Impact of Study Habits on Academic Performance of Junior High School Students

Enoch Danso Okyere
Faculty of Social Sciences and Education
Islamic University College, Accra, Ghana
Email: okyeredanso2@g.mail.com
Tel.: (+233) 0244147842

Abdul-Jaleel Saani
Faculty of Social Sciences and Education
Islamic University College, Accra, Ghana
Email: sanxrrasta@iug.edu.gh
Tel.: (+233) 020 9901444

Abstract — The study sought to investigate the impact of study habits on academic performance of Junior High School students of the Nsawam-Adoagyiri Municipality of the Eastern Region of Ghana. The design adopted for the study was ex post facto design. The sample size for the study was 263. Simple random and purposive sampling procedures were used to select the schools and respondents respectively. Questionnaire and test-item were instruments used in collecting the data, and the reliability coefficients were estimated as 0.797 and 0.812 respectively. The findings indicated that students’ time management, examination, reading and note-taking, homework and assignments to some extent do not directly influence their academic performance. It is therefore recommended to management of the various Junior High schools to ensure that teachers guide students to use alternative strategies to boost their study habits in basic schools.

Key Terms — academic performance, effort of students in learning, good teaching, study habits

INTRODUCTION

The world is becoming more and more competitive. Quality of students’ academic performance has become the key factor for personal progress (Abbott-Chapman, Hughes & Wyld, 1992). It is the desire of all parents that their children climb the academic ladder to a high level. This desire for high level of performance among students put a lot of pressure on students, teachers, psychologists and the educational system in general (Abdul-Kareem, 1999). In fact, it appears as if the whole educational system revolves the academic performance of students. Thus, a lot of time and effort of the schools are used in helping students to achieve better results in their scholastic endeavours.

Generally, the quality of a nation depends upon the quality of its citizens which also depends on quality education. Furthermore, quality education besides other factors depends upon quality teaching in the schools. Good teaching without good study habits developed by students will lead to undesirable effects such as poor academic performance (Adetola, 2001). According to Saani (2012), an aspect of quality education is reflected through academic achievement which is a function of study habits and study attitude of the students. Thus to enhance the quality of education, it is necessary to improve the study habits and study attitudes of students.

Due to the increasing nature of poor academic performance of public Junior High School student (JHS) students within West African countries such as Ghana, especially in external examinations like West African Examinations Council (WAEC), many educationists tend to shift the blame on the teaching methodology adopted by the teachers and lack of fund from the government to provide quality textbooks (Ayegman-Mensah, 2011; Saani, 2012; Tope, 2011; WAEC, 2015). However, these might not be the main reasons why students perform poorly in examinations since there are many factors that affect students’ academic performance (Hau & Salili, 2014).

As true as this might sound, it is yet to gather adequate research evidence to prove that the kind of habits students adopt or adapt in studying is a key factor on why students fail. Peterson and Barrett’s (2012) study on the relationship between students’ study habits and their academic performance revealed a positive correlation between the two variables. Pokay and Blumenfeld (2015) also conducted a series of studies to find out relationship between study habits and academic success and reported positive relationship between study habits and academic success. If study habits relate positively to academic achievement then it was in the right direction that this current study sought to examine the impact of JHS students’ study habits on their academic performance.

This study focused on study habit, good teaching and academic performance variables of JHS of the following schools in the Nsawam-Adoagyiri Municipality: (a) Nana Ofiac-Djan MA JHS in Djankrom “A” circuit, (b) Nsawam Methodist JHS in Djankrom “B” JHS circuit, (c) Adoagyiri RC JHS in Adoagyiri “A” circuit, (d) Panpanso Tefhie Presbyterian JHS in Adoagyiri “B” circuit, and (e) Nsawam Presbyterian JHS in Nsawam Central circuit.

The choice of the Nsawam-Adoagyiri Municipality of the Eastern Region of Ghana was justified by the fact that current records show that JHS students in the municipality performed poorly in the 2015 Basic Education Certificate Examination (WAEC, 2015). This poor performance exhibited by JHS within the municipality might have been caused by their poor study habits or other social and psychological factors. The study, therefore, formulated the following specific objectives to help assess the impact study habit have on students’ academic performance in the municipality:

(a) To ascertain the impact of JHS students’ study habits on their academic performance.
(b) To find out the indirect influence JHS students’ study habits on their academic performance.
Review of Related Literature

The argument of Thorndike's theory of reinforcement serves as the theoretical base for this study. Thorndike has considered the strengthening of connection between stimulus and response as being responsible for the formulation of habits. Such habits are broken when connections or bonds are weakened. In the light of this, Thorndike has formulated some basic principles of learning which are: the law of effect, the law of exercise and the law of readiness. For the purpose of this study the first two principles are considered. Thorndike (1986), in his principle of effect has observed that learning consists of forming association, bonds or relationship between stimulus and response and has further asserted that such “association” or “habits” become strengthened or weakened by the nature and frequency of stimulus response pairing. Thorndike has stressed environmental stimulus as one of the tools for modifying behaviour and increasing task performance.

This theory states that responses which were unpleasant or brought little or no satisfaction would not recur. The principle of effect is based on the emotional reaction of the student. This explains that learning is strengthened when accompanied by a pleasant or satisfying feeling, and that learning is weakened when associated with an unpleasant feeling. The student will strive to continue doing what provides a pleasant effect to continue learning. Whatever the learning situation, it should contain elements that affect the students positively and give them a feeling of satisfaction (Atkinson, 2003). Therefore, instructors should be cautious about using punishment in the classroom.

Similarly, Thorndike (1986) in his principle of exercise held that repeating a habit increases its strength since “practice makes perfect.” The law has two parts which are use and disuse. The use of connection increases its strength, while disuse of connection weakens its strength. Thorndike found the law inconsistent with the law of effect, and interpreted “use” as correct use that was rewarded. Thorndike sees motivation and reinforcement as an agent of habit formation and one of the factors that can influence a learner's study habit and task performance. Iheanacho (2002) supported this view and suggested that behaviour that is reinforced tend to become habitual and reinforcement increases the probability that any given response will be repeated.

Therefore, parents' attitude towards a child's school work strengthens the way the child approaches school and studies. For instance, parents might arrange for extra coaching for their children if they believe that school performance is very important. Thus, the nature and frequency of environmental stimuli can affect positively or negatively a student's study habits. The principle of exercise states that those things most often repeated are best remembered. It is the basis of drill and practice. It has been proven that students learn best and retain information longer when they have meaningful practice and repetition (Kumar, 2012). It is clear that practice leads to improvement only when it is followed by positive feedback. When a modifiable connection between a situation and response is not being used over a period of time, the strength of that connection is weakened (Hau & Salili, 2014; Saani, 2012). A behaviour that is stimulated over regular periods will tend to be repeated leading to habit formation.

This shows that individual study habits play a pivotal role in determining a student's academic performance. A student's progress or failure in the classroom depends upon several factors namely: interest in the subject, study facilities, own study habits, school organisational culture, effective teaching and teacher commitment (Weiner, 2010). Weiner posited that most students are defective in their performance due to lack of study habits. According to Weiner, study habits are associated with scholastic performance and that there is difference between the study habits of the most successful and the least successful students between the bright and the dull students. Krohn and O'Connor (2011) in another study compared the students study habit scores with composite measures of performance. Krohn and O'Connor reported that study habits are one of the important factors, which is helpful to achieve more in the promising field.

Wunnia (2012) reported in her study that there is a positive and significant correlation between study habits and academic performance. In another study, Tymms and Gibbon (2012) examined the relationship between times spent on homework and examination grades among approximately 3000 students from schools and colleges in Northeast England. The average time spent was five hours per week and girls reported spending approximately 30 minutes per week more than boys. The study revealed that students who worked for long hours gained slightly better grades than those who worked for modest periods.

Conceptual Framework

As depicted in Figure 1, the dependent variable is students’ academic performance while examination, homework and assignments, reading and note-taking, concentration, and time management forms the study habits inventory which constitute the independent variables. Effort put in by students in learning serves as a mediating variable. Students’ academic performance in general is influenced by many factors such as school organisational culture, effective teaching and learning activities, teachers job satisfaction, teacher supervision and teacher commitment to the school and the teaching profession (Saani, 2012). However, the current study supported the view that students’ academic performance is influenced positively by their study habits with regard to examination, homework and assignments, reading and note-taking, concentration, and time management.

The assertions held by the study is that, if students study habits with regard to examination, homework and assignments, reading and note-taking, concentration, and time management are view positively or are in good shape, they will perform good academically as expected. However, this influence is not direct as it seems. It can be seen as complex influence because the fact that students study habits are perceive positively does not mean they will perform significantly in terms of academic. The students must first exhibit some level of effort in learning what they have been taught both in the school and at home in order for them to have total development both morally, economically and academically. The effort exhibit in...
learning what they have been taught will boost their ability to understand and apply what they have been taught appropriately. In the long run, their academic performance will increase significantly.

The study employed the ex post facto design since the study entailed a survey of two groups of students, those with good study habits and those with poor study habits. In the context of social and educational research the phrase ‘ex post facto’ means ‘after the fact’ or ‘retrospectively’ and refers to those studies which investigate possible cause-and-effect relationships by observing an existing condition or state of affairs and searching back in time for plausible causal factors (Ary, Jacobs, Razavich & Sorensen, 2006).

The target population for the study was all public JHS students in the Nsawam-Adoagyiri Municipality in the Eastern Region of Ghana while the accessible population was all second year students of public JHS students of the same Municipality during the 2015/2016 academic year. Currently, there are 31 Junior High Schools and 3626 students respectively in the Nsawam-Adoagyiri Municipality (Education Management Information System, 2015).

Approximately, a sample size of 263 students were obtained using Krejcie and Morgan’s (1970) Table for determining sample size from a given population. Simple random sampling procedure was used to select one JHS from each of the five circuits in the municipality. The school selected were Nana Ofae-Djan MA JHS in Djankrom “A” circuit, Nsawam Methodist JHS in Djankrom “B” JHS circuit, Adoagyiri RC JHS in Adoagyiri “A” circuit, Pananso Tefhie Presbyterian JHS in Adoagyiri “B” circuit and Nsawam Presbyterian JHS in Nsawam Central circuit.

The study handpicked form two students because they were considered to be the most appropriate elements since they were still in school at the period the research was conducted and were not in final examination (BECE) mood. Using the guidance of the study habit constructs, the students were grouped into two main groups using purposive sampling procedure. The groups were those with good study habits and those with poor study habits. Their study habits were; therefore, of great importance to the researcher. Respondents were selected randomly again to ensure fair representativeness.

The five schools were selected using the lottery method. Pieces of papers totalling the number of schools required for the study had “YES” written on them, folded and put in a container. The same was done for papers with “NO” on them. The papers were then mixed thoroughly by the researcher tossing them over and over again. This was to ensure that the selection of the schools in each circuit was fair and also that each school had an equal chance of being selected. The headteachers were asked to pick a piece of paper each, one after the other. After each picking the researcher stirred the rest of the papers in the container. The schools that picked “YES” were selected for the study. The lottery method of simple random sampling was used again to select the students in form two classes from each of the schools (both ‘A’ and ‘B’). In all a total of 263 students were selected for the study. Those students selected with good study habits were 131 while those selected with poor study habits were 132.

Questionnaire and a test-item for eliciting data on students study habit and academic performance respectively were the sole data collection instruments used in collecting data. The instruments were pre-tested and the internal consistencies were calculated using Cronbach’s alpha. The Cronbach’s alpha co-efficients of the instruments generated were 0.797 for the questionnaire and 0.812 for the test-item with the help of Test Analytics for Surveys (TAFS), a tool of SPSS Predictive Analytic Software (PASW) Version 18.0.

Prior to the administration of the questionnaires, an informal familiatisation visit was made to the five selected public junior high schools for the confirmation of the number of students and to seek for more information concerning the schools and the respondents. Data was personally collected by the researcher. The Ghana Education Service Directorate of the Municipality was contacted with a letter for permission to conduct the study in its jurisdiction. In addition, the importance of the study was discussed with the headteachers and their consent sought for students’ participation in the study. Some teachers were nominated to assist the researcher in administering the questionnaires and the test-items. The instruments were administered personally by the researcher.

![Figure 1: Conceptual framework for the impact of study habits JHS students on their academic performance](http://ijhass.org)
During the administration, the students were briefed on the objectives of the study and the need to respond frankly to the items with the help of the head teachers and some teachers.

Students in the sample were seated and well-spaced out to ensure that they worked independently. They were briefed on how to respond to the items and given the opportunity to ask questions or call the questions or call the attention of the researcher to clarify difficulties they came across in the course of responding to the items. They were then given the research instruments to respond to. To ensure that all questionnaires and test-items were received the researcher numbered each copy. The collection of the data took three weeks. Out of the 263 responses sampled, the researcher received, 259 (98.5%) valid responses and thus used for the analysis.

The data that was collected was first grouped for editing. After the editing, they were coded using numerical values (coded manual) for the variable view of the Predictive Analytic Software (PASW) Version 18.0. Test Analytics for Surveys (TAFS), a tool of PASW, was used for coding the data and analysing verbatim responses to the items in the questionnaire and produce tables and charts directly to enable data interpretation. The test-items were also marked and scored before entering into the variable view of the software. After this, the data was inputted into the data view to complete the keying process. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used in analysing the data.

Impact of Study Habits on JHS Students’ Academic Performance

The first specific objective of the study was to ascertain the impact of JHS students’ study habits on their academic performance. The study adopted the independent sample t-test to compare the views of the two groups of students: those with good study habits and those with bad study habits. These groups of students were compared based on their study habits and academic performance. The study habits variable was made up of 34 items. These items were pooled together to form the study habits variable.

With regard to academic performance, students test scores were used to represent their academic performance. The test item was made up of many questions that were formulated from their core subjects such as integrated science, English language, and mathematics. The researcher tries to find out if there is a statistically significant difference between students with good study habits and students with bad study habits with regard to their academic performance. The results are presented in Table 1.

The results in Table 1 indicate that there was statistically significant difference in the scores of students with good study habits (M = 73.23, SD = 0.58) and those with bad study habits (M = 69.73, SD = 0.51) with regards to English language scores [t = -2.40, df = 257, p = .02].

Based on Cohen (1988) guidelines on the interpretation of the eta square, the magnitude of the difference in the mean scores of students with regard to English Language as indicated in the table was very small (eta square (\(\eta^2\)) = .017). This means that there was only 1.7 percent of the variances in English Language scores that was explained by students study habits. Again the results in Table 1 shows that with regard to Mathematics scores, there was statistically significant difference in the scores of students with good study habits (M = 81.82, SD = 0.57) and students with bad study habits (M = 59.87, SD = 0.53), [t = -2.40, df = 257, p = .02]. The table depicts that the magnitude of the difference in the means was very large (eta square (\(\eta^2\)) = 1.183).

### Table 1: Impact of Study Habits on Students’ Academic Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Groups of Students</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>p-value</th>
<th>(\eta^2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English language</td>
<td>Those with good study habits</td>
<td>73.23</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>-2.40**</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Those with bad study habits</td>
<td>69.73</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>Those with good study habits</td>
<td>81.82</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>-.02**</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Those with bad study habits</td>
<td>59.87</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated science</td>
<td>Those with good study habits</td>
<td>72.75</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>-2.93**</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Those with bad study habits</td>
<td>63.30</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Data, 2016. **p<0.01  *p<0.05  (N1 = 129; N2 = 130) where N = sample size, M = mean, SD = standard deviation and \(\eta^2\) = eta square.

The study can, therefore, say that there was a very large (98.3%) variance in Mathematics scores that was explained by students study habits. Similarly, with regards to integrated science, there was statistically significant difference in the scores of students with good study habits (M = 72.75, SD = 0.57) and students with bad study habits (M = 63.30, SD = 0.51), [t = -2.93, df = 257, p = .00]. The magnitude of the difference in the mean scores was very small for integrated science (eta square (\(\eta^2\)) = .025). Again, the study can say that only 2.5 percent of the variances in dismissal, firing or layoffs were explained by respondents’ status.

The results show that students with good study habits performance higher than those with bad study habits. Therefore, students study habits have a significant impact on their academic performance. The findings corroborate
with that of Krohn and O’Conner (2011) who aver that counselling students on good study habits can bring about improvement in the students’ academic performance. Tymms and Gibbon (2012) also asserted that student who worked for long hours and adopt good study habits are able to obtained better grades than those who worked for modest periods or adopt bad study habits.

**Indirect Influence of Study Habits on Students’ Academic Performance**

The rationale for this objective was to find out whether study habits will directly or indirectly predict their academic performance in the school. The hierarchical linear multiple regression analysis was used to analyse the data in order to tackle this objective. Even though researchers (Krohn & O’Conner, 2011; Tymms & Gibbon, 2012; Wunnia, 2012) have commented a lot on the relationships that exist between study habits and students’ academic performance and also the influence students’ study habits have on their academic performance. However, the literature fails to show clearly the influence study habits have on students’ academic performance, especially within the Ghanaian cultural context.

After satisfying the multicollinearity condition using tolerance and variance inflation factor values. (VIF), the various inventories of students’ study habits that are: examination, homework and assignments, reading and note-taking, concentration and time management were first used as the independent variable while students’ academic performance was used as dependent variable. The effort of students in learning was used as an intervening or mediating variable. The study indicates that for the various study habit inventories to predict significantly students’ academic performance, the students must first exert some level of effort in learning what they have been taught. The results are presented in Table 2.

In the first model, the five inventories of study habits were entered as independent variables with students’ academic performance in the school operating as dependent variable. The results as shown in Table 6 indicate that the standardised beta co-efficient for concentration was not statistically significant. However, time management (Beta = .119 (.055), p = .026), examination (Beta = .371 (.039), p = .001), reading and note-taking (Beta = .192 (.044), p = .043), and homework and assignments (Beta = .288 (.065), p = .004) were statistically significant with regard to their contributions to students’ academic performance in the school. This means that time management, examination, reading and note-taking, and homework and assignments are the only statistically significant study habit inventories. In addition, the unique proportional contribution of the study habit inventories to students’ academic performance in the school was .456 with an adjusted R² of .442.

This means that the study habit inventories are able to predict or explain only 45 percent of the variance in students’ academic performance in the school. It therefore means that besides these inventories of study habits identified, other factors not yet in the model have a chance of contributing or predicting about 55 percent to students’ academic performance in the school. The result suggests that the inventories of study habit alone do not contribute significantly to students’ academic performance in the school and that they do so when other variables are considered.

### Table 2: Influence of Study Habits on Students’ Academic Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>Model One</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Model Two</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time management</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.119*</td>
<td>0.055</td>
<td>0.103*</td>
<td>0.064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examination</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.371**</td>
<td>0.039</td>
<td>0.311**</td>
<td>0.039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading and note-taking</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.192*</td>
<td>0.044</td>
<td>0.114**</td>
<td>0.044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework and assignments</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.288**</td>
<td>0.065</td>
<td>0.201**</td>
<td>0.041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentration</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.042</td>
<td>0.038</td>
<td>0.051*</td>
<td>0.064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good teaching and effort of students in learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.401**</td>
<td>0.035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>1.025</td>
<td>3.175</td>
<td>0.825</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>0.695</td>
<td>0.456</td>
<td>0.581</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>0.442</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.563</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Field Data, 2016. **p<0.01  *p<0.05  (n = 259) Dependent Variable = Students’ Academic Performance, where SE = standard error*

In the second model, as presented in Table 2, the mediating variable which was good teaching and effort of students in learning was entered into the model. The theory here is that student’s study habits in themselves do not predict directly their academic performance in the school significantly, and that they do so indirectly through good teaching by teachers and the level of effort students exert in learning. When good teaching and effort exerted by students in learning was entered into the model, the beta co-efficient of some of the study habit inventories shrank while others increase. Also, the concentration inventory beta co-efficient which was not significant in the first model became statistically significant at 0.05 significant levels in the second model.
The resultant shrinkage, increments and significance in the beta co-efficient mean that the study habits of students does not directly influence their academic performance to the school. They do so only when the students are able to exert some level of effort in learning what they have been taught in the school and also when teachers do good teaching. In other words, they do so when they have imbibed the content of what their teachers have introduce them to and are able to understand them as expected through appropriate study habits. However, it is important to observe that the unique proportional contribution of the five study habit inventories and effort exerted by students in learning on students’ academic performance was 0.581 with an adjusted R² of 0.563.

This means that students study habits, good teaching by teachers and students effort in learning were able to predict or explain about 58% of the variance in students’ academic performance in the school. It therefore means that besides these main variables identified, other variables not yet in the model have a chance of predicting about 42% to students’ academic performance in the school.

The significant increase with regard to the unique proportional contribution of the independent variables and the mediating variable on students’ academic performance in the school mean that when students are able to exert positive efforts in learning what they have taught by their teachers with regard to English Language, Integrated Science and Mathematics, the predictability of their study habits becomes more potent on their academic performance. The finding suggests that when students adopt appropriate and effective study habits towards their education, they will be able to improve in their academic work performance. Therefore, the current study fails to rejects the hypothesis that there is no direct influence of students study habits on their academic performance, since the influence is indirect through effort exerted by students in learning what they have been taught.

The findings are in line with the submissions of Krohn and O’Connor (2011) who posited that the amount of effort put in by students with regard to their academic work seems to be more positively associated with students’ academic performance. Nonetheless, Saani (2012) pointed out that student who spends more time on their academic work scores higher on measures of performance and attitude than students who spend little or no time at all. Studies that have delved more deeply into this topic suggest, however, that the amount of effort students exert in their academic work is related to students’ higher academic performance (Wunnia, 2012).

CONCLUSIONS

From the findings of the study the following conclusions are drawn: Students’ time management, examination, reading and note-taking, and homework and assignments are able to influence their academic performance in the school to some extent and that inventories of study habit alone do not contribute significantly to students’ academic performance in the school and that they do so when other variables are considered. Therefore, students study habits to some extent do not directly influence their academic performance. They do so only when the students are able to exert some level of effort in learning what they have been taught in the school.

The study attempts to combine study habit, good teaching and effort exerted by students and their influence on students’ academic performance; the study will provide valuable information about the effects of poor study habit on the academic performance of students. Students will benefit more from the findings of this study as they will be offered the necessary assistance as and how to develop good study habits which will help to improve upon their academic performance. It will serve as a source for school counsellors to use in given information to students on how study habits affect their academic performance and the results of this study will make them aware of the common study habits among other co-students. The study will further help teachers in understanding better the diversity of learning in students and as such, develop more effective methodologies in teaching their subject matter for better understanding of students. It will also serve as resource materials for others who want to carry out research in related field.

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**Biography**

Mr. Abdul-Jaleel Saani is currently an assistant lecturer at the Department of Education, Islamic University College, Ghana; and a post graduate student reading Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana. He is a member of Educational Research Network for West and Central Africa (ERNWACA) since 2014. Research interests: Teacher-student social interaction, equity issues in e-Education, teacher motivation/compensation, quality in education, gender and education, school culture and climate, economic and financing of education, teacher professionalism.