

The Competence-Based Curriculum in Uganda: Decolonization or a New Face of Neo-Colonialism

Ahumuza Audrey¹, Musiimenta Nancy²

1,2 Metropolitan International University

Abstract

This study critically examined Uganda's Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC) through decolonization and neo-colonialism theoretical frameworks to determine whether the curriculum represented genuine educational sovereignty or perpetuated external control over Uganda's educational system. Employing a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, the study recruited 450 participants across six stakeholder groups (curriculum developers, Ministry officials, development agency representatives, teacher training instructors, practicing teachers, and education scholars) from 12 purposively selected districts representing Uganda's four geographical regions. Quantitative data collected through validated questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlations, one-way ANOVA, and multiple regression analysis, while qualitative data from key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis underwent thematic analysis and critical discourse analysis. The findings revealed that international development agencies played a dominant role in CBC conceptualization, design, and financing, with stakeholders perceiving high levels of external influence ($M=4.12$, $SD=0.68$) and strong alignment with Western educational frameworks ($M=3.98$, $SD=0.74$). External influence demonstrated significant positive correlation with Western framework alignment ($r=.687$, $p<.01$) and significant negative correlations with indigenous knowledge integration ($r=-.542$, $p<.01$), perceived curriculum ownership ($r=-.614$, $p<.01$), and contextual appropriateness ($r=-.558$, $p<.01$), confirming all three research hypotheses. Multiple regression analysis predicting perceived curriculum ownership ($R^2=.562$, $F(6,443)=94.72$, $p<.001$) identified external influence ($\beta=-.341$, $p<.001$) as the strongest negative predictor while indigenous knowledge integration ($\beta=.294$, $p<.001$) emerged as a significant positive predictor. Similarly, contextual appropriateness ($R^2=.618$, $F(7,442)=103.26$, $p<.001$) was strongly predicted by perceived ownership ($\beta=.421$, $p<.001$) and indigenous knowledge integration ($\beta=.274$, $p<.001$) while negatively predicted by external influence ($\beta=-.268$, $p<.001$) and Western framework alignment ($\beta=-.186$, $p=.001$). The study concluded that Uganda's CBC constituted a neo-colonial intervention that prioritized alignment with global education standards defined by Western nations and international organizations over authentic responsiveness to Ugandan educational needs, cultural contexts, and development priorities. Recommendations included establishing constitutional protection for educational sovereignty through legislative frameworks limiting external influence, systematically centering indigenous knowledge systems and local languages as foundational curriculum elements, and democratizing curriculum development through genuinely participatory processes that engage teachers and communities as co-designers rather than passive recipients of externally conceived reforms.

Keywords: Competence-Based Curriculum, decolonization, neo-colonialism, indigenous knowledge systems, curriculum ownership

Introduction of the Study

Received: 24.12.2025

Accepted: 25.12.2025

Published on: 30.12.2025

Education systems in post-colonial African nations have long been sites of contestation between indigenous knowledge systems and externally imposed pedagogical frameworks. Uganda's recent adoption of the Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC) represents a significant shift from the traditional knowledge-based approach that has dominated its education system since independence (Julius & Kazaara, 2025; Sanjeewa, 2021). Proponents argue that CBC represents a progressive step toward decolonizing education by emphasizing practical skills, critical thinking, and learner-centered approaches that align with African developmental needs. However, critics contend that this curriculum reform, heavily influenced and financed by international development agencies and Western educational consultants, may constitute a subtle form of neo-colonialism that perpetuates external control over Uganda's educational agenda while marginalizing indigenous pedagogies and local knowledge systems (Guyo, 2017; Hamzani et al., 2021). This study critically examines the nature, implementation, and implications of Uganda's Competence-Based Curriculum through the theoretical lenses of decolonization and neo-colonialism. By investigating the origins, funding mechanisms, content, and delivery methods of the CBC, this research seeks to determine whether this educational reform genuinely represents an emancipatory move toward educational sovereignty or merely repackages colonial educational structures under the guise of modernization and competency development (Ari Maisule et al., 2023; Bazimaziki & Nsengiyumva, 2021; Summers, 2019).

Background of the Study

Uganda's formal education system has its roots in colonial missionary education, which was designed primarily to produce a class of intermediaries to serve colonial administration rather than to foster holistic African development. Following independence in 1962, successive governments attempted various educational reforms, yet the fundamental structure and epistemology of the colonial education system remained largely intact. The curriculum continued to prioritize rote memorization, theoretical knowledge, and certification over practical skills and contextual learning (Frankema & van Waijenburg, 2023; Lee, 2019). In the early 2000s, global education discourse began shifting toward competence-based approaches, championed by organizations such as UNESCO, the World Bank, and various bilateral donors. These international actors argued that competence-based education would better prepare learners for the 21st-century labor market by emphasizing transferable skills, problem-solving abilities, and practical application of knowledge. Between 2015 and 2020, Uganda embarked on a comprehensive curriculum review process that culminated in the adoption of the Competence-Based Curriculum, officially launched in phases beginning in 2020 (Frankema & van Waijenburg, 2023; Geera & Onen, 2023; Prosper Mubangizi, 2020).

The CBC emphasizes learning outcomes, continuous assessment, and the development of competencies across cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. However, the reform process has been characterized by significant involvement of international development partners who have provided substantial financial resources, technical expertise, and ideological direction. This external influence raises critical questions about ownership, appropriateness, and the extent to which the curriculum reflects Ugandan cultural values, indigenous knowledge systems, and locally identified educational priorities versus externally determined development agendas (Cook, 2022).

Scholars of decolonization argue that genuine educational independence requires African nations to reclaim their epistemological sovereignty by centering indigenous knowledge, local languages, and culturally relevant pedagogies. Conversely, the neo-colonial critique suggests that contemporary educational reforms in Africa often serve to integrate

African economies more deeply into global capitalist structures while creating dependency on external expertise and perpetuating Western cultural hegemony through seemingly neutral technical interventions (Fatimah et al., 2023; Monica, 2022).

Problem Statement

Despite the stated intentions of making education more relevant and practical for Ugandan learners, the Competence-Based Curriculum has generated considerable debate regarding its origins, ownership, and ultimate beneficiaries (Julius, 2025a, 2025b). The curriculum reform has been substantially funded and technically supported by international development agencies, raising concerns about the extent to which it reflects authentic Ugandan educational aspirations versus externally imposed development paradigms. Furthermore, there are questions about whether the CBC adequately incorporates indigenous knowledge systems, local languages, and culturally appropriate pedagogies, or whether it primarily serves to align Uganda's education system with global economic imperatives defined by Western nations and international financial institutions (Franco et al., 2023; Jamil et al., 2020).

Teachers and education stakeholders have expressed concerns about inadequate preparation, insufficient resources, and the imposition of pedagogical approaches that may not be contextually appropriate for Uganda's diverse educational settings (Charles et al., 2023; Julius & Isaac Kazaara, 2025; VERGUN et al., 2021). Additionally, the emphasis on competencies defined largely through Western frameworks may inadvertently marginalize local ways of knowing and being, thereby perpetuating epistemic violence against indigenous knowledge systems. Without critical examination of the CBC's ideological underpinnings, funding sources, content orientation, and implementation processes, Uganda risks embracing an educational reform that, despite progressive rhetoric, may constitute a new form of neo-colonial control over its most crucial institution for societal transformation (Katurebe & Nalukwago, 2024; Muwanguzi et al., 2023; Ndomondo et al., 2022). This study therefore seeks to interrogate whether the CBC represents genuine decolonization of Uganda's education system or merely repackages neo-colonial domination under contemporary development discourse.

Main Objective of the Study

To critically analyze the Competence-Based Curriculum in Uganda through decolonization and neo-colonialism theoretical frameworks in order to determine the extent to which the curriculum represents genuine educational sovereignty or perpetuates external control over Uganda's educational system.

Specific Objectives

1. To examine the role and influence of international development agencies in the conceptualization, design, and financing of Uganda's Competence-Based Curriculum.
2. To assess the extent to which Uganda's Competence-Based Curriculum integrates indigenous knowledge systems, local languages, and culturally relevant pedagogies versus Western educational frameworks and epistemologies.
3. To evaluate educators' and education stakeholders' perceptions regarding the ownership, appropriateness, and emancipatory potential of the Competence-Based Curriculum in the Ugandan context.

Research Questions

1. What role have international development agencies played in the conceptualization, design, and financing of Uganda's Competence-Based Curriculum, and how has this influenced its content and orientation?
2. To what extent does Uganda's Competence-Based Curriculum integrate indigenous knowledge systems, local languages, and culturally relevant pedagogies compared to Western educational frameworks and epistemologies?
3. How do educators and education stakeholders perceive the ownership, contextual appropriateness, and emancipatory potential of the Competence-Based Curriculum in addressing Uganda's educational needs?

Hypotheses

H1: There is a significant positive relationship between the level of international donor funding and influence in the CBC development process and the curriculum's alignment with Western educational frameworks rather than indigenous knowledge systems.

H2: The Competence-Based Curriculum demonstrates significantly lower integration of indigenous knowledge systems and local languages compared to externally derived competency frameworks and pedagogical approaches.

H3: Educators' perceptions of curriculum ownership and contextual appropriateness are significantly negatively correlated with the level of external involvement in CBC design and implementation, suggesting that greater foreign influence reduces perceptions of local ownership and relevance.

Methods.

This study employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods research design to critically examine Uganda's Competence-Based Curriculum through decolonization and neo-colonialism theoretical frameworks. The study was conducted across 12 purposively selected districts representing Uganda's four geographical regions (Central, Eastern, Northern, and Western) to ensure geographical diversity and contextual variation. The target population comprised curriculum developers from the National Curriculum Development Centre (N=45), Ministry of Education officials (N=30), representatives from international development agencies operating in Uganda's education sector (N=25), teacher training college instructors (N=120), secondary school teachers implementing the CBC (N=850), and education policy scholars from Ugandan universities (N=40). Using Cochran's formula for sample size calculation with a 95% confidence level, 5% margin of error, and 50% proportion to maximize sample size, and applying a design effect of 1.5 for the multistage sampling approach, the study determined a minimum required sample of 384 respondents to achieve 80% statistical power for detecting medium effect sizes (Cohen's $d = 0.5$). To account for potential non-response and ensure adequate representation across stakeholder categories, the study recruited 450 participants comprising 35 curriculum developers, 25 Ministry officials, 20 development agency representatives, 80 teacher trainers, 270 practicing teachers, and 20 education scholars. Quantitative data were collected using a structured questionnaire with validated scales measuring perceptions of curriculum ownership (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.87$), integration of indigenous knowledge ($\alpha = 0.84$), external influence ($\alpha = 0.89$), and contextual appropriateness ($\alpha = 0.86$), while qualitative data were gathered through 15 key informant interviews with senior curriculum developers and policy makers, 8 focus group discussions with teachers (6-8 participants each), and document analysis of curriculum policy documents, funding agreements, and technical assistance reports from international agencies. Quantitative data were

analyzed using SPSS version 26, employing descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations), inferential statistics including independent samples t-tests and one-way ANOVA to compare perceptions across stakeholder groups, Pearson correlation coefficients to examine relationships between variables as specified in the hypotheses, and multiple regression analysis to determine predictors of perceived curriculum ownership and appropriateness while controlling for confounding variables such as teaching experience, geographical location, and level of education (Nelson et al., 2022, 2023). The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings occurred at the interpretation stage through convergence coding matrices and joint displays that allowed for comparison, confirmation, and expansion of insights regarding whether the CBC represents decolonization or neo-colonialism. Ethical approval was obtained from Makerere University School of Education Research Ethics Committee, and all participants provided written informed consent after being assured of confidentiality, anonymity, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences.

Results.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Study Participants (N=450)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Stakeholder Group	Curriculum Developers	35	7.8
	Ministry Officials	25	5.6
	Development Agency Representatives	20	4.4
	Teacher Training Instructors	80	17.8
	Practicing Teachers	270	60.0
	Education Scholars	20	4.4
Gender	Male	248	55.1
	Female	202	44.9
Region	Central	128	28.4
	Eastern	110	24.4
	Northern	106	23.6
	Western	106	23.6

Teaching Experience	Less than 5 years	142	31.6
	5-10 years	165	36.7
	11-15 years	89	19.8
	Over 15 years	54	12.0
Level of Education	Diploma	156	34.7
	Bachelor's Degree	218	48.4
	Master's Degree	62	13.8
	Doctoral Degree	14	3.1

The demographic distribution of the 450 study participants revealed a well-balanced representation across Uganda's four geographical regions, with Central region accounting for 28.4% of participants, while Eastern (24.4%), Northern (23.6%), and Western (23.6%) regions demonstrated nearly equal representation, ensuring that findings captured diverse contextual perspectives from across the country. Practicing teachers constituted the largest stakeholder group at 60.0% (n=270), which was methodologically appropriate given that they represented the primary implementers of the Competence-Based Curriculum and could provide authentic insights into its practical application and contextual appropriateness. Teacher training instructors comprised 17.8% of the sample, while curriculum developers (7.8%), Ministry officials (5.6%), development agency representatives (4.4%), and education scholars (4.4%) provided specialized technical and policy perspectives. The gender distribution showed a moderate male predominance (55.1% vs. 44.9%), which reflected the broader gender composition within Uganda's education sector, particularly at secondary school level where male teachers remained slightly more numerous than their female counterparts.

The teaching experience profile demonstrated that the majority of participants (68.4%) had over five years of experience, with 36.7% having 5-10 years, 19.8% having 11-15 years, and 12.0% possessing over 15 years of teaching experience, suggesting that the sample comprised predominantly experienced educators who had witnessed Uganda's educational transitions and could provide informed comparative perspectives on the CBC versus previous curriculum frameworks. Educational qualifications indicated that 48.4% held bachelor's degrees and 34.7% held diplomas, representing the typical qualification structure of Uganda's teaching workforce, while 16.9% possessed postgraduate qualifications (master's or doctoral degrees), primarily among curriculum developers, Ministry officials, education scholars, and teacher training instructors. This demographic composition was statistically adequate for addressing the study objectives, as the sample size of 450 exceeded the minimum required 384 participants calculated to achieve 80% statistical power, thereby reducing Type II error probability and enhancing the study's capacity to detect genuine effects regarding external influence, indigenous knowledge integration, and perceptions of curriculum ownership.

across diverse stakeholder groups with varying levels of proximity to curriculum development and implementation processes.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis of Key Study Variables (N=450)

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1. External Influence in CBC Development	4.12	0.68	1			
2. Alignment with Western Frameworks	3.98	0.74	.687**	1		
3. Integration of Indigenous Knowledge	2.34	0.81	-.542**	-.608**	1	
4. Perceived Curriculum Ownership	2.51	0.86	-.614**	-.573**	.621**	1
5. Contextual Appropriateness	2.68	0.79	-.558**	-.531**	.594**	.712**

*Note: All variables measured on 5-point Likert scales (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree). * $p < .01$ (2-tailed)

The descriptive statistics revealed striking patterns regarding stakeholders' perceptions of Uganda's Competence-Based Curriculum that supported the study's critical examination through neo-colonial theoretical lenses. External influence in CBC development received the highest mean score ($M=4.12$, $SD=0.68$), indicating that participants strongly agreed that international development agencies played a substantial role in conceptualizing, designing, and financing the curriculum, with the relatively low standard deviation (0.68) suggesting considerable consensus across diverse stakeholder groups regarding this external involvement. Similarly, alignment with Western educational frameworks demonstrated a high mean score ($M=3.98$, $SD=0.74$), reflecting participants' strong perceptions that the CBC predominantly reflected Western pedagogical approaches, competency definitions, and epistemological orientations rather than locally derived educational philosophies. In stark contrast, integration of indigenous knowledge systems received the lowest mean score ($M=2.34$, $SD=0.81$), indicating that participants disagreed that the CBC adequately incorporated local knowledge, cultural values, and indigenous pedagogies, while perceived curriculum ownership ($M=2.51$, $SD=0.86$) and contextual appropriateness ($M=2.68$, $SD=0.79$) also fell significantly below the midpoint of the scale, suggesting widespread skepticism regarding local control over curriculum development and doubts about the CBC's suitability for Uganda's diverse educational contexts.

The correlation analysis provided robust statistical evidence supporting all three research hypotheses and revealed theoretically meaningful relationships between variables that illuminated the neo-colonial dynamics within Uganda's curriculum reform. External influence demonstrated a strong positive correlation with alignment to Western frameworks ($r=.687$, $p<.01$), confirming Hypothesis 1 and indicating that greater involvement of international donors corresponded with stronger orientation toward Western educational models rather than indigenous knowledge systems. Critically, external influence showed strong negative correlations with integration of indigenous knowledge

($r=-.542, p<.01$), perceived curriculum ownership ($r=-.614, p<.01$), and contextual appropriateness ($r=-.558, p<.01$), suggesting that international involvement operated as a displacement mechanism that marginalized local epistemologies and diminished stakeholders' sense of ownership over their own educational system. The particularly strong negative correlation between alignment with Western frameworks and integration of indigenous knowledge ($r=-.608, p<.01$) provided compelling evidence for Hypothesis 2, demonstrating that these represented competing rather than complementary orientations within the curriculum. Furthermore, the strong positive correlation between indigenous knowledge integration and perceived curriculum ownership ($r=.621, p<.01$) suggested that stakeholders associated authentic decolonization with the centering of local knowledge systems, while the robust correlation between perceived ownership and contextual appropriateness ($r=.712, p<.01$) indicated that locally controlled curriculum development was viewed as essential for creating education that meaningfully addressed Uganda's specific developmental needs rather than serving externally defined global competitiveness agendas that characterized neo-colonial educational interventions.

Table 3: Comparison of Perceptions Across Stakeholder Groups Using One-Way ANOVA (N=450)

Variable	Stakeholder Group	N	Mean	SD	F	p	η^2
External Influence	Curriculum Developers	35	3.42	0.71	28.64	<.001	.243
	Ministry Officials	25	3.68	0.65			
	Development Agencies	20	3.21	0.83			
	Teacher Trainers	80	4.15	0.58			
	Practicing Teachers	270	4.34	0.54			
	Education Scholars	20	4.52	0.49			
Indigenous Knowledge Integration	Curriculum Developers	35	3.18	0.74	35.71	<.001	.287
	Ministry Officials	25	2.96	0.68			
	Development Agencies	20	3.45	0.79			
	Teacher Trainers	80	2.31	0.71			
	Practicing Teachers	270	2.15	0.75			
	Education Scholars	20	1.87	0.68			

Perceived Curriculum Ownership	Curriculum Developers	35	3.54	0.79	42.18	<.001	.322
	Ministry Officials	25	3.28	0.73			
	Development Agencies	20	3.71	0.82			
	Teacher Trainers	80	2.47	0.68			
	Practicing Teachers	270	2.28	0.74			
	Education Scholars	20	1.93	0.71			

Note: Post-hoc Tukey HSD tests indicated significant differences ($p < .05$) between policy makers (Curriculum Developers, Ministry Officials, Development Agencies) and implementers (Teacher Trainers, Practicing Teachers, Education Scholars) across all variables.

The one-way ANOVA results revealed statistically significant differences across stakeholder groups for all three key variables, with particularly large effect sizes that indicated substantively meaningful variations in how different actors within Uganda's education system perceived the Competence-Based Curriculum. For external influence, the omnibus F-test was highly significant ($F(5,444)=28.64, p < .001, \eta^2=.243$), representing a large effect size whereby stakeholder group membership explained approximately 24.3% of the variance in perceptions of international donor involvement. Post-hoc comparisons using Tukey HSD tests revealed a clear bifurcation between policy-level actors and implementation-level practitioners, with education scholars ($M=4.52$), practicing teachers ($M=4.34$), and teacher trainers ($M=4.15$) perceiving significantly higher external influence compared to curriculum developers ($M=3.42$), Ministry officials ($M=3.68$), and development agency representatives ($M=3.21$), all pairwise comparisons $p < .001$. This pattern suggested that those closest to curriculum development processes either genuinely perceived less external domination due to their involvement in ostensibly collaborative processes, or alternatively, were ideologically invested in defending the legitimacy of their work and therefore minimized acknowledgment of foreign control, whereas implementers who experienced the curriculum as a *fait accompli* imposed from above more readily recognized and critiqued the neo-colonial dimensions of external influence.

The findings for indigenous knowledge integration demonstrated an even larger effect size ($F(5,444)=35.71, p < .001, \eta^2=.287$), with stakeholder groups explaining 28.7% of variance in perceptions, and revealed an inverse relationship to external influence perceptions wherein policy makers rated indigenous knowledge integration significantly higher than implementers. Development agency representatives provided the highest ratings ($M=3.45$), followed by curriculum developers ($M=3.18$) and Ministry officials ($M=2.96$), while teacher trainers ($M=2.31$), practicing teachers ($M=2.15$), and particularly education scholars ($M=1.87$) offered substantially lower assessments, with all differences between policy and implementation groups statistically significant at $p < .001$. This divergence was theoretically significant as it suggested that curriculum architects either genuinely believed they had adequately incorporated

indigenous knowledge through tokenistic inclusion of superficial cultural elements, or were engaged in what postcolonial scholars term "strategic essentialism" whereby symbolic gestures toward local content masked fundamental epistemological alignment with Western frameworks. Conversely, implementers' lower ratings, especially among education scholars trained in critical pedagogy, indicated recognition that authentic integration of indigenous knowledge required more than superficial cultural references and demanded fundamental epistemological decolonization that challenged Western knowledge hierarchies. The perceived curriculum ownership variable demonstrated the largest effect size ($F(5,444)=42.18, p<.001, \eta^2=.322$), with particularly stark contrasts wherein policy makers (curriculum developers $M=3.54$, Ministry officials $M=3.28$, development agencies $M=3.71$) maintained moderate perceptions of local ownership while implementers expressed significantly lower ownership perceptions (teacher trainers $M=2.47$, practicing teachers $M=2.28$, education scholars $M=1.93$). This hierarchical gradient strongly supported Hypothesis 3 and illuminated the power asymmetries inherent in Uganda's curriculum reform, wherein those with decision-making authority and direct relationships with international funders maintained illusions of ownership despite substantial external influence, while those responsible for actualizing the curriculum in diverse Ugandan contexts experienced it as an externally imposed neo-colonial intervention that marginalized their professional knowledge, contextual expertise, and pedagogical agency, thereby reproducing colonial patterns of knowledge production wherein African educators served as passive recipients and implementers of educational models conceived elsewhere rather than as legitimate knowledge creators and curriculum designers for their own societies.

Table 4: Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Perceived Curriculum Ownership and Contextual Appropriateness (N=450)

Model 1: Predicting Perceived Curriculum Ownership				
Predictor Variable	B	SE	β	t
(Constant)	5.742	0.283		20.29
External Influence	-0.428	0.062	-.341	-6.90
Western Framework Alignment	-0.186	0.058	-.160	-3.21
Indigenous Knowledge Integration	0.312	0.048	.294	6.50
Teaching Experience	0.089	0.034	.092	2.62
Education Level	0.124	0.041	.108	3.02
Region (ref: Central)	-0.043	0.037	-.038	-1.16

Model Summary: $R^2=.562, Adjusted R^2=.556, F(6,443)=94.72, p<.001$

Model 2: Predicting Contextual Appropriateness				
Predictor Variable	B	SE	β	t
(Constant)	5.234	0.297		17.62
External Influence	-0.312	0.065	-.268	-4.80
Western Framework Alignment	-0.198	0.061	-.186	-3.25
Indigenous Knowledge Integration	0.267	0.050	.274	5.34
Perceived Curriculum Ownership	0.389	0.046	.421	8.46
Teaching Experience	0.075	0.036	.081	2.08
Education Level	0.095	0.043	.089	2.21
Region (ref: Central)	-0.038	0.039	-.036	-0.97

Model Summary: $R^2=.618$, Adjusted $R^2=.612$, $F(7,442)=103.26$, $p<.001$

Interpretation of Regression Models

The multiple regression analysis for Model 1 predicting perceived curriculum ownership demonstrated exceptionally strong explanatory power, with the combination of predictor variables accounting for 56.2% of the variance in ownership perceptions ($R^2=.562$, Adjusted $R^2=.556$, $F(6,443)=94.72$, $p<.001$), representing a large effect size that substantially exceeded conventional thresholds for social science research and indicated that the theoretical framework centering external influence, epistemological orientation, and indigenous knowledge integration captured the core dynamics shaping stakeholders' sense of ownership over Uganda's curriculum. External influence emerged as the strongest negative predictor ($\beta=-.341$, $t=-6.90$, $p<.001$), indicating that for every one-unit increase in perceived external influence (on the 5-point scale), perceived curriculum ownership decreased by 0.428 units while holding all other variables constant, thereby providing robust support for Hypothesis 3 and confirming that international donor involvement operated as a mechanism of dispossession that alienated Ugandan educators from their own educational system. Western framework alignment also significantly negatively predicted ownership ($\beta=-.160$, $t=-3.21$, $p=.001$), suggesting that curricula perceived as epistemologically foreign generated resistance and disidentification among implementers. Conversely, indigenous knowledge integration demonstrated a strong positive relationship with ownership ($\beta=.294$, $t=6.50$, $p<.001$), indicating that stakeholders experienced curricula incorporating local epistemologies as authentically "theirs" and worthy of investment, thereby highlighting that decolonization through centering indigenous knowledge systems represented not merely symbolic politics but a material determinant of

implementation success and professional commitment. The significant positive effects of teaching experience ($\beta=.092$, $p=.009$) and education level ($\beta=.108$, $p=.003$) suggested that more experienced and highly educated practitioners possessed greater critical consciousness to recognize neo-colonial patterns, while the non-significant regional variable ($\beta=-.038$, $p=.247$) indicated that perceptions of ownership transcended geographical location and represented a national phenomenon across Uganda's diverse contexts.

Model 2 predicting contextual appropriateness explained an even larger proportion of variance ($R^2=.618$, Adjusted $R^2=.612$, $F(7,442)=103.26$, $p<.001$), with 61.8% of variability in appropriateness perceptions accounted for by the predictor set, representing an exceptionally strong model for educational research and demonstrating that the study successfully identified the critical factors determining whether curriculum reforms were perceived as contextually relevant versus contextually alienating. Perceived curriculum ownership emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta=.421$, $t=8.46$, $p<.001$), indicating that stakeholders who experienced agency and ownership over curriculum development were substantially more likely to view the curriculum as appropriate for Uganda's contexts, thereby establishing ownership as a critical mediating mechanism through which decolonization could translate into practical educational effectiveness. External influence ($\beta=-.268$, $t=-4.80$, $p<.001$) and Western framework alignment ($\beta=-.186$, $t=-3.25$, $p=.001$) both significantly negatively predicted contextual appropriateness, providing compelling evidence that internationally driven reforms employing Western pedagogical models were perceived as contextually dissonant with Uganda's educational realities, including resource constraints, large class sizes, linguistic diversity, and cultural values that emphasized communal learning and respect for elder knowledge. Indigenous knowledge integration positively predicted appropriateness ($\beta=.274$, $t=5.34$, $p<.001$), reinforcing that curricula incorporating local knowledge, languages, and culturally relevant examples were viewed as more suitable for addressing Uganda's specific developmental challenges. The combined regression findings illuminated a clear theoretical pathway wherein external influence displaced indigenous knowledge and local ownership, which in turn undermined perceptions of contextual appropriateness, thereby suggesting that Uganda's Competence-Based Curriculum, despite rhetoric of learner-centeredness and skills development, functioned as a neo-colonial intervention that prioritized alignment with global education standards defined by Western nations and international organizations over authentic responsiveness to Ugandan educational needs, cultural contexts, and development priorities, ultimately reproducing dependency relationships wherein Uganda's education system served external agendas of producing workers for global capitalism rather than empowered citizens equipped with knowledge and skills rooted in African epistemologies and oriented toward African flourishing.

Conclusion

This study critically examined Uganda's Competence-Based Curriculum through decolonization and neo-colonialism theoretical frameworks, achieving its main objective of determining whether the curriculum represented genuine educational sovereignty or perpetuated external control over Uganda's educational system. The findings provided compelling evidence that the CBC constituted a new face of neo-colonialism rather than authentic decolonization. Regarding the first specific objective examining the role of international development agencies, the results

demonstrated that external actors played a dominant role in conceptualizing, designing, and financing the curriculum, with stakeholders perceiving high levels of external influence ($M=4.12$) and strong alignment with Western educational frameworks ($M=3.98$). The regression analysis confirmed that external influence significantly predicted both reduced curriculum ownership ($\beta=-.341, p<.001$) and diminished contextual appropriateness ($\beta=-.268, p<.001$), while the strong positive correlation between external influence and Western framework alignment ($r=.687, p<.01$) validated Hypothesis 1 and revealed that international donor involvement systematically oriented the curriculum toward externally defined competency standards rather than locally determined educational priorities. Addressing the second specific objective regarding indigenous knowledge integration, the study found critically low levels of incorporation of indigenous knowledge systems, local languages, and culturally relevant pedagogies ($M=2.34$), with the strong negative correlation between Western framework alignment and indigenous knowledge integration ($r=-.608, p<.01$) confirming Hypothesis 2 and demonstrating that these represented competing rather than complementary orientations wherein external influence actively displaced local epistemologies. The particularly striking finding that education scholars, who possessed the theoretical training to recognize epistemological colonization, rated indigenous knowledge integration lowest ($M=1.87$) suggested that the CBC's claims to cultural relevance constituted superficial tokenism rather than fundamental epistemological decolonization.

Regarding the third specific objective evaluating stakeholders' perceptions of ownership, appropriateness, and emancipatory potential, the findings revealed widespread skepticism, with low ratings for perceived curriculum ownership ($M=2.51$) and contextual appropriateness ($M=2.68$) across implementation-level stakeholders. The significant group differences wherein policy makers rated ownership substantially higher than implementers (curriculum developers $M=3.54$ vs. education scholars $M=1.93, p<.001$) illuminated profound disconnects between those who collaborated with international donors in curriculum design and those who confronted the practical realities of implementing externally conceived pedagogies in diverse Ugandan contexts. The regression analysis powerfully confirmed Hypothesis 3, demonstrating that greater external involvement significantly reduced perceptions of ownership ($r=-.614, p<.01$), while indigenous knowledge integration emerged as a strong positive predictor of both ownership ($\beta=.294, p<.001$) and contextual appropriateness ($\beta=.274, p<.001$). Most critically, the exceptionally strong relationship between perceived ownership and contextual appropriateness ($r=.712, p<.01; \beta=.421, p<.001$) established that authentic local control over curriculum development functioned as the essential mechanism through which education could address Uganda's specific developmental needs rather than serving global competitiveness agendas defined by Western nations and international financial institutions. Collectively, these findings demonstrated that despite progressive rhetoric emphasizing competencies and learner-centeredness, Uganda's CBC reproduced colonial patterns of knowledge production wherein African educators served as passive implementers of externally conceived models rather than legitimate curriculum designers for their own societies, thereby perpetuating epistemic violence, undermining professional agency, and ultimately serving neo-colonial projects of integrating Uganda more deeply into global capitalist structures while maintaining dependency on external expertise and marginalizing indigenous knowledge systems that could provide foundations for genuinely emancipatory education oriented toward African flourishing rather than Western-defined development paradigms.

Recommendations

Establish Constitutional Protection for Educational Sovereignty: The Ugandan government should enact legislative frameworks that guarantee local ownership of curriculum development by requiring that at least 75% of curriculum design committees comprise Ugandan educators, scholars, and community representatives, while limiting international development agency involvement to advisory roles without decision-making authority or conditionality attached to funding.

Systematically Center Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Local Languages: The National Curriculum Development Centre should undertake a comprehensive curriculum revision process that authentically integrates indigenous knowledge systems, local languages, and culturally relevant pedagogies as foundational rather than supplementary elements, ensuring that African epistemologies occupy equal status with Western knowledge frameworks rather than being marginalized as exotic additions to fundamentally Eurocentric curricula.

Democratize Curriculum Development Through Participatory Processes: The Ministry of Education and Sports should institutionalize genuinely participatory curriculum development processes that engage practicing teachers, teacher trainers, parents, students, and local communities as co-designers rather than passive recipients of curriculum reforms, thereby building the ownership and contextual appropriateness that this study identified as essential for implementation success.

Recommendations.

Ari Maisule, S., Bamidele, J., & Olayemi Sennuga, S. (2023). A Critical Review of Historical Analysis of Social Change in Nigeria from the Pre-Colonial To the Post-Colonial Period. *International Journal of Arts, Humanities & Social Science*, 04(04). <https://doi.org/10.56734/ijahss.v4n4a8>

Bazimaziki, G., & Nsengiyumva, V. (2021). The enslaved family as reflected in Post-colonial African Drama: Ngugi and Ngugi's I Will Marry When I Want. *Journal of Humanities and Education Development*, 3(3). <https://doi.org/10.22161/jhed.3.3.2>

Charles, K., Song, Z., & Khaing, T. (2023). Factors Affecting the Implementation of Competency-Based Curriculum in Secondary Schools in Uganda: A Systematic Literature Review. *North American Academic Research*, 6(9).

Cook, E. J. (2022). A narrative review of graduate employability models: Their paradigms, and relationships to teaching and curricula. *Journal of Teaching and Learning for Graduate Employability*, 13(1). <https://doi.org/10.21153/jtlge2022vol13no1art1483>

Fatimah, A. T., Isyanto, A. Y., & Toto. (2023). Science, technology, engineering, agriculture, mathematics, and health in agribusiness curriculum. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education*, 12(4). <https://doi.org/10.11591/ijere.v12i4.25665>

- Franco, L. F. M., da Costa, A. C., de Almeida Neto, A. F., Moraes, Â. M., Tambourgi, E. B., Miranda, E. A., de Castilho, G. J., Doubek, G., Dangelo, J. V. H., Fregolente, L. V., Lona, L. M. F., de La Torre, L. G., Alvarez, L. A., da Costa, M. C., Martinez, P. F. M., Ceriani, R., Zemp, R. J., Vieira, R. P., Maciel Filho, R., ... Suppino, R. S. (2023). A competency-based chemical engineering curriculum at the University of Campinas in Brazil. *Education for Chemical Engineers*, 44. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ece.2023.04.001>
- Frankema, E., & van Waijenburg, M. (2023). What about the race between education and technology in the Global South? Comparing skill premiums in colonial Africa and Asia. *Economic History Review*, 76(3). <https://doi.org/10.1111/ehr.13221>
- Geera, S., & Onen, D. (2023). Challenges in Reforming University Curricula for Graduate Employability: Head of Academic Departments Perspective. *East African Journal of Education Studies*, 6(3). <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajes.6.3.1661>
- Guyo, F. B. (2017). Colonial and post-colonial changes and impact on pastoral women's roles and status. *Pastoralism*, 7(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13570-017-0076-2>
- Hamzani, D. N., Abdullah, A. A., Awang, Mohd. D., Abdul Kadir, M. N., & Mohd. Fadzil, A. F. (2021). A Historical Appraisal of Ethics and Civilization in Malaysia from Pre-Colonial to Post-Colonial Era. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 11(12). <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v11-i12/11785>
- Jamil, M., Muhammad, Y., Masood, S., & Habib, Z. (2020). Critical thinking: A qualitative content analysis of education policy and secondary school science curriculum documents. *Journal of Research and Reflections*, 14(2).
- Julius, A. (2025a). *Are Ugandan University Learners Ready to Harness AI? The Garbage In, Garbage Out Dilemma*.
- Julius, A. (2025b). *Modern Parenting: Avoiding Discipline and the Rise of Unruly Adults*.
- Julius, A., & Isaac Kazaara, A. (2025). The Competency Paradox: How Traditional Grading Nullifies the Objectives of Uganda's Competency-Based Curriculum. In *International Journal of Academic Multidisciplinary Research (IJAMR)* (Vol. 9). www.ijeais.org/ijamr
- Julius, A., & Kazaara, A. I. (2025). The Legacy of Educational Commissions in Uganda: A 200% Scorecard from Pre-Colonial, Colonial, to Post-Colonial Eras. In *International Journal of Academic Pedagogical Research* (Vol. 9). www.ijeais.org/ijapr
- Katurebe, B., & Nalukwago, H. (2024). THE INFLUENCE OF COMPETENCY-BASED CURRICULUM PROMOTED STUDENTS' SELF-DISCOVERY IN SELECTED GOVERNMENT-AIDED SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF WAKISO DISTRICT, UGANDA. A CROSS-SECTIONAL SURVEY. *SJ Education Research Africa*, 1(1). <https://doi.org/10.51168/sjeducation.v1i1.5>

- Lee, H. (2019). A Study on Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *I Will Marry When I Want* and *Devil on the Cross*: the First and Second Emancipation Generations' Recognition of Neo-coloniality and the Orature of Their Struggle. *The Journal of Mirae English Language and Literature*, 24(1). <https://doi.org/10.46449/mjell.2019.02.24.1.69>
- Monica, A. (2022). Implementing the Lower Secondary Curriculum in Uganda During the Covid-19 Crisis. *African Journal of Education, Science and Technology*, 7(2).
- Muwanguzi, E., Kibaya, E., Serunjogi, D., & Dickens, C. (2023). Assessing the Impact of Competency-Based Curriculum on O' LEVEL History Education in Uganda: A Comprehensive Literature Review 1. In *Quest Journals Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Science* (Vol. 11, Issue 7).
- Ndomondo, E., Mbise, A., & Katabaro, J. (2022). History teachers' conceptualization of competency-based curriculum in transforming instructional practices in lower secondary schools in Tanzania. *Social Sciences and Humanities Open*, 6(1). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2022.100331>
- Nelson, K., Christopher, F., & Milton, N. (2022). *Teach Yourself Spss and Stata*. 6(7), 84–122.
- Nelson, K., Kazaara, A. G., & Kazaara, A. I. (2023). *Teach Yourself E-Views*. 7(3), 124–145.
- Prosper Mubangizi. (2020). UGANDA'S NEW LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM: MOVING TOWARDS A COMPETENT AND QUALITY EDUCATION SYSTEM. Policy Brief. In *NCDC*.
- Sanjeewa, Dr. W. (2021). Historical Perspective of Gender Typed Participation in the Performing Arts in Sri Lanka During the Pre- Colonial, The Colonial Era, and the Post- Colonial Eras. *International Journal of Social Science and Human Research*, 04(05). <https://doi.org/10.47191/ijsshr/v4-i5-15>
- Summers, C. (2019). Learning leadership? Elite Ugandan students and late colonial politics. *Africa*, 89(S1). <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0001972018000943>
- VERGUN, A. R., YAGELO, S. P., VERGUN, O. M., HAVRYLIUK, I. M., & KIT, Z. M. (2021). Academic integrity of applicants: curriculum and examination of scientific papers in the context of counteraction to academic plagiarism. *Higher Education of Ukraine in the Context of Integration to European Educational Space*, 88((I)). <https://doi.org/10.38014/osvita.2021.88.03>