

## **Factors Affecting Student Learning Outcomes in Ghanaian Junior High Schools: A Comparative Study of High and Low-performing Schools**

Mikako NISHIMUKO

*Teikyo University*

This paper examines factors affecting students' learning outcomes in Ghanaian junior high schools by investigating the similarities and differences in teacher and student practices and perspectives on education between high-performing schools and low-performing schools. Some concepts have been identified as improving teachers' effectiveness, such as teacher and student characteristics, curriculum, and classroom, all of which influence each other. Based on questionnaires from teachers and students, this research reveals that teachers at high-performing schools have a greater number of competencies, including greater enthusiasm, more teaching skills and knowledge, and a higher capacity to accept students compared to teachers at low-performing schools. Students at high-performing schools also study longer hours and have higher learning motivation, and many of them admire and respect their teachers as role models. At low-performing schools students struggle more with teacher absences and punctuality as well as teachers' use of corporal punishment, shouting, and verbal insults. Without timely and sufficient capititation grants, the school management struggles to expand their decision making that decentralization had sought to effect. However, teachers at both high and low- performing schools have engaged in teaching and learning improvement practices, such as teacher training workshops, school cleaning, and counselling. This paper illustrates that while implementing curriculum and managing the environment and classroom culture are important targets for improvement, teachers' professional competencies, including their qualities, attitudes, skills, and knowledge, also need to be improved since they link to other factors affecting students' learning outcomes, such as students' skills, knowledge, attitudes, and aptitude.