Journal of African History, 60.1 (2019), pp. 3–23. © Cambridge University Press 2019
doi:10.1017/S0021853718000464

'BETWEEN EDUCATION AND CATASTROPHE': CÔTE D'IVOIRE'S PROGRAMME D'ÉDUCATION TÉLÉVISUELLE AND THE URGENCY OF DEVELOPMENT (1968–1983)*[1]

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Abstract

Côte d'Ivoire's Programme d'Éducation Télévisuelle (PETV) was one of postcolonial Africa's most innovative educational reforms. And yet, PETV was implemented by a country exemplary for its educational conservatism. This apparent paradox is explained by the Ivorian state's developmentalist vision had crowned education its 'priority of priorities'. By charting the adoption and termination of PETV, this article argues for the centrality of formal schooling to the history of development.

Key Words

Cote dIvoire, West Africa, Education, Development, Postcolonial, Technology, Youth.

Between 1971, when the first school television broadcasts were beamed into classrooms, and 1983, when the screens unceremoniously went dark, Côte d'Ivoire's *Programme d'Éducation Télévisuelle* (PETV) was the world's most ambitious attempt to harness television for public education. By 1981, it reached at least three-quarters of elementary school classrooms, or more than 700,000 students. In its heyday, PETV was referred to as 'the biggest pedagogical adventure of the century', uniting more than a dozen national and international development agencies.[2] Critics have portrayed PETV as a project imposed unilaterally from the outside, either a deliberate neo-colonial venture intended to reproduce relations of domination or a top-down technocratic scheme for rapid modernization.[3] Yet

* I would like to thank the *Journal's* referees and the participants of Princeton University's African History Workshop for their comments on earlier drafts. Thanks are also due to Richard Kouakou and Kramoko Vami for their kindness in Bondoukou. Above all, I am grateful for the friendship of Alexis Motto, Henri Yapi, and Fabio Viti, without whom this article would never have been written. Author's email: elisap@princeton.edu.

1 These words, which I first encountered as a citation of the Ivoirian in charge of the PETV production studio, allude to H.G. Wells's 1920 bestseller, *The Outline of History*, in which he famously concludes that human history is becoming 'more and more a race between education and catastrophe.' H.G. Wells, *The Outline of History: Being a Plain History of Life and Mankind* (3rd edn, New York, 1921), 1100.

2 F. S. Dédy, 'L'École piégée par la technologie: l'expérience télévisuelle de la Côte d'Ivoire', *Kasa Bya Kasa*, 8:8 (1987), 101.

3 A. Benveniste, 'Côte d'Ivoire: Télévision Extra-Scolaire pour l'Éducation des Adultes Ruraux, Bilan Critique', *Revue Tiers Monde*, 20:79 (1979), 465–478; Dédy, 'L'École,'; H. Koné and J. Jenkins, 'The Programme for Educational Television in the Ivory Coast', *Educational Media International*, 27:2 (1990), 86–93;

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such readings, which rest on a general perception of the Ivorian regime as subservient to foreign interests, do not take into account the key role that education played in contemporary discourses of development.[4] Côte d'Ivoire, in particular, had invested heavily in a vision of development that had crowned education its 'priority of priorities'.[5] PETV's ambitious overhaul of the Ivorian education system represented the high-water mark of this conviction. By the time PETV was terminated in the early 1980s, that consensus had unraveled.

This article, in examining the PETV, bridges the literatures of education and development. Postcolonial education in Africa is, in general, understudied.[6] While studies of colonial-era education by historians have flourished, schooling in the independence era and beyond has largely remained the purview of anthropologists and sociologists.[7] In part, this chronological bias reflects issues of access to sources conventionally plumbed by the historian; as Jean Allman and others have observed, the 'phantom archive' of postcolonial Africa poses its own particular challenges.[8] The result, in the historiography of education, is a predilection for the study of institutions (whether schools or missions) that have maintained records, which has itself translated, however unwillingly, into an elite bias.[9] A historical study of PETV, which overhauled public primary education,

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A. Bamba, *African Miracle, African Mirage: Transnational Politics and the Paradox of Modernization in Ivory Coast* (Athens, OH, 2016), 175–7.

4 In this article, the term 'development' is used the way that Ivorian politicians employed it during the 1970s, which had changed since independence in 1960. One of the most prominent education officials in the country explained the term's evolution: 'In an original conception, 'development' considered only the evaluation of the income of the inhabitants of a country. Little by little another idea took its place, [which] is now accepted, that *man is not only the means of this development, but also and above all its end*.' Emphasis added. '24ème Congrès du SNEPCI: L'enseignement face au développement', *Fraternité Matin* (Abidjan), 8 Jul. 1971.

5 The phrase was a well-known 'Houphouëtism', or an expression frequently employed by President Felix Houphouët-Boigny, who governed throughout this period; see, for example, F. Houphouët-Boigny, 'Message de nouvel an à la nation le 31 décembre 1969', *Anthologie des Discours, 1946–1978, Volume I* (Abidjan, 1978), 281–92.

6 J. Straker, 'The State of the Subject: A Guinean Educator's Odyssey in the Postcolonial Forest, 1960–2001', *The Journal of African History*, 49:1 (2008), 94.

7 C. Summers, *Colonial Lessons: Africans' Education in Southern Rhodesia, 1918–1940* (Portsmouth, NH, 2002); P. Barthélémy, *Africaines et Diplômées à L'Époque Coloniale, 1918–1957* (Rennes, 2010); H. Gamble, *Contesting West Africa: Battles Over Schools and the Colonial Order, 1900–1950* (Lincoln, NB, 2017). Important works in anthropology and sociology that have analyzed postcolonial education in Africa include: P. Foster, *Education and Social Change in Ghana* (London, 1965); L. Buchert, *Education in the Development of Tanzania, 1919–1990* (Athens, OH, 1994); L. Proteau, *Passions scolaires en Côte d'Ivoire: École, état et société* (Paris, 2002); P. Bianchini, *École et politique en Afrique noire: Sociologie des crises et des réformes du système d'enseignement au Sénégal et au Burkina Faso (1960-2000)* (Paris, 2004); C. Coe, *Dilemmas of Culture in African Schools: Youth, Nationalism, and the Transformation of Knowledge* (Chicago, 2005).

8 J. Allman, 'Phantoms of the Archive: Kwame Nkrumah, a Nazi Pilot Named Hanna, and the Contingencies of Postcolonial History-Writing', *The American Historical Review*, 118:1 (2013), 107–8; 'Writing the History of Africa after 1960', Special issue, *History in Africa*, 42 (2015).

9 For example, see J. McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi, 1875–1940: The Impact of the Livingstonia Mission in the Northern Province* (Cambridge, 1977); Takyiwaa Manuh, 'Building Institutions for the New Africa: The Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana', in P. Bloom, T. Manuh and S. Miescher (eds.), *Modernization as Spectacle in Africa* (Bloomington, 2014), 268–84; D. Magaziner, *The Art of Life in South Africa* (Athens, OH, 2016).

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interrogates national education reform at the lowest level of the educational pyramid. Its archive, as it has been reconstituted here, draws notably on documents safeguarded by Ivorian teachers and development experts who managed and delivered the program, as well as on their individual memories of that period.

Shifting the analytical register from elite, secondary and tertiary education to the elementary classroom foregrounds the near-universal belief — shared by ordinary people, politicians and international experts — that the 'right' kind of mass education would emancipate newly-independent nations from the oppression of colonial backwardness.[10] It was a belief with roots. In 1908, for example, the Governor General of French West Africa had asserted that education, in addition to consolidating French influence, was 'the most effective means…to assure the rapid development, from all standpoints, of this land'.[11] Notwithstanding the Governor General's sentiments, colonial administrations were reluctant to invest in the education of their subjects. Thus the formal transition to independence lent new urgency to the conviction — 'almost an article of faith' — that mass education, properly modified from its colonial origins, would catalyze development.[12] Accordingly, the literature on postcolonial education in Africa has tended to assume that the most thoroughgoing projects of education reform were undertaken by explicitly anti-colonial leaders, often avowedly socialist or Marxist.[13] Historians have thus overlooked one of the continent's most progressive schooling reforms because it was implemented by a regime well-known for clinging to colonial models. The Ivorian state's drive to modernize, and the conviction at all levels of society that education was central to that endeavor, accounts for this apparent paradox. Examining the ways that PETV re-imagined postcolonial education in Africa thus foregrounds an innovative vision of national development from an unexpected source.

More broadly, the story of PETV highlights the need to join histories of formal schooling to the 'new' histories of development.[14] This approach, which directs attention to development projects 'on the ground', engages with the specificity of local contexts as a counterweight to the studies that have focused on Western institutions, actors, and ideologies.[15]

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10 J. Hanson, *Imagination and Hallucination in African Education* (East Lansing, MI, 1965); L.G. Cowan, J. O'Connell and D. Scanlon (eds.), *Education and Nation-Building in Africa* (New York, 1965).

11 Qtd. in Gamble, *Contesting*, 6.

12 J. S. Coleman, 'Introduction: Education and Political Development', in J.S. Coleman (ed.), *Education and Political Development* (Princeton, 1965), 4.

13 Buchert, *Education;* Bianchini, *École*; J. Straker, 'State of the Subject'; J. Zimmerman, '"Money, Materials, and Manpower": Ghanaian In-Service Teacher Education and the Political Economy of Failure, 1961–1971', *History of Education Quarterly*, 51:1 (2011), 1–27; J. Allman, 'Kwame Nkrumah, African Studies, and the Politics of Knowledge Production in the Black Star of Africa', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 46:2 (2013), 181–203; F. Blum, P. Guidi and O. Rillon (eds.), *Étudiants Africains en mouvement: Contribution à une histoire des années 1968* (Paris, 2016).

14 Such 'new' histories of development have concentrated their attention on large-scale infrastructure and agricultural programs, see A. Isaacman and B. Isaacman, *Dams, Displacement, and the Delusion of Development: Cahora Bassa and Its Legacies in Mozambique, 1965–2007* (Athens, OH, 2013); P. Bloom *et al.* (eds.), *Modernization*; Bamba, *African.*

15 N. Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore, 2003); A. Staples, *The Birth of Development: How the World Bank, Food and Agriculture Organization, and the World Health Organization Changed the World, 1945–1965* (Kent, OH, 2006); V. Dimier, *The Invention of a European Development Aid Bureaucracy: Recycling Empire* (Basingstoke, 2014).

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However, most development histories overlook the widespread conviction of African publics, statesmen, and foreign experts that national education was the primary vector of development.[16] In fact, during the 1960s and 1970s, the single largest expenditure in the budgets of most African countries was the seemingly mundane provision of primary and secondary education.[17] Schooling was postcolonial Africa's most important development project.

In independent Côte d'Ivoire, official statements and popular expectations continuously linked education to development. Precisely because PETV spoke to the longstanding promise that through education the nation would achieve a better future, the Ivorian public greeted its implementation with a skepticism that only hardened over the course of the 1970s.[18] During the summer of 1980, virulent demands for PETV's immediate termination flooded the front pages of the national newspaper, unleashing pent-up frustration at the dissonance between understandings of development and educational realities. Reflecting its contentious history, the extant literature on PETV — produced mostly by participant-witnesses — divides sharply in its assessment of the program's efficacy. Most commentators have judged it an utter failure.[19] Partisans of educational television instead argue that it was a victim of its own success, effective as a medium of instruction but a 'socio-cultural' flop.[20] The most even-handed assessment, alluding to Cheikh Hamidou Kane's well-known novel, sees PETV as an 'ambiguous adventure,' its merits overwhelmed by its deficiencies.[21] Several decades after PETV's final broadcast, and with its audiovisual and print material destroyed, it is no longer possible to evaluate the program itself, the evidence for which has largely disappeared. Instead, this article seeks to account for the particular domestic and international conjuncture that made PETV possible in educationally conservative Côte d'Ivoire, to recover the alternative vision of Ivorian development that PETV's innovations presented, and to probe its sudden un-doing. The conviction, at every level of Ivorian society, that development hinged on education frames this reading of the PETV drama.

THE TROUBLE WITH CÔTE D'IVOIRE'S EDUCATIONAL CONSERVATISM

In contrast with many African leaders of the 1950s and 1960s, who eagerly rushed to greet greet their country's newfound independence, Felix Houphouët-Boigny approached Côte d'Ivoire's imminent independence reluctantly. An advocate of Franco-African partnership, he was firmly convinced that Côte d'Ivoire lacked the infrastructure, personnel, and

16 UNESCO, *Conference of African States on the Development of Education in Africa: Final Report*, 1961, 9–13.

17 F.J. Nieuwenhuis, *The Development of Education Systems in Postcolonial Africa* (Pretoria, 1996), 19. See also, The World Bank, *Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Agenda for Action* (Washington, D.C., 1981), 184.

18 'Télévision scolaire: des réponses rassurantes', *Fraternité Matin* (Abidjan), 15 Sept. 1971; 'Télévision scolaire: plus d'inquiétude chez nos maîtres…', *Fraternité Matin* (Abidjan), 18 Sept. 1971.

19 See Dédy, "L'Ecole."

20 J.-C. Pauvert and M. Egly, *Le 'Complexe' de Bouaké 1967–1981* (Paris, 2001).

21 P. Désalmand, 'Une aventure ambiguë: le programme d'éducation télévisuelle (1971–1982)', *Politique Africaine*, 24 (1986), 91–103.

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financial means to develop itself successfully without direct French participation. By the time alternatives to national sovereignty ran aground, Houphouët had determined not to let independence interfere with French investment in Côte d'Ivoire. Without it, he believed, his dream of making Côte d'Ivoire 'a modern and model country' would be forever out of reach.[22] Houphouët thus incessantly touted Franco-Ivorian friendship, disdaining 'the myth of nominal independence.'[23]

This 'special relationship' between France and Côte d'Ivoire was enshrined by the Cooperation accords signed in April 1961, which specified the terms of French educational 'assistance' to Côte d'Ivoire.[24] The Cooperation accords granted what Houphouët considered an essential ingredient of development: degree equivalence. Educational qualifications obtained in Côte d'Ivoire (including the *baccalauréat* exam and, from 1964 onwards, university diplomas) would enjoy the same legal standing as those obtained in metropolitan France — a guarantor, as he saw it, of both internationally recognized quality and continued French involvement in Ivorian schooling. In binding post-independence Ivorian education to France, the country would avoid the deterioration of educational quality it had witnessed as a consequence of 'adaptation' initiatives during the 1930s.[25] Steadfast Ivorian commitment to high-quality education would assure Côte d'Ivoire of the 'efficient cadres. . .[it] needs for its harmonious development,' declared Houphouët to the Legislative Assembly in May 1960.[26]

Schooling was at the center of Ivorian domestic politics. Tremendous resources were devoted to education, to the tune of 5.2 per cent of GDP in 1963, which UNESCO reported was, 'if not the largest, at least one of the highest [proportions] among African and even foreign countries.'[27] Between 1960 and 1968, the number of primary school students had more than doubled, to more than 400,000.[28] Repeatedly, the government pledged itself to the goal of universal primary education.[29] In order to staff this educational expansion, the number of Europeans working in Ivorian schools skyrocketed; in the mid-1960s, more than 90 per cent of Côte d'Ivoire's secondary school teachers were foreigners.[30] Many of these expatriate teachers were well-paid French technical assistants provided for by the Cooperation accords (consequently referred to as *coopérants*). The result was that, throughout the 1960s, Ivorian education more closely resembled the French

22 'Lamine Diabaté, ancien directeur de la BCEAO, ancien ministre d'État, ministre de l'Économie et un des douze sages de la redaction de la Constitution. Interview réalisée par Maurice Bandama and Ousmane Dembélé', in I. Diabaté, O. Dembélé and F. Akindès (eds.), *Intellectuels Ivoiriens face à la crise* (Paris, 2005), 51.

23 F. Houphouët-Boigny, 'Discours prononcé à Adzope le 24 mai 1959', *Anthologie, Volume II*, 986.

24 L. Manière, 'La politique francaise pour l'adaptation de l'enseignement en Afrique après les indépendances (1958–1964)', *Histoire de l'éducation*, 128 (2010), 163–90.

25 R. Autra, 'Historique de l'enseignement en A.O.F.', *Présence Africaine*, 6 (1956), 68–86.

26 F. Houphouët-Boigny, 'Discours de politique générale devant l'assemblée législative le 2 Mai 1960', *Anthologie*, *Volume I*, 326.

27 UNESCO, 'Mission du groupe de planification de la Côte d'Ivoire', 1963, 31.

28 P. Désalmand, *Histoire de l'éducation en Côte d'Ivoire: de la conférence de Brazzaville à 1984, Volume II* (Abidjan, 2004), 341.

29 M. Le Pape and C. Vidal, 'L'école à tout prix [Stratégies éducatives dans la petite bourgeoisie d'Abidjan]', *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, 70 (1987), 64–5.

30 L. Cerych, *L'Aide Extérieure et la Planification de l'Éducation en Côte-d'Ivoire* (Paris, 1967), 22–3.

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metropolitan system than it had under colonial rule. Indeed, among former French territories, Côte d'Ivoire was notable for 'having conserved almost wholly the [educational] structures characteristic of metropolitan instruction'.[31]

Along with this material investment, a longstanding rhetorical one was made, in which the public valorization of formal education was constant. 'Going to school, it's like arming oneself with a large lamp to be lit up in the night', blared the radio slogan of 1968.[32] This rhetoric surfaced in interviews with students of this period, who equated attending school with 'enlightenment' and 'becoming someone'.[33] Education symbolized 'social emancipation. Once you were at school, you were promoted to a better future'.[34] In Côte d'Ivoire, both the citizens and their government located their aspirations for progress in the classroom.[35]

As the 1960s unfurled, however, troublesome developments pushed Houphouët to reconsider the educational policies his government had pursued since independence. In January 1967, during his high-profile opening speech at the Conference of National Education Ministers of Francophone Africa and Madagascar, Houphouët publicly disclosed his misgivings. As he saw it, the key obstacle to development lay in the chasm separating school and society:

> Above all, the absence of a doctrine or of reflection on the matter of education has diverted us from adopting … methods and curricula truly adapted to the realities of our African countries. From which, in practice, [there is] *a serious divorce* between our systems of education, our societies … and the new political context, turned resolutely towards the future; the school, which should represent … *the most powerful motor of development*, fulfills only very imperfectly its role.[36]

In the context of the cooperation agreements that Côte d'Ivoire and the other attendees had signed with France, Houphouët's newfound insistence on educational relevancy was particularly significant. Rather than accelerating Ivorian development, by 1967 it was increasingly clear that the costs of French-style education appeared to be sabotaging it.

Indeed, schooling bottlenecks threatened to choke Ivorian economic growth. Though education spending had continued its upward climb, the country was far from producing enough qualified graduates to fulfill the needs of a modern economy. The cost of educating a student had risen by 70 per cent between 1960 and 1968, earning Côte d'Ivoire the distinction of outspending the rest of francophone Africa when it came to education. 'Wastage' — the 40 per cent of primary school students who either repeated a year or abandoned it — represented an enormous sunk cost for the government.[37] The system's

31 R. Clignet and P. Foster, 'La prééminence de l'enseignement classique en Côte-d'Ivoire: Un exemple d'assimilation', *Revue française de sociologie*, 7:1 (1966), 34.

32 Dédy, 'L'École', 115–6.

33 Interview with Mahi Etienne Abale, Bondoukou, 8 March 2016 and Luc Djah, Aboisso, 3 March 2016.

34 'Dedy Seri, sociologue au département d'ethno-sociologie de l'université de Cocody, conseiller à la primature. Interview réalisée par Ousmane Dembélé', in *Intellectuels*, 163.

35 R. Clignet and P. Foster, *The Fortunate Few: A Study of Secondary Schools and Students in the Ivory Coast* (Evanston, IL, 1966), 199.

36 F. Houphouët-Boigny, 'Discours prononcé à l'Occasion de L'Ouverture de la Conférence des Ministres de l'Éducation Nationale des Pays Francophones d'Afrique et de Madagascar le 26 janvier 1967', *Anthologie, Volume II*, 795. Emphasis added.

37 S. Grant, 'Educational TV comes to the Ivory Coast', *Africa Report*, 16:2 (1971), 31.

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low productivity, though far from unique in the African context, was clearly unsustainable. Further, the extreme shortage of secondary schools meant that the majority of students who *were* able to obtain a primary school certificate could not continue their studies, leaving them un(der-)qualified for 'respectable' employment yet unmoved by the prospect of agricultural labor. These unemployed ex-students, the vanguard of the 'rural exodus', posed an enormous challenge to the continued expansion of an agricultural economy. An increase in the number of secondary schools was desperately needed, but the state was at a loss to find qualified teachers to staff them. Already its importation of foreign instructors was costing dearly. But the employment of so many French *coopérants* impeded the curricular and structural reforms needed to undo the 'divorce' between school and society. The crisis loomed ominously; how could an economy lacking in qualified instructors produce them fast enough to maintain a steady growth rate without over-spending?

The problems plaguing Ivorian schooling had helped mobilize significant student opposition to political authorities. Ivorian university students, especially, contested Houphouët's conservative politics of education. As they saw it, the Cooperation accords benefitted French interests, securing Côte d'Ivoire as a French dependency and blocking the much-needed 'Africanization' of education (and personnel) to fit Ivorian needs. Students and intellectuals sought 'real independence' in place of Houphouët's 'ouverture'.[38] Student opposition posed a serious threat to the state. Due to the fact that they were few in number, African university students held a privileged role, on the one hand incarnating the state's ambitions for development — the 'efficient cadres' — and, on the other, the most erudite critics of state failure to produce it. The relationship between students and the state in Côte d'Ivoire deteriorated steadily throughout the 1960s; at least three major government crackdowns on student protests (1963, 1965, and 1967) had resulted in hundreds of arrests and the repatriation of foreign students.[39] By mid-1967, open opposition to the regime had been sufficiently repressed for Houphouët to concentrate on his development agenda, though the critique of his pro-French educational policies, most loudly voiced by students, continued to simmer.[40]

The global movement of student protests that erupted in 1968 threatened to reignite these student-state tensions. Student demands for 'Africanization' at the University of Dakar were particularly unnerving. Swiftly, Ivorian authorities approved granting an additional, tenth month of funding to the scholarships offered at the University of Abidjan so as to 'neutralize any leaning towards student agitation', thereby 'keep[ing] Côte d'Ivoire out of the difficulties that other territories are having'.[41] Nevertheless, the demonstrated power of anti-French student politics haunted an administration committed to parity with French educational qualifications. In late June, another education crisis hit: the

38 Charles Nokan, sociologue, Interviewé par Ousmane Dembélé, in I. Diabaté *et al.* (eds.), *Intellectuels*, 184; F. Grah Mel, *Félix Houphouët-Boigny: L'épreuve du pouvoir, Volume II* (Abidjan, 2010), 230–3; K. Arnaut, 'Les 'Hommes de Terrain': Georges Niangoran-Bouah et le Monde Universitaire de l'Autochtonie en Côte d'Ivoire', *Politique Africaine*, 112:4 (2008), 18–35.

39 On student repression by the state, see J. Baulin, *La Politique Africaine d'Houphouët-Boigny* (Paris, 1980) and S. Diarra, *Les faux complots d'Houphouët-Boigny: Fracture dans le destin d'une nation (1959–1970)* (Paris, 1997).

40 Grah Mel, *Houphouët-Boigny, Volume II*, 242.

41 Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de la Courneuve, Paris, Direction des Affaires Africaines et Malgaches, Côte d'Ivoire, Box 21, Jacques Raphaël-Leygues telegram to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 30 May 1968.

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'hecatomb' of the 1968 *Baccalauréat* exam. Of a thousand candidates who had sat the written portion, only 147 were admitted to the oral exam (and of these, one-third were French).[42] More frightening perhaps than student discontent, such a low rate of success put the entire educational model into question. The exam's 'catastrophic' outcome prompted the national teacher's union to 'observe with bitterness that our educational policies risk dangerously hobbling the development of our country.'[43]

Houphouët had long defended his choice to emulate the French educational system by asserting the necessity of degree equivalency for national development. But if the result was a miserable success rate of 10 per cent, could his government withstand the double critique of propagating neo-colonial education *and* failing to meet the aspirations of its educated class? Houphouët faced disaffected students and students who were at risk for becoming so — an intolerable proposition for a leadership convinced that education was the 'motor of development'. It was clear that the all-important relationship between the state and its students was in jeopardy. In the face of student unrest and high-profile examination failure, Côte d'Ivoire found itself deeply preoccupied with the sustainability of its conservative educational model and the feasibility of its development aspirations.

THE PROMISE OF PETV

The 1968 conjuncture preoccupied education specialists everywhere. In that year, the Director of UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning announced a 'world educational crisis', the crux of which was the disparity between outmoded educational systems and their modern environments.[44] In Africa in particular, continued educational expansion, which was seen as vital for development, had become untenable as the numbers of those who did not attend school past the primary level soared and budgets bloated. PETV, which drew on more than twenty years of UNESCO's experimentation with educational technology, would emerge as one of the organization's most intensive attempts to resolve this global emergency. Having begun to experiment with educational radio in the 1940s, by the 1960s UNESCO had overseen several pilot projects involving television, notably Télé-Niger.[45] Results were promising but sample sizes limited; UNESCO was eager to increase the scale of its efforts. In 1960, its General Conference had adopted the 'Gaston Berger' resolution, urging, as had its namesake, the use of modern techniques to fight illiteracy in what was termed the developing world. Highly-placed UNESCO education specialists were convinced that 'only' audio-visual technology could achieve the 'two competing goals' of individualization of teaching and democratization of access, quality, and content.[46]

42 'Baccalauréat: tous les candidats malheureux représenteront à la 2ème session décident le gouvernement et le rector', *Fraternité Matin* (Abidjan), 19 Jun. 1968.

43 'M. Adiko Niamkey à L'Ouverture du XXIIe Congrès du SNEPCI: "'Nous devons donner un enseignement efficace et utile répondant aux réalités Ivoiriennes", *Fraternité Matin* (Abidjan), 12 Jul. 1968.

44 P. Coombs, *The World Educational Crisis: A Systems Analysis* (London, 1968).

45 For PETV's predecessors, see A. Grisay, *La télévision éducative dans le tiers-monde: les expériences qui ont inspiré le PETV Ivoirien* (Liège, 1977).

46 H. Dieuzaide, 'Le progrès technologique ne pourra triompher réellement un jour que dans le refus d'imitation et par le risque créateur', *Le Monde Diplomatique* (Paris), May 1970.

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Another expert, closely involved with PETV, insisted that of all of UNESCO's educational projects in Africa, Télé-Niger had been its 'most precious'.[47]

UNESCO experts reflected an emerging technocratic consensus. Widespread disillusion with conventional methods lent credence to initiatives like PETV, which a World Bank staffer hailed as a 'torch in the night' of African education.[48] Influential academics portrayed mass media as a 'multiplier and enhancer' of modernization processes.[49] By the mid-1960s, scholar-practitioners like Stanford's Wilbur Schramm, who would consult closely with PETV, were arguing forcefully that the use of radio and television in schools had great potential for developing countries.[50] Evoking Schramm's optimism, the Ford Foundation's leading advisor on international education, in his 1968 report regarding the nascent PETV project, concluded that '[t]elevision offers a real hope to...[developing] nations.'[51] In September 1968, the World Bank leadership, after a decade of diffidence regarding education spending, began urging 'the use of modern communications techniques' to address the lack of qualified teachers in the developing world.[52] A 1969 report to the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (a powerful body of donor countries) expressed the view of 'experts on aid to education in Africa' that 'television and similar media, provided costs could be kept down, may be almost the only practical means in very poor countries to achieve a reasonable degree of instruction.'[53] Support for the union of the international expert and the machine was on the rise. Together, they could bridge the impasse between outmoded schools and modern times.

Swelling technocratic support for educational television did not escape Abidjan's notice. In April 1968, Côte d'Ivoire invited a preliminary mission of UNESCO experts to investigate the possibility of bringing television into the classroom. UNESCO concluded that such a program could solve two of the country's biggest schooling challenges: high costs and highly variable quality. Though initially expensive, over the long-term PETV would lower educational costs by reducing the number of dropouts and making more efficient use of teachers.[54] These cost-efficiencies would allow Côte d'Ivoire to achieve universal primary education by 1983.[55] By delivering high quality content with the most up-to-date pedagogy, television education would compensate for a lack of qualified teachers and regional inequalities in

47 D. Najman, *L'éducation en Afrique, que faire?* (Aubenas, France 1972), 150.

48 P. Muncie, *Torches in the Night: Educational Experiences in Tanzania and the Ivory Coast* (Washington D. C., 1973).

49 H. Shah, *The Production of Modernization: Daniel Lerner, Mass Media, and the Passing of Traditional Society* (Philadelphia, 2011), 4.

50 W. Schramm, *Mass Media and National Development: The Role of Information in the Developing Countries* (Palo Alto, 1964).

51 Rockefeller Archive Center, Tarrytown, NY, Reports 010263, Box 416, Frank Bowles, 'Travel Diary: Ethiopia and Abid' [Abidjan], 20 Apr. 1968, 39.

52 R. S. McNamara, 'Address to the Board of Governors', World Bank (https://openknowledge.worldbank.org), 1968, 9.

53 Princeton University Industrial Relations Library, Princeton, NJ, IR10343, 'Report to the DAC on the conclusions and recommendations of the informal meeting of experts on aid to education in Africa held on the 29th and 30th May, 1969', 7.

54 Dieuzaide estimated that the program would increase the national budget by 7 to 8 per cent while increasing the annual returns to education spending by 40 to 50 per cent. Dieuzaide, 'Le progrès'.

55 M. Egly, 'L'utilisation de la télévision scolaire au Niger, en Côte d'Ivoire et au Sénégal', *International Review of Education*, 32:3 (1986), 342.

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schooling. More children would graduate and they would graduate with better skills. A UNESCO expert even calculated that one year of PETV instruction was equivalent to 1.44 years of conventional schooling![56] Rural students would have access to the kind of educational investments that, until then, had been concentrated in urban centers. In addition, a purposeful valorization of rural life in the broadcasts themselves — the television production center was built in 'the interior', at Bouaké, exactly for this reason — would help stem the 'rural exodus', and 'establish an equilibrium between the towns and the villages'.[57]

Ivorian authorities, too, believed that PETV would finally undo the crippling 'divorce' between school and society that had preoccupied Houphouët.[58] Unlike Côte d'Ivoire's elitist and expensive schooling that followed the French model, PETV was envisioned as a 'democratic education that adapts and integrates itself into our milieu ... the future citizen is placed at the center of the system.'[59] PETV would heal the 'divorce' by emphasizing spoken over written French, by focusing on Ivorian traditions and cultures, and by standardizing and democratizing education. In the process, it would contribute to the creation of a national identity suited to social development. As the Director of Primary Education put it, 'our country, at the beginning of the decade of its development, has chosen to systematically utilize [educational] television ... to try to win the cultural battle that [will] condition [the outcome] of the economic battle.'[60] The stakes were even higher for the Director of the Bouaké complex, who described PETV as an 'enormous gamble ... to win the great battle between education and catastrophe.'[61]

The ideas of development experts and the needs of Ivorian authorities were in alignment. Together, they hoped to dramatically change the educational landscape of the developing world, securing renown as global innovators and catapulting Côte d'Ivoire to the educational cutting edge. By the early 1970s, more than a dozen bi- and multi-lateral development agencies had invested in PETV. This exceptional degree of cooperation affirmed both the emerging technocratic consensus around educational television and the positive reputation that Côte d'Ivoire had consciously cultivated among Western powers, and France in particular.[62] Crucial to this reputation was the steadiness of Ivorian politics. In a region suffering from political uncertainty, stability reassured donors that the project could be carried out over the long-term.[63] Nor would their investments tumble into the

56 Najman, *L'éducation*, 161.

57 G. Kamissoko, 'Télévision educative: l'égalité de tous devant la qualité', *Fraternité Matin* (Abidjan), 2 Sept. 1971.

58 This paragraph draws on a series of articles published in *Fraternité Matin* in the run-up to PETV's debut. G. Kamissoko, 'L'égalité de tous'; G. Kamissoko, 'Des chances de promotion pour tous', *Fraternité Matin* (Abidjan), 7 Sept. 1971; 'Télévision scolaire: le langage d'abord', *Fraternité Matin* (Abidjan), 9 Sept. 1971; 'Télévision scolaire: une école normale 'permanente'', *Fraternité Matin* (Abidjan), 10 Sept. 1971.

59 O. Coulibal, 'L'enseignement télévisuel: un système démocratique', *Fraternité Matin* (Abidjan), 29 Mar. 1977.

60 G. Kamissoko, 'Des chances de promotion'.

61 G. Kamissoko, 'Télévision éducative: le maître de plus en plus important...', *Fraternité Matin* (Abidjan), 3 Sept. 1971.

62 T. Weiskel, 'Independence and the *Longue Durée*: The Ivory Coast 'Miracle' Reconsidered' in P. Gifford and W. Louis (eds.), *Decolonization and African independence: the transfers of power 1960–1980* (New Haven, 1988), 372.

63 Military coups had beset Western Africa: Dahomey/Benin (1963, 1965, 1967), Nigeria (1966), Upper Volta/Burkina Faso (1966), Ghana (1966), Togo (1963, 1967) Sierra Leone (1967), and Mali (1968).

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wrong hands; Abidjan was firmly in the pro-Western camp. Finally, while most African economies were floundering, Côte d'Ivoire was enjoying a period of heady economic growth (the 'Ivorian miracle', which would last from about 1950 until the mid-1970s), accenting its exceptional regional role and lending heft to Abidjan's claim that the state would progressively assume PETV's costs. In the end, fifteen bi- and multi-lateral assistance partners worked together on PETV, contributing one-quarter of the funding, and making it one of the period's most collaborative development initiatives.[64]

Though PETV inspired an impressive coalition of foreign support, French experts and equipment dominated its implementation. A 1973 UNESCO report detailed French support: that year, two-fifths of the personnel at the PETV production center were provided by France, as was 35 per cent of external financing.[65] When France pledged $1 million to PETV, it had 'reserved the right' to supply technology and equipment.[66] Thomson, a French firm, secured the contract to provide Ivorian schools with television sets while a subsidiary, CATEL, provided maintenance. Some Ivorians suspected that PETV was a way for Thomson to unload its outdated stock on a country with no bargaining power.[67] Indeed, the business interests associated with the PETV-Thomson deal would not be surprising.[68] Nevertheless, critics who characterize PETV as a vehicle of French interests minimize Houphouët's remarkable ability to attract significant foreign resources to the transformation of Côte d'Ivoire that he desired.[69] By August 1969, Houphouët was convinced that PETV was 'very probably capable of responding to the legitimate needs and priorities of the universalization of instruction in our country.'[70] In making PETV possible in Côte d'Ivoire, it is not clear, to paraphrase Frédéric Grah Mel, whether the French or the Ivorians were using the other more.[71] In any case, between 1968–69, against the backdrop of a 'world educational crisis', the Ivorian government and its external partners put in motion one of postcolonial Africa's most innovative educational reforms.

THE CHANGES PETV WROUGHT

In October 1969, the editorial board of the *Times Educational Supplement* named PETV 'the most exciting of the projects with which UNESCO is connected.' They went on to

64 Koné and Jenkins, 'Programme', 88. Partners included UNICEF, the United Nations Development Fund, the World Bank, the European Development Fund, the Ford Foundation, France, Canada, Belgium, Germany, the United States, Italy, Japan, and Switzerland.

65 UNESCO Archives, Paris, INT/UNESCO/UNDP/IVC/71/153, 'Programme d'éducation télévisuelle: rapport sur les résultats du projet — conclusions et recommandations', October 1973, 12.

66 Grant, 'Educational TV', 33.

67 P. N'Da, 'Un Professeur d'université: 'Arrêttons le gaspillage'', *Fraternité Matin* (Abidjan), 30–31 Aug. 1980; Dédy, 'L'École', 123; Interview with Dembélè Daouda, Bondoukou, 8 March 2016.

68 During the mid-1960s, Thomson's products in particular were not competitive. A delayed transition to portable and color had likely resulted in a swollen stock of large-format monochrome sets, see I. Gaillard, *La television: histoire d'un objet de consummation (1945–1985)* (Paris, 2012), 188–215; personal communication with author, 5 Oct. 2016.

69 Bamba, *African*; M. McGovern, *Making War in Côte d'Ivoire* (Chicago, 2011).

70 F. Houphouët-Boigny, 'Message à la nation à l'occasion du IXe anniversaire de l'indépendance le 7 août 1969', *Anthologie, Volume II*, 962.

71 Grah Mel, *Houphouët-Boigny, Volume II*, 321.

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describe PETV as 'the biggest attempt so far to introduce technology to [education].'[72] Yet PETV's innovations extended far beyond the use of television sets. Its reforms in the domains of technology, curriculum, and pedagogy worked together to profoundly alter the culture of teaching and learning in Ivorian primary schools. PETV's long-lasting effects were due in part to its projection on a national scale, unprecedented in Africa.[73] Its inaugural broadcast, on 27 September 1971, reached 20,500 students, or more than double the number of students reached by its predecessor in Niger.[74] To keep pace, the television network expanded, reaching two-thirds of the population in 1968 and three-quarters in 1972.[75] Each year, a new grade of programming was added until, in 1977, broadcasts covering the entire six-year primary school cycle had been produced. By 1978, over 12,000 televisions were installed in classrooms around the country and almost 400 hours of broadcasts had been produced for grades 1 through 6.[76] By the time PETV was terminated in 1983, it had reached between two-thirds and four-fifths of Côte d'Ivoire's primary school student body.[77]

Systematic use of educational television signaled innovation in Ivorian schooling in multiple ways: as a symbol, as a tool, and as a vehicle. On the plane of representation, the television functioned as an indicator of modernity, heralding Côte d'Ivoire's strides towards development. The image — as presented, for example, in this photo — was striking: students in heretofore 'peripheral' areas clustered around an icon of connectivity [Fig. 1]. As a tool, the television, which was relatively new in Côte d'Ivoire, was itself used in novel ways.[78] Since electricity was scarce, the sets ran on power generated by 36 batteries. Technical alterations helped 'tropicalize' the technology, protecting against the dry conditions of the seasonal harmattan, when fine particles of sand blew in from the Sahara, and the extreme humidity of the rainy season.[79] CATEL support teams regularly made the rounds, repairing and replacing equipment as needed. Outages were expected and accounted for. To that end, Canadian technical assistance had spent almost $1 million building West Africa's most advanced printing house in Bouaké, next-door to the $11 million state-of-the-art Audio-Visual center.[80] Pedagogical support materials (syllabi, broadcast schedules, teachers' guides, suggested lesson plans, student workbooks, etc.)

72 'The widening gap', *Times Educational Supplement* (London), 24 Oct. 1969.

73 And, with the exception of El Salvador, in the world, see A. Grisay, *La télévision*, 9. For striking parallels of the Ivorian and Salvadorian experiences with educational television, see H. Lindo-Fuentes, 'Educational Television in El Salvador and Modernisation Theory,' 41 (2009), 757–92.

74 Egly, 'L'utilisation', 341.

75 Koné and Jenkins, 'Programme', 86.

76 Dédy, 'L'École', 122. For broadcast hours, see G. Jacquinot, *L'École devant les écrans* (Paris, 1985), 64.

77 Figures vary, see Désalmand, 'Aventure', 92 and Egly, 'L'utilisation', 344.

78 For a thorough history of television in Côte d'Ivoire, see H. Koné, 'La dynamique des médias dans les sociétés en mutation: Le cas de la Côte d'Ivoire' (unpublished PhD thesis, Université Louis Pasteur de Strasbourg, 1989), 150–269.

79 There is disagreement as to how well the sets worked. Désalmand reports that between 20 and 40 per cent of broadcasts were not received. Désalmand, *Histoire*, 337.

80 Fifty per cent of the funding came from the World Bank. The current editor-in-chief of Côte d'Ivoire's national publishing house maintains that, in the early 1990s, Bouaké was still West Africa's most technologically advanced printing center. Interview with Guy Lambin, Abidjan, 13 April 2016. It has since become the site of Côte d'Ivoire's second university, the Université Alassane Ouattara de Bouaké – Campus 1.

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Fig. 1. Camille Bolou, a primary school teacher, poses with his classroom's new television. (nd, c. 1974–6). Source: Private papers of Camille Bolou, c. 1975 (courtesy of Claire Nicolas).

allowed teachers to proceed in the event of technical problems. Primary school teachers also subscribed to *L'École Permanente*, a fortnightly publication that relayed pedagogical information.[81] Together, printed products and television broadcasts were meant to break the dependency on schoolbooks. Whereas books were seen as expensive, ill-adapted, and static, the content produced at Bouaké was dynamic, responsive, centralized, and perpetually updated.[82] Complementing the broadcasts, this printed material forced teachers who were still relying on French textbooks to adopt the new curriculum.[83] Thus, even in the absence of a (functioning) television, widely disseminated printed support material assured PETV's implementation.

Unlike most attempts to integrate television into schooling, in PETV the role of the television was neither as supplement nor substitute; it was constitutive. Students watched three to four broadcasts per day, of five to ten minutes each, totaling about 600 broadcasts per year.[84] In PETV, what happened on the television was integral to the learning process: 'exchanges no longer take place, as in the past, only between the teacher and the students, but in a triangular relationship of which the poles are the teacher, the students, and the broadcast.'[85] Each 'pole' interacted with the others, dividing agency in the learning process among them. The television thus upended the constraints of the educational system: from

81 Richard Kouakou, a former school teacher, saved every issue of *L'École Permanente* from 1975 to 1978 and graciously shared them with me.
82 Jacquinot, *L'École*, 64.
83 Désalmand, *Histoire*, 322.
84 Egly, 'L'utilisation', 340.
85 Pauvert and Egly, *Complexe,* 20.

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resource-strapped to resource-abundant, from a binary one-way pedagogical relationship to a symbiotic, triangular one, from static books to locally-produced, dynamic content, from remote, unconnected classrooms to teachers and students 'tuned-in' to modernity on a national scale.

Under PETV, a curricular re-imagining accompanied the use of new technologies of its transmission. French teaching, based on locally-produced workbooks and a new emphasis on the spoken language, changed radically. Previously, 'adaptation' had consisted of modifying the content of French schoolbooks — 'Pierre' morphed into 'Mamadou' — but the method remained unaltered. Seeking genuine 'adaptation', PETV incorporated Canadian models for teaching French as a *second* language, introducing written expression only in the third trimester of first grade. Produced in-country, PETV curricula cited concrete points of reference for its Ivorian public. The results were unequivocal: classes spoke French spontaneously, and fluently, in a way their non-PETV counterparts did not. In a reversal of traditional schooling, writing had taken second place to speaking. Mathematics instruction too underwent an overhaul, adopting the principles of New Math (*maths modernes*). Emphasis shifted away from traditional arithmetic to topics that demanded spatial logic, problem solving, and group work. Geometry and applied mathematics took up a 'new place' in the curriculum, seeking to develop what PETV pedagogues termed 'discoverers [rather] than reciters.'[86] PETV learning methods stressed the use of manipulatives and self-directed 'problem-solving' over conventional arithmetic sets solved individually and in pursuit of the 'right' answer. Teaching guides claimed that active and collaborative learning methods would transform students into engaged members of society.[87]

The most obvious curricular change under PETV was the amalgamation of history, geography and the sciences — previously separate subjects — into the inter-disciplinary *étude du milieu* (local case study).[88] For upper-level primary students, these learning experiences sought to integrate the community with the school. By surveying the transportation needs of sellers in a market, for example, students could engage in basic data analysis, calculate distances travelled, and produce sketches of different vehicles. The television also brought the geographically and ethnically diverse *milieux* of Côte d'Ivoire into the classroom, broadcasting cultural performances and artisanal craftsmanship. Similar to colonial-era initiatives to valorize rural areas and reduce urban migration, the *étude du milieu* sought to convey the 'right balance' of 'tradition' and 'modernity' to students (an exercise as ineffective in the 1970s as it had been in the 1930s).[89] However, the *étude du milieu* differed from colonial reforms in two important ways: there was no manual labor component and the activities were pegged to academic learning outcomes. Though detractors of the PETV curriculum abounded, even its most unsparing critics conceded that PETV had made 'laudable efforts at Africanization.'[90]

86 'Special: mathématique N°1', 65, *L'Ecole Permanente* (Abidjan), 26 Mar. 1976, 6.
87 *Ibid.* 19.
88 'Special: etude du milieu N°2', 70, *L'Ecole Permanente* (Abidjan), 4 Jun. 1976.
89 H. Gamble, 'Peasants of the Empire: Rural Schools and the Colonial Imaginary', *Cahiers d'études Africaines*, 195 (2009), 790.
90 A. Touré, *La civilisation quotidienne en Côte d'Ivoire: procès d'occidentalisation* (Paris, 1981), 134.

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Perhaps most radically, PETV encouraged a 'democratic' style of pedagogy, which went counter to the traditional hierarchies of Ivorian education. In 1970, *Centres d'Animation et de Formation Pédagogique* (CAFOPs) replaced erstwhile *Instituts de Formation Pédagogique* (IFP), reflecting the new focus on facilitation (*animation*).[91] PETV's 'democratic' approach re-cast the classroom dynamic. Contrary to the traditional Ivorian classroom, in which the '*maître*' monopolized knowledge and authority, under PETV the teacher facilitated child-centric learning. The rostrum, a well-established symbol of hierarchy, disappeared from PETV classrooms.[92] Students addressed teachers with an informal '*tu*'.[93] In place of students copying pre-determined phrases from the board, PETV guides urged teachers to help students generate their own.[94] An excerpt from a teacher's guide gives a sense of PETV methods:

> Let us imagine the adventures of an Ivorian traveler to Ghana, at the time when vehicles still drove on the left-side of the road in that country … In crossing the road, he is sure to be threatened by cars coming from the side that he does not expect … . But let us suppose a traveler in an even stranger country: that of the child who is learning to read even while his motor skills are not sufficiently developed. In this country, nothing is anymore as the child expects it.[95]

Children's needs, interests and motivations took center stage. Success was gauged by student participation and engagement, not rows of cowed pupils. A 1974 UNESCO report marveled at the PETV students, who were 'active, used to group-work', and 'displaying an enthusiasm, a dynamism, a concentration on their task and an openness of spirit [that is] truly extraordinary.'[96] Such a report contrasts starkly with what would have been observed in the traditional primary school classroom. Whereas, according to the PETV ethos, teachers worked to understand the world from the child's perspective, in the traditional classroom, it had been students who adjusted to the teacher. Lapses in behavior or comprehension were punished swiftly and often. 'The switch was our classmate,' rued an interviewee. 'It sat on the teacher's desk, always in view.'[97] Lessons consisted of copying and memorizing, silently, the content dispensed by the teacher. The dreaded *dictée*, which disappeared under PETV, had epitomized the authoritarianism of traditional education: there was only one correct response and each mistake translated into corporal punishment. In the traditional classroom, obedience mattered most; the quiet ones did not suffer.[98] PETV sought instead to cultivate qualities like curiosity, self-expression, and self-directed learning that were antithetical to the older classroom hierarchies.

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91 Interview with Koffi Seraphin Brou, Toumodi, 6 Feb. 2016.
92 Désalmand, *Histoire*, 341.
93 Dédy, 'L'École', 103.
94 Documentation PETV, *Livre du maître: lecture, ecriture, expression écrite — CP1, CP2, CE1* (Bouaké, 1976), 28.
95 PETV, *Livre du maître*, 18.
96 J. Deunf, *Rapport de mission en Côte d'Ivoire pour l'enseignement scientifique intégré (1er au 22 mars 1975)* (Paris, 1975), 27. Qtd. in Désalmand, '*Aventure*', 99n5.
97 Interview with Solmane Konate, Bondoukou, 7 Mar. 2016.
98 Interview with Efi Mensah-Bonsu, Accra, 5 Aug. 2016.

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What did a day of PETV look like in practice? French class might begin with a five- to ten-minute television broadcast. In this particular example, the lesson's theme is 'toilette'.[99] On the black and white screen, a boy appears on the screen, shirtless, proudly declaring to his mother that he is clean. She looks at him and says his face is unwashed. 'I do not have water,' he says; she passes him a bucket. 'Aïe!' he shrieks, 'I have soap in my eyes!' She helps him rinse and shows him how to use his brother's comb to tidy his hair. The mother-son dialogue fades and a man in a classroom appears on screen: the *télémaître* (TV teacher). Staring straight ahead, he calls out, 'Good morning children!' 'Good morning!' students call back. Referencing the previous scene, the *télémaître* explains new words like 'eyes', 'rinse', and 'ears'. He engages two children, René and Awa, to help him explain. 'René, show me your eyes.' René obliges, 'Here are my eyes.' He then opens and closes them, narrating the action. Awa enters the frame: 'Show me Awa's eyes!', says the *télémaître*.

At the end of the broadcast, the teacher picks up where the *télémaître* left off. Students identify the vocabulary words on their own bodies and on those of their classmates, copying the television model. Future sessions will work on pronunciation, memorization, and conversation of the same vocabulary. At the end of the lesson cycle, students practice using a bucket, rags, and water to clean themselves properly. Grammar, in the form of direct object pronouns, will creep in as they do so. A writing lesson might follow the oral exercises. PETV emphasized communication as the primary use of written language. When a student wrote about his *paire* (pair) rather than his *père* (father), the teacher would patiently correct his mistake, recognizing the intention.[100] Capturing the PETV philosophy succinctly, a primary school teacher recounted her experience:

> I wrote 'good' on the [student] papers. Each time, I corrected the orthography but without deducting points: except for exams and *texts de contrôle* (tests), *writing is not done to win points but to transmit a message*. Besides, it is important to inspire the love of work well-done … but not the paralyzing fear of making mistakes. It's about *promoting creativity*.[101]

By centering the child rather than the teacher, PETV proposed a truly progressive alternative to the traditional schooling model. The redefinition of the student-teacher relationship in elementary schools that had adopted PETV was profound. Interviews with teachers who taught with PETV attest to the 'excellent comprehension' of the students, the 'atmosphere of play' in the classroom, and the rapidity with which they began speaking French.[102] The universal practice of rote oral repetition was eroded in a matter of years. PETV students, in contrast with their seniors, experimented in their writing, no longer paralyzed by the consequences.[103] Testifying to PETV's powerful changes, a generational gap was opening up, splitting expressive students from passive ones. Teachers, too, were divided, between those

99 This section draws on 'Spécial français N°3', 104, *L'École Permanente* (Abidjan), 14 Apr. 1978, 19–24.

100 Interview with Jean-Jacques Alloko, Abidjan, 18 Mar. 2016.

101 PETV, *Livre du Maître*, 28; emphasis added.

102 Interview with Miyi Méon Aka, Assinie, 20 Feb. 2016; Kramoko Vami, Bondoukou, 7 Mar. 2016; Interview with Jean-Jacques Alloko.

103 Personal correspondence with Aletta Grisay, 25 and 28 Nov. 2016. Grisay headed a team of pedagogical evaluators in assessing PETV's language instruction during the 1970s under the joint authority of the University of Liège and the Ivorian Ministry of Education.

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who had adopted PETV's more democratic approach and those who cherished the centralized authority and prestige they had wielded before the major reforms.

The difference between traditional classrooms and PETV classrooms, observed a former PETV teacher, was as dramatic as that between a typewriter and a computer.[104] The new technologies of PETV, the innovative curricula, and the democratic pedagogies reinforced each other to profoundly alter primary education. Together, they were meant to attenuate, if not repair, the 'divorce' between schooling and Ivorian society. However, while PETV's reforms healed certain stumbling blocks in Ivorian schooling, 'experts' often introduced new incoherence. PETV's critics denounced the program's expatriate-heavy staff of 'specialists'.[105] One sensational story circulates, of an early broadcast entitled 'Koffi *climbs* the pineapple tree' (an absurdity for anyone who has beheld the low bush on which that fruit grows).[106] Nationality, however, had only a minor role to play in producing such discordances. The real gap continued to fester in the 'imported method and conceptions' inherent to the PETV project.[107] Three episodes of profound disjuncture underscore the point.

First, though the PETV curricula was expressly 'Ivorianized', Abdou Touré's close reading of the CP1 PETV French guide for teachers reveals the insidious valorization of Westernization embedded within the 'Africanized' content. Touré shows that the PETV characters with local names engage in subaltern tasks and possess objects of local production while characters with French names own imported items and stay on the margins of such activities. All of the characters — René, Moussa, Lucie, and Fatou —are Ivorian, but their names indicate differential access to modernity.[108] Further, sociologists found that the broadcasting of local cultural practices on school televisions led students to experience culture as a spectacle for consumption, not participation.[109] Second, in a clear break from conventional school, PETV prioritized images over text. However, Western and Western-trained pedagogical and graphic experts, confident that the television would bridge the earlier gap between the text and the child, neglected to consider the silent 'text' embedded in pictorial representation. Conventions of Western imagery, such as the use of clouds to indicate anger and arrows to convey movement, mystified PETV's young audience.[110] Pedagogical experts involved in PETV had subscribed to the 'foundational idea' that audiovisual language would be less culturally-coded and hence more democratic and accessible.[111] But discordances between students and educational broadcasters persisted.

Like PETV pedagogues, its economic analysts suffered occupational blindness. In 1976, a cost evaluation report of PETV was commissioned by USAID. Its authors found that a

104 Interview with Jean-Jacques Alloko.
105 N'Da, *'Un professeur'*.
106 Désalmand, *'Aventure'*, 96.
107 Jacquinot, *L'école*, 65.
108 Touré, *Civilisation*, 134.
109 Dédy, *'L'école,'* 133.
110 A. Brezault, 'Les déboires d'un riche Africain se rendant au restaurant,' *Revue Antipodes*, 153 (2001), http://www.iteco.be/revue-antipodes.
111 'Interview de Guy Berger par Thierry Lefebvre', in T. Lefebvre and C. Raynal, *Un Studio de television à l'école: le collège expérimental audiovisuel de Marly-le-Roi (1966–1992)* (Paris, 2017), 171.

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1972 planning study, 'which we consider excellent', had underestimated the actual cost of PETV by 70 per cent, which translated into an additional $3 million a year on top of the projected $4 million.[112] Despite the magnitude of PETV's cost overruns, in 1976, 'many production personnel at the Bouaké complex consider [its extension to secondary school] quite likely.'[113] The gap between expert projection and political reality is especially striking when one notes that, at the public presentation of the aforementioned report, its authors were stunned to find that no copies had been printed; its contents were too sensitive to circulate.[114]

As the limits of 'expertise' became apparent, Côte d'Ivoire's educational crisis was worsening. Under PETV, to combat the inefficiency of a 40 per cent student dropout rate, automatic promotion had been instituted in primary schools: the result was swollen *CM2* (*cours moyen* 2, equivalent to sixth grade) classes with no concurrent expansion of secondary schools. PETV students, whose education had ill-prepared them for the secondary school entry exams, failed them in alarming numbers.[115] Bribery (the so-called 'blue papers') became a widespread means to secure scholastic advancement, affecting the academic composition of the incoming *sixième* (seventh grade). Students who would earlier have left school now felt entitled to continue. The stakes had also risen; in 1980, a primary school leaving certificate no longer assured employment. Two factors operated in the background: economic stagnation and a steady demographic surge fueled by migration. By mid-1980, the World Bank's regional economist could declare Côte d'Ivoire 'broke'— just as foreign assistance for PETV was diminishing.[116] Meanwhile, between 1970 and 1985, the population had essentially doubled, further straining scarce resources. Thus, in tandem with PETV's skyrocketing costs, secondary-school demand had soared, meritocratic principles of progression had been undermined, students' behavior and expectations had shifted, and the vise of economic contraction tightened. It was under these conditions that a widespread critique of politically-vulnerable PETV erupted. PETV's demise indexed a crisis of faith in the Ivorian developmentalist vision.

THE 'NEWSPAPER WAR'

In the summer of 1980, violent attacks on PETV splashed across the pages of Côte d'Ivoire's national, state-controlled newspaper, *Fraternité Matin*.[117] Denunciation of

112 World Bank Group Archives (WBGA), Washington D.C., 52869I, S. J. Klees and D. T. Jamison, 'A Cost Analysis of Instructional Television in the Ivory Coast' (1976), 44–7.

113 WBGA 52873I, S. M. Evans and S. J. Klees, 'ETV Program Production in the Ivory Coast', (1976), 68.

114 Telephone interview with Steven J. Klees, 22 May 2017.

115 In 1976, 55 per cent of students failed the secondary school entry exam. A longstanding problem, it 'was complicated by the extension this year of television education to Grade 6 (CM2).' Centre des Archives Diplomatiques, Nantes, 1PO/1/155, '*Note sur la rentrée scolaire 1976–1977 dans la primaire et la secondaire: vue par la presse locale*', Sept. 1976, 4.

116 Interview with Richard Westebbe by Robert W. Oliver, World Bank Group Archives Oral History Program, 25 Jan. 1998, 24.

117 According to Pauvert and Egly, 300 detractors wrote letters in response to *Fraternité Matin*'s call for debate on PETV. Pauvert and Egly, *Complexe*, 39.

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PETV's expense, reduced educational quality, technical difficulties, and its 'foreign' nature abounded. This PETV 'newspaper war', sustained over the course of two months, was the first press-mediated public critique of a government policy.[118] As such, it excluded the majority of Ivorians.[119] The rancor of the 'newspaper war' was nourished by the anxiety of well-educated Ivoirians that 'the most powerful motor of development' was floundering. The state's heavy discursive investment in the unassailable link between the two helps explain why an education crisis provoked this extended public debate.

At the close of its tenth annual congress, the National Union of Secondary School Teachers in Côte d'Ivoire (SYNESCI) passed two motions.[120] The first demanded the 'pure and simple elimination' of PETV before 'multiple generations of Ivorians are intellectually and culturally sacrificed'. The second motion, concerned with another educational scandal of that year, sought sanctions against those responsible for the 1980 *Bac* leaks (which would later lead to that exam's notorious annulment). Anxiety about the role of education in society is writ large in this double proposal. The reference to 'generations' exposed unease about the future of Ivorian development, while the inability of Côte d'Ivoire to guarantee the meritocracy of its most important qualification revealed how precarious that development was. Subsequent letters, penned by 'young intellectuals, professors, teachers and, naturally, parents of students', elaborated on the concern for PETV's consequences for the country's future.[121] How would these underperforming PETV students 'be helpful to the development of our country' wondered a contributor.[122] These substandard students, 'future agents of the development of Côte d'Ivoire,' needed to be 'saved' exclaimed another.[123] A third decried 'falling behind our African brothers' and the 'delaying' of multiple generations as a result of PETV.[124] Threatened by the changes to the schooling landscape, the Ivorian educated class feared its social capital in jeopardy.[125]

With education under siege, so too was the status of teachers. Regarding the abovementioned *Bac* leaks, SYNESCI deplored the 'slanderous campaign orchestrated by the press against teachers' and demanded 'reparation … so that their credibility was reestablished'.[126] However, on the very same page as SYNESCI's motion against PETV, a group of inspectors of primary education retorted that the secondary school teachers had never seriously engaged with the PETV reforms. They 'expressed their profound indignation' at the 'irresponsible levity' with which SYENSCI had attacked PETV and noted that secondary-level teachers 'had distinguished [themselves] only by [their] indifference to [PETV's] pedagogical reform which demanded a reconsideration of the behavior of the

118 Bianchini, *École*, 153.
119 In 1980, UNESCO estimated that 75 per cent of Ivorian women and 42 per cent of men were illiterate. Désalmand, *Histoire*, 359.
120 SYNESCI, 'Les enseignants demandent', *Fraternité Matin* (Abidjan), 5 Aug. 1980, 3.
121 'Enseignement télévisuel: les lecteurs s'interrogent…', *Fraternité Matin* (Abidjan), 20 Aug. 1980.
122 N. P. Abolé, 'Enfants éloquents ou simples perroquets', *Fraternité Matin* (Abidjan), 27 Aug. 1980, 16.
123 O. Traore, 'Établir le dialogue sur des bases concrètes', *Fraternité Matin* (Abidjan), 20 Aug. 1980, 8.
124 M. G. Gonty, 'Un enseignement plein de lacunes', *Fraternité Matin* (Abidjan), 27 Aug. 1980, 16.
125 Proteau, *Passions*, 61–98.
126 SYNESCI, 'Les enseignants'.

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educator vis-à-vis the educated.'[127] Such infighting between educators demonstrated their insecurities regarding their profession, which had previously been held in high regard for the social role it played.

Fraternité Matin would not have published such a virulent critique of a government policy if the leadership had not sanctioned it. Already in September 1978, the Ivorian head of state had asked whether PETV should not be done away with.[128] The program was certainly not cutting education costs. In 1979, the country was spending 8.23 per cent of its GDP on education; this represented the largest proportion in its history and an increase of three percentage points over its 1963 extravagances.[129] It has been suggested that the seemingly democratic nature of the 'newspaper war' gave the regime license to terminate PETV.[130] Still, only a fraction of the 'abundant mail' sent to *Fraternité Matin* was penned by officials.[131] The virulence of the debate, a veritable 'sociological snapshot', captured the public fracturing of the state's developmentalist vision, in which education had reigned unquestioned. [132]

In autumn 1980, PETV broadcasts were cut by 30 per cent. In November 1981, the program was officially abandoned.[133] PETV's traces were completely erased from the Ivorian educational landscape. An educational reform law passed in 1977 that shared PETV's reformist outlook was never implemented, and Ivorian primary schooling reverted to the 1964 curriculum.[134] Televisions migrated to family homes or collected dust in sheds. In 1983, Côte d'Ivoire's Ministry of Primary Education and Educational Television — the world's first and only such ministry — was re-baptized the Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research.[135] Seemingly overnight, Ivorian authorities pulled the plug on a project that had absorbed millions of dollars, engaged hundreds of foreign 'experts', and produced over 7,000 educational broadcasts over the course of a decade.

Abidjan's unilateral action had serious consequences for UNESCO, whose flagship educational television program was now in tatters. PETV had represented the culmination of twenty years of research and the work of hundreds of the world's most qualified specialists.[136] UNESCO's enormous gamble tarnished its brand of 'expertise', forcing its abdication of the politics of developing-world educational initiatives. The 1980s would be the decade of the World Bank and structural adjustment. The Bank's insistence on meeting projected fiscal targets had long jarred with UNESCO's focus on attaining educational ones.[137] It was, in part, at the World Bank-financed Bouaké complex that UNESCO lost

127 Les inspecteurs de l'enseignement primaire, 'Un système aux qualités reconnues', *Fraternité Matin* (Abidjan), 5 Aug. 1980, 3.
128 L'Association des Inspecteurs de l'Enseignement primaire de Côte d'Ivoire, 'Mise au point de l'AIEPCI', *Fraternité Matin* (Abidjan), 27 Aug. 1980, 16.
129 UNESCO, 'Government expenditure on education, total (% of GDP)', (http://www.indexmundi.com).
130 Désalmand, 'Aventure', 94.
131 'Les Lecteurs'.
132 Désalmand, 'Aventure', 95.
133 M. Kouame, 'Conseil national: d'importants décisions', *Fraternité Matin* (Abidjan), 26 Nov. 1981, 7.
134 Désalmand, *Histoire*, 342.
135 Pauvert and Egly, *Complexe,* 34 and Désalmand, *Histoire*, 328.
136 Egly, 'L'utilisation', 338.
137 L. Zaki, *Enquête sur la Banque Mondiale* (Paris, 1989), 70.

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its upper hand. Thus concluded the last major, multilateral educational development project in Africa before the strictures of structural adjustment began to be felt.

Coinciding as it did with the country's precipitous economic decline, PETV's abandonment marked a turning point for Côte d'Ivoire. Its history captures both the audacity of imagining Côte d'Ivoire as 'modern and model' and the bitter taste left by a state that defaulted on that promise. The Ivorian leadership's developmentalist vision of education as the 'priority of priorities' had led it first to pursue a highly conservative politics of education, and then, concerned with the inefficacy of that model for Ivorian development, to veer sharply towards the progressive ethos offered by PETV. Yet the challenge posed by PETV to the Ivorian educational system embodied the mounting anxiety that development was slipping out of reach. The explosive and public nature of the 'newspaper war' transformed PETV from bold reform to ignominious defeat. By the time of PETV's dismantling in the early 1980s, epithets had soured from 'global leader' to 'guinea pig'.[138] A former director of the Audio-Visual Center at Bouaké, Mr. Brou, deplores all the time Côte d'Ivoire has lost 'for nothing.' Reflecting on the ground-breaking nature of PETV, he concluded, matter-of-factly, '[w]e were so ahead back then.'[139]

138 R. Autra, 'Une boîte ne peut restituer l'ambiance réceptive d'un être vivant', *Fraternité Matin* (Abidjan), 30–31 Aug. 1980, 10.

139 Interview with Koffi Seraphin Brou.

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