



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### PRIVATE INVESTMENTS IN THE EDUCATION-TRAINING SECTOR AND SOCIO-SPATIAL CHANGES IN THE COMMUNE OF VAVOUA (CENTRE WEST OF THE IVORY COAST)

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#### ABSTRACT

The education-training sector in Vavoua was poorly invested until the end of the rebel occupation (2002-2011). However, the end of this crisis has led to a proliferation of private schools in the municipal landscape. The present study focuses on the determinants of these private investments in the education-training sector in the commune of Vavoua as well as on the landscape changes that they have brought about. To this end, the data collection method was based on documentary research and field surveys. The study reveals that 91% of these private initiatives were carried out after 2011 and 60% of the operators are education and training personnel. The growing school-age population, the decline in public investment, the availability of land and the profitability of these private initiatives are the main factors behind the multiplicity of these private schools. This contributes to a qualitative change in the communal landscape of Vavoua.

#### INTRODUCTION

Access to education is an essential issue for human development. It is the subject of numerous declarations, local, national and international programmes (Maulini et al, 2005 p.1). As a result, investing in human capital is becoming essential for all nations. Each country has taken steps to strengthen its education system by allocating more funds to education and training (OXFAM, 2019 p.8). It is in this context that Ivory Coast, a country located in West Africa, is currently experiencing dynamism due to investments in the education-training sector. Indeed, the current expenditure of the Ivorian education system (in millions of CFA francs) increased from 828 496 in 2015 to 1 034 684 in 2017. It is also estimated at 1 078 415 in 2018 and 1 131 876 in 2019 (MENETFP, 2017, p.15). Despite this, disparities exist between the country's administrative regions, accentuated by the lack of state investment in the sector, which has led to the entry of private actors. As regards private education provision, it has largely contributed to the general increase in access. In fact, over the last ten years, we have seen the development of private education provision, whose share has increased over

the period, rising from 22 % in 2005 to almost 25% in 2014-2015. While this offer stagnated at primary level (between 12% and 13% of enrolments) during the decade, it represents almost half of the enrolments in secondary 1 (49%) and is the majority in secondary 2 (55 %) in 2014. In ETFP, private provision remains dominant for technical education (95%). Finally, for higher education, private provision is largely present (44.5 % in 2014). The presence of this predominant private offer, which is largely dependent on state subsidies, must be questioned in terms of its complementarity with the public offer on the one hand, but also in terms of its effectiveness and relevance, particularly for the higher levels of the system, on the other hand (MENETFP, op cit, p.18-19). In spite of everything, Abidjan outperforms the other cities with an estimated school access rate of just over 80 % (WORLD BANK, 2011 p.33). The country's other secondary cities are then caught in a trap of educational under-investment. Located in the centre-west of the country, Vavoua is one of the localities in the interior that are on the fringes of this educational investment dynamic. Thus, this situation means that the need for education and training is crying out in the locality. As a result, more or less coordinated private initiatives are increasingly emerging with the multiplication of establishments that have an undeniable impact on the communal landscape. Identifying the determinants of this phenomenon and measuring its structuring power on the

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landscape are the main concerns of this work. The figure above is a presentation of the study area.

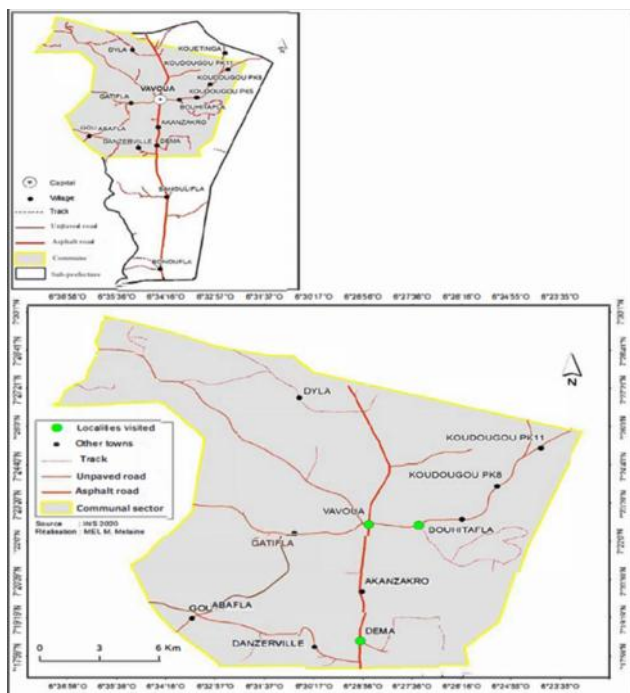


Figure 1. Presentation of the study area

## METHODS

This study relies on two data collection techniques, namely desk research and field survey. The method adopted is based on secondary and primary sources. The secondary source is made up of works tracing private investments in the ivoirien education system. The consultation of these works was possible through search engines and university libraries. These include the library of the Université Jean Lorougnon Guédé de Daloa (UJLoG), the Institut de Géographie Tropicale (IGT), and the Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRD) in Abidjan. These made it possible to explore theses, dissertations, scientific articles and reports on the education-training sector. However, the apprehension of private investments in the sector in the transformation of the communal landscape of Vavoua was not possible through this method. In order to do this, field surveys were carried out and included a census of private establishments in the commune of Vavoua, followed by interviews with public authorities (Regional Directorate for Education, Regional Directorate for Construction and Urban Planning, Regional Directorate for Planning and Development, Regional Directorate for the Environment, Prefecture, Town Hall and Chieftaincy) and private authorities (Economic Grouping of Teachers, Neighbourhood Associations and Ethnic Communities) were conducted. The sample of populations surveyed in this study was selected using the non-probabilistic method, specifically the reasoned choice. In total, 35 private investors and 190 households were surveyed, as well as 14 resource persons interviewed. The processing and tabulation of the information collected was done using computer software. Word processing was done with Word software. The tables were created using Excel software. For the cartographic representation of the results, Adobe Illustrator and Qgis software were used. The use of a GPS (Global Positioning System) OSM Track was useful for the geolocation of establishments and

infrastructures. Finally, a digital camera was used to take photographs to illustrate the study.

## RESULTS

### Multiplicity and diversity of private investment in the education-training sector since the end of the rebel occupation

**At the level of the education system:** The last 10 years have seen the emergence of a multitude of private initiatives in terms of the creation of education and training institutions. Figure 2 shows the evolution of the number of establishments over the years. The commune of Vavoua currently has 35 private schools, all cycles combined. But until 2013, it had 3 private schools. The year 2013 marks the beginning of the establishment of all kinds of educational and training establishments with the creation of 4 schools in that year. The peak is reached in 2015 with the establishment of 8 schools in that year alone. The years 2014 and 2017 are also important dates with the registration of 7 and 6 schools respectively. In Vavoua, two types of private structures coexist in the education sector. These are secular establishments which account for 72% of this category against 28% for denominational establishments.



Source: Field surveys, July 2020

Figure 2. Evolution of the number of private education and training institutions created per year from 1960 to 2020

Private secular establishments are schools that allow pupils from different origins, cultures, religious affiliations and social backgrounds to be in the same class. Private denominational schools, on the other hand, are created and run by a religious organisation. As a result, secular educational institutions are the most predominant in the locality. The private secular schools are numerous and differ according to the level of study. There are 71% secondary schools, 18% primary schools, 7% pre-schools and only 4% higher education institutions. In terms of private denominational schools, 64% are primary schools, 27% are secondary schools and 9% are pre-school schools. Specifically, 64% of these denominational schools are Christian, as opposed to 36% Muslim. Among the Christian schools, two groups stand out, namely Protestant denominational schools (36%) and Catholic denominational schools (27%).

**Private investment in the training sector is still low:** Training is a learning process that enables an individual to acquire the skills and abilities needed to perform a trade or professional activity. This learning process requires training centres. However, the training sector is under-represented in Vavoua. The 4 technical training establishments are the most dominant. These are the Collège SAINT-ÉMILE, the Groupe scolaire LE LABELLE, the Collège DOUMBIA ISSIAKA and the Institut Supérieur LE GONTRAN.



Photo: The authors, July 2020

Figure 3. Students in training

In practice, beyond the approvals, only the last two establishments mentioned actually operate in this register. With regard to vocational training, the Collège SAINT-ÉMILE, and the Groupe Scolaire LE LABELLE have been approved but are not yet operating in this register. Finally, the Sewing and Hairdressing Learning Centre ou CACC is the only establishment providing training leading to a qualification. The figure 3 below is an illustration. Figure 3 shows the Centre for Apprentice Sewing and Hairdressing in Bouhitafla, a village district in the commune of Vavoua, which was created in 2018. The students are learning.

**Spatial distribution of private educational institutions in the commune of Vavoua:** Public schools in the education-training sector are unevenly distributed in the Vavoua landscape. The figure 4 below highlights this distribution.

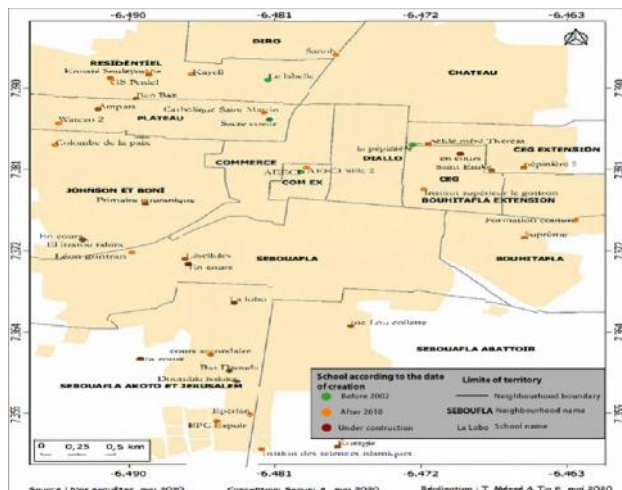


Figure 4. Distribution of private education-training institutions in Vavoua in 2020

The figure shows that private establishments are more concentrated in the northwest, east and south of the town. Moreover, this sector has undergone a notable evolution with the chronology of the establishment of these establishments. Indeed, until 2002, the commune of Vavoua had 5 private establishments. The period from 2002 to 2010 was marked by an absence of private initiative due to the military-political crisis. As for the period after 2010 to 2020, it recorded the creation of 31 public schools in the education-training sector.

These schools began to be established in earnest from 2012 onwards. The proliferation of these private establishments has spread beyond the urban core to other localities in the commune such as Bouhitafla (3 establishments) and Dema (1 establishment). These villages located on the outskirts are gradually being swallowed up by the city. In addition, 4 public schools are under construction in Vavoua. The urban fronts of the South, East and North-West have a lot of land available because of the proximity of the communal villages within an average radius of 5 km. From the above, it follows that the spatial configuration of private establishments in the education-training sector has evolved considerably in the communal landscape of Vavoua.

**The determinants of the increase in private investment and the strategies of the actors in the education-training sector.**

**Factors behind the increase in massive private investment in Vavoua:** The rapid growth of the population is putting pressure on education and training needs. This sector now has significant infrastructure needs. Indeed, Vavoua's population growth is 2.6% per year, while the commune has 8 public pre-schools, 33 public primary schools and 1 high school (INS-Daloa, 2018-2019). However, the school-age population in the department of Vavoua is estimated at 237 179 individuals, i.e. 27 % of the regional population (Ministry of Planning Daloa 2014). These figures have been increasing over the years, along with the need for school infrastructure. As a result, the lack of public education and schooling has increased, contributing to the emergence of private schools in Vavoua. The attractiveness of land for the creation of private schools is also explained by its affordability. It is in this sense that 61% of actors say they have bought a 600 ha plot for less than 500 000 CFA francs. The same area was bought by 23% of actors for more than 1 000 000 CFA francs, compared to 16% of actors who said they had bought this type of land for between 500,000 and 1 000,000 CFA francs. The majority of actors who have invested in this sector are pleased with the relatively good profitability rates. The table 1 below shows this profitability.

Table 1. Improvement in turnover according to areas of investment in 2020

Areas of investment	REVENUE IMPROVEMENT			
	Less than 10 000 000 per year	10000000-50000000 per year	No profitability	Total (%)
Pre-school (%)	7	-	-	7
Primary (%)	18	4	5	27
Secondary (%)	11	27	13	51
High School/Training (%)	2	-	13	15
Grand total (%)	38	31	31	100

Source: Field surveys, July 2020.

Table 1 above shows that 69% of investors report an improvement in turnover, while 31% report the opposite. For the latter category, players are still in the investor consolidation phase. In some cases, this phase can last 3 to 5 years before there is a return on investment. Among the investors who have recorded an improvement in turnover, 38% say they have a profitability of less than 10 000 000 CFA per year, while 31% declare a profitability of between 10,000,000 and 50 000 000 CFA per year. In addition, the state provides funding according to the number of students assigned to these public schools. The levels of funding are defined by the convention according to the type of establishment (general, technical or professional) and the training cycle (first or second

Table 2. Spaceoccupied by public schools in the education-training sector

AREAS OF INVESTMENTS	LOT SIZE					Total
	Lessthan600 m <sup>2</sup>	600-1000 m <sup>2</sup>	1000-2000 m <sup>2</sup>	2000-3000 m <sup>2</sup>	Over 3000 m <sup>2</sup>	
College/Secondary	8,89 %	4,44 %	15,56 %	13,33 %	8,89 %	51,11 %
High School/Training	2,22 %	0,00 %	4,44 %	0,00 %	8,89 %	15,56 %
Pre-school	0,00 %	0,00 %	6,67 %	0,00 %	0,00 %	6,67 %
Primary	13,33 %	4,44 %	6,67 %	2,22 %	0,00 %	26,67 %
Grand total	24,44 %	8,89 %	33,33 %	15,56 %	17,78 %	100 %

Source: our surveys, July 2020.

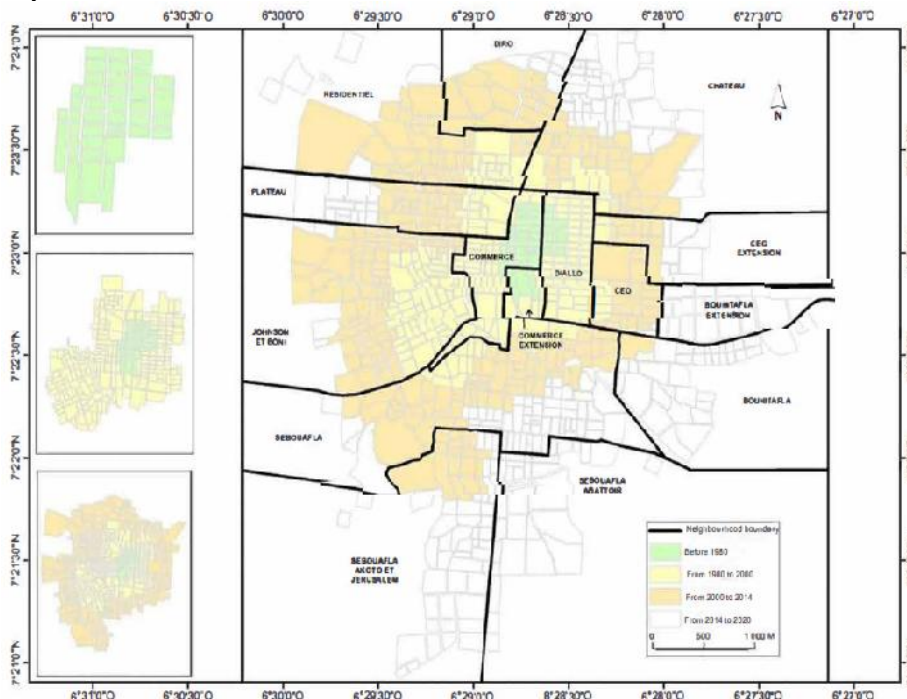


Figure 5. Spatial dynamics of the town of Vavoua from 1980 to 2020



Photo: The authors, July 2020.

Figure 6. Privateschool in R+3

Table 3. Other sectors of investment from the earnings of privateschools

Other areas of investment	Localization				Total (%)
	With in Vavoua	Village of Vavoua	Other locality in the country	No answer	
Agriculture	4,44	2,22	-	-	6,67
Construction	4,44	-	6,67	-	11,11
Informal trade	2,22	-	-	-	2,22
Education/training	24,44	8,89	26,67	-	60
Large retail	-	-	2,22	-	2,22
Transport	2,22	-	-	-	2,22
No answer	-	-	-	15,56	15,56
Total (%)	37,78	11,11	35,56	15,56	100

Source: Our surveys, July 2020.



Photo: The authors, July 2020.

**Figure 7. Overview of a market near a private settlement**

cycle). Indeed, for general education establishments in the first and second cycle, the amounts are respectively 120 000 FCFA and 140 000 FCFA per year and per student. For technical and vocational education, a lump sum of 170 000 CFA francs is granted for the two training cycles. In Vavoua, 70% of the turnover of private general education establishments is covered by state subsidies linked to the pupils affected. In sum, it can be said that the enthusiasm of actors in this sector is explained by the financial interest generated by private schools.

**Strategies for the realisation of private investments in Vavoua:** Private actors in the education-training sector have carried out their projects through different modes of financing. Thus, 70% of the actors reveal that they had recourse to formal financing, while 30% declare having used network financing. In terms of formal financing, 51,11 % of the investors stated that they had financed their investments through personal savings, while 17,78 % stated that they had financed their investments through bank loans. As for network financing, 26,67 % of the investors declared to have financed their investments via associations/groups, 2,22 % declared to have financed their investments via partnership and only 2,22 % of the investors acquired their establishments via inheritance. Savings and fundraising from interest groups are the main ways of financing private education and training institutions in Vavoua. Two categories of actors can be distinguished in the process of implementing projects for private education and training institutions, depending on whether they operate collectively or individually. Thus, 69 % of the actors have decided to promote their projects individually against 31 % who do so collectively. Private actors in the education-training sector are mostly from the public education and training sector. Moreover, private education does not constitute a homogeneous whole. Under this name, we find private establishments with different statuses. They can be classified into two main groups. These are public schools under contract with the State, estimated at 82,22 %, and public schools without any agreement with the State, representing 17,78 %. In addition, the non-contracted schools operate as subcontractors to the contracted schools.

**Landscape impacts of the proliferation of private education institutions in Vavoua:** By establishing themselves in a given area, private education establishments participate in the production of new forms of spatial organisation. The activities of this sector, whether agglomerated or dispersed, polarise the space, create shopping areas and circulate flows of all kinds through the networks that are created. This structuring of space through the distribution of private investment gives it a new configuration.

**Expansion of the city through new private schools:** The role of the school is not only limited to providing education and socialisation. It is also a factor in urban dynamics. In fact, the school, through its buildings, its population and related economic activities, contributes to the reshaping of the communal territory. This is all the more true since establishments such as the SAINT-ÉMILE college, the LABELLE college and the GONTRAN college each occupy more than 3 000 m<sup>2</sup>. In this city, the spatial coverage of private schools is very important. The table 2 below shows this area. Table 2 shows that the surface area occupied by private schools is enormous. The weight of educational buildings in the urban fabric is considerable. These schools are part of the facilities located within the city and have a very important impact on its expansion. Figure 5 below highlights this spatial dynamic.

Figure 5 shows the urban dynamics of the city of Vavoua at different dates. In addition, a focus on the different stages of expansion is essential. The first inset shows the space occupied by the town before 1980. The second medallion shows the evolution of the town from 1980 to 2000. The third medallion shows that the city expanded a little more from 2000 to 2014 with the brown font. From 2014 to 2020, we see the city sprawl along the urban fronts, marked on the map in white. It is in this last zone that private establishments are being set up, contributing to the expansion of the city with the appearance of new districts. This phenomenon has grown with the demographic growth and school-age population. It is also observed that the limits of the commune are pushed back towards the surrounding villages. This is the case of the villages of Sébouafla and Akanzakro which are now an integral part of the town. Thus, it appears that private investments in the education system are real precursors of the spatial dynamism of the town of Vavoua. It is with good reason that treatment centres and public internet connections, shops, markets, restaurants, stationery shops, etc. are being created in the vicinity of the schools.

**Private schools as architectural masterpieces:** With the spatial distribution of private schools, the architectural landscape undergoes a clear aesthetic transformation giving a more cheerful and attractive image to the municipality. As such, they are seen by some as tourist attractions. On the whole, the architecture of the school buildings is more imposing than that of other urban buildings (Figure 6). In figure 6, the Damas Gontran secondary school can be seen. This establishment, with its three-storey building, contributes to the aesthetics of the urban landscape of Vavoua. In addition, all sectors of activity have been impacted by private investment in the education-training sector

**Socio-economic impacts:** Within the perimeter of the schools, micro-economic activities such as text processing points, mobile money and small informal food markets have developed (figure 7). A pupil sitting on an empty table used as a stall for selling food around the school. Moreover, as far as the actors in the system are concerned, the gains made are invested in various sectors of activity (Table 3). Reinvestment of earnings is predominantly in the education-training sector at 60%, whether in Vavoua or in other localities. Furthermore, inter-urban transport in Vavoua has been revolutionised by the savings from a private establishment in the education-training sector in the said commune. This is the Groupe scolaire le LABELLE, which was one of the first private schools in

Vavoua and has now embarked on land transport. The owner of the LE LABELLE School Group, created in 1999, says he has invested his financial gains in a transport company also called LE LABELLE. Named the best land-based company in Côte d'Ivoire in 2019, this company has marked its place in the city. Thus, the population is the main beneficiary of this reinvestment belonging to the same actor.

## DISCUSSION

The commune of Vavoua was faced with insufficient public investment in education. This situation was due to the global economic crisis of the 1980s and especially to political instability, which forced Ivorian leaders to considerably reduce funding in this sector (UNESCO-UNICEF, 2016, p.17). However, today this situation has taken a different turn. Thus, this study carried out in the said locality reveals that 91% of private initiatives in education were carried out after 2011. These private educational investments are multiple and are unevenly distributed in this municipality, especially in the urban fronts, given the availability of land. The educational investments referred to are described by UNESCO (1997, pp. 60-63) as community schools, faith-based schools, spontaneous and nomadic schools, schools for expatriates or specific ethnic groups. Their purpose is to meet the demand of particular groups of rural, urban and poor or nomadic populations, who cannot access other types of education. Similarly, Gerard (1999, p.153), states that in West Africa, the time when the public school held a monopoly on school education seems long gone. For him, private secular schools, Koranic schools, medersas, Christian schools in Togo and Senegal and many other countries now also offer their educational services. For these authors, private investment in the education-training sector is the most common form of investment in countries, particularly in Africa. It should also be noted that private educational investments in the commune of Vavoua make up for the weakness of public investments in the education-training sector and constitute a profitable investment for the actors.

This is what Rocque (2009) quoted by Rabii (2011, p.86) tries to justify when he states that public funding alone is incapable of satisfying and responding to the totality of the needs of the education system, hence the importance of integrating the private sector in the provision of education. For him, this private sector is not only supposed to help the schooling of the whole population but also to allow the actors to make profits. The WORLD BANK (2009, p.7), does not say the contrary when it notes that the craze for private institutions is due to an important trend of the emergence of more sophisticated forms of private involvement in education through for-profit public-private partnerships (PPPs). Moreover, private investment in the education-training sector is leading to a territorial and socio-economic transformation of the locality of Vavoua. As for the territorial effects, these establishments are real actors who participate in the dynamics of territorial development by structuring the town. For Bolou (2014, p.35), this structuring of the space by the distribution of private establishments gives it a new configuration. We can observe in this space a reorganisation of spaces by human activities in terms of sowing of points, extension area, polarisation, meshing or networks (Pumain and Saint-Julien, 2005, p.97). These investments improve the standard of living of the populations thanks to the creation of direct or related jobs and participate in the territorial development dynamics of the city. Couldiat-

Kielem (2007, p.38), takes a similar approach, emphasising that educational investment is a factor in the accumulation of human capital, which in turn is a factor in improving income and sustained economic growth. Furthermore, he goes further to say that education, especially at the primary and lower secondary levels, contributes to poverty reduction by increasing the labour productivity of the poor. Similarly, Rabii (2011, p.12) recalls that investment in education is known to have a positive impact in the economic, social, political, and demographic spheres. At the economic level, it allows individuals to improve their productivity and increase their income and employability opportunities. At the social level, education enables social integration and equalisation between individuals, both in terms of gender and space. At the demographic level, studies and surveys have shown that the generalisation of schooling, particularly in the case of women, allows for a better control of the demographic growth rate. On the other hand, UNICEF (2016, p.17) emphasises that education is a powerful tool for breaking the cycle of poverty at both the private and national levels. The impact of education on personal income and economic growth has been validated since the 1970s by numerous studies worldwide. On average, an additional year of education represents a 10% increase in what an individual will earn.

## CONCLUSION

The structuring power of private investment in the education-training sector in the communal landscape of Vavoua (Centre-West of Ivory Coast) has begun. The private sector, one of the most important partners of the State after international institutions and donors, has effectively committed itself to helping the education sector in Vavoua by making huge investments. These are the construction of primary, secondary and higher education infrastructures of a secular and religious nature. This participation of the private sector has been accompanied by a transformation, an embellishment of the living environment, the creation of small trades, and the appearance of inequalities in the spatial distribution of educational establishments in Vavoua. The next stage of our reflection will focus on all the secondary towns in the Haut-Sassandra region, with a view to bringing out all the nuances of the reflection.

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## Glossary of abbreviations

CACC: Sewing and Hairdressing Learning Centre  
 CFA: Financial Community in Africa  
 ETEFP: Technical Education and Vocational Training  
 GPS: Global Positioning Système  
 IGT: Institute of Tropical Geography  
 INS: National Institute of Statistics  
 IRD: Institute for Research and Development  
 MENETFP: Ministry of National Education, Technical Education and Vocational Training  
 OMS: World Health Organization  
 PPP: Public-Private Partnerships  
 RGPH: General Census of Population and Housing  
 UFR: Training and Research Unit

UJLoG: Jean Lorougnon Guédé University  
UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation  
UNICEF: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

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