

## **Preliminary Analysis of Challenges and Improvement Practices in Ghanaian Junior High Schools: A Comparative Study of High-and Low-performing Schools**

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This paper examines obstacles to students' regular schooling and quality education in Ghanaian junior high schools, as well as their countermeasures, by investigating similarities and differences in perspectives on education barriers and good practices at high- and low- performing schools. Ghana has promoted the decentralization of education, in the expectation that education management and systems for providing quality education become equitable, affordable, and accountable. One way to realize such benefits is to empower schools by devising and implementing school performance improvement plans using capitation grants. As shown in questionnaire responses, research outcomes reveal that delayed and insufficient capitation grants prevent schools from using the benefit of expanded decision making by school management that decentralization has sought to effect. This paper, moreover, illustrates that the household economy of students at low-performing schools exerts greater impact on their learning outcomes than that of their peers at high-performing schools, who demonstrate more motivation to learn, pose questions to teachers, and spend more time on exam preparation than students at low-performing schools. Exploring learning improvement practices attempted at schools, including awarding high-performing students and having female role models to encourage female education, this paper also suggests that identifying and sharing these good practices can prompt progress in students' regular schooling and learning.