



# An Assessment of the Implementation of Christian Religious Education Curriculum in Anglican Church in Uganda Founded Primary Schools in Eastern Uganda

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**Abstract:** *The study investigated the implementation of Christian Religious Education Curriculum (CREC) in Anglican Church of Uganda founded primary schools in Eastern Uganda. The assessment was based on a qualitative investigation that employed three methods to collect data: document analysis, classroom observation, and interviews. The results showed that; the aims and objectives of CRE are to inculcate moral ethical and spiritual integrity, tolerance, and human fellowship. Reasons for the implementation of CRE in Primary Schools are: to offer a framework for understanding the context of moral living, to develop students' abilities to improve on their moral lives and understand their own religion and its values, The challenges hindering the implementation of Christian religious education curriculum in Primary Schools are; Teachers focused their greatest attention on measuring written works especially in cognitive attainment rather than affective and psychomotor behavior. Inadequate Religious education textbooks, Lack of induction training and refresher courses for teachers of Christian Religious Education in primary Schools. It is recommended that the Government of Uganda should accept Christian Religious Education to be taught and examined as a separate subject in primary School. Support supervision by the Inspectors to ensure that teachers prepare Christian Religious Education and teach as planned by the NCDC. The ministry of Education and Sports working hand in hand with the NCDC, and foundation bodies should ensure that regular workshops and trainings for all teachers of Christian Religious Education are conducted to empower them with the new methods and skills of handling the subject.*

**Keywords:** *Assessment, Implementation, Religious Education, Curriculum, Monitoring, Supervision.*

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## 1. Introduction

In Uganda the foundation that nurtured the growth of the teaching of Christian Religious Education was laid down by the early Christian Missionaries who combined the introduction of Christianity among the Africans with education (Ssekamwa, 1997). In pre-independent Uganda,

the formal education in Uganda was in the hands of religious organizations and missionaries that had founded the schools. The Anglican missionaries used Christian religious education as one of their most effective ways of evangelizing and converting Ugandan students to Christianity (Byarunga, 2018). After independence in the 1963 Education Act, the Government took control the management and administration of schools.

The Church in Education system was left with the role of spiritual guidance and pastoral care in its Institutions through schools Boards, Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers and school Chaplains (Anglican Church of Uganda Education Policy (April 2016). Among the role of the School Chaplain in the COU founded primary School, is to make sure that Christian Religious Education is taught by a believer who is a professional teacher. (Guidelines for Chaplaincy in Schools, 2001). However, previous studies have shown that religious education has encouraged children to learn from various religious beliefs, values and culture while at the same time, exploring their own beliefs regarding their religion (Dinama, 2013). Religious education is a good preliminary point and a fundamental way to meet explicit requirements as this will help to caution learners all the way through until they graduate to the next level (Basome & Allida, 2018).

The greatest challenge and opportunity today are how to provide a sufficient number of suitably trained and committed teachers of Christian Religious Education in both Primary and Secondary Schools (Rugyendo, 2012). The teaching of Christian Religious Education is not inspected and monitored like other subjects by the head teachers and Inspector of Schools. This is a challenge to the Anglican Church of Uganda who founded School to enforce the teaching of the subject through its Diocesan Inspector of Schools and Parish priest. The Anglican Church of Uganda education policy states that; Christian Religious Education shall be compulsory, stand alone and part and parcel of the examinable curriculum in COU Primary and Post Primary Schools (The Church of Uganda Education Policy, 2016).

According to Byarunga (2018), Uganda has no state religion and the freedom of religion is guaranteed by the National Constitution. Christian religious education is provided in private founded schools, church founded schools and government founded schools. In Eastern Region of Uganda teachers take religious education as a minor subject, so few teachers make scheme of work and lesson plans and even it is not taught as planned by the NCDC. Social studies (SST) and Christian religious Education (CRE) form one paper of 100 marks. CRE is given the least marks in the final examination. The percentage for CRE is 25% and SST is 75% of the entire paper (Kateeba as cited by Basome, 2018). This has led teachers to concentrate on teaching SST than CRE. The teachers' negligence in preparations and the teaching of Religious Education is working towards the failure of the mission of the church of Uganda as far as Education system is concerned. Teachers are targeting good performance in the final examination Cognitive (head) neglecting the affective (heart) and hands (psychomotor). This has contributed to moral decline amongst the learners in primary and post primary because they have not developed

spiritually (Basome & Allida, 2018). As a result, many stake holders in education are making efforts in searching for an appropriate strategies and methods to ensure that Christian Religious Education is taught in all schools as planned by the NCDC. There was a need therefore, to assess the implementation of Christian Religious Education Curriculum (CREC) in Anglican Church of Uganda founded primary schools in Eastern Uganda.

## 1.1 Statement of the Problem

The Anglican Church of Uganda education policy states that Christian Religious Education (CRE) shall be compulsory stand alone and part and parcel of the examinable curriculum in COU founded Primary Schools (The Anglican Church of Uganda Education policy, 2016). However, The Church of Uganda education policy has no enforcement mechanism or sanctions to be applied to those who flout it. There are no coordination mechanisms to unite the stakeholders willing to do their part in enforcement of the implementation of Christian Religious Education Curriculum.

Preliminary investigation reveals that many Primary Pupils have been promoted from one class to the next level without completing the topics of CRE as per Curriculum. This has affected the achievement of the aims of teaching CRE which is to inculcate moral ethical and spiritual integrity, tolerance and human fellowship. As a result, the products of students promoted to the next level of education are not grounded in all aspect of life and more so the spiritual aspect is denied. This could be the cause of the increasing drop out of Children from School, examination malpractice and early pregnancy among others. Therefore, without Government and Church interventions this could affect our children today and the next generation. Thus, the assessment was necessary to identify the gap and establish the ways of shaping the future through innovative approaches that will bring all stake holders concerned towards the implementation of CRE Curriculum.

## 1.2 Research Questions

1. Why is the implementation of Christian religious education curriculum important in Primary Schools in Eastern region of Uganda?
2. What are the challenges hindering the implementation of Christian religious education curriculum in Primary Schools in Eastern Uganda?
3. What should be done for the effective implementation of Christian religious education curriculum in Primary Schools in Eastern Uganda?

## 2. Literature Review

This section reviews related literature and studies that have already been done and reviewed from local and international books, journals, newspapers, the internet sources, and research reports. The review of related literature and studies was done in order to research the subject and probe available literature on the implementation of Christian Religious Education Curriculum (CREC) in Anglican Church of Uganda founded primary schools so as to compare with other researcher conducted study in similar area. Further still, to collate the reading materials, which have, in one way or another, a close similarity to this study.

### 2.1. The Importance for the implementation of Christian religious education curriculum in Primary Schools

According to the NCDC, the 2012 Primary Six Curriculum aims to instill moral, ethical, and spiritual integrity, tolerance, and human fellowship. This is consistent with Byarunga's (2018) statement that the key values of Uganda's Constitution, such as equality and respect for human dignity, are manifestations of the moral ideals that have defined the country. Therefore, Christian Religious Education curriculum should be introduced since it increases comprehension of the essential moral ideals, which are contained in the Ugandan Constitution.

Alupo (2016), noted that "Religious Education supports the learner by developing and reflecting on his or her values and contributing to the learner's capacity for sound moral and ethical judgment."

Christian religious education helps pupils comprehend their own faith and its principles. This is why Christian religious education, as the centre of the students' emotional lives, should be taught in a responsible manner by a qualified Christian religious education teacher. This is consistent with the job of a school chaplain, who ensures that Christian Religious Education is taught by a believer who is also a professional teacher (School Chaplaincy Guidelines, 2001).

According to Byarunga (2018), Uganda's Constitution articulates and mentions a number of fundamental human rights that must evolve as the country develops into a modern and democratic society. Future generations must be equipped to interpret and use these fundamental human rights in new contexts in a godly manner. Because Christianity teaches transcendent values, students in Christian religious education will be better equipped to face these issues.

Byaruhanga (2018) also stated that, in addition to emotional and intellectual development, the nation must invest in the spiritual growth and development of its population. This is consistent with the Church of Uganda's Vision and Mission: "A Christ-Centered Church equipped for transforming mission among people" and "To fulfil Christ's mission through holistic teaching, evangelism, discipleship, and healing for healthy and godly nations" so that His people can enjoy abundant life on earth and later in heaven. (Church of Uganda, Education Policy, 2016).

The Republic of Uganda Education Act of 2018 and the Anglican Church of Uganda Education Policy of 2016 mandate the implementation of Christian Religious Education curriculum. According to the Education Act of 2018, religious studies must be included in the curriculum in primary and secondary schools, and one of the broad objectives of the Church of Education policy of 2016 is to ensure quality assurance, Christian teaching, and spiritual nurture in all COU-founded educational institutions. The COU's education strategy also requires Christian leadership, teaching, and nurturing in schools. Further states that Christian Religious Education (CRE) will be compulsory, stand alone and part and parcel of the examinable curriculum in COU Primary and Post Primary Schools (The Anglican Church Education Policy, 2016).

### 2.2 The challenges hindering the implementation of Christian religious education curriculum in Primary Schools

According to Basome (2018), teachers placed a greater emphasis on measuring written work, particularly cognitive attainment, than on affective and psychomotor behaviour. This undermines the primary goal of teaching Christian Religious Education (NCDC, 2012). The goal of teaching Religious Education as outlined in the curriculum is consistent with the goals of primary education in Uganda, which seek to promote and preserve cultural and spiritual values.

Teachers do not create schemes of work and lesson plans for Christian Religious Education as guidelines for implementing the Christian Religious Education Curriculum because they lack reference books and are unfamiliar with the new format of planning based on the new curriculum. This finding is consistent with Njoku (2015), who stated that teachers must enhance their teaching skills in order to stay up with the needs of a rapidly changing society.

Basome (2018) also stated that there is a scarcity of induction and refresher courses for Christian Religious Education teachers in primary schools regarding curriculum interpretation and implementation. This is one of the challenges hindering the implementation of Christian Religious Education Curriculum.

Religious education is not tested as other topics because teachers lack proper evaluation skills. The findings are consistent with the findings of Dinama, as cited in Basome (2018), who observed that Religious Education teachers possessed poor assessment skills, and the cause and source of this could be that teachers are not trained in Religious Education teaching skills, which is reflected in poor performance in tests and end-of-term examinations. He went on to say that, in addition to poor pedagogical knowledge and evaluation abilities, teachers' lack of collaboration with one another could be a barrier to the implementation of the Christian Religious Education Curriculum.

According to Lukwango (2013), negative comments from some stakeholders influence learners' attitudes towards learning Religious Education. This has had an impact on certain students' academic performance and contributed to an increase in immoral and bad behaviours in today's young generation, such as corruption, murder, rape, and defilement.

Kutto's research, as quoted by Amugah (2017), on overcoming hurdles in teaching CRE in Eldoret Municipality showed that both teachers and learners have a negative attitude towards the subject, which hinders its effective implementation of Christian Religious Education Curriculum curriculum. This is consistent with the findings of Basome (2018) in the Bulamagi sub-county, where teachers exhibit a negative attitude towards teaching of Christian Religious Education following the Curriculum of Religious Education.

### **2.3 The effective implementation of Christian religious education curriculum in Primary Schools**

To ensure the efficient implementation of the Christian Religious Education Curriculum, teachers of Religious Education must attend regular refresher courses and workshops to learn new techniques and methodologies for teaching value. The study's findings support Nzomo's study, as referenced by Kutto (2013), which states that teachers must improve their teaching skills in order to meet the expectations of a rapidly changing society.

According to Onsongo (2008), the success of any curriculum innovation is determined on teachers' attitudes

towards implementation. As a result, there is a need to shift stakeholders' attitudes about Religious Education as a subject.

Christian Religious Education must be treated equally with other subjects offered in elementary school. For example, science, English, math, and social studies. This solution is similar to the observation made by Ndarwa (2007), who stated that Christian Religious Education (CRE) as a subject must be considered as important as any other subject within the curriculum and thus be given equal consideration as the Social Studies, English, Mathematics, and Science during the curriculum implementation process.

## **3. Methodology**

This section presents the design of the study, particularly the research design and the methods and techniques that were used to obtain research data. It describes the research design, population, sample size and sampling techniques, research instruments, validity and reliability of research instruments, data collection procedures, treatment of data, data analysis procedures, and ethical considerations.

### **3.1 Research Design**

This study used descriptive design which was aimed at an Assessment of the Implementation of Christian Religious Education Curriculum in Anglican Church of Uganda Founded primary Schools. A qualitative method was used to gather data about the topic of the study.

### **3.2 Study Population**

The data was collected from five primary school in Eastern region of Uganda. Forty three (43) qualitative interviews were conducted. Those interviewed were District Education Officer (4), District Inspector of schools (4) Head-teachers (5) Teachers (10), Parents (5) and pupils (15).

### **3.3 Sampling Techniques**

The sample size of the study was obtained using purposive and simple random sampling techniques.

### 3.3.1 Purposive Sampling Technique

**In this study, the researcher's judgment was that the District Education Officers were purposely chosen because they hold data on the district's education system, including inspector reports and PLE performance.**

### 3.3.2 Simple Random Sampling Technique

In this study, simple random sampling was used to select the (4), District Inspector of schools (4) Head-teachers (5) Teachers (10), Parents (5) and pupils (15).

## 3.4 Qualitative Data Collection

During the qualitative data collection phase, the researcher conducted a guided interview with the selected respondents, documentary analysis and observation check list.

### 3.4.1 Interview Guide

The interview guide was used to gather responses from 18 teachers, 9 parents, 9 local leaders and 9 school management committees.

### 3.4.2 Document Analysis Guide

The document analysis was used specifically to get information from the library, internet, newspapers and reports.

### 3.4.3 Observation Checklist

In the observation check list were the following items: Christian Religious Education Curriculum, Christian Religious Education textbooks, Pupils books, Christian Religious education schemes of work and lesson plan, time tables and Pupils books.

## 3.5 Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis followed four main steps: translating and transcribing, identification of themes, coding data, and conceptualization of themes (Neuman, 2011).

### 3.5.1 Translating and transcribing

The recorded data was analyzed by playing the recorded version on a multimedia player. The digital sound versions of the interviews were displayed, and the researcher had the power to start and stop by pausing. The recordings of the interview were transcribed verbatim. After transcribing all the interviews, the transcripts were checked against the recordings for a second time.

### 3.5.2 Identification of Themes

The coded data was sorted into arrays according to the major categories, giving special attention to the research questions. All the chunks of data that had the same labels or closely related labels were categorized.

### 3.5.3 Coding the data

The information gathered from the interviews and documentary analysis was used to derive these tags. Codes are labels or tags for the assignment of units of meaning and are particularly useful instruments for the purposes of data reduction (Neuman, 2011).

### 3.5.4 Conceptualization of Themes

The conceptualization of themes was tied together and paved the way for answering the research questions. The basic ideas for conceptualization were inferred from specific instances of the data collected to validate the findings, i.e., determine the credibility of the information and whether it matched reality. Three primary forms were used in the second, qualitative, phase of the study: (1) triangulation—converging different sources of information (interview and observation); (2) member checking—getting feedback from the participants on the accuracy of the identified categories and themes; and (3) providing a rich, detailed description to convey the findings (Neuman, 2011).

## 3.6 Ethical Consideration

Ethics refers to well-founded moral standards that prescribe what humans should do, usually in terms of rights, obligations, societal benefits, fairness, or specific virtues (Saunders et al., 2012).

The researcher respected the participants' autonomy and freedom. The researcher did not put participants under pressure, force, frighten, embarrass, offend, harm, or coerce them. The researcher was honest in reporting the research results and informed participants of their rights to withdraw if they felt like doing so.

## 4. Results and Discussion

This section highlights findings from the study, specifically how the implementation of Christian religious education curriculum important in Primary Schools, the challenges hindering the implementation of Christian religious education curriculum in Primary Schools and the effective implementation of Christian religious education curriculum in Primary Schools in Eastern Uganda.

#### **4.1 Reasons for implementation of Christian religious education curriculum in Primary Schools**

The findings revealed that while Christian traditions in Uganda have maintained diverse views on Christian religious education, there are a number of reasons why Christian Religious Education Curriculum should be implemented. Some of these reasons are:

The findings revealed that Christian Religious Education improves comprehension of basic moral ideals enshrined in Uganda's Constitution. Some respondents stated that youngsters with a solid basis in Christian religious education have decent morality. This is consistent with the NCDC's 2012 Primary Six Curriculum, which aspires to instill moral, ethical, and spiritual integrity, tolerance, and human fellowship. This is also backed by Byarunga (2018), who stated that the basic values found in Uganda's Constitution, such as equality and respect for human dignity, are manifestations of the moral ideals that have defined the country.

It was also discovered that implementing a Christian religious education curriculum provides a framework for understanding the context of moral life and helps students better their moral lives. This is consistent with the statement made by Alupo (2016) in her foreword message in the Religious Education Learning Area Lower Secondary Syllabus, where she stated that "Religious Education supports the learner, developing and reflecting on his/her values and contributing to his/her capacity for sound moral and ethical judgement."

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It was also revealed that Christian religious education can assist students understand their own religion and its values. This is why Christian religious education, as the centre of the students' emotional lives, should be taught in a responsible manner by a professional Christian religious teacher. This is consistent with the Guidelines for Chaplaincy in Schools (2001), which state that one of the school chaplain's responsibilities is to ensure that Christian

Religious Education is taught and delivered by a believer who is a competent teacher.

The findings also showed that Christian religious education can be used to deepen values over time. This is consistent with Byarunga's (2018) statement that Uganda's Constitution articulates and mentions a number of essential human rights that must evolve as the country develops into a modern and democratic society. Future generations must be ready to interpret and use these fundamental human rights in new contexts in a godly way.

It was discovered that Christian religious education is an integrated and holistic approach to education that requires pupils to grow emotionally, academically, physically, psychologically, culturally, and spiritually. This is consistent with the Church of Uganda's Vision and Mission: "A Christ-Centered Church equipped for transforming mission among People" and "To fulfill Christ's mission through holistic teaching, evangelism, discipleship, and healing for healthy and godly nations" so that His people can enjoy abundant life on earth and later in heaven. (The Anglican Church of Uganda, Educational Policy, 2016).

Furthermore, it was discovered that Christian Religious Education Curriculum aids in providing students with the knowledge, values, and abilities required to choose alternatives to self-destructive and aggressive behaviour when confronted with interpersonal and intergroup conflict. This is reinforced by Byaruhanga (2018), who stated that a good education system ensures that its graduates understand their duties to the nation.

#### **4.2 The challenges hindering the implementation of Christian religious education curriculum in Primary Schools**

The findings revealed that poor curricula, syllabuses, and Religious Education textbooks impede the implementation of the Christian Religious Education curricula. This is consistent with the findings of Basome (2018) in Bulamagi sub-county, where respondents stated that schools were provided with curriculum, syllabuses, and textbooks, but some teachers claimed to have lost the text books and do not know where to get them because they are not sold anywhere.

The studies also found that teachers do not create schemes of work and lesson plans for Christian Religious Education because they lack reference books, and some are unfamiliar with the new format of planning based on the new curriculum. This finding is consistent with Njoku (2012),

who stated that teachers must enhance their teaching skills in order to stay up with the needs of a rapidly changing society.

The findings revealed that today's stakeholders expect the best grades, not morality, which has encouraged teachers to focus their efforts on measuring written work, particularly cognitive attainment, rather than affective and psychomotor behaviour. This undermines the primary goal of teaching Christian Religious Education (NCDC, 2012). The goal of teaching Religious Education as outlined in the curriculum is consistent with the goals of primary education in Uganda, which seek to promote and preserve cultural and spiritual values.

It was discovered that Religious Studies teachers do not receive induction training or refresher seminars on how to interpret and apply the Christian Religious Education Curriculum. This is consistent with Nzomo's findings, as stated by Kutto (2013), who discovered that teachers take a long time to upgrade their teaching skills in order to meet the expectations of a changing society.

### **Effective implementation of Christian religious education curriculum**

The following should be done for the Effective implementation of Christian religious education curriculum:

Some respondents noted that regular refresher courses and workshops for Religious Education teachers would be beneficial in equipping them with new methods and methodologies for teaching. The study's findings support Nzomo's study, as referenced by Kutto (2013), which states that teachers must improve their teaching skills in order to meet the expectations of a rapidly changing society.

To ensure the effective implementation of Christian Religious Education Curriculum it was suggested that teachers need to be inspected and monitored by the Inspectors from the Church and the Government to see that they prepare Religious Education and teach as planned by the NCDC and Periodic workshops should be held for teachers on how to teach Religious Education and its purpose

The findings also revealed that in a modern Ugandan society, Christian religious education should be dealt with in a sound educational manner where the teacher is able to relate Christian beliefs to the experiences and needs of the students. This must in the end mean dealing with the questions and doubts which students bring to Christian religious education class from their immediate environment.

It was revealed that the teaching of Christian religious education in primary schools cannot be effectively done unless those teachers involved in handling the subject, are able to see Christianity in its contemporary setting with-out losing sight of its historical origins.

The increasing number of highly qualified people teaching Christian religious education at all levels in Uganda is a positive tribute to the seriousness with which society in Uganda has taken the intellectual dimension of the subject. However, one of the major obstacles to the effective teaching of Christian religious education as an academic subject at primary school level today is lack of proper techniques and enlightenment in the subject.

In the teaching of Christian religious education, the fundamental questions one needs to ask are: what is religion? What is religious education? What is education? And what is Christianity? Any definition of these four aspects of Christian religious education has to consider the consequences of such definition on the students' acquisition of knowledge, acquisition of skills and change of attitudes.

Periodic workshops should be held for teachers on how to teach Christian Religious Education and its purpose.

The Anglican Church of Uganda should come up with enforcement mechanism or sanctions to be applied to those teachers who flout the Anglican Church of Uganda Education policy.

Particular coordination mechanisms to unite the stakeholders willing to do their part in enforcement of the implementation of Christian Religious Education Curriculum should to be established.

There is a need to change stake holders' mind- set towards Religious Education as a subject. Onsongo (2008) said that the success of any curriculum innovation depends on the attitude of the teachers towards the implementation.

The respondents however agreed that approaches like adoption of good communication skill, good code of conduct / practice, strong emphasis on the importance of teaching Religious Education, appropriate use of student-centered methods and techniques, love for student and passion for the job will enhance effective implementation of teaching of Religious Education in Primary schools.

## **5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **5.1 Conclusion**

Religion has played a major role in shaping people's lives in Uganda from time immemorial. According to National

Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC, 2012), the aims and objectives of religious education is to inculcate moral ethical and spiritual integrity, tolerance and human fellowship. Some of the reasons for the implementation of Christian religious education curriculum in Primary Schools are: Christian Religious education offer a framework for understanding the context of moral living and develop students' abilities to improve on their moral lives and helps the students to understand their own religion and its values.

## 5.2 Recommendations

1. The study recommends that stake holders should ensure that the aims and objectives of the teaching of Christians Religious Education are achieved. This will help in the implementation of Christian Religious Education Curriculum.
2. Christian Religious Education should be taught and examined as a separate subject in primary School. Teachers will be inspected and monitored by the Inspectors to see that they prepare Christian Religious Education and teach as planned by the NCDC.
3. The ministry of Education and Sports working hand in hand with the NCDC should ensure that regular workshops and trainings for all teachers of Christian Religious Education are conducted to empower them with the new methods and skills of handling the subject.
4. The Syllabus of Christian Religious Education should match with the new knowledge and skills that have come up within the new curriculum innovation. The Ministry of Education and Sports should revise the Religious Education in terms of the content, time allocation and put in place appropriate strategies to minimize teachers and learner's bias towards the subject.
5. The Ministry of Education and Sports should revise the Christian Religious Education in terms of the content, time allocation and put in place appropriate strategies to minimize teachers and learner's bias towards the subject.
6. The school administration should be encouraged by the managers and inspectors to give full support to the teaching of Religious Education in terms of provision of instructional materials and allocation of adequate time to the teaching of the subject.

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