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### Exploration of the Indigenous Knowledge and Skills Transmitted Through the Amayebe Musical Tradition among Busoga Communities

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*Amayebe Musical  
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Indigenous Knowledge (IK) is essential in every society; unfortunately, it has been globally marginalised, partly due to colonialism. Many aspects of African IK have either been lost or are on the verge of extinction due to limited documentation, yet the school system continues to sideline it, exhibiting Eurocentrism. Using a qualitative approach, this ethnographic study explored the IK embedded in the Amayebe musical tradition of the Basoga in Southeastern Uganda with the aim of critiquing and integrating its aspects into the Primary Musical Arts Teacher Education (PMTE) as an approach to decolonisation. Guided by Decolonial theory, data were collected using participant observation, interviews, and focus group discussions from five Amayebe master musicians and twenty-nine apprentices, followed by inductive thematic analysis. Results indicated that the IK transmitted through the Amayebe musical tradition transcends its performance to general knowledge for one's meaningful living in society. It involves learning to perform the different dance roles (okusansaga, okutabula, and okukina), singing and composing, choreographing, making Amayebe instruments, as well as generic aspects like okwefumintiriza (self-reflection), which enable them to develop other skills like okwezuula (self-discovery), obumalirivu (self-determination), and okweikiririzaamu (agency). These skills are very relevant in the socio-cultural and socio-economic development. The study recommended collaboration between educators and culture bearers to research, document, and archive IK embedded in the various Indigenous traditions and later keep it alive by practising and critiquing it before integrating some of its aspects into school-based education systems like PMTE. This might eventually contribute to decentring European epistemes and centring Indigenous knowledge systems as advocated by the decolonial theory.

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**INTRODUCTION**

The sum of experiences that individuals undergo during any learning programme depends on a number of factors, regardless of whether the learning occurs informally, non-formally, or formally. Such factors include, but are not limited to, global trends, societal needs, available resources, and the philosophy underpinning the learning programme, which reveals the aims and objectives. Uganda, like other formerly colonised countries, implements a Eurocentric education which continues to demonise Indigenous Knowledge (IK) (Mawere, 2015), and propagates a belief that learning only occurs at school (Kisekka, 2022). The curriculum is dominated by Western learning theories, pedagogical approaches and content, keeping Indigenous learning practices at the periphery of the learning process (Akena, 2012). For instance, the recent Education Policy Review Commission Report notes that in the current musical arts education system, "A learner is praised as being a musician for playing a piano, ... violin, but ridiculed if they played amadinda... endere... or performed any Indigenous dances such as ekitaguriro..." (Government of Uganda [GoU], 2025, p.157). Such an education system manifests a lack of cultural responsiveness, and it is less contextualised to the needs of the Ugandan society because the imported ideas may have successfully worked in the country of origin, which may not be

the case in Uganda because of differences in context (Kisekka, 2022). Besides, the marginalisation of IK in the school system exposes it to the threat of extinction, yet if this knowledge is lost, it may be lost forever (Msuya, 2007; Muwagga et al., 2013).

There have been several attempts to safeguard Indigenous practices like those embedded in Indigenous musical traditions through Education Commissions that have continuously recommended the need to make the curricula at all levels more Africentric (GoU, 2025; Khadidja, 2014). The commissions' recommendations, however, fall short of pragmatic ways of preserving IK using education, and to this end, further studies have underscored the need to research and document those Indigenous practices so that they can be integrated into the contemporary education system (Isabirye, 2019, 2021a). Based on such recommendations, this study explored the IK transmitted through the Amayebe musical tradition as a strategy for preserving it from extinction. It aimed at documenting IK and integrating it into the Primary Musical Arts Teacher Education (PMTE) program. It was hoped that integrating the IK embedded in Amayebe musical tradition would make PMTE more culturally relevant and decolonised (Wabyona, 2021). Decolonising the PMTE programme is likely to bear lasting fruits with a high multiplier effect towards improving the quality of teaching and learning in primary schools

across Uganda, where the graduates of this programme end up.

Preserving IK promotes Uganda's Vision 2040, which envisages a culturally vibrant and morally upright society where the populace professes and performs Indigenous cultural practices (GoU, 2013). This is likely to boost self-esteem and promote self-confidence while participating in a society which values the learner's Indigenous beliefs and voices eventually ensures quality education that nurtures meaningful living (UNESCO, 2017).

### Theoretical Review

This study was grounded in the interpretivist philosophical paradigm, which believes that reality is subjective and negotiated, working hand in hand as co-creators. It was guided by the decolonial theory, which advocates for challenging the Eurocentric paradigm as a monolithic world view and centring Indigenous practices while remaining open to critically engaging with global epistemes to attain global competence (Coppola et al., 2021; Hebert, 2023; Mignolo, 2012; Quijano, 2000). The Decolonial theory emphasises centring Indigenous epistemologies, challenging Eurocentric perspectives, promoting cultural sustainability, fostering community engagement and addressing historical marginalisation. Therefore, it fully supports the decolonisation of the school-based musical arts curriculum at all levels by advocating for critical deconstruction and re-evaluation of Eurocentric and Indigenous practices to attain inclusivity and equity (Drinkwater, 2015; Isife, 2021; Kanu & Ndubisi, 2020; Rakena et al., 2024).

### Definition of Key Concepts

Musical arts refer to an integration of music, dance, drama, poetry, drumming, and storytelling as they are practised with no clear beginning or end to each (Nannyonga-Tamusuza, 2015). PMTE is a musical arts specialist teacher training for Ugandan primary schools. Amayebe means leg rattles in Lusoga,

which form the main accompaniment for the Amayebe musical tradition. The public performances of this tradition had reduced among the communities, which implies that the IK embedded in its practices was under threat of extinction. Decolonisation in this study is the act of critically challenging European epistemic dominance in learning programmes. It encompasses a critical consideration of pedagogical practices, content, learning theories, assessment strategies, and other learning practices and carefully centring Indigenous aspects.

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Every learning programme should be guided by a plan for learning (curriculum) (Netherlands Institute for Curriculum Development, 2009). This plan consists mainly of aims and objectives, content, methods of teaching, and assessment strategies. Curriculum exists for learners and it is concerned with both content and process, so its elements intertwine like a spider web, but content receives the most attention. Content is the concepts learnt and process is how the content is managed (Adagale, 2015). Curriculum should balance knowledge, skills, and attitudes to ensure holistic learning, and it is guided by philosophical underpinnings, which are the lens for determining the content and process (Mulenga, 2018). Though the curriculum for Indigenous education was not written, there were sequential procedures for transmitting IK and skills to the next generation.

Indigenous education was a lifelong learning process of passing on IK from childhood to adulthood (Kanu & Ndubisi, 2020). In this case, IK is the content transmitted through this learning programme; it is unique and traditional to a given culture and mainly relies on local modes of transmission (Raseroka, 2013). Contextually, "African IK is the lifestyle of Africans" (Olu & Kanu, 2020, p.93), and it is embedded in local language, beliefs, myths, games, folklore, rituals, songs and dances, among others (Zegeye & Vambe,

2006). African IK is principally stored in memory, so transmission of knowledge and skills is done by people who acquire them through practice for continuity. There is rising interest in the exploration of IK systems to cultivate self-confidence that stems from a sense of personal worth due to understanding of one's past, and to re-awaken the Indigenous peoples to the human right of freedom of expression (Kanu & Ndubisi, 2020; Raseroka, 2013). Findings can be used to challenge Eurocentrism in school-based learning.

Globally, as a result of colonialism, IK systems "have become an area of interest because generally, Indigenous communities are under threat from the invasion of economic systems that undermine their livelihoods, belief systems, values and interests" (Raseroka, 2013, p.244). For instance, the schooling system introduced by the European colonialists in Africa demonised and discredited the Indigenous practices of learning, and most of the people who undergo the colonial school system forsake their Indigenous ways and profess Eurocentrism, which they uphold as superior (Ekadu-Ereu, 2012; Masolo, 2003).

The impermanence of memory and the risk of culture bearers' death might cause its rapid erosion, thus underscoring the need for permanent and reliable modes of storing that knowledge before its total extinction. Accordingly, Raseroka (2013) suggests the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to capture IK and preserve it for accessibility. Ekadu-Ereu (2012) and Isabirye (2021a, 2021b) recommend keeping it alive in communities by teaching it to youth. IK can also be preserved by integrating it into the school-based musical arts programmes using specially designed models (GoU, 2025; Kigozi & Kagoloby, 2024).

Indigenous education is the most comprehensive way of instructing young people in their ways of life. It involves the inculcation of knowledge, skills, and values that are relevant for immediate and long-term application into socio-economic activities. It

covered, among others, farming, blacksmithing, cooking, carving, basketry, masonry, hunting, and home management (Olu & Kanu, 2020). Additional learning areas that were basically recreational include wrestling, dancing, music, drumming, poetry, acrobatics, and so forth (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2003). Some skills, like musical arts, were taught to both genders, but others, like hunting, were strictly for males, while home management was for females. The specific concepts learnt under each learning area were tailored by the societal demands and also based on the expertise of the elders (Lubogo, 2020). For instance, communities would perform musical traditions, but they varied due to the aforementioned factors.

Assessment of skill mastery was through observation of practical knowledge and skill application and exhibition of learnt values in everyday practice, to determine those who would graduate (Nsamenang & Tchombe, 2011). Since learning is communal, it fosters one's integration within one's community and nurtures the development of social skills. It promotes the accumulation of "knowledge of the cultural practices and spirituality" (Kanu & Ndubisi, 2020, p.13). Learning would cultivate self-motivation to execute societal roles as valued members who can positively contribute to their respective communities. It would therefore focus on the importance of community survival and sustainability. Everyone would be proud of their contribution to their communities, hence fostering *okweikiririzaamu* (agency and self-confidence). The idea of upholding communal values above oneself resonates with the Ubuntu philosophy that promotes humaneness, interdependence (Bennett, 2023; Mwipikeni, 2018; Waghid, 2020). Moulding an acceptable individual in society resonates well with Kwasi Wiredu's (2004) conceptualisation of being educated among the Akan of Ghana as being sensible, possessing some basic knowledge of one's culture and natural environment, and having mastery of a selected branch of knowledge or skill.

Additionally, such a person should have a commendable degree of moral maturity to become acceptable in one's society (Wiredu, 1998, 2002). Besides emphasising the local language in which all learning occurred, there were also general concepts that were taught and emphasised in everyday to nurture an acceptable member of society, such as respect for elders, cleanliness, honesty, charity, industriousness, humility, and generosity (Olu & Kanu, 2020).

Indigenous African education was shaped by the philosophical principles of functionalism, holism, preparedness/preparationism, perennialism, and communalism. These principles are fundamental in guiding the process of content selection. Preparationism means training for the purpose of equipping them with specific skills for the fulfilment of their particular roles in their society, and Functionalism draws attention to providing knowledge, skills, and values that one needs to utilise in daily practice and become fully integrated into their specialisation (Kanu, 2017). Communalism highlights that teaching a child is a collective responsibility of every member of the community, and perennialism aims at preparing the child to become acquainted with the finest achievements of his cultural heritage, to become aware of the values of one's heritage, preserve it, and sustainably pass it on to the next generation (Ogbo & Ndubisi, 2020). Holism explains that people were trained to be productive in multiple skills with minimal specialisation, so "The fact that a person is a trained dancer or wrestler does not mean that he would not be able to farm, build his house, hunt around his house..." (Ogbo & Ndubisi, 2020, p.14). These principles were used in scrutinising the kind of IK transmitted during the Amayebe musical tradition. This study used these principles to analyse the extent to which the IK in the Amayebe musical tradition adhered to them.

Summarily, the reviewed literature identified the following gaps: limited documentation of Indigenous Knowledge, insufficient pragmatic

ways of preserving IK through education, dominance of Western learning theories and content in the curriculum, and lack of cultural responsiveness and contextualisation in musical arts education. Therefore, this study attempted to bridge these gaps by documenting the Indigenous Knowledge and Skills transmitted through the Amayebe musical tradition that could be incorporated into PMTE to decentre Eurocentric content and practices.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was conducted among the Busoga communities because it is where the Amayebe musical performance is expected. This tradition was selected because its last public performance was nearly two decades ago (Isabirye, 2012). This indicated that it could be lost if no immediate documentation of its practices were done to safeguard it, so the study employed ethnography in a qualitative approach. Ethnography enabled the researchers to spend more time with Amayebe culture bearers to gain an in-depth understanding of the tradition. The study aimed at exploring the IK and skills transmitted through the Amayebe musical tradition. Data were collected through participant observation of Amayebe tradition transmission sessions, five 60-minute semi-structured face-to-face interviews with Amayebe master musicians selected by snowballing, and two focus groups (FGD) comprising nine and ten purposively selected Amayebe apprentices, respectively. Confidentiality, informed consent, and pseudonyms were embraced during this study, while data quality was ensured through triangulation, member checking, spending prolonged time during field work and use of the qualitative code book to ensure consistent use of codes (Coleman, 2021; Creswell, 2012). Inductive thematic analysis was done, where themes emerged from the collected data (Creswell, 2012; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).



## RESULTS

Data from FGD, interviews, and observation resonated about the conceptualisation of a teacher as one who possesses the knowledge and skills about a particular concept. One respondent alluded to the Lusoga proverb, “*Buli agaba, agaba ku kyalinakyo; waigumbulizi agaba ku buviiri bwe,*” literally translated as “Whoever gives, gives part of what they have; a caterpillar gives part of its fur.” This implies that for one to be regarded as a teacher of the Amayebe musical tradition, such a person must possess some IK and skills about some aspects of the tradition before being able to pass it to others. During observations, the researcher noticed that different people led different parts of the learning sessions, and each leader demonstrated proper mastery of the aspect they were teaching. Since the IK in the Amayebe culture is not written, there were very high chances that the master musicians would choose to transmit only the skills and knowledge that they possessed.

The master musician assigns apprentices various tasks during the learning process, and in most cases, there is no clear-cut way to mark the beginning and end of certain activities, but each of them builds towards the desired goal. The target of every master musician is to ensure that all the apprentices turn into not only *abakugu* (exceptionally skilled performers) of Amayebe tradition but also possess multiple skills for better survival. For instance, according to one respondent,

*In fact, I want them to be abakugu and be able to do many things in their daily life as well, that is why we spend some time especially helping each other to become responsible parents, ensure that they have enough food, ensure that they take their children to school, and pay for all the requirements. (Interview with MM<sub>3</sub> on July 27, 2024).*

This reveals that master musicians target inculcating knowledge and skills that turn apprentices into exceptionally skilled Amayebe musical performers

and eventually train the others, and besides, they aim at inculcating additional skills to foster their general well-being beyond Amayebe musical performances. The researcher observed that at the end of each rehearsal, each group would discuss many topics, and on one occasion: “*Throughout all the speeches, the comments were characterised by words of appreciation... pointing out areas... beyond Amayebe musical performances to include group welfare, group savings, time management and empisa edh’obuntu...*” (Field notes with group B on January 28, 2025). This indicated that though the primary target is to nurture expert Amayebe performers, the training stretches to general life aspects like their welfare, financial literacy, and sociable conduct, ensuring that all group members become all-round individuals in their communities. The respondents noted that one would become a laughing stock in their village even if they faced common societal challenges like famine and poor parenting, regardless of how outstanding they were in Amayebe performance.

Master musicians also aim at imparting all knowledge and skills about Amayebe without compartmentalisation, as narrated thus: “*People should be all-round in all things concerning Amayebe performance... we teach them all these roles in the context of performance because it is difficult to learn only one skill... Everybody must learn as many roles as possible*” (Interview with MM<sub>2</sub> on August 10, 2024). This reveals that apprentices are trained to acquire all possible knowledge and skills about the Amayebe tradition with minimal specialisation. This curtails monopoly and empowers each of them to perform the different dance roles.

The explicit IK, skills and values transmitted through the Amayebe musical tradition were thematically analysed and presented under: performing the dance, making Amayebe instruments, repertoire, accompaniment, and generic aspects.

## Performing the Dance

With the target of nurturing *abakugu* in the Amayebe musical tradition, learning processes are crafted around core concepts that enable apprentices to attain the necessary knowledge, skills, and values. Master musicians concurred that it is good to make the new apprentices start learning the basic aspects of the performance, like *okusiba*, literary translated as ‘tying’ to mean dressing the costumes or Amayebe instruments on the legs. MM<sub>1</sub> affirmed during an interview on August 2, 2024, that “*I teach the members... especially those who okukina... to properly okusiba... they need some extra costumes to properly perform their style.*” This shows that those who perform the *okukina* style, which involves wriggling the waist, wear extra costumes that they are taught how to tie. During the FGDs with group A on August 3, 2024, one respondent noted that the new members would also be taught how to *okusiba* Amayebe, which implied tying Amayebe instruments on their legs, so they learn how to tie Amayebe and costumes before dancing.

During observation sessions, it was noted that getting ready for performance involved everyone dressing appropriately, so most apprentices remained in vests, folded and tightened their trousers. The *abatabuzi* (syncopators) often had the vest, *ekitambi* (commonly known as *ekikooyi*), and *akawu*. *Ekikooyi* is a soft, striped, brightly coloured, lightweight and versatile fabric typically made from cotton, and often used as an inner wrapping for women, and *akawu* is a furry animal skin for dancing. Working in small groups, pairs, and individually, the apprentices are taught how to properly tie the costumes or instruments, so tightly but comfortably, because it is shameful for one’s costumes to loosen during performance. It was common that the more experienced members guided the less experienced through this entire session. The Amayebe instruments are tied on the calf and to the sides of the lower leg to allow the performer to jump mightily. The apprentices then learn the standing posture, with great care to ensure that the legs are

slightly apart to avoid rubbing and breaking the pods.

*Okusansaga*, *okutabula*, and *okukina* are the fundamental Amayebe dance styles transmitted to the apprentices. *Okusansaga*, also known as *okusamba*, literary translates as “to scatter” and it is the basic style performed by the majority. They slightly lean backwards and energetically jump, predominantly in lines and circles, and the sonority of their rattles engulfs the entire atmosphere, overshadowing other performance activities. MM<sub>3</sub> noted, “*Those who jump perform the same rhythm uniformly... you make one line and you jump kicking forward to the front*” (interview on February 12, 2025). According to this response, *abasasazi*—those who perform *okusansaga*, mainly work in a linear formation, often jumping forward, and this was also confirmed during observations. They provide the basic rhythm, and it is the first performance style learnt. *Okutabula* is the next style, and *abatabuzi*—people who perform the *okutabula* style are always fewer, sometimes one or two. They freely perform outside the established formation, often improvising irregular motifs to fill the gaps and enrich the regular rhythm created by *abasansazi*. One respondent affirmed that although all apprentices are taught this style, few people master it, “*because it requires a bit of experience which people usually acquire with time...*” (interview with MM<sub>1</sub> on April 28, 2025). This means that apprentices gradually learn *okutabula* with time.

*Abatabuzi* and *abasansazi* tie Amayebe on the calf, but the *abasansazi* add *ekikooyi* and *akawu*. Sometimes, *abatabuzi* also perform *okukina* style, which involves vigorous wriggling of the waist, but in some instances, the *abakini* (those performing the *okukina* style) are different people. The master musician concentrates on a specific skill and progresses to another as soon as apprentices demonstrate mastery. He also works with the apprentices to choreograph the performance as they learn. During this session, they work out the formations, levels, and styles, breaking concepts

into intelligible units and gradually adding them up. During performance, they use hand signals and eye contact to remind themselves and communicate different messages.

### Amayebe Instrument Making

Some master musicians do not teach making Amayebe instruments because they revealed that they are not well-skilled to do so. Others reported that they lacked Amayebe pods and *obutembetembe* (African arrowroot seeds), so they buy pods and give them to someone who can make, or buy finished Amayebe instruments from makers. During FGD with group A on August 3, 2024, a respondent said, “If you have the pods, you can call him [Amayebe instrument maker] to pick them and he will return with already made Amayebe instruments.” During interviews, a master musician confirmed that they depended on buying already-made instruments, so they never made their own.

However, other apprentices in some groups learn these concepts because during FGD with group B on August 7, 2024, one respondent claimed, “We make them [Amayebe instruments] ourselves because there is *Omuyebe* tree at MM<sub>3</sub>’s home.” This reveals that the apprentices learn how to make their instruments and during one of the observed Amayebe making sessions with group B on February 28, 2025, it was noted that, “...the master musician went along with me to collect Amayebe pods from *omuyebe*... a fire was set in one of the mango tree shades on the compound...” From this excerpt, Amayebe instrument making starts with collecting Amayebe pods from the *omuyebe* tree and setting fire. *Omuyebe* is *Oncoba Spinosa*, a thorny tropical shrub and its hard greenish pods turn brownish when they mature. On May 17, 2024, MM<sub>4</sub> explained that the pods should be harvested when they mature and turn brownish, without allowing them to fall off the tree. He explained that Amayebe are hooked using *empendo* (long hook-like stick) before *okufughula* and *okufumba*. *Okufughula* is boring holes using red-hot iron, and

*okufumba* means boiling the pods for about three hours.

The observation notes with group B on February 28, 2025, further indicate, “...went to pick *obutembetembe*... sticks were shaped and cut into pieces of about one foot long, the pods with holes were soaked to remove *ekiniini*.” This shows that the Amayebe are soaked to soften, sticks on which to put them and seeds to be put inside are prepared, then the mesocarp is removed. It was further written: “Pods were arranged on the sticks; seeds were added and twined in groups of four sticks each.” This meant that Amayebe are then put in the sticks, and *obutembetembe* are added before fastening the sticks. It was also observed that two small holes are put on each pod and dried before using. Another respondent further mentioned, “one should be able to repair their instrument, so that is part of what we do with them during the learning process” (interview with MM<sub>5</sub> on January 28, 2025). This revealed that the apprentices are also taught to repair their instruments.

### Accompaniment

According to Amayebe performers, accompaniment motivates the dancers and includes both vocal and instrumental, with variation in the instruments used. For example, while it was observed that group A uses only *akaduumi*, on August 2, 2024, MM<sub>2</sub> mentioned that they accompany with *akaduumi* – a small conical single-headed drum with a diameter of about fourteen inches; and *omugaabe* – a long drum. This indicated that while some groups used *akaduumi*, others enriched it with the *omugaabe*. Another respondent also mentioned thus;

*...and since time immemorial, that small drum is played alone, but as I told you, as people go on thinking and creating, they keep on adding several aspects ...that is how the long drum came to be added to Amayebe performances so that the texture thickens... even your ears can notice the difference* (interview with MM<sub>2</sub> on March 12, 2024).



This indicated that though *akaduumi* was the original accompaniment, with time, performers enriched it with *omugaabe*. This implied that performers had liberty to create ideas and indeed, during an observation session with group B, the researchers noted, “*The accompaniment was an ensemble that included endingidi, embaire, engoma enene, akaduumi, omugalabe...*” and on another encounter, it was noted, “*...akaduumi, engoma enene, omugaabe and ensaasi players sat next to each other in that order... engoma enene player ...and two embaire players...*” (Excerpts from observation notes with group B on August 7, 2024 and February 28, 2025 respectively). These extracts reveal that, out of creativity, the Amayebe accompaniment greatly varies across different performing groups. MM<sub>3</sub> noted that most instrumentalists joined the group when they knew how to play the instruments, so it was a matter of simply telling them what to play, and they would do so. During another interview, MM<sub>1</sub> noted, “*...even the drum, I know how to play it so I can train those boys...*” These responses reveal that the master musicians teach their apprentices to play the accompanying instruments.

### Repertoire

Regarding accompanying songs for the Amayebe musical tradition, the responses concurred with MM<sub>1</sub>, who revealed that there were several songs, but each of them had a specific ceremony where it was performed, so the songs performed depend on the ceremony where the performance is being done. The songs are all performed in *Lusoga* (language of the Basoga) and they are composed based on different topics such as welcoming and entertaining guests, praising key figures in society, mourning the dead, and marriage, among others. According to observations, sometimes there can be specific interludes during training sessions during which new songs are learnt but, in most cases, the soloist simply sings the *omwesi* (call) part of a new song and the rest have to learn the *okwikiriza* (response) by imitation, for example MM<sub>2</sub> elaborated that if the

group members “*are quick at learning, you can even introduce a new song straight away on stage, you teach them the okwikiriza part and they will grasp it ... you keep adding the words in your omwesi part* (interview on June 20, 2024). The songs are commonly in responsorial form. They are usually short and repetitive, with the soloist only varying the leading line. The master musicians’ responses reveal that through imitation, they teach their apprentices to sing, compose new songs, and to improvise on the already existing ones to suit the situation at hand.

### Generic Aspects

When a member arrives for a training session, they commonly say to the others, “*Muli mutya, ba ssebo?*” This is literary translated as “how are you gentlemen?” In response, they say, “*tuli bulungi ssebo!*” which implies, “We are well, sir!” *Ssebo* is the respectful title for a male person, and it looks like an unspoken rule in all groups to greet other members or respond to the greeting respectfully. MM<sub>3</sub> noted, “*...when you are training a certain group of people, the first lesson you teach is discipline... When people are disciplined, everything will move on smoothly*” (interview on February 12, 2025). This indicated that “*empisa edh’obuntu*” – humanistic conduct was highly cherished and practised among Amayebe communities, and no one would be tolerated for breaching those acceptable standards. To attain membership acceptability among Amayebe communities, emphasis was on other virtues such as economic empowerment through self-taught financial literacy and food security. MM<sub>3</sub> said, “*...I want them to be able to do many things... we spend some time especially helping each other to become responsible parents, ensure that they have enough food... pay for all the requirements*” (interview on July 27, 2024). This indicates that though the principal objective for forming the group was performing Indigenous musical traditions, the master musicians are also concerned about the

general welfare of the group members, so they train them on many other aspects.

Throughout the learning sessions, apprentices are given activities that challenge them to self-examine oneself leading to stage performance. MM<sub>1</sub> explained how apprentices self-examine before performing on stage:

*Sometimes, I will observe and suggest that so and so could be tried on stage, then sometimes I could even ask the person himself if he feels that he could try the stage... interestingly others would accept while during a few instances, some would refuse and ask for more time to practise* (Interview on April 28, 2025).

This response highlighted that training embeds *okwefumintiriza* (self-reflection) and *okwekebera* (self-examination), and these life skills help individuals attain *okwezuula* (self-discovery), *obumalirivu* (self-determination), and *okwekiririzaamu* (agency), which inspire apprentices to continually pursue self-improvement in their lives beyond Amayebe musical performances.

## DISCUSSIONS

The Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda (2023) highlights the need to document IK as a way of saving it from extinction. Indeed, it is necessary because in some instances, Amayebe performers would hardly remember some songs, so they improvised certain phrases. This underscores the need to record this information, archive it using ICT and make it accessible (Raseroka, 2013), and keep it alive by teaching the youths and performing it in communities (Ekadu-Ereu, 2012). It is important to objectively integrate these practices into the school system (GoU, 2025) as one of the effective steps towards meaningful decolonisation of the school musical arts curriculum.

The integration of Amayebe IK into the PMTE programme enhances the skilling of prospective teachers and addresses the lack of practical skills

created by the Eurocentric education, empowering them to possess the required knowledge, skills, and values to pass on to others (Kanu, 2017; Nsamenang & Tchombe, 2011). This means that to complete the cycle for integration, it should stretch from research, critique of the findings for contextualisation, integration into the curriculum, and then training of the teachers to implement.

Throughout the study findings, it is revealed that Amayebe apprentices are exposed to several skills, knowledge and values concerning the tradition. These include performing the different dancing roles (*okusansaga*, *okutabula*, *okukina*), singing and composing, making Amayebe instruments, as well as generic aspects like. Besides, there is also the acquisition of skills like *okwefumintiriza*, which make the Amayebe apprentices more agentic, thus cultivating a self-inducement to execute societal roles as valued members. This vast curriculum highlights a balance of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, which curtails compartmentalisation and ensures holistic individuals. These findings agree with the previous research that revealed that African Indigenous education is holistic (Kanu, 2017; Kanu & Ndubisi, 2020; Ogbo & Ndubisi, 2020). Also, the different aspects of the tradition, like the dance motifs and different songs, reveal the principle of functionalism because different songs are specially composed and performed during specific ceremonies (Kanu, 2017). Additionally, it implies that this tradition can be used to criticise wrong acts in society, such as corruption or environmental degradation in society (Zegeye & Vambe, 2006). Integrating these insights into PMTE might enhance a comprehensive approach that prepares prospective teachers to attain artistic mastery and essential life skills, encouraging metacognitive reflection and autonomy for lifelong learning. This might eventually have a higher multiplier effect on transforming primary education, as such graduates will aim to produce all-round individuals at the primary level.

Summarily, the curriculum for the Amayebe musical tradition prepares individuals for real-life experiences in society, enabling active participants to live meaningfully. Embedding them into PMTE directly addresses broader societal needs, moving beyond purely academic pursuits to cultivate character and community values that the current Eurocentric system overlooks, thus aligning with the principles of communalism and functionalism.

## CONCLUSIONS

Indigenous Knowledge (IK) is important in pursuing cultural identity, socio-cultural, and socio-economic development of any given nation. Through the Amayebe musical tradition, master musicians inculcate IK, skills, and values to nurture holistic apprentices. The main target is to ensure that apprentices are refined into *abakugu* (exceptional performers) who eventually become the next generation of Indigenous teachers. The IK in Amayebe tradition inculcates the different dance roles, singing and composing, choreographing, making Amayebe instruments, and generic aspects like *okwefumintiriza* (self-reflection), which enable them to develop other skills like *okwezuula* (self-discovery), *obumalirivu* (self-determination) and *okweikiririzaamu* (agency). Besides, it emphasises humanistic protocols for harmonious communities. Therefore, this study concluded that integrating Amayebe IK into PMTE is a necessary step towards decolonising education, ensuring cultural relevance, and producing well-rounded teachers for Uganda because it encourages nurturing holistic individuals who are equipped with character and community values.

## Recommendations

The study recommended shifting to the Practitioner-Pedagogue-Andragogue Approach of teacher training, where prospective teachers are nurtured to be skilled musicians and effective pedagogues/andragogues, thus redefining their identity (Akuno, 2022). This might be realised by

adopting the 2PA model, which elaborates the elements that should be included in PMTE.

There should be critical and pragmatic curriculum reforms to decolonise teacher training and reflect African particularities (Agbaje, 2023). This might make it more culturally responsive and inclusive (GoU, 2025). It is a collective responsibility, but individuals should embrace the “Me First” principle, where everyone prioritises decolonising oneself before attempting to decolonise others.

The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, and the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) should liaise to conduct research on the Indigenous musical customs through collaborations between educators and culture bearers in teaching and research. The collected data should be accessible by archiving it in regional museums (Msuya, 2007).

MoES should recognise the unique contribution of Indigenous culture bearers in the preservation and transmission of the cultural aspects, and should develop a credentialing scheme to support their formalisation and qualification (GoU, 2025).

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