

# Integrating Indigenous Music Instruments into Uganda's Competency-Based Curriculum: A Qualitative Multiple-Case Study of Opportunities, Challenges, and Decolonial Pathways in Wakiso District Secondary Schools

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## Abstract

Uganda's Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) for lower secondary schools signals a transformative shift toward learner-centred, contextually responsive education, yet integration of indigenous music instruments *Adungu* (bow-harp), *Endingidi* (tube-fiddle), *Akogo* (lamellaphone), *Engoma* (drums), and *Enanga* (trough zither) into formal music education remains substantially underexplored. This qualitative multiple-case study investigated the opportunities, challenges, and decolonial pathways for integrating indigenous instruments into CBC music education across six secondary schools in Wakiso District, Uganda. Drawing on decolonial pedagogy, indigenous knowledge systems theory, and sociocultural learning theory, the study employed lesson observations, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis with 114 participants: 18 music teachers, 90 learners (S1–S4), and six school administrators. Thematic analysis revealed four opportunity themes CBC's competency orientation, cultural relevance imperatives, learner-centred pedagogies, and assessment flexibility alongside four challenge themes: instrument scarcity, teacher capacity gaps, colonial curriculum legacies, and resource inequities. Four decolonial integration pathways emerged: community-school partnerships, teacher professional development grounded in indigenous epistemologies, curriculum localisation embedding indigenous instruments as core content, and policy advocacy for equitable resource allocation. Findings demonstrate that indigenous instruments can operationalise CBC principles while advancing educational decolonisation, but systemic barriers require coordinated intervention across policy, pedagogy, and resource provisioning. The study contributes empirical evidence to inform curriculum implementation, teacher education reform, and culturally responsive music pedagogy in Uganda and comparable postcolonial contexts globally.

**Keywords:** *Competency-Based Curriculum, decolonial pedagogy, indigenous music instruments, music education, Uganda.*

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## Introduction

Uganda's National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) introduced the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) for lower secondary schools in 2020, signalling a shift from rote memorisation toward competency development, learner-centred pedagogy, and culturally responsive education (Namatende-Sakwa et al., 2025; Wawire et al., 2025). For music educators, this reform raises critical questions: Whose musical knowledge is valued? What role can Uganda's indigenous instrument traditions play in a curriculum claiming to be both globally oriented and locally grounded? Indigenous instruments *Adungu*, *Endingidi*, *Akogo*, *Engoma*, *Enanga* embody sophisticated epistemological systems transmitting cultural knowledge, social values, and identity across generations (Busobozi & Ekadu, 2026a; Busobozi & Ekadu, 2026b; Nzewi, 2019). Their marginalisation in formal schooling constitutes an epistemological impoverishment rooted in colonial educational architecture that privileged Western knowledge while displacing indigenous traditions (Wa Thiong'o, 1986; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). Despite CBC's explicit call for contextually relevant musical experiences (NCDC, 2020), empirical evidence on how integration unfolds in practice remains scarce. This study addresses that gap by investigating opportunities, challenges, and decolonial pathways for integrating indigenous instruments into CBC music education in Wakiso District, guided by three research questions: (1) What opportunities does CBC create for indigenous instrument integration? (2) What challenges do teachers, learners, and administrators encounter? (3) What decolonial pathways enable authentic, sustainable integration?

## Theoretical Framework

The study draws on three complementary theoretical frameworks that together illuminate the political, epistemological, and pedagogical dimensions of indigenous instrument integration in CBC contexts.

Decolonial pedagogy (Mignolo, 2007; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018; Wa Thiong'o, 1986) provides the overarching critical lens, interrogating the colonality of knowledge embedded in postcolonial education systems. Decolonial scholars argue that curricula in postcolonial Africa continue to reproduce colonial hierarchies by privileging Western epistemologies while marginalising indigenous knowledge traditions (Ngoma & Fikelepi-Twani, 2024; Roy, 2021). In music education specifically, this manifests as the privileging of Western notation, instruments, and theory as the unmarked standard against which indigenous music is measured and found wanting. Decolonial pedagogy demands not merely the addition of indigenous content to existing curricula but a fundamental restructuring of knowledge hierarchies what Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) terms "epistemic freedom." This framework guided analysis of how institutional



practices, curriculum documents, and teacher attitudes reproduce or challenge colonial epistemological orders.

Indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) theory (Akuno, 2019; Isabirye, 2022; Nzewi, 2003, 2019) positions indigenous instruments as holistic knowledge networks integrating technical skill, cultural narrative, social function, and embodied cognition. Nzewi (2003, 2019) argues that African musical instruments are not merely sound-producing objects but complex epistemological systems through which communities transmit values, histories, and identities. *Adungu* performance, for instance, encodes Acholi cultural memory; *Endingidi* playing in Bunyoro Kingdom carries specific narrative and social functions (Busobozi & Ekadu, 2026a; Busobozi & Ekadu, 2026b); *Engoma* drumming coordinates communal ritual and celebration. IKS theory guided interpretation of how instruments function as living knowledge systems rather than cultural artefacts, and how their integration into formal schooling can constitute genuine epistemological pluralism rather than tokenistic representation.

Sociocultural learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978; Wenger, 1998) emphasises that learning is inherently social, situated, and mediated through communities of practice. This framework is particularly pertinent because indigenous music transmission has historically occurred through apprenticeship, oral demonstration, community performance, and intergenerational mentorship processes that align closely with sociocultural understandings of learning as participation in communities of practice (Mabingo, 2020; Makwa, 2025). Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development illuminates how more experienced community musicians can scaffold learners' acquisition of complex indigenous instrument skills, while Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of legitimate peripheral participation explains how learners gradually move from observation to full participation in indigenous musical communities. Together, these three frameworks provided an integrated analytical architecture for understanding the opportunities, challenges, and pathways identified in this study.

## Materials and Methods

### Research Design

This study employed a qualitative multiple-case study design (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018), appropriate for investigating complex, context-bound phenomena across multiple sites where the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. Multiple-case design was selected over single-case design to enable cross-case comparison, strengthen analytical rigour through replication logic, and enhance the transferability of findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Each school constituted an individual case, with cross-case analysis revealing both convergent patterns and site-specific variations. The study was conducted across six purposively selected secondary schools in Wakiso District a culturally diverse district surrounding Kampala, hosting communities from multiple ethnic groups including Baganda, Banyoro, Acholi, Langi, and Basoga, and thus providing a strategic site for examining the integration of instruments from diverse cultural traditions. Schools were selected to represent variation in location (urban/peri-urban), school type (government/private),

and resource level (well-resourced/under-resourced), ensuring that findings captured the full range of implementation contexts.



## Participants

A total of 114 participants were recruited through purposive sampling, which prioritises information richness over statistical representativeness (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The sample comprised 18 music teachers (three per school), 90 learners drawn from Senior 1 to Senior 4 (15 per school), and six school administrators (one per school). Music teachers were selected based on their current teaching of the CBC music syllabus; learners were selected to represent gender balance and different year groups; administrators were selected based on their oversight responsibility for curriculum implementation. Participant identities are protected through coded identifiers (e.g., T1–T18 for teachers, L1–L90 for learners, A1–A6 for administrators) throughout this paper.



Figure 1. The Five Indigenous Instruments Examined in This Study



Data were generated through four complementary methods over a six-month period from February to July 2025, enabling prolonged engagement and methodological triangulation. First, lesson observations (three per school, 18 total) were conducted using structured observation protocols capturing teacher-learner interactions, instrument use, pedagogical approaches, classroom environment, and CBC competency alignment. Observations lasted 80 minutes each, corresponding to standard lesson duration. Second, semi-structured interviews were conducted individually with all 18 teachers and six administrators, each lasting 45–60 minutes, exploring experiences, perceptions, challenges, and recommendations regarding indigenous instrument integration. Interview guides were developed iteratively, with initial questions refined following early interviews. Third, focus group discussions were conducted with learners (one per school, six total), each involving 12–15 learners and lasting 60–75 minutes, exploring engagement, cultural identity, learning experiences, and perceptions of indigenous versus Western music education. Fourth, document analysis was conducted on school music syllabi, lesson plans, schemes of work, CBC policy documents, and NCDC curriculum frameworks. All interviews and focus groups were audio-recorded with participants' consent, transcribed verbatim, and supplemented with detailed field notes capturing contextual observations.

### Data Analysis

Thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework was applied to all data: (1) familiarisation through repeated reading and immersive engagement with transcripts and field notes; (2) generating initial codes by systematically identifying features of the data relevant to the research questions; (3) searching for themes by collating codes into potential themes; (4) reviewing themes to ensure coherence within themes and meaningful distinction between them; (5) defining and naming themes through detailed analysis of each theme's scope and essence; and (6) producing the final report through analytical narrative construction. Analysis was conducted iteratively across individual cases and then cross-case, with constant comparison identifying convergent and divergent patterns. Document analysis data were integrated into thematic analysis, with policy and curriculum texts providing contextual evidence for themes identified in interview and observation data.

### Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was established through four strategies recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985): member checking (sharing preliminary findings with six participants across three schools for verification and correction); triangulation (across four data collection methods, six school sites, and three participant groups); prolonged engagement (six months of fieldwork enabling deep contextual understanding); and peer debriefing (regular analytical discussion with a senior colleague external to the research). Ethical clearance was obtained from the relevant institutional research ethics committee; all participants provided written informed consent; anonymity was maintained through coded identifiers; and all data were stored securely with restricted access.

## Results

### Opportunities for Indigenous Instrument Integration

**CBC's competency orientation aligns with indigenous pedagogies.** Teachers across all six schools observed that CBC's emphasis on practical competencies



creativity, cultural identity, communication, and collaboration mirrors the learning outcomes embedded in indigenous music transmission systems. At Kasubi Secondary, T3 explained: *"The CBC wants learners to demonstrate skills, not just recall facts. That is exactly what Adungu teaching does you learn by doing, by playing, by performing in community. There is no written test for Adungu mastery; you perform, and the community judges."* This alignment was evident in lesson observations at three schools, where learners engaged with *Engoma* rhythmic patterns and *Adungu* melodic progressions in ways that directly addressed CBC composition, ensemble performance, and creative expression competencies. Document analysis of CBC syllabus documents confirmed that performance-based competency descriptors "demonstrates technical proficiency," "expresses cultural identity through musical performance," "collaborates effectively in ensemble" map directly onto outcomes of indigenous music learning. This finding extends Busobozi and Isabirye's (2026) argument that CBC principles provide structural support for culturally responsive music education by demonstrating empirically how this alignment manifests in classroom practice.

**Cultural relevance imperatives motivate learner engagement.** Learners consistently reported heightened engagement, intrinsic motivation, and emotional investment when indigenous instruments were incorporated into lessons. L47 (S3 learner, Wakiso Girls' School) stated: *"When I play the Adungu, I feel connected to my heritage. I understand who I am. Music class becomes meaningful, not just exercises from a book."* L12 (S2 learner, Kasubi Secondary) elaborated: *"My grandfather plays Engoma. When we do Engoma in class, I can ask him questions. Music connects my school life and my home life."* Teachers confirmed that indigenous instrument lessons generated consistently greater participation, curiosity, peer collaboration, and sustained attention than Western instrument sessions. A1 (administrator, Kira Secondary) noted that attendance in music classes had increased since the teacher began incorporating *Endingidi* demonstrations, attributing this to heightened cultural relevance. Nannyonga-Tamusuza and Weintraub (2012) similarly document how indigenous sound traditions serve as cultural archives that affirm identity and belonging when integrated into formal institutional settings.

**Learner-centred pedagogies accommodate indigenous transmission processes.** CBC's learner-centred framework emphasising active learning, inquiry, peer collaboration, and contextual application created structural space for oral demonstration, imitation, peer scaffolding, and experiential learning, which are the core processes of indigenous music pedagogy (Isabirye, 2021a; Ssegantebuka et al., 2022). At Kira Secondary, T8 described adapting *Endingidi* master-apprentice techniques within classroom settings: *"I teach the basic bowing technique, then the stronger students help the others. It is exactly how Endingidi has always been taught the one who knows, teaches the one who does not."* This approach enabled stronger learners to scaffold peers, constituting a direct classroom application of Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development within an indigenous pedagogical frame. Observations at Busukuma College documented similar dynamics with *Akogo* thumb piano, where learners who had prior community exposure to the instrument served as informal instructors, with the teacher facilitating rather than directing learning.

**Assessment flexibility accommodates indigenous performance competencies.** CBC's Conversation-Observation-Product (COP) assessment framework which values performance, process, and product rather than written examination alone was identified by teachers as particularly compatible with authentic assessment of indigenous music competencies. T14 (Busukuma College) noted: *"COP lets me assess*



*how a learner plays Engoma in an ensemble, how they explain its cultural meaning, and what they produce in a performance. That is authentic assessment of indigenous competence you cannot assess Engoma mastery with a multiple-choice test."* T6 (Namayumba Secondary) described designing assessment tasks requiring learners to perform an indigenous instrument piece, explain its cultural context, and reflect on their learning process a holistic assessment approach that COP explicitly enables. This finding aligns with Oola et al. (2024), who argue that scenario-based, performance-oriented assessment is a key driver of effective CBC implementation, and with Wambi et al. (2024), who document teachers' growing confidence in performance-based assessment modalities.

### Challenges to Indigenous Instrument Integration

**Instrument scarcity and infrastructure limitations.** The most pervasive challenge across all six schools was the acute shortage of indigenous instruments. Only two schools possessed more than two indigenous instruments; four schools relied on borrowed community instruments or improvised substitutes constructed from locally available materials. T11 (Nansana High) lamented: *"I have thirty learners and one Adungu. How do I teach ensemble skills? How do I assess individual competence when there is one instrument for thirty students? The policy says integrate, but the resources say otherwise."* Infrastructure limitations compounded instrument scarcity: three schools lacked dedicated music rooms, with lessons conducted in general classrooms unsuitable for ensemble performance or instrument storage. A4 (administrator, Nansana High) acknowledged that the school's annual budget allocated no specific funds for indigenous instrument procurement, with all music resources directed toward maintaining existing Western instruments. Kigozi and Kagolobya (2024) document similar resource deficits in Ugandan music education contexts, noting that indigenous instruments are consistently deprioritised in school procurement decisions.

**Teacher capacity gaps in indigenous instrument pedagogy.** Teachers across all schools reported significant gaps in their own training in indigenous instruments and their associated pedagogies. Most had received formal pre-service training centred on Western music theory, notation, and instruments, with minimal exposure to indigenous musical knowledge systems. T16 (Namayumba Secondary) stated: *"I know Western notation, piano, guitar. But Akogo? Enanga? I learned from YouTube. That is not enough to teach authentically I cannot convey the cultural meaning, the proper technique, the social context."* T2 (Kasubi Secondary) expressed anxiety about teaching instruments she had not mastered: *"If I teach Adungu incorrectly, I am not just teaching wrong technique I am distorting cultural knowledge. That responsibility is heavy."* These concerns reflect what Isabirye (2022) terms the epistemological dimension of teacher capacity: the need not merely for technical playing skills but for deep understanding of the cultural knowledge systems that instruments embody. Ngeno (2023) and Wambi et al. (2024) identify teacher training as a critical determinant of CBC implementation success across East African contexts, with capacity gaps constituting a systemic rather than individual failure.

**Colonial curriculum legacies and epistemological hierarchies.** Despite CBC's explicit rhetoric of cultural relevance and contextual responsiveness, institutional practices across all six schools continued to privilege Western music content. Document analysis of school music schemes of work revealed that 70–80% of instructional time was allocated to Western instruments, music theory, and notation. When asked about this imbalance, administrators at three schools expressed concern that prioritising indigenous instruments might disadvantage learners in national examinations, which remain substantially Western-oriented in their assessment frameworks. A2 (administrator, Wakiso Girls' School) stated: *"Parents ask me: will my*



*child pass the music examination? The examination is Western. So I must ensure teachers cover Western content first."* This institutional logic perpetuates what Ssekimpi (2024) documents as the persistence of colonial legacies in Ugandan music education, reproducing epistemological hierarchies that marginalise indigenous knowledge even within curricula rhetorically committed to cultural relevance. This finding resonates deeply with Wa 'Thiong'o's (1986) argument that decolonisation requires challenging internalised hierarchies not merely changing policy rhetoric while leaving institutional structures and assessment frameworks intact.

**Resource inequities between urban and peri-urban schools.** Stark and systematic inequities were observed between urban schools which had better instrument access, more experienced teachers, stronger community networks, and greater parental support and peri-urban schools, which faced compounding disadvantages across all dimensions. Urban schools had access to cultural centres, university music departments, and NGO-supported arts programmes that provided instruments, visiting musicians, and professional development opportunities. Peri-urban schools, by contrast, operated with severely constrained budgets, higher teacher turnover, and weaker connections to cultural institutions. T17 (peri-urban school) observed: *"Schools near Kampala get donations, get visits from university lecturers, get attention from projects. We are forgotten. The policy is the same for everyone, but the support is not."* Sekiwu et al. (2024) document similar structural inequities in indigenous education programmes in Uganda, while Netshivhambe (2024) argues that preservation and integration strategies must explicitly address structural inequities to ensure sustainable outcomes across diverse school contexts.

### Decolonial Integration Pathways

**Pathway 1: Community-school partnerships for instrument access and knowledge transmission.** Three schools had established formal or informal partnerships with community-based indigenous musicians, with demonstrably positive outcomes for both instrument access and pedagogical authenticity. At Kasubi Secondary, monthly visits by an *Engoma* ensemble from a neighbouring community provided both instrument access and authentic cultural transmission that no textbook or teacher training could replicate. T3 explained: *"When the community musicians come, the whole school feels it. The energy is different. Learners see that these instruments are alive, not museum pieces."* At Wakiso Girls' School, a partnership with a master *Adungu* player from the local Acholi community had transformed the school's music programme: L52 (S3 learner) reflected: *"Learning from a real Adungu player is different. He knows the instrument's soul, its history, its stories. He teaches with passion I do not see in textbooks."* This pathway aligns with Makwa's (2025) advocacy for harnessing community musicians as living archives for sustainable indigenous music education, and with sociocultural theory's emphasis on authentic communities of practice as essential learning environments (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Formalising such partnerships through memoranda of understanding, modest honoraria, and structured curriculum integration would transform ad hoc arrangements into sustainable institutional practice.

**Pathway 2: Teacher professional development grounded in indigenous epistemologies.** Two teachers who had participated in a week-long indigenous music workshop organised by a regional music education network reported transformative impacts on their pedagogical confidence, cultural understanding, and classroom practice. T8 (Kira Secondary) explained: *"The workshop taught me that indigenous pedagogy is not inferior it is different, equally sophisticated. I learned about graduated scaffolding in Adungu teaching, improvisation structures in Endingidi, ensemble interdependence in Engoma. Now I teach*



*differently I understand what I am teaching, not just how to play the notes."* T15 (Busukuma College), who had attended a separate workshop on *Akogo* and *Enanga*, described a similar transformation: *"Before the workshop, I was afraid to teach indigenous instruments because I did not know them. After, I understood that indigenous pedagogy has its own rigour, its own logic. I became a more confident and more culturally responsible teacher."* These testimonies underscore that effective professional development must go beyond technical skill acquisition to engage teachers in critical reflection on epistemological assumptions what Isabirye (2022) terms "reclaiming indigenous epistemes." Busobozi and Ekadu's (2026b) detailed documentation of *Endingidi* pedagogical mechanisms graduated technique, narrative transmission, solo performance traditions provides a replicable model for structuring such professional development content.

**Pathway 3: Curriculum localisation embedding indigenous instruments as core content.** Teachers and administrators across all six schools advocated for NCDC to revise the music syllabus to mandate indigenous instrument competencies as examinable, core content rather than optional cultural enrichment. T14 (Busukuma College) argued: *"Make it mandatory learners must demonstrate competence in at least two indigenous instruments before completing S4. Then schools will invest, teachers will prioritise, learners will take it seriously, and parents will support it."* A5 (administrator, Kasubi Secondary) supported this view: *"When the syllabus mandated keyboard skills, every school found a keyboard. When it mandates Adungu, every school will find an Adungu."* This pathway aligns with Human and Akuno's (2024) call for indigenising music education through participatory, bottom-up curriculum development processes that centre indigenous epistemologies rather than merely adding indigenous content to Western frameworks. Mapana and Campbell's (2023) demonstration that indigenous musical pathways can be structured into formal pedagogical frameworks with clear learning progressions, assessment criteria, and pedagogical strategies provides an empirical precedent. Curriculum localisation must be accompanied by the development of detailed indigenous instrument curriculum guides, teacher resources, and assessment frameworks that enable consistent, culturally informed implementation across diverse school contexts.

**Pathway 4: Policy advocacy for equitable resource allocation.** Administrators and teachers across all schools called for coordinated policy advocacy to ensure that resource allocation reflects the curriculum's stated commitment to indigenous instrument integration. A6 (head teacher, Namayumba Secondary) argued: *"Government must allocate budget specifically for indigenous instruments. Policy must mandate that every school has minimum instrument sets at least five Adungu, five Endingidi, a set of Engoma trained teachers, proper storage facilities. Without this, integration remains a paper policy."* T1 (Kasubi Secondary) called for a national indigenous instrument procurement programme, modelled on existing government initiatives for science laboratory equipment: *"The government equips science labs because it values science. When it equips music rooms with indigenous instruments, it will signal that it values our cultural heritage."* This pathway requires structural transformation beyond pedagogical innovation aligning with decolonial pedagogy's insistence that dismantling colonial institutional architectures requires policy-level intervention, not merely classroom-level change (Mignolo, 2007; Walubo et al., 2025a). Ngoma (2024) and Yende (2023) document similar policy advocacy imperatives in South African higher education contexts, suggesting that the challenge of policy-resource alignment is a pan-African rather than uniquely Ugandan issue.



## Discussion

This study demonstrates that CBC creates genuine structural opportunities for indigenous instrument integration in Uganda's secondary school music education, but realising these opportunities requires confronting formidable challenges rooted in material constraints, capacity deficits, and deeply entrenched colonial legacies. The alignment between CBC's competency orientation and indigenous pedagogies represents a significant epistemological opening indigenous music transmission has always been inherently competency-based, emphasising practical mastery, embodied learning, oral transmission, and performance demonstration rather than written examination (Nzewi, 2003; Isabirye, 2021b). This finding extends Busobozi and Isabirye (2026), who argue theoretically that CBC principles support culturally responsive music education, by providing empirical evidence of how this alignment manifests in classroom practice across six diverse school contexts.

The finding that instrument scarcity and teacher capacity gaps fundamentally constrain integration reveals a critical and widening gap between policy rhetoric and implementation reality a pattern documented across CBC implementation in Uganda (Kidega et al., 2024; Namaalwa et al., 2025) and East Africa more broadly (Wawire et al., 2025). Critically, the capacity gaps identified in this study are not merely technical teachers lacking playing skills but epistemological: teachers lack deep understanding of the cultural knowledge systems that indigenous instruments embody and transmit. This distinction is crucial for designing effective professional development. A workshop that teaches teachers how to play *Adungu* without teaching them what *Adungu* knowledge means, how it is transmitted, and why it matters will produce technically competent but culturally shallow teaching potentially more damaging than no indigenous instrument teaching at all, as it risks decontextualising and trivialising cultural knowledge (Busobozi & Ekadu, 2026a; Isabirye, 2022).

The persistence of colonial curriculum legacies the continued privileging of Western music in institutional practice despite CBC's cultural relevance mandate reveals the depth of epistemological colonisation in Uganda's educational system. Teachers, administrators, and parents have internalised the hierarchy that positions Western music as the rigorous, examinable standard and indigenous music as cultural enrichment, heritage performance, or extracurricular activity. This internalisation is not merely attitudinal but is reproduced structurally through national examination frameworks that remain substantially Western-oriented. Curriculum reform rhetoric cannot overcome structural examination conservatism without parallel reform of assessment systems a point that Ssekimpi (2024) makes with reference to music subject selection at A-level, and that Oola et al. (2024) address through advocacy for scenario-based, performance-oriented assessment. Yende (2023) and Ngoma (2024) document analogous challenges in South African and broader African higher education contexts, confirming that the epistemological colonisation of music education is a pan-African rather than uniquely Ugandan challenge requiring pan-African scholarly and policy responses.

The resource inequities between urban and peri-urban schools documented in this study constitute a form of structural injustice that threatens to reproduce existing inequalities through the CBC's implementation. If well-resourced urban schools are better positioned to implement indigenous instrument integration because they have better instrument access, more experienced teachers, and stronger community networks then the cultural benefits of integration will accrue disproportionately to learners who already enjoy educational advantages. Equitable integration requires not



merely equal policy but targeted resource redistribution toward under-resourced schools, a principle that Netshivhambe (2024) and Sekiwu et al. (2024) articulate in related contexts. This finding has implications for how NCDC and the Ministry of Education design implementation support for CBC music education.

The four decolonial pathways identified in this study are not independent interventions but synergistic components of a comprehensive transformation strategy. Community partnerships provide instrument access and authentic pedagogical knowledge; enhanced teacher professional development grounded in indigenous epistemologies enables teachers to use these resources effectively; curriculum localisation mandating indigenous instrument competencies creates institutional incentives for investment; and policy advocacy for equitable resource allocation provides the material foundation for all other pathways. This synergy suggests that piecemeal implementation addressing one pathway while neglecting others is unlikely to produce sustainable transformation. Effective decolonial integration requires coordinated, multi-level action across classroom, school, curriculum, and policy domains simultaneously.

This study has several limitations that should inform the interpretation of findings. The six-month fieldwork period provides a cross-sectional snapshot rather than longitudinal understanding of how integration evolves over time; the findings from Wakiso District may not transfer directly to regions with different cultural compositions, resource levels, or institutional histories; and learner outcomes whether indigenous instrument integration actually improves musical competency, cultural identity, or academic performance were not measured quantitatively. These limitations point to important directions for future research: longitudinal studies tracking the sustainability and impact of integration efforts; comparative studies across East African CBC contexts; and mixed-methods investigations measuring learner outcomes alongside the qualitative processes documented here.

## Conclusion

Uganda's CBC provides a structural opening for integrating indigenous music instruments into secondary school music education that is unprecedented in the country's post-independence educational history. However, transforming this structural opening into sustainable decolonial practice requires coordinated action across pedagogy, curriculum, resources, and policy. Indigenous instruments *Adungu*, *Endingidi*, *Akogo*, *Engoma*, *Enanga* are not cultural decorations or heritage exhibits but epistemological resources embodying centuries of knowledge, technical mastery, social wisdom, and communal identity. Their integration into formal schooling is not merely about preserving tradition but about building education systems that honour multiple ways of knowing, affirm learners' cultural identities, and actively challenge the colonial legacies that continue to shape what counts as legitimate musical knowledge in Ugandan classrooms.

The four decolonial pathways identified in this study community-school partnerships for instrument access and knowledge transmission, teacher professional development grounded in indigenous epistemologies, curriculum localisation embedding indigenous instruments as core examinable content, and policy advocacy for equitable resource allocation offer a replicable, evidence-based framework applicable to Uganda and to comparable postcolonial contexts globally where indigenous music traditions have been marginalised by colonial educational architectures. The pathways are synergistic



and mutually reinforcing: their transformative potential is greatest when pursued simultaneously rather than sequentially.

Whether CBC's structural openings become genuine pathways to decolonial transformation ultimately depends on the collective will of educators, curriculum developers, policymakers, community musicians, and learners to invest in an education system that truly reflects Uganda's cultural richness and epistemological diversity. This study provides empirical evidence to support that investment demonstrating that when indigenous instruments are integrated thoughtfully, authentically, and with adequate support, they do not merely enrich music education but fundamentally transform it, producing learners who are musically competent, culturally grounded, and epistemologically empowered.

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### Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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