

# **A Critical Analysis of the Factors Influencing Form Two and Three Students Choice of Elective Subjects in Public Secondary Schools in Kenya**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to investigate factors influencing the choice of Elective subjects as an examinable subject in (K.C.S.E). To establish the relationship between availability of and use of teaching and learning resources and the student choice of Elective subjects as examinable subject. To determine the relationship between teachers level of education and students choice of Elective subjects, To establish whether there is a relationship between students' perceived future subject opportunities and their choice of Elective subjects as an examinable subject. According to Orodho (2008), a research methodology is the process used to collect information and for the purpose of making analysis. The study will employ qualitative research methodology to gather information. The study will also use a descriptive design with critical document analysis. Students' subject choices are influenced by numerous factors including outcome expectancies, individual variants such as gender, personal interests, learning experiences, environmental factors and personal contacts. Outcome expectancies were the most influential factors in students' subject choices' however gender and the environment play a very minimal role when it comes to subject choice. There are variations in the level of influence each factor has on students' subject choices by gender. Family members are more influential in students' subject choices as compared to other persons. As students interact with their peers, their advice is less important as compared to family members, teachers and subject counselors

The study further recommends that, after initial subject decisions have been made, subject counsellors can continue to encourage successful subject development by identifying sources of psychosocial support available to students. Persons that offer subject advice to students should ensure that they are well informed so as to provide accurate information that will lead students to correct subject choice

**Key Words:** Elective Subjects, Gender, Subject Choices, Psychosocial.

## **1.0 Introduction**

Advent of information technology, the emergence of post industrial revolution and job competition. It was a common practice in the old days to find feudalism converting it into a family affair where the son of a blacksmith was destined to become a blacksmith and a feudal was born a leader. Industrialization and post industrialization has made it possible for a common

person to be richer as long as she or he has due skills and knowledge (wattles, 2009). Today, one has not only to make due subject planning but also exhaustive subject research before making a subject choice so as to adjust with the evolving socio-economic conditions (wattles, 2009). Most of students who are in secondary schools do not have accurate information about occupational opportunities to help them make appropriate subject choice.

According to kerka (2000), subject choice is influenced by multiple factors including personality, interests, self-concept, cultural identity, globalization, socialization, role model, social support and available resources such as information and financial. Bandura et al (2001) state that each individual undertaking the process is influenced by several factors including the context in which they live in, their personal aptitudes, social contacts and educational attainment. According to Hewitt (2010), factors influencing subject choice can either be intrinsic or extrinsic or both. Hewitt further states that most people are influenced by subjects that their parents favour, others follow the subjects that their educational choices have opened for them, some in a study by perrone et al., (2001) on role model influence on the subject decisiveness of college students, it was found that role model supportiveness, and quality of relationship contributed to the subject choice of students. The same study indicated that majority of the students selected same gender role models. Research on the role of spirituality and religion in subject development although limited in scope has suggested that such factors relate positively to desirable subject development outcomes such as subject decisions. For many people with spiritual or religious commitment faith plays a critical role in the subject decision making process. (duffy and dick 2009). A study on subject choice in Ethiopia by stebleton (2007) indicated that the students had an external locus of control and believes that there are numerous external factors which influence

their subject choices. Therefore this study sets to critically analyze the factors influencing the students subject choice in public secondary schools in Kenya.

## **2.0 Statement of problem**

The importance of Elective subjects to students and the country's social economic development is crucial to the realization of vision 2030. Therefore the choice of Elective subjects as examinable subject stands out because of its role to the development of a nation. The decline in enrolment of students in Elective subjects in secondary schools is of great concern among teachers, parents and education stakeholders. There is shortage of comprehensive and confirmation studies on the factors that influence the choice of Elective subjects as an examination subject in secondary school. There is therefore need to asses' key factors that influence the student's enrolments in elective subjects in public secondary schools

## **3.0 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

**The main aim of the study is to critically analyze the factors influencing students choice of elective subject in Public Secondary Schools in Kenya.**

## **4.0 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

1. To critically establish the relationship between availability of and use of teaching and learning resources and the student choice of Elective subjects as examinable subject.
2. To critically determine the relationship between teachers level of education and students choice of Elective subjects as an examinable subject?
3. To critically establish whether there is a relationship between students' perceived future subject opportunities and their choice of Elective subjects as an examinable subject

## **5.0 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. What is the relationship between the availability and use of teaching and learning resources and choice of Elective subjects as examinable subjects?
2. Is there any relationship between teacher's level of education and choice of Elective subjects as an examinable subject by the students?
3. What is the relationship between students' perceived future subject opportunities and their choice of Elective subjects as a examinable subject?

## **6.0 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The study would be of great significance to the school management because it would help the management fraternity in understanding the factors affecting the choice of elective subjects and be able to initiate appropriate measures to improve on students' performance in elective subjects. The relevant government ministries would also benefit from the study findings and be able to come up with policy issues touching on subject choice and later career choice at higher levels of education in Kenya.

## **7.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **7.1 Teaching - learning resources and student choice of subject**

Munguti (2004) noted that most schools had many difficulties in so far as teaching and learning resources are concerned. He observed that textbooks support (reference) books teaching aids and stationery is very important and lack of these adversely affect the teaching of Mathematics. Munguti further maintained that unavailability of funds causes the shortage of teaching resources not only in Mathematics but also in other subjects like Elective subjects.

Bishop (2005) noted that materials resources are important for curriculum implementation and attainment of syllabus objectives, because they have their unique role that they play towards this effort. Thundhlana (2008) contends that a variety of materials and approaches in teaching are necessary to enable the education system to produce graduates, who are intellectually alert, able to explore and benefit from what their environment offer them. For effective teaching and learning to take place in elective subjects, teaching and learning resources are necessary.

Generally lack of learning and teaching resources adversely affect the enrollment of students Twoli (2006) agreed that students in a number of countries in Africa had found in strong relationships because resources and achievement Kathuri (2010) observed that good as they may be teaching resources may not be significant in totality, but very critical in some situations or some subjects. The Republics of Kenya (KIE 2010) cited lack of materials shortage of teachers and finance as some of the problems facing the 8.4.4 curriculum implementation.

Indeed, the availability to teaching and learning resources enhances the instructional process of the subject.

In view of these reviews it is evident there is the relationship between the availability and use of resources on the performance and enrolment of students in Elective subjects. With this relationship being established it is hoped that will help school administrators and teachers in ensuring the resources needed for effective learning and teaching Elective subjects are available.

## **7.2 The effects of teacher's level of education on the choice of Elective subjects as an examinable subject by students**

Bishop (2005)states that human resources are important in curriculum implementation and attainment of the syllabus objectives.

Ayot (2008) asserts that for proper implementation of a curriculum innovation there must be availability of adequate trained man power in the area. But he noted that many schools suffer an acute shortage of teaching personnel. This is concurred by Mite (2001) who contends that certain subjects in the schools are not taught as they lack manpower. According to Boardman (2005) two very different teachers may cause the same syllabus to appear very differently in the eyes of the children who are learning.

Husen et al (2004) points out that teacher's altitude towards teaching would affect teaching styles in such a way as to bring out a difference in students outcome. Mwangi (2006) found out those teachers negative attitude are being reflected on students poor performance. Twoli (2006) agreed that teacher's behavior and altitude are important variable which account for students achievements.

Mbiti (2011) contents that a large number of teachers went into teaching profession only because they could not find a job of their choice and that the profession often attracts candidates who are not keenly interested in the profession. There is scare evidence on the relationship between teachers attitude towards the job and students enrolments in Elective subjects. It is therefore of value to determine the relationship which will be aimed at designing ways of changing the altitude appropriately so that student's enrolment in Elective subjects can be improved.

### **7.3 Students attitudes towards Elective subjects as a subject of choice**

Nkosan (2008) points out that if teachers feel that the subjects is not important to the extent that they do not emphasize teaching it students may not be blamed for having the same attitude.

Agwata (2006) in his study in secondary schools noted that students dropped Economics because to them the subject was too difficult and abstract for their level. It is often true that student's attitude towards a subject affects the overall outcome in national Examinations. The negative

attitude towards Elective subjects may originate from the fact that much of its content includes concepts and diagrams that are too abstract for learners to easily comprehend. The use of appropriate local examples by teachers to help foster an understanding and arouse interest in the subject is limited. There is need to determine the effect of student's attitude towards Elective subjects enrolment.

## **8.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

According to Orodho (2008), a research methodology is the process used to collect information and for the purpose of making analysis. The study will employ qualitative research methodology to gather information. The study will also use a descriptive design with critical document analysis

## **9.0 CONCLUSION**

Students' subject choices are influenced by numerous factors including outcome expectancies, individual variants such as gender, personal interests, learning experiences, environmental factors and personal contacts. Outcome expectancies were the most influential factors in students' subject choices' however gender and the environment play a very minimal role when it comes to subject choice. There are variations in the level of influence each factor has on students' subject choices by gender. Family members are more influential in students' subject choices as compared to other persons. As students interact with their peers, their advice is less important as compared to family members, teachers and subject counselors

## 10.0 RECOMMENDATION

The study recommends that, after initial subject decisions have been made, subject counsellors can continue to encourage successful subject development by identifying sources of psychosocial support available to students. Persons that offer subject advice to students should ensure that they are well informed so as to provide accurate information that will lead students to correct subject choice.

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