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Integrating Indigenous Knowledge into Uganda's Primary School Curriculum: Strategies for Decolonisation and Cultural Reclamation

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Uganda's education system, like those in many postcolonial countries, has been profoundly influenced by colonial legacies that prioritise Western epistemologies over Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS). This pervasive Eurocentric approach has resulted in the marginalisation of Uganda's rich cultural heritage, inadequately preparing learners to address local challenges and perpetuating a disconnect from their cultural roots. The integration of IKS into Uganda's primary education curriculum is a critical step towards decolonising education, fostering inclusivity, and preserving indigenous identity. This paper adopted a qualitative research design, specifically employing document analysis and key informant interviews with Headteachers and teachers, to explore perceptions, practices, and possibilities for integrating IKS into the national curriculum. Through this interpretive and exploratory methodology, the study sought to understand the socio-cultural dynamics and educational policies that shape curriculum choices. The paper further proposed pragmatic strategies for decolonising Uganda's education system by reimagining the primary education curriculum to balance Western-influenced knowledge with indigenous knowledge processes. By adopting this approach, learners will become well-versed in global knowledge systems while developing a deep appreciation for their cultural heritage. Ultimately, this will equip learners to contribute meaningfully to the sustainable development of their communities, fostering a new generation of leaders who are grounded in their cultural traditions and equipped to navigate the complexities of an increasingly globalised world.

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INTRODUCTION

Decolonising education involves a critical examination and transformation of education systems, curricula, pedagogical approaches, and policy frameworks to dismantle colonial power structures that perpetuate inequality and marginalisation (Barongo-Muweke, 2016). In parallel, cultural reclamation refers to the process of recovering, revitalising, and preserving cultural heritage, traditions, and practices that have been suppressed or erased through colonialism, imperialism, or systemic oppression (Bihari, 2023). This process entails rediscovering and reasserting the cultural identity, languages, customs, and indigenous knowledge systems of historically marginalised communities. As Mawere (2024) notes, cultural reclamation prioritises the integration of indigenous knowledge systems, local realities, and cultural practices into educational content, while simultaneously challenging Eurocentric assumptions embedded in formal curricula.

This approach amplifies marginalised voices by valuing the histories, languages, and contributions of indigenous peoples, thereby promoting inclusivity and educational equity (Gichuru, 2024). Decolonisation also entails re-evaluating curricula that disproportionately privilege Western knowledge frameworks over diverse epistemologies (Joyce, 2023). To be truly transformative, education must promote cultural relevance, ensuring fairness in access, content, and delivery (Tariq, 2024). As Taylor (2022) asserts, decolonising education

fosters critical thinking, identity affirmation, and social transformation by cultivating learning environments that respect and engage with diverse worldviews.

Uganda's current education system, established in the post-independence period of the 1960s, follows a colonial model consisting of seven years of primary education, six years of secondary education, and three to five years of post-secondary education (Jones, 2023). However, despite structural expansion, the curriculum often fails to reflect Uganda's cultural realities or integrate indigenous knowledge systems and local practices (Conrad, 2022). For example, foundational African knowledge in areas such as oral traditions, agriculture, traditional medicine, and spirituality remains largely excluded from mainstream education, undermining its legitimacy in the eyes of learners (Al-Mansoori & Hamdan, 2023). Integrating Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) into Uganda's curriculum aligns with both national priorities and global development frameworks. It supports Uganda's Vision 2040, which advocates for inclusive and sustainable development. It contributes to the achievement of UNESCO's Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which emphasises equitable and quality education for all.

Statement of the Problem

Uganda's education system remains deeply entrenched in colonial legacies that marginalise African epistemologies and undermine indigenous knowledge systems (Shizha, 2014). The continued dominance of English as the primary language of

instruction exacerbates this issue, distancing learners from their cultural heritage and impairing meaningful engagement with learning content (Leung, Ki, & Wang, 2014). In response, this study explores the decolonisation of Uganda's primary education curriculum through the integration of indigenous knowledge systems.

This approach seeks to restore respect for local languages, cultural practices, and community-based knowledge, ultimately producing well-rounded learners equipped to address Uganda's development needs holistically. Integrating IKS into the curriculum is not merely an academic endeavour—it is a transformative process that seeks to balance Western and Indigenous epistemologies while emphasising culturally relevant and developmentally responsive education. By embedding local knowledge and values into formal learning spaces, Uganda can reclaim cultural identity, address context-specific challenges, and promote inclusive education that resonates with learners' lived experiences. The study therefore proposes practical and context-sensitive strategies to make Uganda's education system more inclusive, equitable, and responsive to the realities of its diverse learners.

Research Question

- What strategies can be put in place to decolonise and reclaim Uganda's primary education curriculum to include indigenous knowledge?

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Paulo Freire's pedagogical theory forms a foundational framework for this study on integrating indigenous knowledge into Uganda's primary school curriculum. Freire conceptualises education as a tool for liberation, aimed at dismantling colonial legacies and transforming oppressive systems (Mayo, 2019). His pedagogy is anchored in three core principles: *humanisation*, *conscientização* (critical consciousness), and *education as liberation*. Humanisation seeks to

restore dignity, cultural identity, and self-worth, particularly among marginalised communities (Longchari, 2024). *Conscientização* empowers learners to critically understand and challenge systems of oppression (Villares Nascimento, de Oliveira, & dos Santos, 2022). The principle of education as liberation underscores the idea that education is never neutral; it either perpetuates domination or facilitates emancipation (Finn & Freire, n.d.). Freire's pedagogy promotes critical thinking, the questioning of dominant paradigms, and the inclusion of indigenous knowledge and cultural practices as central to meaningful learning (Takona, 2025).

By adopting Freire's liberatory framework, Uganda can reimagine its education system as one that empowers rather than oppresses. This requires a deliberate shift away from colonial knowledge structures toward a culturally responsive and inclusive curriculum that reflects the realities of Ugandan learners (Burgess, Dzmadzi, & Kabeba, 2022). Ultimately, such an approach advances justice, equity, and social transformation by embedding the identity, history, and aspirations of the Ugandan people into the heart of the education system.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholars argue that decolonising education necessitates a fundamental rethinking of teaching, research, institutional structures, and governance to dismantle entrenched inequalities (Luke & Heynen, 2021). Contemporary education systems continue to reflect the dominance of Global North epistemologies, often marginalising alternative and indigenous ways of knowing (Desai & Wane, 2022). As a result, African children frequently study histories and philosophies centred on Euro-American narratives, while learners in the Global North are rarely exposed to African thought systems (Wiseman, 2022; Tabulawa, 2013). This imbalance not only reinforces colonial hierarchies but also devalues local epistemologies and perpetuates

educational and social inequities (Lund, Mlekwa, & Mlambo, 2024).

Decolonising education thus involves integrating diverse knowledge systems into curricula, recognising the legitimacy of multiple epistemologies, and fostering inclusive global education (Omodan, 2024). As Dei (2016) emphasises, all knowledge systems are context-bound, and no single epistemology should dominate others. Movements such as *Rhodes Must Fall* underscore the political and transformative role of education in confronting systemic oppression and promoting social justice (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). In this light, decolonisation entails rethinking pedagogical methods, research paradigms, and institutional governance to support inclusive, critical, and participatory education (Mudaly, 2018; Knudson, 2015). Ultimately, a decolonised educational framework aspires to dismantle systemic inequalities and cultivate learning environments that honour and integrate diverse worldviews. In doing so, education can become a transformative force for equity, inclusion, and sustainable societal advancement.

METHODOLOGY

Research Paradigm and Design

This study adopted an interpretivist paradigm to investigate strategies for decolonising education in Uganda, specifically focusing on integrating indigenous knowledge into primary education curricula. The interpretivist approach emphasises the subjective interpretations and meanings individuals assign to their social realities, influenced by personal experiences and contexts (Pretorius, 2024). A qualitative case study design was employed to explore the decolonisation of Uganda's primary education curriculum. This approach facilitated an in-depth examination of the complex issues surrounding decolonisation, yielding rich, contextualised data. By focusing on a specific case, this study aimed to provide a nuanced

understanding of the need for decolonisation in Uganda's primary education sector.

Population and Sample

The research was conducted in four primary schools in Kampala City and Wakiso District, located in Uganda's central region. This region was deliberately selected due to its significant role in primary education delivery in Uganda. The sample consisted of two government-aided and two private schools, providing a diverse representation of school types. Data collection involved in-depth interviews with 20 respondents, comprising head teachers and teachers, until data saturation was achieved. This qualitative approach enabled the researcher to gather rich, detailed insights into the research context.

Sampling Methods

Purposive sampling was used to select teachers and head teachers, ensuring relevant and rich data aligned with the research question. The selected respondents provided valuable insights into strategies for decolonising the primary school curriculum.

Data Collection Instrument

A comprehensive interview guide was developed to gather qualitative data on decolonising Uganda's primary education system. The guide consisted of three sections: an introductory section outlining study objectives, a demographic section collecting participant background information, and a core section assessing participants' knowledge of decolonisation in education. Open-ended questions encouraged participants to share experiences, discuss challenges, and provide suggestions for effective decolonisation strategies. This approach facilitated a nuanced understanding of practical and contextual factors influencing the decolonisation of Uganda's primary education system.

Data Analysis

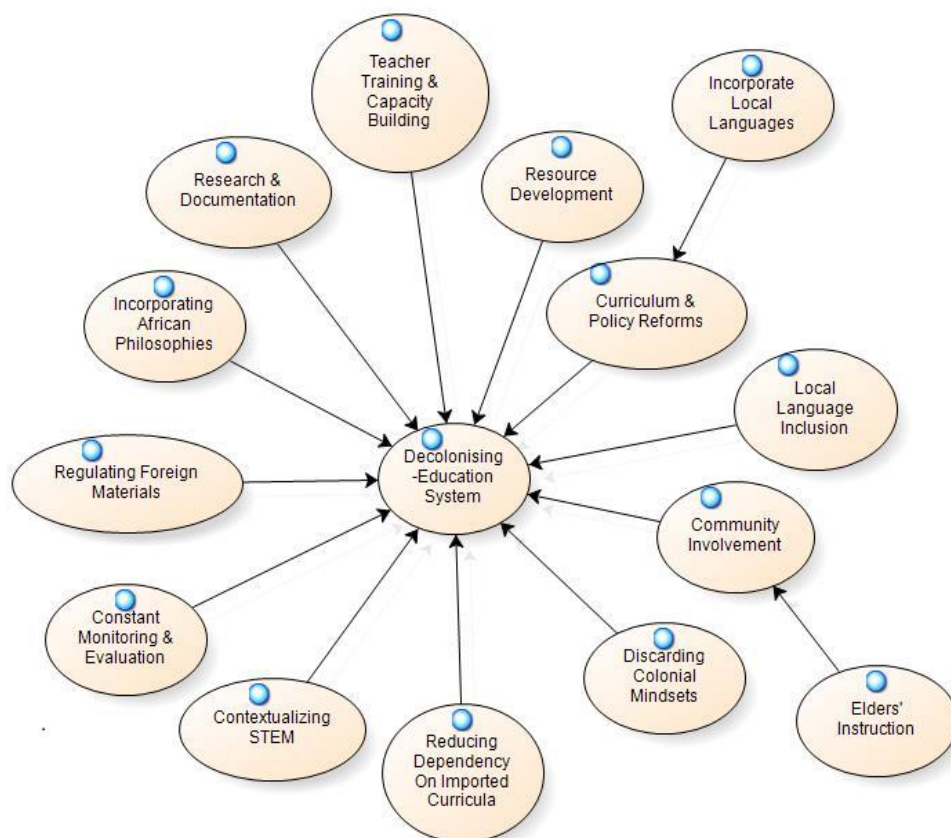
The interview data was systematically transcribed and coded to identify emerging themes. An inductive thematic analysis approach was used, allowing themes to emerge naturally through iterative review and comparison. Key concepts were identified, organised, and coded, while significant statements and patterns were highlighted. NVIVO software was used to create concept maps, visualising overarching themes and facilitating a nuanced understanding of the data. This rigorous analytical process enabled a detailed exploration of strategies for successfully decolonising Uganda's primary education.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher upheld rigorous ethical standards, prioritising participants' rights and welfare. Key principles included informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, and respect for privacy. Participants received a comprehensive explanation of the study and provided written consent. Anonymity was maintained by de-linking identities from responses, and confidentiality was ensured by allowing participants to share information without pressure. Stringent data security measures safeguarded all data. By adhering to these principles, the researcher ensured the integrity of the research process, safeguarding participants' dignity and rights.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Figure 1: Thematic Results on Strategies for Decolonisation and Cultural Reclamation of Uganda's Primary Curriculum



The study highlights the urgent need to decolonise Uganda's education system, still rooted in colonial legacies. Respondents linked societal moral

challenges to the belief that African traditions and knowledge systems hinder progress. This disconnect from cultural roots has eroded moral and

cultural values. Decolonising education is key to cultural preservation, empowerment, relevance, and equity. While educators recognised its importance, they stressed the need for resources and systemic changes. Key strategies for decolonisation include teacher training, language inclusion, curriculum reform, community involvement, and monitoring. Research, equity promotion, partnerships, and reduced reliance on imported curricula are also essential. Advocacy and awareness-raising are crucial for fostering understanding of decolonising education in Uganda.

Theme 1: Teacher Training and Capacity Building

The Head Teacher of M School, a government-aided school based in Kampala, expressed the following:

It is necessary to carry out teacher training and capacity building. Most of our teachers are products of a colonial education system that emphasised topics such as the Canadian prairies in geography, Niagara Falls in America, and how Speke 'discovered' the source of the Nile in history—as if there were no natives present before Speke's arrival. If we are to move towards decolonising Uganda's primary education system, we must begin by providing in-service training for teachers. This will equip them with the skills and knowledge to integrate indigenous knowledge into the current curriculum effectively.

The teacher at M School echoed the sentiments of the Head Teacher, adding:

Decolonisation of education is important, yes, but I would personally be open to blending indigenous knowledge into the curriculum. However, I am a product of the colonial education system, and honestly, I am unsure of how to do so effectively. Therefore, it would be fair if I, along with my colleagues, were trained to first understand how to integrate indigenous

knowledge. I believe the best way to achieve this is by revising the teacher training program to include courses on indigenous knowledge systems and culturally responsive pedagogy. For instance, we should be trained on how to incorporate the diverse ways of dressing from different cultures, agricultural methods, food storage techniques, and ways of interacting with one another. This would help us to teach students in a way that is culturally relevant and respectful of local traditions.

Theme 2: Language Inclusion

Teachers and Deputy Head teachers at Konu Primary in Wakiso district emphasised that to promote the decolonisation of Uganda's education system, language inclusion is crucial, particularly by teaching in the mother tongue, as it is a norm in countries like China and Germany.

Teacher Kali shared the following perspective:

The importance of decolonising education should not be underestimated, but for this to be effective, we need to teach in our local languages. Yes, currently, we teach in local languages in lower primary schools, but many teachers in our area come from different regions, which complicates the use of the mother tongue in teaching. As a result, most teachers default to teaching in English, which makes integrating indigenous knowledge more difficult.

The Deputy Head Teacher shared;

While we acknowledge and embrace being part of the global village, where we are encouraged to speak English, we must also prioritise our local languages when leading efforts to successfully carry out the decolonisation of our education system.

The Director of Studies at the same school commented that;

Let us begin to be more considerate in how we teach our learners in schools. It is disheartening to see the enforcement of harsh rules against the use of local languages. Learners who speak their indigenous languages during school hours are often punished or ridiculed for using their mother tongue. If we are truly committed to promoting language inclusion in our curriculum, we must start by embracing and valuing our languages first.

Theme 3: Curriculum and Policy Reforms

The teachers' perspectives on policy and curriculum reform under the decolonisation of education underscore the critical role that systemic changes in policy play in enabling meaningful curricular transformations. As they highlight, policy reform acts as the foundation upon which curriculum reforms can take place, ensuring that decolonisation is not just a theoretical aspiration but a practical and tangible change in education. Stella, a teacher at a private school in Wakiso, emphasised the significance of incorporating indigenous knowledge, languages, and practices into the curriculum, a crucial aspect of decolonisation. She noted that education systems have historically been shaped by Western perspectives, marginalising indigenous knowledge and cultures. According to Stella, reforming policies to support the integration of local traditions, philosophies, and languages would provide students with a more inclusive and representative education, valuing their cultural heritage. This approach, Stella argued, would challenge the dominance of Western knowledge systems and empower students to reconnect with their cultural roots. She cautioned that without policy reform, the curriculum would remain entrenched in colonial structures, limiting the potential for genuine decolonisation.

Bantamuze, who teaches in the same school as Stella, further underscores the imperative of adapting education systems to respect and celebrate cultural diversity. This approach is crucial for developing a curriculum that reflects the lived

experiences of students from marginalised communities. Incorporating local art, literature, and traditions into the curriculum would enable learners to engage with their culture in meaningful ways, cultivating a sense of pride and identity. This approach aligns with the broader objectives of decolonisation, which seek to address the cultural erasure perpetuated by colonial education systems. Effective policy reform can ensure that these culturally relevant elements are not merely supplementary additions to the curriculum, but rather integral components of the educational framework, central to the learning experience. Kanya's perspective on the need to provide a more accurate and balanced historical view speaks directly to the harmful legacies of colonialism. The colonial narrative often distorts or undermines the contributions of indigenous figures and movements. For example, framing Kabalega, a prominent Ugandan hero, in a negative light within a Western educational context is an example of historical distortion. Policy reform would enable a curriculum that acknowledges these historical truths, correcting misrepresentations and honouring the figures who shaped the history of Uganda. By revisiting colonial narratives and exposing their biases, the curriculum can foster a deeper understanding of the nation's past and its heroes.

The combined voices of these educators underscore the consensus that curriculum reform cannot be successfully implemented without a supportive policy framework. Policy reforms are essential to ensure that educational systems are inclusive, diverse, and rooted in the local context. Through these reforms, the curriculum can evolve from a tool of colonial oppression to one that promotes social justice, cultural pride, and historical accuracy. Without policy changes, the challenges of decolonising education would remain theoretical, as the structural and institutional barriers would continue to perpetuate colonial-era thinking.

Theme 4: Community Involvement

Community involvement is vital for decolonising Uganda's education system. It enables the integration of indigenous knowledge, connecting students to local traditions, promoting cultural heritage, and making education more relevant to Ugandan realities. According to the Head teacher of Charity Primary School, a private school:

Our communities possess a rich wealth of indigenous knowledge that can greatly enrich our curriculum and learning environments. To tap into this valuable resource, it is essential that we involve local communities in education. This collaboration enables the integration of indigenous cultural practices, languages, and wisdom into formal education, preserving and promoting Ugandan cultural heritage while fostering pride in local traditions and histories. By recognising and validating indigenous knowledge, communities become empowered to shape the educational narrative. For instance, in Buganda, our elders possess valuable knowledge on environmental preservation. By inviting them to share their expertise with primary school learners, we can promote contextualised learning and move away from merely adopting Western models.

Bahati, a teacher at Peace Primary School, suggested another way of engaging communities:

Encourage local communities to actively participate in teaching indigenous languages. Schools can host language classes where parents and community members can serve as teachers, enabling children to learn local languages as part of their education.

Bahati further emphasised:

Can you imagine, even we teachers are not well conversant with our language? Why should we wait until holidays to have our children taken to language specialists to learn our languages when we can invite our elders to do so? It is

better that we partner with community members who can come over and teach our children.

Nabawanuka, a teacher at Subbi Primary School, had this to say about community involvement:

Whatever we are doing in our schools and classrooms, we should never downplay the importance of involving the community in decolonising the primary school curriculum. For example, what is wrong with taking our classes into the community so that learners can gain first-hand experience in what they are being taught? If we are teaching children how to cook certain dishes, we can visit a nearby home, purchase all the necessary ingredients, and involve the learners directly in the cooking process. This way, they learn more effectively and meaningfully.

Theme 5: Resource Development

Resource development plays a crucial role in the successful integration of indigenous knowledge into the primary education system in Uganda. For decolonisation to be effective, educational resources must be relevant, culturally appropriate, and accessible.

The Head teacher, Katwere, argues;

Decolonisation in education requires active involvement from both teachers and learners in designing culturally responsive materials. By creating textbooks that reflect Uganda's diverse indigenous cultures, languages, history, and practices, education can be better aligned with the country's heritage. These textbooks should cover subjects like social studies, literature, and arts, while also including local stories, cultural norms, and traditional ecological knowledge.

Mateke from Kantu Primary School adds;

The development of multimedia resources, such as audio and video materials featuring traditional Ugandan music, dance, and storytelling, is essential to teaching learners

about indigenous art forms and their cultural significance. This approach not only enriches the learning experience but also helps children recognise the relevance of their own culture, preventing them from dismissing traditional knowledge in favour of foreign influences. The creation of such resources is key to fostering pride in Uganda's indigenous heritage and ensuring its preservation in the education system.

Theme 6: Constant Monitoring and Evaluation

To ensure the effective implementation of decolonising primary education in Uganda, constant monitoring and evaluation are essential. Regular assessments of the curriculum, teaching methods, and learning outcomes must be conducted to determine their alignment with decolonisation principles. Incorporating local languages and cultural practices into teaching and learning methods can promote cultural relevance and inclusivity. This approach acknowledges Uganda's diverse cultures and languages, helping learners connect their educational experiences to their everyday lives. According to Musiime, a teacher in a government-aided school:

Madam, while it is crucial to decolonise our education system, we must ensure that proper monitoring mechanisms are in place to guide and oversee the process. Without dedicated monitors, there is a risk of reverting to the familiar curriculum or adopting practices that seem easier for us, undermining the intended transformation. For instance, we have noticed that District Education Officers rarely visit schools, leaving teachers to their own devices. In such cases, some teachers resort to teaching what they find convenient rather than adhering to the desired changes. This highlights the importance of consistent supervision to ensure the effective implementation of a decolonised education system.

Theme 7: Research and Documentation

Decolonising education involves transforming curricula, teaching methods, and institutional structures to incorporate local knowledge, cultural values, and histories marginalised during colonialism. Research and documentation are crucial strategies for achieving sustainable decolonisation. As Katara emphasised:

The problem we have with our indigenous knowledge is that it is not properly documented, and our elders are dying, which reduces the chance of ever getting that knowledge. For me, I think if we want to decolonise our education system, that means we need to carry out deep research and then document everything for our generation. Let us discard the narrative that if you want to hide anything from an African, just hide it in the book.

Theme 8: Reducing Dependency on Imported Curricula:

Some respondents indicated that moving forward, the Ministry needs to reduce or put a total ban on the imported curricula, which are seen as teaching wayward characters to learners. Katusi had this to say:

If the education system in Uganda is to be decolonised, then our schools should, with immediate effect, stop depending on imported curricula. Instead, we should train our Ugandans who will develop a curriculum dependent on our cultures, our food, and our way of life. Without such, it will become extremely hard...

Interviewees emphasised the need for contextualised STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) education, aligning it with Uganda's challenges like sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, and public health. They argued that incorporating local examples would make learning more relevant and practical for addressing community needs.

Theme 9: Addressing Colonial Mindsets in Educational Goals

Some teachers emphasised that if the decolonisation of Uganda's education system is to be carried out successfully, there must be a deliberate effort to address the colonial mindset embedded in educational goals. Many people still believe that an educated person must secure a white-collar job and be fluent in English, reflecting the legacy of colonial ideals. Muyama, a teacher, elaborated on this issue:

Madam, we need to shift the focus of education from merely preparing students for formal employment to empowering them to become agents of community transformation. Colonial education systems prioritised producing clerks and administrators to serve colonial governments, a legacy that continues to shape Uganda's educational goals. By reorienting the education system to emphasise self-reliance, entrepreneurship, and problem-solving skills, learners can be equipped to address Uganda's unique challenges, such as poverty, unemployment, and underdevelopment. We need our young ones to exercise entrepreneurship skills in order to survive.

A teacher at Kantu Primary School also shared thoughts on the colonial mindset:

We were made to believe that our traditional forms of informal education are backwards, anti-development, and crude. As a result, many Ugandans have developed a mindset that our indigenous ways are not good enough to impart knowledge to learners or to inform effective teaching methods. If we are serious about decolonising education—especially the primary school curriculum—we must begin by changing this mindset. We need to recognise the value of our informal education systems and embrace them for the improvement of our education system.

A Head Teacher at the same school commented:

When it comes to our curriculum, we need to cultivate and promote a positive mindset among all stakeholders. The belief that African learning materials and teaching methods are not good enough to impart knowledge to learners must be challenged and abandoned. Only then can the true decolonisation of education begin.

This perspective highlights the need to redefine education as a tool for fostering innovation, resilience, and self-sufficiency among learners, ensuring that they are prepared to contribute meaningfully to their communities and nation.

Theme 10: Incorporating African Philosophies of Education

Some Head Teachers emphasised the importance of integrating Ubuntu, an African philosophy that instils values of togetherness, unity, mutual respect, and mutual support, into the curriculum. They highlighted that incorporating Ubuntu would encourage teachers to focus on ethics and moral values rooted in African traditions. For example, learners would be taught to respect elders, care for the environment, maintain personal hygiene, fulfil their societal roles and duties, and contribute to harmony within the community. This approach, they argued, would help preserve cultural norms and counter the teaching of values perceived as foreign or inappropriate.

Kabarwa, a teacher at Kantu Primary School, emphasised the importance of integrating the African philosophy of Ubuntu into the curriculum. She observed that the values embedded in Ubuntu—such as communal living, empathy, sharing, and respect for others—are increasingly absent among learners.

In schools today, learners no longer share, show love, or act as their brothers' or sisters' keepers. They often display a lack of respect for elders and prefer isolation over community, she noted. This erosion of communal values, she

argued, poses significant challenges for teachers, as it undermines the moral and social foundation necessary for effective learning and holistic development. Embedding Ubuntu across the curriculum would therefore serve as a critical step in reintroducing African values and fostering socially responsible learners.

Another head teacher echoed the call for a return to African values rooted in **Ubuntu**, questioning the reluctance to promote compassion, communal responsibility, and empathy in schools. Reflecting on her own experiences as a pupil in the 1980s, she stated:

We respected our elders, shared our meals, dressed smartly for school, and took pride in cleaning our classrooms and toilets. These acts instilled a sense of responsibility and community. She noted that contemporary school environments have shifted dramatically, with most responsibilities delegated to non-teaching staff. This dependency, she argued, fosters a culture of laziness and entitlement among learners, contradicting the Ubuntu ethos of collective responsibility and mutual care. Reinforcing such values within the curriculum, she suggested, is vital for restoring moral and civic discipline in schools.

Theme 11: Establishing Policies that can Regulate Content from Imported Materials

To ensure that educational materials align with Uganda's cultural values and aspirations, teachers and head teachers are advocating for the Ministry of Education and Sports to establish robust policies and frameworks. These policies would regulate the content of imported educational materials, banning those that conflict with Ugandan cultural values and traditions. The importance of adapting foreign content to fit local contexts and reflect Ugandan realities cannot be overstated. This approach would enable learners to connect with the material on a deeper level, fostering a sense of pride and identity. Moreover, investing in research and innovation to

create homegrown educational resources would promote self-reliance and equip learners with the skills and knowledge needed to address Uganda's specific challenges. Developing locally relevant materials would also preserve Uganda's cultural heritage, ensuring that future generations can learn from and appreciate their rich history and traditions. By taking a proactive approach to regulating educational materials and promoting local content, Uganda can create a more inclusive and effective education system that truly serves the needs of its learners.

A critical concern raised by teachers is the continued importation of learning materials from countries such as China, the United States, and the United Kingdom—resources often misaligned with the cultural, linguistic, and contextual realities of African, and more specifically, Ugandan learners. These materials frequently reflect foreign pedagogical assumptions and cultural references that are unfamiliar to both learners and teachers, making classroom instruction unnecessarily challenging. One teacher observed that, “*When it comes to teaching, educators often struggle to effectively use these imported resources because they do not resonate with the local context.*” In the pursuit of decolonising Uganda’s education system, it is essential to prioritise the development of locally produced teaching aids. For instance, utilising indigenous resources such as clay, wood, banana fibres, and other locally available materials can foster culturally grounded, cost-effective, and contextually relevant learning experiences. Such a shift not only enhances pedagogical effectiveness but also promotes creativity, self-reliance, and cultural pride among learners and teachers alike.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Several scholars have extensively examined strategies for decolonising education systems in Uganda, emphasising the need to reorient curricula and pedagogical practices to reflect the country's cultural values, socio-economic realities, and developmental aspirations. The colonial legacy of

education in Uganda has long promoted Eurocentric content and pedagogies that alienate learners from their indigenous identities, knowledge, and lived experiences (Mawere, 2024; Bolt & Bezemer, 2009). To counter this, scholars propose inclusive, contextually relevant approaches aimed at transforming education into a tool for cultural affirmation and socio-economic empowerment. Mawere (2024) critiques the colonial education system for marginalising African languages and epistemologies, while privileging European values, thereby eroding local identity. He argues for the prioritisation of indigenous knowledge systems as a foundation for cultural preservation and pedagogical relevance. In alignment with this view, da Silva et al. (2024) and Fernández-Llamazares et al. (2021) advocate for the integration of indigenous languages into the education system as a means of sustaining cultural identity and facilitating meaningful learning experiences. Language is not only a medium of instruction but also a carrier of cultural heritage, which, when preserved, enhances learner engagement and knowledge internalisation.

Mdwaba (2023) and Onwutalobi (2024) reinforce this stance by calling for the replacement of Eurocentric curricula with content that centres African histories, philosophies, and traditions. This includes reclaiming African narratives and ensuring educational content reflects the lived realities of learners. Critical pedagogy, particularly articulated in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, is foundational to these discussions (Leonard & McLaren, 2002). Freire emphasises dialogic learning rooted in learners' socio-cultural experiences. Applied to Uganda, this would involve constructing curricula that reflect local knowledge and empower students to critically engage with their world. Moreover, scholars such as Ramesh (2018) and Lin (2021) underscore the necessity of integrating indigenous knowledge into formal education systems. This includes developing curricula that draw on community-based practices and cultural values relevant to learners' everyday lives. Zikargae et al. (2022) emphasise that practical, experiential

learning related to agriculture, health, and environmental sustainability is essential for making education locally responsive. Charles (2023) supports this by advocating for hands-on learning methods and the development of homegrown educational resources that address Uganda's unique challenges and opportunities. Similarly, Arinaitwe and Corbett (2022) call for pedagogical reforms that are tailored to local needs and grounded in community realities.

Bolt and Bezemer (2009) criticise the continuity of colonial structures in African education systems, which often disconnect educated elites from the grassroots population. Malott (2021) and Inertia (2023) argue that genuine decolonisation must go beyond curricular reform to address structural inequalities within the broader education system. This includes rethinking teacher training, governance structures, and resource allocation. Sebbowa and Majani (2021) propose an inclusive curriculum framework that reflects Uganda's cultural and socio-economic contexts while empowering all segments of society. Virvidaki et al. (2024) further advocate for decentralising education and involving local communities in curriculum development to ensure the relevance and responsiveness of educational content. Similarly, Heleta (2016), in *The Shame of the West*, challenges the dominance of Western educational norms in African systems and calls for resistance to epistemic domination. Falola (2003) and Sekiwu (2023) propose revisiting educational content to integrate African philosophies, spiritual traditions, and community values—thereby making education a transformative and identity-affirming process.

Additionally, Cindi (2021) raises concern about the commodification of African education under global neoliberalism, a critique echoed by Verger et al. (2017), who argue that foreign influence often distorts educational priorities. Musila (2019) highlights the critical role of African literature and the humanities in reclaiming African identities, recommending the inclusion of African arts,

history, and literature to provide learners with a more holistic and locally grounded education. Sone (2018) and Greene (2017) further emphasise the need to incorporate local Ugandan authors, poets, and historians into the curriculum to preserve and promote cultural heritage. Recent scholarship also stresses the importance of community-based, culturally relevant educational systems. Mthembu (2021) and Schreiber-Barsch et al. (2023) argue for education that fosters self-reliance rather than mimicking Western models. Obiagu (2023) adds that decolonising education must address pressing local issues—such as poverty, inequality, and underdevelopment—through practical, skill-based learning in areas like agriculture, public health, and renewable energy. Empowering communities to actively participate in shaping educational content is crucial for sustainability and relevance (Dushkova & Ivlieva, 2024). Finally, scholars such as Shahjahan et al. (2022), Kessi et al. (2021), and Coenraad et al. (2022) advocate participatory curriculum development processes that include input from students, educators, and community members. This participatory approach ensures that education is inclusive, reflective of local knowledge systems, and responsive to community aspirations.

In sum, decolonising education in Uganda demands more than curricular revision; it requires a comprehensive restructuring of educational systems to promote equity, participation, and cultural integrity. Prioritising indigenous languages, contextual knowledge, and community engagement are essential steps toward building an education system that empowers Ugandans to critically engage with and transform their social realities.

RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

To effectively decolonise Uganda's education system, a comprehensive curriculum reform is necessary, integrating indigenous knowledge systems, local languages, and cultural narratives. This reform should prioritise preserving and promoting Uganda's diverse heritage, ensuring students connect with their cultural identity.

Educators should receive training emphasising the value of indigenous knowledge and critical pedagogy, while community involvement in curriculum development is crucial to reflect local realities. Decentralising educational policies to allow regional autonomy and ongoing research and evaluation will support the integration of context-specific content, fostering self-reliance and resilience. By reforming the curriculum, preserving languages, involving local communities, and fostering critical thinking, Uganda can create an inclusive education system that empowers students, reconnects them with their heritage, and equips them to navigate local and global challenges. This decolonisation process will restore dignity and identity to Ugandans, paving the way for a more inclusive, just, and equitable society.

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