

## FACTORS INFLUENCING UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' CHOICE OF CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AS A SCHOOL TEACHING SUBJECT IN KENYA

**Rev Prof. Aggrey Ayub Walaba**  
Dept of Curriculum Instruction and  
Educational Media  
Moi University, Eldoret, Kenya  
E-mail: [awalaba@yahoo.com](mailto:awalaba@yahoo.com)

**Prof Joel Kipkemboi Kiboss**  
Dept of Curriculum Instruction and  
Educational Management  
Egerton University, Egerton Kenya  
E-mail: [kiboss@yahoo.com](mailto:kiboss@yahoo.com)

### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to find out why undergraduate degree students choose Christian Religious Education (CRE) as one of the teaching-learning subjects at University level. In Kenyan secondary schools, CRE is taught as an examinable Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education subject except in Muslim schools. Normally, Education students are allowed to choose it as a teaching subject in their Teacher Education programs at University level. Data was collected using questionnaires and interview from 316 Education students at Moi University's main and Eldoret West Campuses. The findings revealed that there were over twenty reasons why the students chose the subject. Several conclusions were derived from the findings and viable recommendations made. Many respondents said that the subject should be made compulsory, elective, optional, and examinable but a few wanted it abolished. The researcher subjects these options to the future scholars to review these findings and evaluate what the study discloses. Nevertheless the study is very useful to all educational stake holders.

**Keywords:** Christian Religious Education, Education, Subject Combination, Free choice, Compulsory subject

### INTRODUCTION

Historically, Christian Religious Education (CRE) was introduced by Missionaries during the colonial era (Anderson, 1970; Walaba, 2008). Education in Kenya was the responsibility of the Missionaries and so CRE gained prominence in the school curriculum (Ayot, 1986). Although it was used as a means to win converts, CRE became a dominant subject during independent Kenya school syllabus (Kasomo, 2011).

The secondary school syllabi for Christian Religious Education in some African and Asian countries are said to have been conceptualized by Saint Ignatius Loyola the founder of the Jesuit Order of the Roman Catholic Church, and were later on put into practice by the Department of Education of the World Council of Churches (Girault, 1993) to work as a bridge across denominations for Christian unity (Chaube, 1990/91 and Semlyen, 1993).

According to Dian and Van Diepen (1972) the influence of the World Council of Churches (Ecumenical Movement) first entered in the East African Secondary schools in 1968 when a joint education panel for Catholic and Protestant schools and colleges was formed to formulate a transitional Religious Education syllabus, that could secure freedom of worship as contained in the Kenya Education act of 1967. This syllabus, which was based on St. Luke's Gospel, was first introduced in Kenya in 1972 (Walaba, 1999).

CRE is a compulsory and examinable subject in primary school but elective subject in

Secondary Education (Republic of Kenya, 2002). At the secondary level examinable subjects are categorized as follows:

- Group 1. English, Mathematics, and Kiswahili;
- Group 2. Biology, Physics, Chemistry, Physical Sciences, and Biological Sciences;
- Group 3. History and Government, Geography, Christian Religious Education, Islamic Religious Education, Social Studies, and Hindu Religious Education.
- Group 4. Home Science, Art and Design, Agriculture, Woodwork, Metalwork, Building Construction, Power Mechanics, Electricity, Drawing and Design, and Aviation Technology;
- Group 5. French, German, Arabic, Music, Accounting, Commerce, Economics, Typewriting and Office Practice.

In Form 3 students are required to take all the three subjects in Group 1 and at least two subjects in Group 2 and 3. Also, they are required to select one subject in the other two remaining areas as optional subjects. At the end of four years, all students sit for the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) examination in the mandatory and elective subjects above to qualify for admission to tertiary education (Buchmann, 1999).

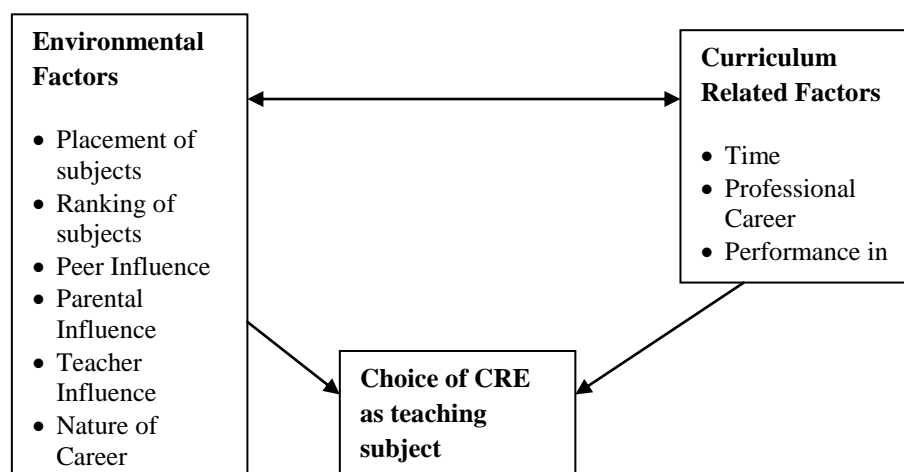
It is normal for persons to make decisions in life. But there are several reasons why they take such a line of action. For instance, students in secondary schools are required to make career choices and hence subject combinations necessary to prepare them for the career of their choice. But choosing a career by students at the university level may be influenced by several factors such as a student's grade, subject contents, salary scales, parental or teachers' influence, peer pressure, and community views. The choice of CRE, just like medicine, History and Government, Kiswahili, English Language, literature, economics as a teaching subject area in Secondary education can be problematic in that it creates challenges among university students. For instance, it may be as a result of an internal desire of the person to take up the subject, admiration of the career or a call from God call among other factors.

Experience from teaching CRE at various tertiary levels that include University of Nairobi, former Siriba Teachers Training College (now Maseno University Siriba Campus), Masinde Muliro University, Maasai Mara University, and at Moi University; the researcher have revealed that often seem to be confronted by uneasy ways when it comes to choosing or deciding on a life career. This is even more pronounced when one has to choose subject combinations that include CRE as other teaching subject. It was therefore necessary to get answers to the above questions.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study is guided by the triadic model of attitude formation of Radford and Govier (1991) and Feldman (1990). According Radford and Govier, this theory has three components; affective, behavior and cognitive. Choice is affected by a numbers of factors in the system. Change in one component form a system and are interdependent (Feldman, 1990). This implies that change in a person's choice is a product of changes in other components. Evidence exist that affective and cognitive components of attitude are closely related. The affective component encompasses one's positive or negative emotions about something he/she feels about. The behavior component consists of a disposition or intention to act in a particular manner that is relevant to his/her preference. The cognitive component refers to the belief and thoughts one holds about the object of our preference. Students may therefore view choice of CRE as an area that is beneficial and hence this view leads to preference formation.

For instance, a student's preference towards choice of CRE may consist of positive emotions (the affective component). An intention to choose CRE as a teaching subject (the behavior component) and the belief that teaching of CRE as a career is beneficial or worth for him/her (the cognitive component). A person's preference is a hypothetical construct that cannot be directly observed and its existence can only be inferred from a person's behavior (reason for choice of subject). This behavior can be a result of influences from a variety of both environmental and curricula related factors.



**Figure 1: Factors Influencing Choice of Subject (Adapted from Indoshi, Wagah and Agak (2010))**

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are two folds and are to:

1. Identify from students factors or reasons that influenced choice of CRE as a teaching subject
2. Explore the implications of the findings in this study for teacher education

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A total of 316 (135 from Main Campus and 181 from Eldoret West Campus) third year students taking BEd degree with CRE as the other teaching subject participated in the study. The method adopted in data collection involved the use of BSCC questionnaire to garner the necessary data from third year CRE students in Main and Eldoret West Campuses of Moi University. The questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first section elicited biographic information of students as to their age and gender (male or female) while the second section elicited information from students on their perceived reasons for choosing CRE as a teaching subject. Also, a blank space was provided for students to freely write as many reasons for their choice of CRE as a teaching subject.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As alluded to earlier, 316 students responded to the BSCC questionnaire by writing on the blank spaces provided the reasons or factors influencing their choice of CRE as a teaching subject. With respect to the first objective, Table 1 shows the reasons or factors adduced by

third year education students taking CRE as a teaching subject in their BEd degree program. The findings are presented in frequencies, percentages and order of importance.

Majority of students (40.19% and 50%) from Main Campus (MC) and Eldoret West Campus (EWC) respectively choose CRE as a teaching subject because of peer influence. This reason was listed by a very high number (90.19%). In other words 285 out of 316 of the students taking CRE in combination with other subjects as a teaching subject listed peer influence as their reason for choosing CRE. This is in line with what Kiboss (1997) observed of the fact that students tend to influence each other regarding the subjects they like or dislike one year after they join secondary education. Some students listed CRE as a teaching subject because they see it as relevant to their professional career. For example 124(39.24%) 166(52.53%) of Main Campus and Eldoret West Campus respectively see the choice of CRE as serving multiple careers of counseling, guidance and teaching. A notable number (36.39% and 43.67%) of students from Main Campus and Eldoret West Campus respectively choose CRE as a teaching subject because it was their best performed subject in KCSE examination. This reason is listed by 253 of 316 students in both Main and Eldoret West Campuses. The students mentioned this factor because when they enroll for BEd, they are placed into the program based on their performance in the subject combination areas (Moi University, 1998).

**Table 1 Overall reasons or factors for choice of CRE by students (percentage in parenthesis)**

Factors or Reasons	Frequency of mention	
	MC	EWC
Nature of Career marketable currently	54(17.09)	111(35.13)
Suggested by lecturers	12(3.80)	18(5.70)
Best subject in the curriculum	20(6.33)	41(12.97)
Pressure from parents	9(2.84)	10(3.16)
Interest to pursue in future academic studies	33(10.44)	79(25.0)
Allow study of different world religions	5(1.58)	10(3.16)
It deals with day to day situations	73(23.10)	86(27.21)
Ethical issues and appreciation of the creation of God	15(4.75)	33(10.44)
Instills spiritual and moral development	80(21.32)	103(32.59)
My best performed subject in High school examination	115(36.39)	138(43.67)
Inspiring during time of uncertainty	42(13.29)	75(23.73)
Easy to combine with any second subject (Kiswahili, English, History and geography)	108(34.18)	122(38.61)
Influence by peers	127(40.19)	158(50.0)
Good for guidance, counseling and teaching	124(39.24)	166(52.53)

The findings in Table 1 indicate that among the leading factors that respondents consider to have influenced their choice of CRE as a teaching subject is peer pressure and its goodness for guidance, counseling and teaching. The data show that 40.19% and 50.0%, of respondents from Main campus and Eldoret West campus respectively listed the former while a similar number (39.24% and 52.53% from Main campus and Eldoret West campus respectively) chose the latter. This was followed by its ease to combine it with any second subject (e.g., Kiswahili, English, History and geography) listed by respectively 34.18% and 38.61% of the respondents from Main and Eldoret West campuses choosing CRE as the other teaching subject. Some seem to have chosen CRE as a teaching subject because of its perceived marketability. Evidentially, more than 165 out of 316 (i.e., 17.09% and 35.13% respectively) third year students indicated that marketability of the subject combinations did inform their

choice of CRE. This observation is true given that secondary schools had an acute shortage of Arts teachers that includes CRE teachers when these respondents were completing their Secondary Education (Muindi, 2008). Also over 20% of respondents from each campus listed personally beneficial factors as reasons behind their choice of CRE. Evidentially, 23.10% from Main Campus and 27.21% from Eldoret West Campus chose CRE because they felt that it deals with day to day situations while 21.32% and 32.59% respectively listed it as providing them with spiritual and moral nourishment. This supports Itolondo's (2012) insinuation that the inclusion of Religious Education in the school curriculum is for spiritual and moral development.

Other factors presented by respondents as not having a very influential effect on their choice of CRE as a teaching subject where as follows:

1. Its inspiration during the time of uncertainty, powerlessness, fear and hopelessness listed respectively by 13.29% and 23.73% of the respondents in Main and Eldoret West Campuses.
2. Interest to pursue in future academic studies listed by 10.44% and 25.0% of the respondents from Main campus and West campus respectively.
3. The subject supplying knowledge for handling ethical issues and appreciation of God's creation listed respectively by 4.75% and 10.44% respondents from Main and Eldoret West Campuses.

Among the factors listed by respondents as the least influential effect on their choice of CRE as a teaching subject are:

1. An area to study different world religions and their respective histories listed by only 1.58% and 3.16% respondents from Main Campus and Eldoret West Campus respectively.
2. Pressure from parents listed by only 2.84% and 3.16% respondents from Main Campus and Eldoret West Campus respectively.
3. Influence by teachers and lecturers listed by only 3.80% and 5.80% respondents from Main Campus and Eldoret West Campus respectively.
4. Considered it as the best subject in the curriculum was listed by only 3.80% and 5.70% of students in Main Campus and Eldoret West Campus respectively.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

An analysis of the findings seems to suggest that the influential factors could have come from their peers, teachers or parents. Some effects of the second subject combination like Kiswahili, English and others did also appear to be one of the major contributing factors to choice of Christian religious education as a teaching subject respondents' previous performance at KCSE. Furthermore, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that. Surprisingly, a majority of was not reason enough to make them choose CRE as a teaching subject. due to other reasons which range from to guidance and counseling career option. Other factors touched on the importance of CRE to instill moral development which agrees with Ihuoma's (1995) and Walaba's (2013) assertions that Religious Education is viewed as a means to restore moral and social order in society. Perhaps the aim of teaching CRE to inculcate spiritual and moral values in our youth is not unrelated to this view (Itolondo, 2012). In addition, students seem to view CRE as providing solution to challenges or discouragement



in life or situations. This agrees with Walaba (2013) observation that students taking CRE as a teaching subject view it as an avenue to solving spiritual and moral issues.

One factor could be for instance, that combination of religious education with history and government may lead to the study of law. Christian religious education and history deal with justice, equality, peace and universal human rights. They can therefore be complementary to each other. Therefore whoever wants to pursue law has just to choose and study Christian religious education.

The study findings have several suggestions which can lead to the improvement of teaching learning and training of trainees of Christian religious education. Among the recommendations is the indispensable availability of adequate teaching or learning resources. Provision of teaching aids, seminars, workshops and even field or study trips. Liberative or transmissive teaching methods should be the learner's contract. Life approach which sanctitly handles viable issues of the students should be utilized. Life approach should be inculcated into undergraduate degree students who choose to study Christian Religious Education.

## REFERENCES

- Anderson, J. (1970). *The strangle for the School*. Nairobi: Longman Kenya.
- Ayot, H. (1986). *Understanding Social Studies*. Nairobi: Kenyatta University, Kenya and university of London institute of education.
- Buchmann, C., (1999). The state and schooling in Kenya: historical development and current challenges. *Africa Today*, 46(1), 95-117.
- Chaube, S. P. (1990/91). *Indian and western Educational Philosophers*. Agra India: Vinod Pustak Mandir.
- Dian, R. and Van Diepen, J. (1972). *Luke's Gospel for Africa Today*. Nairobi: Oxford University Press.
- Feldman, R. O. (1990). *Understanding Psychology*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Girault, R. (1993). *One Lord, One Faith, and One Church: New Perspective in Ecumenism*. United Kingdom: St. Paul's, 1993.
- Ihuoma, E. (1995). *Moral Education for Colleges and Universities*. Enugu, Nigeria: Fourth Nirmaon Co. Ltd.
- Indoshi, F. C., Wagah, M. O. and Agak, J. O. (2010). Factors that determine students' and teachers' attitudes towards art and design curriculum. *International Journal of Vocational and Technical Education*. 2(1), 9-17.
- Itolondo, W. A. (2012). The role and status of Christian Religious Education in the School curriculum in Kenya. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies (JETERAPS)* 3(5), 721-729.
- Kasomo, D. (2011). Students' attitudes on the teaching of Christian Religious Education in secondary schools in Kenya. *International Journal of Psychology and Behavioral Sciences*, 1(1), 48-54.
- Kiboss, J. K. (1997). *Relative Effects of Computer Based Instruction in Measurement on Students' Attitudes, motivation and Understanding about Measurement and Perception of Classroom Environment*. Doctoral Thesis presented to University of Western Cape, Bellville, South Africa.
- Muindi, B. (2008). Kenya: Acute shortage of Arts teachers. [accessed on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2013] Available from World Wide Web Daily Nation on the Web: [allafrica.com/stories/200810020080.html](http://allafrica.com/stories/200810020080.html)
- Radford, J. and Govier, E. (1991). *A Textbook of Psychology*. London: Routledge

- Republic of Kenya (2002). *Secondary Education syllabus Volume Three*. Nairobi: Kenya Institute of Education.
- Semlyen, M. (1993). *All Roads Lead to Rome?: The Ecumenical Movement*. England: Dorchester House Publications.
- Walaba, A.A. (2008). *Historical Development of Christian Religious Education (CRE) in Kenya Teaching and Learning Pre-colonial to Modern Times*. Eldoret: Bookshop Publishers.
- Walaba, A.A. (2013). *Moral Justice in Africa. A Kenyan Case*. Eldoret: Earstar (EA) Limited.