

# **A struggle for translation: An actor-network analysis of Chilean school violence and school climate policies**

Verónica López  
Vicente Sisto  
Enrique Baleriola  
Antonio García  
Claudia Carrasco  
Carmen Gloria Núñez  
René Valdés

## **Abstract**

In the last six years, Chile has carried out major reforms in school climate policy. However, these reforms are tied to two different realities that conflict with each other: a formative reality, which promotes a school climate of local decision-making and the improvement of school performance; and a punitive reality, which prioritizes improvement in the school climate through accountability protocols and regulations. We used Actor-Network Theory to describe the network of actors that underlie these realities. We analyzed key documents and conducted active interviews with actors responsible for the design and implementation of these policies. Results show that the assembled network enacts an accountability reality by means of the Law on Assurance of the Quality of Education, with key devices and s-objects performing the network. However, this enacted reality is at odds with a logic of school improvement that is still defended by the Ministry of Education, an actor that is no longer the main source of translation in the network. These results are discussed in light of the so-called “global triumph” of New Public Management through the dissemination of specific instruments that bring together subjects and objects in enacting the reality of accountability.

## **Keywords**

Actor network theory, school climate policy, quality assurance, school violence

## **Introduction**

School climate is defined as the quality and character of school life (Cohen et al., 2009). It reflects patterns of people’s experiences in school and is based on norms, goals, values, pedagogical practices, and organizational structures. Researchers in the field of school climate have identified important dimensions which usually include sense of safety, teaching and learning, positive student-teacher relationships, sense of connectedness to/engagement in school, and environmental infrastructure (Cohen et al., 2009). The term “safe and supportive schools” has been coined by many school intervention research programs and professional associations (for example, Bradshaw et al., 2012; Learning First Alliance (LFA), 2001; Osher et al., 2004; Thompson and Wheeler, 2010). It refers to the notion that students need to feel both safe from school violence and health/physical risks *and* nurtured in their social-emotional development. However, a common response from schools in deterring serious and violent incidents is the use of security measures and punitive approaches based on strict discipline codes. While school discipline has traditionally been administered through control measures geared towards children with problem behaviors, this has proven not only to be inefficient and ineffective, but also impedes student-teacher relationships, reduces teachers’ opportunities to support students, and leads students to reject, rather than engage

and connect with their school (Gerlinger and Wo, 2016; Osher et al., 2004).

District, regional, and national level policies also affect school climate. Cohen and Moffit (2009) have shown how the broader public policy environment that defines school climate operates according to three different normative frameworks. They describe a penalizing approach, that emphasizes punishment within schools as a way to solve cases of violence or bullying; a formative approach, that prioritizes teacher training and community involvement; and an accountability approach, that puts pressure on learning outcomes by tying these to educational financing and to different sorts of threats concerning the future of schools.

In Chile, public policies in education have been of a contradictory nature since the return of democracy in the early nineties (Donoso, 2005). Some reforms have been designed and implemented using democratic cues, pursuing a constructivist curriculum approach with strong local relevance, teacher involvement and the progressive empowerment of students through new structures of representation and participation. This approach has faced two institutional obstacles. The first is a history of public policies characterized by a centralized and bureaucratic state. The second is the increasing influence of marketization and accountability policies in education. These have led to greater diversification in the school sector and added new levels of bureaucracy between the ministry of education and schools (Carrasco et al., 2015; Insunza, 2009). In the case of the latter, one of the first public policies rooted in a strong accountability logic was the Preferential Subsidy Law (known locally as *Subsidio Educacional Preferencial*, or SEP) which, as of 2008, increased the monetary value of the Chilean voucher for low socioeconomic status (SES) students. At the same time, SEP ties financial support to the design and implementation of a school improvement plan that obliges schools to self-define and account for goals and indicators in four areas, one of which is school climate.

Moreover, in Chile the role of the ministry of education has changed to create new forms of regulation and to strengthen the influence of private providers in education (Carrasco et al., 2015). In 2011, a new institutional architecture was created: Law No. 20.529 (Congreso Nacional de Chile, 2011) created the system for assuring quality in education (*Sistema de Aseguramiento de Calidad de la Educación*, henceforth SAC). The SAC includes the creation of the Superintendence of School Education (from now on, the Superintendence) and the Agency of Education Quality (from now on, the Agency). The former deals with school audit processes and oversees whether schools comply with the main laws and regulations regarding financial and institutional processes, as well as the protection of student rights. The latter is in charge of evaluating the quality of schools in terms of student achievement on the national standardized assessment (Quality of Education Assessment System: *Sistema de Medición de la Calidad de la Educación* or SIMCE) and other indicators. It also provides technical support to schools that show lower performance. Officially, the SIMCE test is a set of exams used in Chile in order to assess student achievement according to the national school curriculum. In practice, SIMCE is considered an expression of the quality of a school. It is administered annually to all students in the fourth, eighth, and tenth grades.

The SAC also includes a ranking system that categorizes schools based on SIMCE and other indicators according to four levels of achievement: insufficient, medium low, medium and high. If a school remains at the insufficient level for four consecutive years, the school could be closed, meaning that its official recognition as a school is revoked (Law No. 20.529, Article 1, letter g). The Ministry of Education (MINEDUC, as it is known in Chile) creates new policy guidance documents, facilitates curriculum implementation, and provides general guidance to schools through a supervision system located at the level of the provinces, to support school teams with educational resources aligned with the policy. MINEDUC, through its provincial-level supervisors, might decide to allocate these resources to the lower-ranking schools.

The last player is the National Council of Education (*Consejo Nacional de Educació'n*, or CNED). The CNED was created in 2009 by the General Law of Education No. 20.370 to replace the former Superior Council of Education. The SAC law incorporated the CNED into its supervisory structure by giving it the explicit power to approve proposals stemming from the Ministry with respect to a) the national curriculum (curriculum bases, course programs); b) assessment (national and international evaluations, quality standards for learning and achievement, etc.); c) the method for rank-ordering the schools, and d) norms for grading and promotion. Its official mission is “to protect and promote the quality of pre-school, basic, secondary and tertiary education within the framework of education quality assurance systems” (Consejo Nacional de Educació'n, 2019).

In this context, an ambiguous educational policy on school climate has developed, through a combination of formative, technocratic and punitive approaches. There is pressure on schools to make school climate measures a primary focus. The SAC system redefined the concept of educational quality, formerly understood as achievement on the SIMCE test, by incorporating eight “non- cognitive indicators” of educational quality, which the Agency terms “indicators of social and personal development” (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2012: 241).

The eight indicators are: 1) academic self-esteem; 2) school attendance; 3) retention in school; 4) gender equality; 5) technical-vocational certification; 6) healthy life habits; 7) citizen participation, and 8) school climate (defined by the Agency as *clima de convivencia escolar*). Whereas the cognitive indicators (language, math, and science) are measured through the national standardized SIMCE test, some of the non-cognitive, social-emotional indicators (i.e. indicators number 1, 6, 7, and 8 above) are measured through self-report items included in a questionnaire given to students, parents, and teachers as part of the administration of SIMCE. Others (i.e. numbers 2, 3, 4, and 5) are taken from national educational registries. While the cognitive, subject-matter indicators count towards 67% of the final computation of a school's quality score, the eight non-cognitive indicators make up only 33%, and all are equally weighted. This means that, although school climate forms part of the rank order system established by SAC as part of the accountability through high-stakes testing rationale, it contributes only 4.1% towards a school's final rank order.

Moreover, the Superintendence is in charge of making schools enforce the Law on School Violence, incorporated into the General Law of Education No. 20.370 (Congreso Nacional de Chile, 2009) and the SAC Law (Congreso Nacional de Chile, 2011). Research on this law has shown it to be ambiguous, combining two paradigms: a penalizing, control-based logic, as opposed to a democratic, formative logic based on teacher and student training (Carrasco et al., 2012; Magendzo et al., 2013).

All these legal bodies are represented by different actors in the scenario of school climate policies. By means of different channels and approaches, they become part of everyday life in schools. Schools receive regular visits from the pedagogical supervisors, who are the local representatives of the MINEDUC. If the Superintendence receives a complaint regarding a school, its officials are authorized to visit the school. And if a school is ranked in the lowest tier by the SAC, staff from the Agency hold a three-day visit at the school site.

Hence, two competing realities emerge with regard to school violence and school climate. One is a formative reality, in which schools are compelled to improve school climate in order to make them safer and supportive places for all students. Another is a punitive reality, in which schools are encouraged to comply with school climate policies, to avoid negative consequences associated with monetary penalties defined by the Law on School Violence. In this study, we used Actor-Network Theory (ANT) to describe the network of actors that underlie these con-

realities, and to identify the translations that these actors produce of the policies addressing school climate in Chile.

### **ANT as a framework for the analysis of school violence and school climate policies**

Policies are socially constructed through the intersections between history, society, and materiality (Lovell, 2003; Schneider and Ingram, 2008; Stone, 1997). The way in which public policy topics become known changes with time, and with their relationship to other public discourses and technological advances. If we understand policies as forms of knowledge which are socially, semiotically and historically constructed, this allows us to understand their laws and instruments as part of networks that are fluid rather than static (Feldman et al., 2006).

ANT (Latour, 2005) provides both theoretical and methodological tools to analyze educational policies and practices as a heterogeneous network of actors, enacted not only by subjects, but also by objects (Woolgar and Lezaun, 2015). From this perspective, social “order” and “structure” are not givens, but emerge from action (Tirado and Lo´pez, 2012), and should be considered as verbs rather than nouns. The social order is a maze of performative relationships between human and non-human actors. In fact, rather than the “actor” itself, what matters is the assembling, the articulation, and the dynamic acting of human and non-human actors in the network (Callon, 1986). Actors are both subjects and objects, reproducing the interactions of the network, producing new scripts and generating new productions of social interactions.

ANT researchers have defined some key concepts to conduct analyses of educational policies. One of them is translation (Callon, 1986). Translation is understood as “displacement, drift, invention, mediation, creating a bond that did not exist before and which, up to a certain point, modifies two elements or agents” (Latour, 1999: 254). Thus, ANT can be considered as a sociology of translation, “a sociology of all negotiations, intrigues, calculations, records of persuasion and violence, thanks to which an actor or power takes or is bestowed with authority to speak or act in the name of another actor or power” (372). Therefore, actors dispute and negotiate, through their concrete performance, what the issue at stake is, what is needed to settle the matter, and who the responsible parties are.

Another concept is that of actor, or actant. ANT studies dealing with organizational practices have defined actants not at a representational level, but as hybrid (human and non-human) com- positions that perform on the network as agents, since they are fragile and temporary nodes of a network through which power flows, enacting another reality; in Latour’s words: “something that acts or to which activity is granted by others” (Latour, 1996: 373). In the case of non-human objects, they are attributed relational properties, and therefore, “what used to be considered an ‘object’ is now an ‘emergent subject’” (Bruni, 2005: 359). The socio-technical, non-human objects that perform in the network as subjects have been defined and described by Bruni (2005) as s-objects. Recognizing that objects can act as s-objects means assuming that they may have an active agency only partly under human control (Bruni, 2005). In the organizational literature, performance indicators and their accompanying instruments are typically understood as s-objects, since they are nodes of the network through which power flows, and they act performatively over other subjects and objects (Le Gale`s, 2016). In the educational policy realm, these actants could be, for example, school climate manuals and protocols, internal regulations, performance protocols, school improvement plans; all of these play an enacting role. In the network, they meet other instruments, other practices and discourses that embody government objectives, as well as other demands searching for identity agents. In this complex entanglement, instruments are immersed as actors with full rights, negotiating a place, challenging and being

challenged by other actors, producing new connections and, as a result, translating how current Chilean educational policy is enacted.

Following Law (1998), in a public policy context the diversity of actors fights to have their vision of reality prevail. Therefore, the objective of the translation is to serve as a compulsory pathway for the rest; “the translation process implies the attribution of objectives and setting of impossibilities, in parallel to the shift from one action plan to another action plan” (Grau et al., 2010: 67).

ANT identifies the relation between ministerial policies and local practices as a translation, or a move towards knowledge forms, rather than a “dissemination”. Translation models assume that ideas and forms of knowledge change with time and space (Latour, 1999, 2005). According to Feldman et al. (2006), this movement comes from an actor who picks an idea and moves it through the network, re-enacting it ontologically. The process of translation continuously creates and re-creates the network. The result is a continuous potential for change ANT is also focused on power relations and the understanding of how power circulates through- out the network. The analysis is not just based on interactions between members of the network, but also on the ways power is bred, distributed and negotiated (Kriesi et al., 2006). As noted by Edwards (2002), ANT provides a framework for the analysis of the exercise of power through which cultural, social, and economic capital gets produced. This poses the question of how policies operate by restricting, obscuring, or allowing some enactments to become more easily recognized and visible than others. In sum, the antecedents of the Chilean public policies on school violence and school climate invite actors to follow paths that might lead to formative or punitive approaches in their translations. In this study, our aim was to describe and understand which paths of reality are translated. Therefore, our objective was to analyze the translation of school climate policies from these two realities.

## Methodology

### *Research design and phases*

The study involved three sequential phases. In the first phase, we analyzed relevant documents concerning the school violence and school climate policies. These were either formal legal documents, or were in the public domain and had been publicly used for communication purposes by the SAC system. In the second phase, we conducted active interviews with key actors (subjects) in the SAC system involved in the design and implementation of these policies. In the third phase, we selected and analyzed further documents that subjects mentioned in interview. These were either additional documents produced by the governmental bodies they worked for, or linked to the policy documents we had previously analyzed (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** Data production sources.

Policies and/or government institutions	Documents analyzed	Interviews conducted
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Educational Quality Assurance System	Educational Quality Assurance Law* Website SAC*: <a href="http://www.saceduccion.cl">http://www.saceduccion.cl</a> School-site posters about the SAC system Decree 381 (2013)*	
Agency of Education	Fundamentals of Other Indicators of Quality of Education, Unit of Curriculum and Evaluation* Agency webpage*: <a href="http://www.agenciadeeducacion.cl">http://www.agenciadeeducacion.cl</a> PowerPoint presentation 2015 results: link between performance and school climate	I member from the National-level Department of Studies  I member from the National-level Department of Evaluation and Orientation
Ministry of Education	National Policy of School Climate 2011, 2015* Law on School Violence* Ministry of Education official website*: <a href="http://www.mineduc.cl">http://www.mineduc.cl</a> Ministry of Education school climate website*: <a href="http://convivenciaescolar.cl">http://convivenciaescolar.cl</a> Online document of practices involved in Programs of School Improvement Performance measurement standards	I member from the National-level Transversality Unit I member from the National-level Unit of Curriculum and Evaluation I member from the Regional Secretary of the Ministry of Education (SEREMI) I member from the Provincial Department of Education (DEPROV) 2 commune-level school climate coordinators
Superintendence of Education	Superintendence official website*: <a href="http://www.supereduc.cl/">http://www.supereduc.cl/</a> Public Account year 2014	I National-level member from the Complaints Unit I Regional-level member from the Complaints Unit 7 Regional-level officials from the Complaints Unit

\*These documents were analyzed during phase one.

### ***Data production techniques***

*Documentary analysis.* In the first phase, we analyzed the following official legal documents: Law SAC, 2011; General Law of School Violence, 2007; Law on School Violence, 2011; and National Policy of School Climate, 2015. In the third phase, we analyzed documents produced by the SAC system and mentioned by subjects interviewed in phase two. These included documents intended for the general public (i.e. webpages, posters) or for internal use (i.e. performance protocol templates) (see Table 1).

*Active interviews.* We conducted active individual interviews (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995) with actors identified as relevant actants in the network of actors tentatively described in analyses of

phase one (see Table 1). An active interview is defined by Holstein and Gubrium (1995) as an interaction in which the interviewer assumes and shows him/herself as a subject with opinion and social position. This form of interview assumes the communication interaction is itself a form of creation of the social world. In this study, the intention was that the interviewee define and develop the tensions and/or contradictions that he/she saw concerning the current state of the school climate/school violence policies, focusing on those he/she was seeing or observing while performing the role of actor in the network, as a designer and/or implementer of the policies analyzed in phase two. After listening to each participant's views on the tensions of school climate/school violence policies, the interviewer shared the critical nodes previously identified by the research team in Phase 1, and asked the participant his/her opinion. The purpose was to provoke an open and critical discussion that would widen discussion beyond utterances that were faithful to what the legal documents explicitly declared (i.e. socially desirable), making the actants visible as actors in the network. Interviews were transcribed verbatim.

### ***Procedure and data analysis***

We analyzed the documents and interviews from the perspective of ANT, following the concept of thick description given by Geertz (1973). The central concern was to describe how the material network comes together to act as a whole, and on the pathways that emerged. We sought repeated, coherent and conflicting relationships in which human and non-human actors interacted as agents in translating school violence and school climate policies. The aim was to obtain an overview about how the two realities (punitive and formative) were enacted. Special emphasis was placed on identifying objects, devices, and mediators for the constitution of these networks and their role on how mutual translations were carried out. To identify the main intelligibility trends concerning how school violence and school climate policies are enacted, we first selected the three main government institutions of the SAC system: MINEDUC, the Superintendence, and the Agency. In each of these organizations, we tentatively identified and described the objects, devices, and mediators from the documents analyzed in phase one, and construed a preliminary network. The analyses from phases two and three were later incorporated into this network, modifying it accordingly and further analyzing how school violence and school climate policies and practices were enacted and continuously re-enacted in the actor network.

### **Results**

As described above, during the first phase of the analysis, we focused on three main actors in the network of school climate policies: the Agency, MINEDUC at the central level (Santiago, Chile) and the Superintendence. These three actors are administrative bodies of the new education architecture proposed by the SAC system and, as such, set the stage as leading actors of the network in their direct connection with the schools (the CNED does not directly interact with schools). This arrangement is publicly available (Consejo Nacional de Educación, 2019). It has been widely publicized, and is very well known in schools.

Table 2 presents a summary of the preliminary network defined as part of the ANT analysis carried out. To identify the main intelligibility trends concerning how school violence and school climate policies are enacted, we first selected the three main government institutions of the SAC system that directly connect with schools' everyday life: MINEDUC, the Superintendence, and the Agency. In each of these organizations, we tentatively identified and described these objects, devices, and mediators from the documents analyzed in phase one (see first five columns of Table

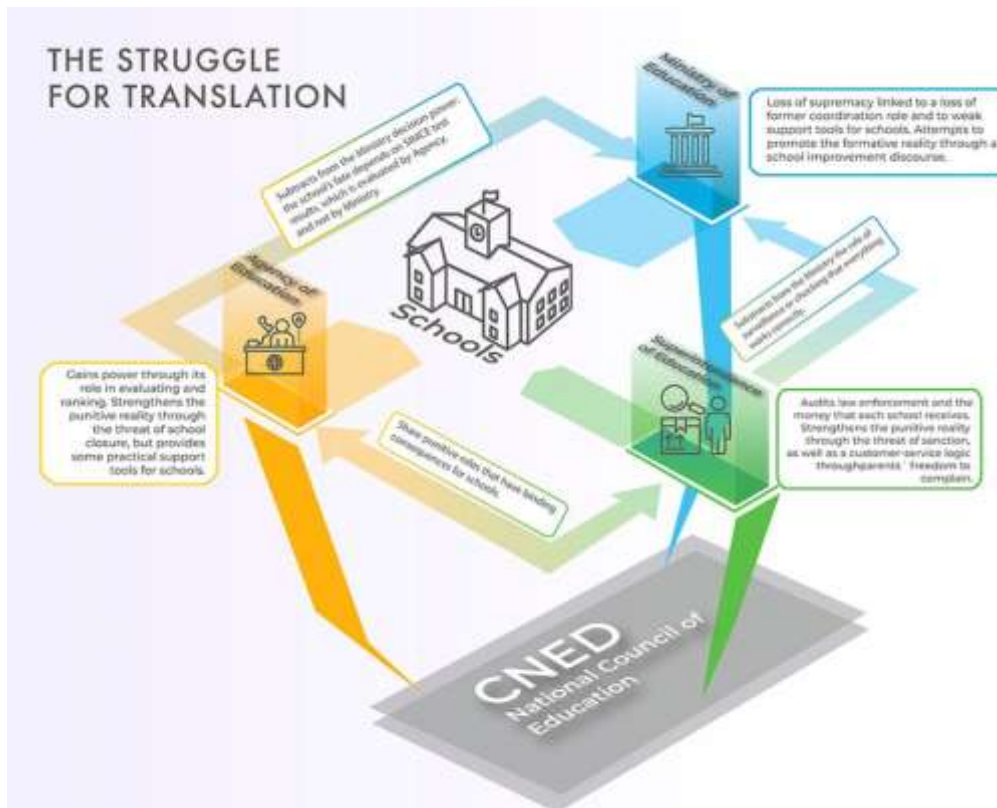
2), that would be followed through active interviews and complementary documentary analyses in phases two and three (last column to the right of Table 2).

**Table 2.** Preliminary network.

SAC organism	Device	S-objects connected to the device	Subjects connected to the device, which deploy directly in schools	Type of relationship and action between organism and schools, as defined by SAC law (top-down)	Tensions identified in the network
<b>Agency</b>	SIMCE (supra-device)	Non-cognitive indicators Self-report questionnaire Orientative evaluation visits	Visitors of the Agency	To inform To evaluate To orient	Lack of coordinated work with MINEDUC and with Agency to better define what is and how to evaluate school climate. Seeks to be defined in its relationship of “orienting” schools, as opposed to its “auditing” relationship. Schools pay more attention to the visit of the Superintendence, due to fear of punishment, than to the visits of the Agency.
<b>MINEDUC</b>	School improvement plan (and its digital platform) National Policy of School Climate Law on School Violence	Guidelines for the elaboration and updating of the school climate norms School educational project (and its formal document) Indicative performance standards School climate manual	System of intermediate supports organized geographically: SEREMI (Regional Secretary of Education) DEPROV (Province Secretary of Education) Supervisors at DEPROV level	To define standards To support school improvement	Relationship of “critical friends” with schools, as opposed to Superintendence and Agency The National School Climate policy, versions 2012 and 2015, are a translation of the Law on School Violence, which did not stem from MINEDUC but rather from legislative power. This allowed the Transversality Unit MINEDUC to partially regain supremacy. The intermediate support systems of SUPEREDUC and DEPROV fight for the supremacy of

<b>Superintendence</b>	Complaints system	The complaint (and/or the threat of complaint) The sanction (and/or the threat of sanction)	Auditors	To audit the educational service Parents are connected as auditing clients. The State is connected as an auditing body, but requires initial denunciation from parents. Installs the relationship of threat.	translation with Superintendence and Agency.	Tension between a discourse of education as a right (if you make a complaint you are doing your duty to safeguard education as a right) with a disciplinary, customer-service discourse (“I am not satisfied with the educational service provided”; “the consumer is always right”).
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**Figure 1.** Final network of actors enacting the two realities on school violence / school climate policies, after the Educational Quality Assurance Law (2012). Source: Own elaboration.

Before presenting the results, we would like to note that this organization and the relationships established by these organisms with schools and amongst each other cut across all areas of schooling, not only on school climate (i.e. curriculum, evaluation). However, in this article we focus on describing the actors that enact both the formative reality and the punitive reality of school violence and school climate policies, in order to give an account of how they are translated and which of them is enacted with greater power. Figure 1 presents the final network, which is described below.

### *The agency of education: An overarching evaluative power*

The SAC Law removed the school assessment system previously set up within MINEDUC through its Department of Studies, and placed it entirely in an independent (albeit related) body, the Agency. This boosted the performative strength of evaluation as a mandatory node of the network, which all actors must go through. Even though the SIMCE test has existed since 1989, it initially only evaluated core subject areas of language and math, and had no consequences for schools beyond putting the results in the public domain, making it easier to have school rankings made public and supposedly promoting school choice. The Preferential Subsidy Law No. 20.248 of 2008 (Congreso Nacional de Chile, 2008) added to the high-stakes evaluation, using SIMCE results to rank schools, and declaring that low-ranking schools may be shut down if, after four years, they were unable to provide evidence of improved SIMCE scores. The SAC Law kept and reinforced the high-stakes approach for schools, this time with four tiers. It also incorporated a more complex

way of defining and measuring educational outcomes by incorporating “other non-cognitive indicators of educational quality”. These were initially defined and operationalized in the document Decree 381 of 2013. In this Decree, school climate was incorporated as one of these non-cognitive indicators of educational quality.

It is well known that evaluation is a device that produces curriculum control (Sánchez-Amaya, 2013). So, in Chile, the control device for schools is through excellence in the SIMCE test. The Agency characterizes parents as clients of an educational service, “empowering” them with information about the quality of the education that their children receive. The underlying assumption is that information is power.

The new legislative framework of the SAC system locates the SIMCE as a higher-order device, through which school actors must pass in order to obtain funding and formal recognition as schools, and be subject to more or fewer visits by auditors (school inspectors or officials of the Agency). Therefore, SIMCE rank orders schools using a public system mandated by law, consistent with an emphasis on the discourse of school efficiency. Behind this logic is the discourse of accountability, holding the schools responsible for their outcomes:

The system of holding the school responsible, as laid out in the SAC Law, takes elements from different countries but is unique. It considers student performance in standardized tests as relevant to rank schools, weighing the scores according to student traits, similar to most systems. It also includes Other Indicators of Quality [of education], in order to consider a notion of educational quality that goes beyond what is strictly academic. (Fundamentals of Other Educational Quality Indicators, MINEDUC 2013)

As seen above, through ranking, the Agency enacts the punitive reality. This produces effects at school level; if a school “falls” into the lower rank, it is visited by Agency officials and may be threatened with closure.

The SIMCE ranking also defines the relationship between the school and the organization-actors of the State, who will act directly in the network as a function of the SIMCE rank.

The Agency makes the SIMCE scores available publicly. This is done annually by means of a press release at an academic seminar; later, all school results are made available on an official website. The Agency not only communicates the evaluative results, but also meta-communicates that standardized evaluation is valid, desirable, trustworthy, positive and politically neutral.

By including non-cognitive indicators such as self-esteem, citizenship training, and school climate, the SIMCE device not only imposes a performative force on the school agenda, but also on the production of a certain class of subjects. In terms of school climate, one example is the Agency’s National Coordinator’s press release concerning the association between school climate and achievement. Pointing out that school climate acts as a “booster” to improve learning outcomes in fundamental areas, the climate is thus portrayed as a means to achieving the “higher” goal of improved SIMCE scores.

With up to 42 points of difference, school climate is associated with better learning scores in Reading and Mathematics, becoming the main factor that explains the scores obtained by schools. (Agency of Education Quality, SIMCE 2015 Press Release)

The Agency defines how the other indicators are measured and applies the statistical weights established by Decree 381. This legal document, and the document that presents the

theoretical fundaments, are both referred to by the officials of the Agency as straitjackets; they exculpate themselves as passive subjects whose duty is to act according to the Law, in this case the SAC Law. However, most subjects from the Agency interviewed also said that the definition and operational characteristics of the other indicators could be revised and modified. This revision of the SAC Law every six years is explicitly laid out within the law itself; the first revision was due in late 2018 but is still pending.

This process of revision appears to have begun already:

The definition of the indicator [of school climate] is a paragraph where the indicator is described and afterwards comes the definition of the dimensions, it is too general, and it was ok that it was so general at the time, I believe in my judgement, that at the time [refers to the year 2011] there had been no previous evaluation, there was a lot of information in that respect but we had to see what was feasible to evaluate, now [at the end of 2016] these definitions may be tuned, perhaps the dimensions themselves may be changed, there could be others [ ... ] I believe that is part of the road we needed to travel. Also, what is important, is that we are now working together with the Ministry once again. (Member of the Agency's Department of Studies)

There is one last actor that clearly has its own agency, and operates directly in schools ranked lowest in the SIMCE category: the performance standard indicators. These were created by MINEDUC, specifically by the Unit for Curriculum and Evaluation. Their function is to provide guidance to schools in relation to expected performance in the area of school management. These are not curricula, but rather school management standards. These standards are used by officials at the Unit for Evaluation and Orientation within the Agency. They conduct mandatory inspections ("orientation evaluations") lasting approximately three days of schools that perform in the lower tier of the SIMCE rank. Curiously, the most direct actant with which these officials interact, and which they use as a mediating instrument to start the dialog with schools, are these performance standards, and not the scores on the non-cognitive indicators of the SIMCE test. However, the formative logic behind the Agency's orientation evaluation is subordinated to the punitive logic of the rank order system and its consequences.

what happens is that there are different types of visits, and that is actually in the law. There are visits that are for schools which, if there was a classification, would be evaluated in high level, for example. Because the idea is to take how they are doing well, and learn from them. And also [there are visits] to schools that are being badly evaluated to see what is really going on there. In general, of course, by law it will be like this, that the visits will be concentrated in those [schools] who are [ranked] in low and medium low, then those [schools] who receive more visits are schools that are low or medium low (Professional in the Agency's Department of Studies)

The visits in these school contexts are included within the recommendations offered by the Agency to the school system and therefore, as general guidelines to the schools. For this, the Agency has a Department of Studies and a Department of Communications, which generate the tools with which the Agency seeks to develop a more formative logic at the systems level (i.e for all schools):

What we are seeking, with all the studies that we are doing, is recommendations for the school

system, that is, all studies end in recommendations. We have done ethnographic studies, in classrooms, where we have raised a lot, a lot of good practices for the development of the different ones, of the different indicators. And within that then we are in that, we are working on that, and we are going to publish [in the future] also, what the schools do with respect to these four indicators of quality [refers to the self-reported non-cognitive of indicators of academic self-esteem, healthy life habits, citizen participation, and school climate] (Head of the Agency's Department of Studies)

In sum, the continuous high-stakes evaluative framework that the Agency promotes through the SIMCE test and its consequences enacts a punitive educational policy environment (Cohen and Moffit, 2009), in which school climate is included as one of several indicators of the 'non-cognitive', 'social-emotional' aspects of educational quality.

### ***Superintendence of education: The freedom to complain***

The following phrase is highlighted in the Superintendence's 2014 Public Report: "The eyes of the Superintendence are looking down on the whole school community." This phrase summarizes the job of the superintendence: surveillance. When viewing the online denunciation system, it is immediately clear that those who may conduct surveillance, or are called upon to do it, are all members of the school community.

However, throughout the interviews an important element emerged that was not evident at the outset: only adults are able to complain. One has to be over 18 years to fill in the online form. The argument for this is that people must legally be held responsible for their claim:

It has to be done [referring to filling out the online form available at the Superintendence's website] by people older than 18 because they have to take liability, we do not receive, for example, anonymous [forms]... sometimes there are some [complaints] by students and they are registered (Member of the national-level Complaints Unit, Superintendence of Education)

In line with the Chilean constitution, which guarantees parents school choice but does not explicitly guarantee students the right to education, the Superintendence is identified as the arbiter in the exercise of school choice. Therefore, it is clear that parents are the main subject-agents to whom the Superintendence should speak. Hence, the child's human rights are subordinate to the parents' rights to educational freedom of choice of school.

However, it is less clear who is scrutinized when a complaint is made – the school (i.e. its responsible adults, such as school principals, teachers, and staff) or its financial administrator (i.e. the municipality in the case of public schools, or a private administrator in the case of privately subsidized or private schools). When one analyzes the steps followed once a complaint has been made, it becomes evident that it is the financial administrator.

The Superintendence, by means of the complaints system, puts the school as the actor under the spotlight as an 'educational service' which must be assured and overseen in terms of quality. If the parent-client is not satisfied with the service provided by the school's administrator, he/she may file a complaint. This procedure is very familiar in Chilean civil society in respect of commercial goods and services, which are overseen by a Superintendence of Commerce, to whom any citizen can complain in the case of a substandard purchase or service. In this case, the service being

monitored is offered by educational providers. In this way, the Superintendence assigns itself a role as a highly active agent in the network.

The effect is that a strong judicial rhetoric dominates the educational field, as well as an economic, market-driven subjectivity of parents as clients of an educational service, who can always complain if the service is not considered up to standard. Through the SAC system, the State now guarantees parents the right to complain through the Superintendence:

I also believe in disciplinary measures to the private subsidized sector [referring to private subsidized schools, who are administered by private parties but receive State funding through the voucher system and other commodities], they have to adjust to the regulations in order to get state funds, many of them think as private [actors] and act as a private [actors], and there is more awareness [now, with the SAC Law] that complaining is possible also by parents. (Member of the national-level complaints unit, Superintendence of Education)

In this scenario, the exercise of educational rights is understood as the freedom to complain. The establishment of the Superintendence was a political response to demands for quality in education raised by the Chilean student movements in 2011. However, this civic demand arose from the point of view of customer service. The suspicion arises that this complaint system is geared towards parents of private subsidized schools, since a) they are the ones who have demanded their 'right to pay' for the education they choose, and b) in order to file a complaint online, digital alphabetization is required, reducing the possibilities of lower-SES parents from municipal schools to use the online platform. Interviews with officials from the Superintendence confirmed that, overall, complaints are much more frequent in the private subsidized sector.

As we have seen, by means of the complaint device, the State transfers to the subjects the responsibility for overseeing the school system. The Superintendence has a complaints unit which operates only when a complaint is filed by a citizen. Therefore, the Superintendence mediate in the network by creating a pathway for translating accountability. With respect to school violence and school climate policies, it characterizes itself explicitly as a translator of the Law on School Violence, by emphasizing mechanisms and legal strategies in its connection with schools. This translation implies the *threat* of penalties by means of a complex system of accountability, against which schools must defend themselves by means of a legal discourse. In this manner, and according to the participants (subjects) interviewed, the Superintendence faces no competition for translation, and colonizes the school discourse with a very legalistic and judicial discourse. This includes clear and strictly followed norms on school climate, as mandated by the Law on School Violence:

The school internal regulations [*reglamento interno*], which are now also called the School Climate Manual, then, the internal relationships of the school have to exist, in this case, a statement of intent by the school on how do they manage school climate. (Auditor, Superintendence of Education)

As can be observed, the Superintendence of Education, and its main role of surveillance, is fostering the enactment of a punitive logic of school violence and school climate policies due to its agency through laws, norms, and regulations. It does this as the direct actant in charge of deciding on and implementing the sanctions and penalties authorized by the Law on School Violence.

***Ministry of education: The loss of supremacy of translation***

Under the new educational structure proposed by the SAC system, the MINEDUC's place as the primary mechanism in the enactment of school climate appears to be under threat. Before the SAC Law, Chilean education was arranged in hybrid fashion, with two key actors: public (municipalities) or private (providers) administrators, together with the Ministry of Education at the central, regional and provincial levels. The MINEDUC was in charge of designing policies and general actions which had to be administered and implemented by educational administrators. The inter-national policies and tendencies drawn from recommendations by supranational organizations, such as UNESCO, were adapted by the Ministry of Education, which established general guide-lines on school climate, prioritizing the power of decision making over the local decisions of the administrators. In the former scenario, even though schools received general indications from their administrators, the regulations – as well as any management decisions – followed direct advice from the Ministry of Education. Once the SAC Law came into operation, two new actors appeared, both directly linked to the school through policies and actions of pressure and support, that had direct and high consequences for schools. This made it difficult for schools to continue trusting the Ministry of Education as the most relevant actor when making school-level decisions, since from then on, the Ministry's suggestions had, for the schools, less consequences than those of the Agency and Superintendence. This view was expressed by participants working at all administrative levels of the Ministry – national, regional, and provincial. Their initial expectation, however, was to be re-enlisted as a relevant actor in the new network that the SAC system created.

When the system of quality assurance of education began to operate, it gave excessive strength to the Superintendence, which then ratifies in the school that what matters to the Ministry is the sanction, and the instrument [refers to the norms of school climate], it does not matter how in fact the instrument is formulated, just that the checklist includes the norms on school climate. So when that logic is installed in schools and when the Ministry is reinforcing it, it is quite difficult to make that change of perspective, it takes very proactive, rather clear individual [Ministry] people [meaning officials] who are capable of teaming with schools. (Member of the Ministry of Education Transversality Unit)

In several ways, MINEDUC's officials have been active in reinstating their place in the network. First, the Ministry has its own structure for counselling and support. The official website of the Ministry, [www.mineduc.cl](http://www.mineduc.cl), contains tabs for what is most relevant for a quick search, highlighting Curriculum and Educational Reform. Neither school violence nor school climate are present in the website's navigation map. To access the information system of the Ministry as it relates to school climate, one is taken to another website, at a secondary level, [www.convivenciaescolar.cl](http://www.convivenciaescolar.cl), where the user can find all the corresponding information. The loss of power is expressed through the dominant discourse that school climate is seen as something that supports school achievement. The primary goal, according to them, has always been achievement in standardized testing, i.e. SIMCE and the higher-education placement test (*Prueba de Selección Universitaria*). "Transversality" is seen as something that cannot be measured, and is therefore of a lesser status. This leaves the Transversality Unit of MINEDUC in the position of actively rejecting accountability.

Obviously, because the Superintendence has to audit the money and the money that is spent

has to be incorporated in the PME [*Plan de Mejoramiento Escolar*, School Improvement Plan], if not, penalty, punishment. The Agency comes and assesses the PME, considers the institution's educational project and inspects the school, and conducts a full analysis based on what the areas and dimensions of the PME themselves mean, because they do not take anything else into account, and they conduct an assessment and provide guidance. They are going to rank you and that is also punitive, because it is the SAC system, the school is being scrutinized from all corners, a school which during four years under the law has a performance below average may be closed down, and after three years it must have an administrator. (Member of Provincial-level Department of Education)

This is the position that this actor-institution assumes in the network: fighting in a struggle for translation. In this struggle, MINEDUC defies its competitors – the Agency and the Superintendence – by declaring its superiority as a senior member, both temporarily (i.e. we were here before) as well as in terms of social status (i.e. we are the Ministry). For the Ministry, seniority secures recognition and, thus, their place in the network. From this uncomfortable position, it claims its role as a “critical ally” (i.e. they need us) of the other two actor-institutions. However, in this struggle for translation, two drawbacks significantly influence their relationship with schools: lack of perceived concrete support from the Ministry of Education and its local representatives (Regional Secretary of the Ministry of Education – SEREMI – at the regional level; Province Department of Education – DEPROV – at the province level) and difficulties coordinating with other SAC organizations. With respect to the first drawback, the subjects in this study did not reveal any specific tools through which MINEDUC supports schools. Their guidance role in the school is perceived as more theoretical than practical.

Educational leadership, curricular implementation, school climate, educational inclusion, based on these four axes [established by the SEP law and which form the four axes of the school improvement plan] the Ministry is related today to the school, what does that mean, [that] the supervisors should advise schools in these four areas, they cannot not do it [meaning they have to do it] ... then what I have to do is provide support, give guidance and deliver there, eeh, good, guidance, support and guidance to the school management teams [ ... ] we always insist in any case that the model is a theoretical exercise, all that is articulated, that is, when I define an action that is going to point to a strategic objective that action could go in any of the four areas, it will depend the emphasis that I place. Therefore, it is not that one area is more important than another. (Regional Coordinator of Supervisors at the SEREMI level)

With respect to MINEDUC's former relationship with schools as general coordinators, at the same time as the SAC system was created, MINEDUC began losing its leading role as passing-point coordinators for schools.

It has always been this unit [refers to the Educational Transversality Unit within MINEDUC] that during all these years has taken these matters [concerning school violence and school climate] between the ministries. Therefore, we assumed the role of experts in transversality and therefore also in school climate. [However,] our Unit was not considered for this discussion [refers to the Law on School Violence] and I absolutely agree that these other standards [refer to the non-cognitive indicators] appear fragmented with an accent that is not what we as a Unit were pushing for regarding the learning [process]. The relationship with

the Agency has not been easy, to be honest, too. In general, they were [at the beginning] more related to the unit of curriculum and standards, this is the debate. (Member of the National-level Transversality Unit, MINEDUC)

Both of these weak network connections – weak supporting tools and weak system coordination – strengthen the distinctions that schools make between MINEDUC and the rest of the SAC organisms, in that MINEDUC has no ability to directly force schools to take action or address problems.

On the one hand [the Superintendence can deliver] a fine and on the other hand [the Agency delivers] classification and we [MINEDUC] have no consequences or problems. We can give very good ideas [to the schools] but if they do not do it, or if these don't have any consequences, then there is a contradiction in terms of structure [of the educational system] that is evident. And on the other hand, in operational terms, it is reinforced, and generally when you have people in the school who have the conviction that things should be different, [it turns out that] there are more disincentives than incentives to be able to do them, [then] you really have to have the courage to do something different, and [believe me] there is, there is, but that simply explains to me [that educational change depends on] the people, nothing more. (Member of the provincial-level DEPROV, MINEDUC)

And they [the Agency] are telling the school that they have [a] perfect climate, or, a bad climate, but on the other hand another construct is being used [refers to the performance standards]. And on the other side there are [SEP] school improvement plans that are telling schools “to achieve school climate, do this, do that” [is referring to the school improvement plan of the SEP law that includes school climate]. So it's an issue of, of authority, or who do I believe. And each school chooses who to believe in, [and] that makes it hard. Now, if you look at it, it's not the school to blame, it's a system that is bombarding with different messages. (Member of the Regional-level DEPROV, MINEDUC)

Given this scenario, the strategy employed by MINEDUC, in order to sustain its position as a critical yet altruistic ally, is to focus on school improvement. It seeks to characterize itself to others as an agent of support. Officials highlight the difference between presenting oneself to schools as a “friend of the school” and as an “agent who collects evidence for accountability”.

We are the only ones who are friends to schools, because we do not sanction them, we don't evaluate or rank them, we provide them with support, we come from the outside world to look at you and tell you “look this is what we see in you from this position”, with these educational outcomes, these indicators of educational quality, with this assessment of your enrollment, with all the elements that we see from the outside, with your PME. (Member of a provincial-level Department of Education)

Hence, MINEDUC has become less important in this new actor-network, as the formative reality it promotes remains at the mercy of the punitive logic on school quality, including school climate. Therefore, the translation of school climate becomes highly punitive and minimally formative.

Instead of saying, “look, I'm going to sanction you if you don't have a good climate” [which

is what the Superintendence does], and “you’re going to be ordered in that category [by the Agency], and if you’re ordered in this category then you can be closed down [by MINEDUC]”, because that’s finally what happens [ . . . ] it’s that, the Superintendence has that side, you could say more punitive. And, perhaps it was not meant like that, but yes, its role is to sanction, and that creates fear and all. Now, I prefer to read it as making schools accountable. The issue is to take responsibility. The problem is that whenever you take responsibility, there are consequences. But those consequences cannot be [interpreted as], the ultimate goal, is not having the consequences, but it has to be about the process, that’s what’s desirable [and] towards here [gesticulates by moving his arm towards himself] we want the schools’ strategies to move. (Member of the national-level Unit for Curriculum and Evaluation, MINEDUC)

### ***National Council of Education: The (invisible) political actor***

The results of this study revealed an almost invisible, yet powerful, political stance in the National Council of Education (CNED). The CNED must, by law, approve a) the curriculum; b) the evaluations, both national and international; c) the method for rank ordering the schools, and d) evaluations, qualifications, and promotions. It is therefore an obligatory passing point of the network. Although there was no direct interaction between the subject participants interviewed and the CNED, this essential status turns it into an actant with plenty of power. As such, in the background, the CNED plays a key role in defining, designing, and modifying the information and tools that govern the punitive and formative logics of school violence and school climate policies. In this manner, Law No. 20.529 acts as an (s)object actant that binds the limits within which the Agency and its subjects can play, restricting their degrees of freedom by way of the CNED.

The Law on Quality Assurance does not say what the indicators are but says that there are other indicators to be approved by the National Council of Education, and that the Ministry creates them and the Agency evaluates them, that is what the law says. (Member of the Department of Studies, Agency)

In the following quote, a professional from the Agency, who helped formulate the initial definition of non-cognitive indicators, expressed the view that the Agency’s hands were tied by the SAC Law and the CNED. The quote reveals the political role that the CNED plays when deciding to accept or reject names, definitions, and the conceptual operationalization of these indicators, and the way they are reported. The professional refers to an indicator initially named “parent satisfaction with the school”, which was rejected by the CNED.

One that had to do with, it was called parental satisfaction. I think the name was maybe a bit unfortunate? But it was nice, it was a nice indicator [psychometrically], but of course it generated a bit of controversy, not so much because it was [understood] as customer satisfaction but because the Council told us that it could generate, as some sometimes there are tensions with parents and [that] could generate as a strange result [ . . . ] because that’s the document that is presented to the National Council of Education and at that moment it is public to be approved. The National Council of Education does not approve the Fundamentals document [refers to the document with theoretical foundations of the non- cognitive indicators], what it approves is the Decree, but the Fundamentals report is the one that

fundamentals the decree, then they review it [as well]. (Professional, Agency)

Therefore, punitive logic takes precedence over the formative logic of preventing school violence and promoting school climate that the different actants attempt to carry out within the constraints established by the high-stakes SAC system (i.e. monetary penalties, threat of school closure). The only way to change this would be to change the SAC law itself. This is a political action that would require the initiative of the Parliament, which is another distant actor acting (or not) in the background.

## Discussion

In this article, we have described and analyzed the network that currently enacts the school violence and school climate policies in Chile, from the perspective of ANT. We conclude that the perspective of the three relevant actors – the Agency, the MINEDUC, and the Superintendence – shape the current translation of school violence and school climate policies into a reality that is mainly punitive.

Our conclusions are threefold. First, it is clear which instruments govern public policy on school climate and school violence: the SAC Law, the Law on School Violence, and the School Climate Policy. These instruments are themselves embedded in heterogeneous performative and enactment logics in relation to school climate and school violence policies. While the SAC Law is rooted in an accountability logic based on New Public Management (NPM), the School Climate Policy was designed and updated from a logic of formative training to improve school performance. Meanwhile, the Law on School Violence is a hybrid instrument that has been translated in heterogeneous ways, as a mediating instrument for prevention and promotion by MINEDUC, and as a subject for auditing school climate manuals and protocols by the Superintendence. Hence, we conclude that, although there is officially one national school climate policy, performatively there are at least two school climate realities in schools, stemming from very different actors, logics and discourses. One is based on the accountability logic of efficiency, and of rewarding *good* schools (high SIMCE performance, high achievement ranking) and punishing *bad* schools (low SIMCE performance, medium-low and insufficient ranking). The other is based on school improvement and community involvement that pays attention to the context and history of each school, regardless of SIMCE performance.

Our second conclusion is that, after the SAC Law installed the Agency and the Superintendence, MINEDUC lost its primary role in the translation of the School Climate Policy in a formative logic, as is officially stated in the National School Climate Policy. From then on it has had to share power, and negotiate dominant logics in the network, with the other two actors, whose instruments are different, and who follow logics that are also different.

The lack of power reported by the Ministry is probably due to the weak practical support tools it provides to schools, along with a loss of its former power to coordinate policies with practices. Taking into consideration the punishments, or threats of punishment, generated by other organizations, which are more binding and relevant for the schools, then the logic of support becomes less powerful than the logic of punishment. This situation is exacerbated by the ineffectiveness of this support in relation to school climate, with the overwhelming presence of institutions and policies which loom over schools and are frequently at odds with each other (López et al., 2018a). This had already been reported by OECD in 2004. It argued that, although Chilean educational policies might be well-intentioned, they are weakly linked to the actual practice of schools. This was supported in 2016 by the same international institutions in relation to weak implementation of

educational reforms. In this context, the Ministry of Education has changed its strategy and is aiming for a gradual implementation of the main educational reforms of the country, such as the Law on Inclusion and the Law on Public Education (MINEDUC, 2017). This did not occur in relation to the SAC Law analyzed in this study.

In the struggle for the supremacy in the translation of the school climate policy, a hybrid and heterogeneous set of translation mechanisms emerges with the Superintendence and MINEDUC at opposite ends. At one end, the Superintendence performs as a device of hyper-surveillance that calls parents to exercise their right to school choice by means of officially complaining about schools for not providing adequate services, and forces schools to be accountable for their management of school climate. At the other end, MINEDUC advocates to improve schools, which includes school climate, and rejects, or at least blocks, moves towards school climate improvement as just another means of translating a logic of accountability. The Law on Inclusion was passed in 2015 and gradually implemented throughout the country. In light of the law, which explicitly addresses students' rights to education, and the role of the state in securing that right, we expect that the tension between punitive and formative reality will be even greater. Future research should address how schools go about resolving this tension (López et al., 2018b).

Our third conclusion is that we must look at the role of non-humans in order to understand the struggle for translation and power relations. The analyses performed in this study allow us to conclude that at least two actors are at the core of punitive performance in the school violence/school climate policy enactment: the Agency's SIMCE test (and its high stakes) and the Superintendence's complaint system (and the threat it entails). Both devices create strong routes by which power circulates (Kriesi et al., 2006) through the Agency, in the form of information (i.e. the ranking system produced by using the SIMCE test scores to rank schools), and through the Superintendence, in the form of money (i.e. the complaint system which, when enacted, can lead to a monetary sanction for a school that does not comply with the Law on School Violence). Many decisions and performances are conducted through these two devices, which act as mandatory nodes in the network, due to the consequences that arise from them. Both devices tie in logics and subjectivities that are closer to the logic of accountability. Since we were not able to find devices closer to the logic of school improvement which had as great a degree of authority in the network, we conclude that it is the reality of punishment that is mainly translated in the school violence/school climate policies of the Chilean school system. We suggest there is a need for further research into the implications of the translations into the punitive logic of school climate.

The role of the National Council of Education is key in this struggle for translation. Although we have made little reference to this actor in our empirical data, it is an essential passing point – a compulsory pathway (Law, 1998) – in any current or future attempt to change the punitive logic of accountability through which all schools must pass. Hence, since strength comes from connections, it has a recognized power in the network. In ANT terms, CNED acts as a *punctualizing* actor (Munro, 2004). Punctualization refers to the process by which complex actors are black-boxed and linked with other networks to create larger actor-networks – “the process of punctualization thus converts an entire network into a single point or node in another network” (Callon, 1991, p. 153). Thus, by becoming an essential passing point for curriculum, evaluation, and rank ordering, CNED makes the entire school violence/school climate network become punctualized into a single point or node of connection, in the larger network of education as a political issue. Through this punctualization, CNED politicizes technical discussions. This is a process defined by ANT researchers as differentiation (Callon, 2008), or the ability to transform issues into “political”, “scientific” and “economic” problems. Hence, CNED has the power of

*motility*; that is, the ability to present the world one way at one moment, and another way the next (Munro, 2009). It defines, in any given situation, what is understood as correct, what is approved, what flow of connections are expected, what competing interpretations of the school system and its improvement prevail, and therefore which realities about school violence/school climate become legitimized. In fact, within the SAC system, the CNED acts as the most political actant, since four of its ten members are designated by the President of Chile, three are designated by different types of tertiary institution (public universities, private universities, and technical-vocational colleges), and three are selected by an open public contest.

Overall, these results suggest that the current enactment of the school violence/school climate reality is tightly wedded to a performative logic of accountability based on the NPM approach. This fits very well with the SAC Law and the SAC system it created, but is at odds with the logic of continuous improvement still propounded by the Ministry of Education.

In light of the so-called global triumph of NPM, this paper has highlighted how, through the dissemination of specific instruments that bind subjects and objects as actants that enact the reality of accountability (Sisto and Zelaya, 2013), the NPM is maintained. We also conclude that these policy implementation movements are not just applicable to the Chilean case, but may also be transferable to other countries and regions that progressively enact accountability as a mechanism of educational reforms.

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