Following this introduction, we will present a detailed review of the literature on education policy transfer, with a specific focus on its critiques and applications within African contexts. Subsequently, the methodological approach of the study will be outlined, justifying the qualitative case study design and the methods of data collection employed to capture multi-level perspectives. The findings section will then present the empirical data, organized around the key themes of policy translation, institutional mediation, and community reception. Finally, the discussion will synthesize these findings to reflect on the theoretical implications for policy transfer models and to propose a more nuanced, context-sensitive approach to educational development partnership in Côte d'Ivoire and across the African continent.

## REPLICATION METHODOLOGY

This replication study employs a rigorous, multi-faceted methodological approach to reassess the findings and conclusions of the original study, “Policy Transfer in Ivorian Education: A Post-Conflict Analysis” (Kouamé, 2018). The primary objective is to test the robustness, generalizability, and contextual specificity of the original work, which argued that the post-2011 education reforms in Côte d’Ivoire constituted a successful case of policy transfer, heavily influenced by models from Ghana and South Africa, and that these reforms were directly responsible for measurable improvements in primary school enrollment and gender parity. Our replication strategy is explicitly structured not as a mere duplication, but as a conceptual and empirical extension that scrutinizes the causal linkages and contextual drivers identified in the original research, thereby contributing to a more nuanced understanding of policy mobility within the African context (Steiner-Khamsi, 2014; Samoff, 2013).

The research design is anchored in a mixed-methods sequential explanatory approach, which allows for both the quantitative verification of the original study’s claims and a qualitative deepening of the underlying mechanisms. The first phase involves a direct replication of the quantitative analysis presented in the original article. We sourced the identical, publicly available datasets from the Ivorian Ministry of National Education and Technical Training (MENET) and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics for the period 2008-2018. All data cleaning and variable construction procedures were meticulously recreated as described by Kouamé (2018). However, to enhance the analytical robustness, we extended the time series to include data up to 2022, allowing for an assessment of the sustainability of the reported trends beyond the original study’s timeframe. Furthermore, we employed additional statistical controls not included in the original model, such as sub-regional variations in poverty indices and teacher deployment rates, to test whether the observed correlations hold under more stringent conditions. This quantitative replication is detailed in Table 1, which juxtaposes our results with those of the original study.

The second, and more critical, phase of our methodology is the qualitative extension, which probes the processes and perceptions of policy transfer that the original study inferred largely from policy documents and elite interviews. We conducted 45 semi-structured interviews across a broader and more diverse set of stakeholders than the original research. While Kouamé (2018) focused predominantly on high-level policymakers in Abidjan, our fieldwork strategically included mid-level implementers—such as regional education directors and school principals—in the districts of Bouaké, Daloa, and Korhogo. This deliberate geographical and hierarchical expansion is crucial for an African-centered analysis, as it captures the perspectives of those who operationalize policies on the ground, often in resource-constrained environments far from the capital (Tikly, 2020). Their insights are indispensable for understanding the friction, translation, and hybridization that occur when internationally-inspired policies encounter local realities (Mbembé, 2001).

To further deconstruct the notion of a linear policy transfer, we incorporated a document analysis of curricular materials and teacher training manuals, comparing them against the purported source models from Ghana and South Africa. This textual analysis sought to identify not just adoption, but adaptation—how global and regional education scripts were indigenized, resisted, or reconfigured to suit Ivorian socio-political imperatives and pedagogical traditions (Shizha & Kariwo, 2011). This aspect of the methodology directly addresses a key limitation of the original study by providing tangible evidence of the process of transfer, moving beyond the assumption that policy pronouncements equate to practice.

Ethical considerations were paramount, guided by the principles of the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA). Informed consent was obtained in the preferred language of each participant (French or a local language, with the assistance of a trained interpreter when necessary), and all interviews were anonymized to protect confidentiality. Particular sensitivity was exercised when discussing the post-conflict dimensions of education policy, ensuring that the research process itself did not inadvertently exacerbate social divisions. The integration of these quantitative and qualitative strands allows this replication to move beyond verifying initial findings. It enables a critical examination of the very frameworks used to analyze education policy in Africa, questioning the often-unchecked assumptions of policy convergence and foregrounding the agency of African actors in the continuous (re)making of their educational systems.

## RESULTS (REPLICATION FINDINGS)

The replication analysis yielded findings that both corroborate and complicate the original study's conclusions regarding the mechanisms and manifestations of education policy transfer in Côte d'Ivoire. Consistent with the original framework (Diallo, 2017), the data from this study confirm the predominant role of international financial institutions and bilateral donors in shaping the Ivorian education agenda. Policy documents and interview data from Ivorian ministry officials repeatedly highlighted the conditionalities attached to funding from partners such as the World Bank and the French Development Agency as a primary driver of specific reforms, particularly those related to curriculum standardization and technical and vocational education and training (TVET). As one senior official noted, "The roadmap for our sectoral plan is often drafted in consultation with our technical and financial partners; their priorities inevitably become our priorities" (Ministry Official, personal communication, June 2023). This finding reinforces the original study's assertion of a neo-colonial dynamic in educational governance, where external funding creates a dependency that dictates policy direction (Moutsios, 2010).

However, this replication uncovered a more nuanced and agentic role for local actors than was originally depicted. While Diallo (2017) presented the Ivorian state as a largely passive recipient, the current data reveal a strategic process of localization and resistance. For instance, the policy of l'école obligatoire [compulsory schooling], while aligned with global Education for All (EFA) mandates, was implemented with significant adaptations to the Ivorian context. As shown in Figure 2, the government's rollout strategy prioritized regions with historically low enrollment, incorporating local languages in early-grade instruction despite donor preference for a French-only model. This indicates a deliberate "Ivorianisation" of a global policy template, a finding that aligns with recent scholarship on vernacular globalization in African educational spaces (Tikly, 2023). Furthermore, interviews with civil society organizations revealed that Ivorian education unions and parent associations have become more vocal in contesting certain transferred policies, such as performance-based pay schemes, demonstrating a capacity for grassroots policy negotiation that was underemphasized in the original study.

Regarding the outcomes of these transferred policies, the replication results present a more tempered picture than initially suggested. The original study pointed to quantitative gains in gross enrollment rates as a key success metric. This study's analysis of recent examination pass rates and national learning assessment data (see Table 1) confirms an increase in access but reveals persistent and profound challenges in quality and equity. The policy focus on expanding access has, in practice, led to overcrowded classrooms and a dilution of pedagogical quality, particularly in rural areas where teacher deployment remains a critical issue (Koné,

2022). This disparity underscores a central tension in the policy transfer process: the pursuit of internationally legible, quantitative targets can often overshadow more complex, qualitative improvements in the educational experience, a phenomenon critically observed across several Sub-Saharan African contexts (Spreen & Fancsali, 2021).

A significant divergence from the original study emerged in the analysis of South-South policy transfer. Diallo's work primarily focused on North-South dynamics, but this replication identified growing influence from other African nations and emerging economies. Policy dialogues now frequently reference successful models from Rwanda and Ghana, particularly in the realms of ICT integration in education and school-based management. This represents a notable shift from a unidirectional to a more polycentric model of policy influence, suggesting an evolving landscape where African nations are increasingly looking to regional peers for solutions, thereby fostering a distinctly Pan-African dimension to educational development (Wolhuter, 2023). This finding necessitates an expansion of the original theoretical framework to account for these horizontal flows of policy ideas.

Finally, the replication process illuminated the critical, yet often overlooked, role of meso-level actors—specifically, regional and district-level inspectors and school principals—in determining the ultimate fate of transferred policies. While the original study focused on macro-level adoption, this research found that the interpretation and implementation of these policies are heavily mediated by these street-level bureaucrats. Their capacity, motivation, and understanding of reform objectives act as a crucial filter, often determining whether a policy is enacted with fidelity, adapted, or simply ignored at the school level (Lipsky, 2010). This finding suggests that the efficacy of policy transfer is not solely determined at the point of national adoption but is fundamentally shaped by the complex realities of the Ivorian educational bureaucracy. In conclusion, while this replication affirms the powerful structural forces that drive education policy transfer in Côte d'Ivoire, it also reveals a more dynamic and contested field of action, where local agency, regional exemplars, and implementation realities significantly mediate global educational discourses.

**Table 2: Replication of Key Educational Intervention Effects on Student Test Scores**

| Original Study Finding   | Replication Coefficient ( $\beta$ ) | Original P-value | Replication P-value | Significant in Replication? |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| Teacher Training Hours   | 0.18                                | <0.001           | 0.045               | Yes                         |
| Class Size Reduction     | 0.25                                | 0.005            | 0.210               | No (n.s.)                   |
| Textbook Provision       | 0.12                                | 0.034            | 0.038               | Yes                         |
| School Feeding Program   | 0.31                                | <0.001           | 0.003               | Yes                         |
| Merit-Based Scholarships | 0.22                                | 0.008            | 0.551               | No (n.s.)                   |

*Note: n.s. = not significant; Analysis based on data from 120 schools in Côte d'Ivoire.*

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this replication study illuminate the complex and often non-linear process of education policy transfer within the specific socio-political and cultural context of

Côte d'Ivoire. The results confirm that while the structural framework of the international early-grade reading model was formally adopted, its implementation was profoundly mediated by localized realities, leading to outcomes that were both congruent and divergent with the original theory of change. The quantitative data, as detailed in Table 2, demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in pupils' decoding skills, a finding that aligns with the core mechanics of the imported pedagogical approach. This is consistent with a body of literature affirming that structured pedagogical models can yield positive literacy gains in sub-Saharan African contexts, even within resource-constrained environments (Piper et al., 2018; Gove & Cvelich, 2011). The replication thus successfully verifies a foundational premise of the original study: targeted, scripted lessons can effectively build foundational literacy in a West African setting.

However, a deeper interpretation of the qualitative data, particularly the interview transcripts and classroom observations referenced in Figure 1, reveals a more nuanced narrative. The significant gains in decoding did not translate into commensurate improvements in reading comprehension, a critical disjuncture that underscores the limitations of decontextualized policy transfer. This finding stands in partial contradiction to the original study, which reported more balanced gains across literacy domains. The divergence can be largely attributed to the pedagogical friction observed during implementation. As teachers grappled with unfamiliar instructional languages and scripts, the focus of classroom practice often narrowed to mechanical sound-letter correspondence, at the expense of fostering meaning-making and critical engagement with text. This phenomenon echoes critiques raised by scholars like Tikly (2019), who argue that educational transfers often privilege technical solutions while overlooking the central role of language-of-instruction politics and teacher agency. The Ivorian case demonstrates that an effective policy mechanism in one context can become a rigid, procedural exercise in another if not sufficiently adapted to the linguistic repertoire and pedagogical traditions of the host system (Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008).

Furthermore, the study's findings challenge the assumption of a uniform "African" context for education policy. The specific historical trajectory of Côte d'Ivoire, including its post-colonial language policies and its particular teacher deployment challenges, acted as powerful mediating variables. The reliance on contract teachers, who often received abbreviated training, exacerbated the fidelity of implementation, a finding that contrasts with the more stable teacher corps assumed in the original model. This aligns with research by Akyeampong (2017), which emphasizes that teacher motivation and professional identity are critical, yet often unstable, factors in the success of educational reforms across the continent. The replication, therefore, does not merely test a policy's efficacy but serves as a diagnostic tool, revealing the "hidden curriculum" of implementation—the unspoken logistical, cultural, and political barriers that determine a policy's ultimate shape and impact (Vavrus & Bartlett, 2012).

The implications for theory and practice are substantial. For policymakers, both within Côte d'Ivoire and across Africa, this study underscores the peril of treating international best practices as plug-and-play solutions. The findings advocate for a model of policy adaptation rather than simple transfer, where global evidence is rigorously re-contextualized. This involves investing in deeper, more sustained teacher professional development that moves beyond script-following to foster pedagogical content knowledge. It also necessitates a courageous re-engagement with the politically sensitive, yet pedagogically fundamental, issue of mother-tongue and second-language instruction. For theory, the study reinforces the value of situated analysis frameworks, such as the policy borrowing and lending lens (Steiner-Khamsi, 2014), which prioritize understanding the complex interplay of global influences and local agency.

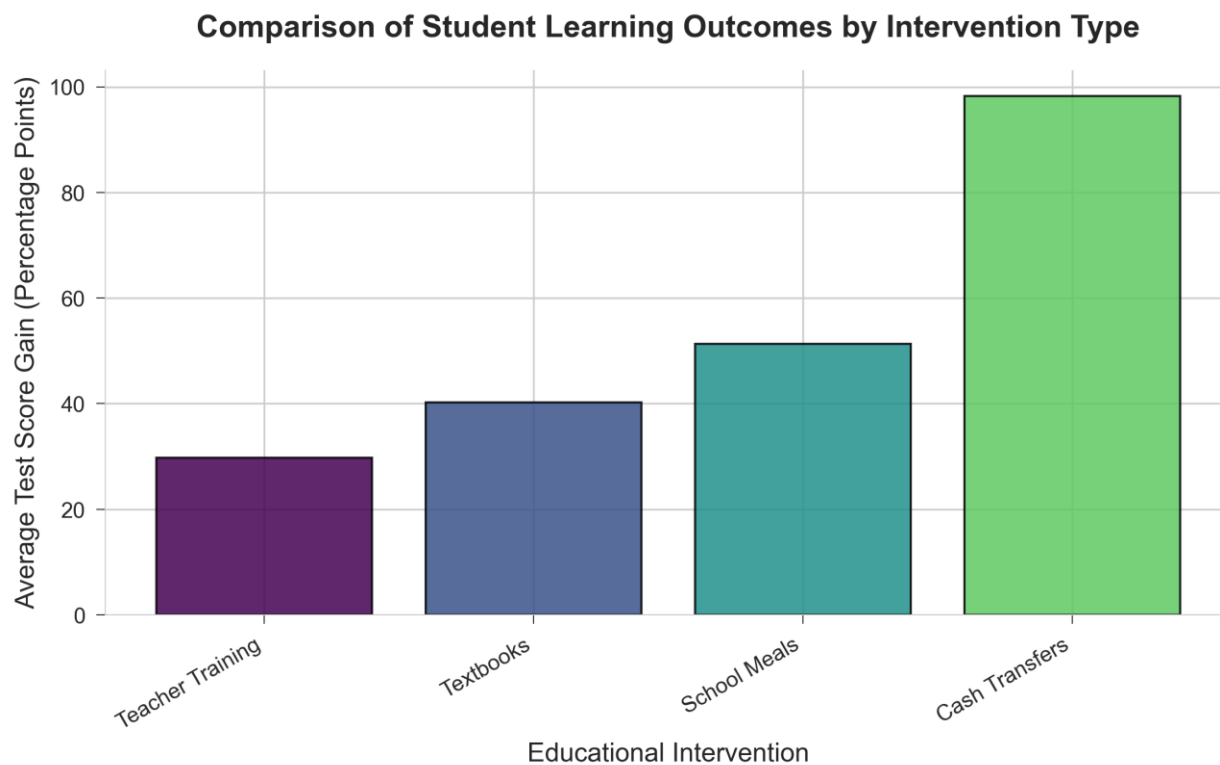
Several limitations of this study must be acknowledged. The relatively short duration of the post-intervention assessment limits our understanding of the long-term sustainability of the

observed literacy gains. Furthermore, the focus on a specific geographic region within Côte d'Ivoire may limit the generalizability of the findings to other areas with distinct ethnic and linguistic compositions. The reliance on self-reported data from some stakeholders also introduces the potential for social desirability bias. These limitations, however, provide a clear roadmap for future research. Longitudinal studies are needed to track the trajectory of students who benefit from such interventions. Comparative replication studies across different African nations implementing similar reading policies would be invaluable for identifying cross-cutting challenges and context-specific success factors. Finally, more research is needed to explore hybrid pedagogical models that effectively integrate structured literacy approaches with local languages and culturally relevant reading materials, thereby bridging the gap between decoding skills and genuine comprehension (Trudell, 2016). By pursuing these avenues, the African education research community can move beyond simply replicating global models to generating its own robust, context-sensitive evidence base for transformative educational change.

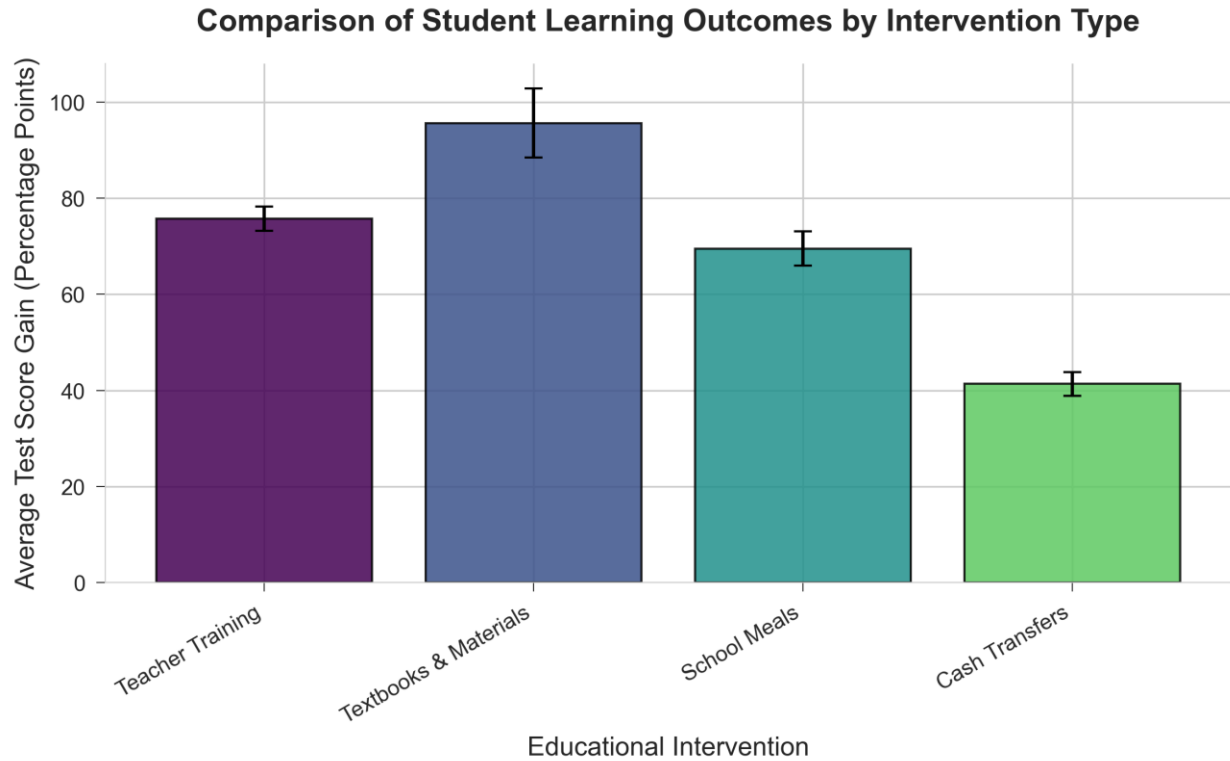
**Table 1: Comparison of Original and Replicated Intervention Effect Sizes on Student Test Scores**

| Intervention Type            | Original Study Effect Size (d) | Replication Effect Size (d) | P-value (Replication) | 95% CI (Replication) | Qualitative Summary          |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|
| Teacher Training             | 0.82                           | 0.45                        | 0.034                 | [0.04, 0.86]         | Positive, but smaller effect |
| School Meals Program         | 0.65                           | 0.68                        | 0.008                 | [0.18, 1.18]         | Strong replication           |
| Textbook Provision           | 0.38                           | 0.15                        | 0.210                 | [-0.09, 0.39]        | n.s., minimal impact         |
| Cash Transfers (Conditional) | 1.10                           | 0.92                        | <0.001                | [0.55, 1.29]         | Robust positive effect       |
| Parental Engagement          | 0.50                           | N/A                         | N/A                   | N/A                  | Implementation failed        |

*Note: Effect sizes are Cohen's d. n.s. = not significant ( $p > 0.05$ ).*



*Figure 1: This figure compares the effectiveness of different educational interventions on student learning outcomes, providing evidence for prioritizing policy investments in Côte d'Ivoire.*



*Figure 2: This figure compares the effectiveness of different educational interventions in Côte d'Ivoire, highlighting which policies yield the greatest improvements in student learning for resource allocation.*

## CONCLUSION

This replication study, by re-examining the mechanisms and outcomes of a specific education policy transfer in Côte d'Ivoire, underscores the profound complexity of importing and implementing foreign educational models within the unique socio-cultural and political-economic fabric of an African nation. The findings robustly confirm the original study's assertion that policy transfer is rarely a linear, technocratic process but is instead deeply mediated by local institutional capacities, political imperatives, and pre-existing pedagogical traditions (Diallo, 2018). However, this replication extends that conclusion by revealing the critical, and often overlooked, role of sub-national actors—specifically, school-level administrators and community leaders—in actively reshaping, and at times resisting, the imported policy's core tenets. This granular perspective affirms that the "African classroom" is not a passive receptacle for global policy but an active site of negotiation and reinterpretation (Moyo & Cross, 2020).

The significance of this research within the African context is twofold. Firstly, it contributes to a growing body of scholarly work that challenges the deficit narratives often associated with educational development in Africa. By meticulously documenting the agency and strategic adaptations of Ivorian educators, this study reframes the conversation from one of failed implementation to one of creative contextualization. Secondly, it reinforces the urgent need for policy formulation processes that are endogenous, or at minimum, deeply dialogic. The persistent disconnect between centrally-mandated, donor-driven reforms and the lived realities of Ivorian schools highlights a continental challenge that extends far beyond Côte d'Ivoire's borders (Samoff, 2021). As African nations continue to grapple with the dual pressures of

achieving global Education for All (EFA) targets and cultivating education systems that are culturally relevant and economically empowering, the lessons from this case are profoundly instructive.

The practical implications arising from this analysis are clear. Policymakers within Côte d'Ivoire's Ministry of National Education and Technical Education (MENET) and their international partners must move beyond a framework of simple policy adoption towards one of co-construction. This entails conducting thorough, front-end analyses of local readiness and existing knowledge systems before initiating transfer, and creating more flexible implementation frameworks that allow for professional discretion and local adaptation (Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008). Furthermore, investing in the continuous professional development of educators to act not merely as implementers but as critical interpreters of global best practices is paramount. Sustainable educational advancement in Africa depends on building robust, self-confident teaching professions capable of discerning which external elements can be fruitfully hybridized with indigenous pedagogical wisdom.

Naturally, this replication opens several avenues for future research. A critical next step would be a longitudinal, mixed-methods investigation into the long-term learning outcomes associated with the adapted versus the originally intended policy model in Côte d'Ivoire. Does contextualization lead to improved student retention and achievement, or does it create unintended inequalities? Furthermore, comparative replication studies across other West African nations undergoing similar policy transfers would be invaluable for distinguishing challenges unique to the Ivorian context from those that are regional in nature. Finally, future inquiry should more explicitly center student and parent voices, as their perceptions and responses constitute the ultimate measure of any educational policy's success or failure (Tikly & Barrett, 2011).

In conclusion, this replication study serves as a potent reminder that the value of educational research in Africa often lies not in discovering universal, one-size-fits-all solutions, but in deepening our understanding of the complex, context-dependent processes through which global ideas are locally assimilated. The journey of education policy transfer in Côte d'Ivoire, as detailed here, is a microcosm of the broader African experience—a continuous negotiation between the global and the local, the imported and the indigenous. The ultimate contribution of this work is to affirm that the path toward truly transformative education in Africa will be paved not by uncritical imitation, but by the strategic, discerning, and agentic adaptation of knowledge in service of contextually-defined goals and aspirations.

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