

## ***Downgrading of graduates on the Côte d'Ivoire labour market***

*Over the last few decades, downgrading has become a recurring concern for graduates on the Côte d'Ivoire labour market. In a context of persistent mass unemployment, some graduates are compelled to accept low-skilled or low-paid jobs rather than have no job at all. Indeed, the employment situation in 2018 shows that, at the level of technical education and vocational training (ETFP), the integration rate of graduates is only 32.36%. In other words, two-thirds (67.64%) of ETFP graduates active in the labour market are unemployed (DAIP, 2019). As for general education, considering the employment/population ratio according to level of education, it is to the disadvantage of the better educated, i.e. 64.9% for primary education, 42.7% for secondary education and 36.8% for higher education.*

*Overall, young people experience long-term unemployment for more than 6 years after leaving the education system. Thus, to cope with these unemployment-related pressures, these young people prefer to accept unsuitable jobs, particularly in the informal sector or with lower wages. According to AFRISTAT (2017), 87.1% of jobs held are in the non-agricultural informal sector, which generally generates a high proportion of insecure jobs, and only 6.2% in the formal private sector. With regard to the situation of people in employment, 43.8% of wages received are low wages and 56.8% of these people earn less than the minimum wage authorised by law.*

*The causes of downgrading are diverse and partly due to the high number of degrees, which are becoming less valuable, the complexity of adapting to new production techniques in a competitive environment and the rigidity of job creation, particularly in Côte d'Ivoire. Companies' needs change rapidly with competition, unlike education policies in developing countries. The degree obtained is less and less a sign of the potential productivity of the human capital acquired by the individual. So, to get out of a situation of unemployment, the graduate will accept jobs with lower qualifications than his/her level of education. They will give preference to any immediate job while hoping to climb the ladder through internal promotion, or they will accept a low-skilled job to reduce the duration of unemployment and thus avoid being crowded out on the labour market (Plassard and Nhu Tran, 2009).*

*Downgrading is a source of concern for households and decision-makers. It penalises individuals in terms of income and employment opportunities, and wastes resources for society as a whole through the under-use of human capital and the inefficiency of public spending on education (Groot, 1996; McGuinness, 2006).*

*As the general level of education rises, many observers question whether the supply of educated labour actually matches the needs of companies. Previous research has shown, for example, that the effects of downgrading on variables such as earnings, job satisfaction or participation in training may depend on the measure applied (Verhaest and Omey, 2004). The phenomenon of downgrading of workers is, however, almost non-existent in Côte d'Ivoire. This article sets out to make a modest contribution.*

*The aim of this study is to analyse the determinants of downgrading and its effects on the wages of graduate workers. To this end, the methodological approach combines the econometrics of qualitative variables with that of linear regressions. The results show that in 2017, the application of different downgrading measures to graduate employees leads to different results. While 34.77% of graduate employees were downgraded professionally from a salary point of view, 36.89% said they had been downgraded. The results also show that the higher levels of degree (Bachelor's, Master's and PhD) have the highest salary gains. However, despite their high status, these degrees are affected by the phenomenon of wage downgrading.*