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Is it indigenisation or decolonisation of social work in Africa? A focus on Uganda

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ABSTRACT

There is some consensus that colonial white western social work which centers on western philosophy, theory and epistemologies is inappropriate, irrelevant for African contexts. The need to create a culturally appropriate and locally relevant social work has been echoed for decades now with social workers proposing various approaches including indigenisation and decolonisation. I have found the interchangeable use of indigenisation and decolonisation in social work literature rather confusing, leaving me with unanswered questions about what the terms mean and when or how to use these terms. While it may be true that indigenisation and decolonisation are interrelated or inextricably tied because they were brought about by the need to address colonisation in social work where the western model of social work was imposed in other diverse contexts as a universal model that transcends all cultures, it has also been argued that indigenisation and decolonisation are different processes conveying different ideas. This paper seeks to examine these terms to analyse the difference between the approaches and how they can be adopted in the Ugandan context to progress the process of creating culturally appropriate and locally relevant social work.

KEY TERMS: Africa, decolonisation, ideology of the colonized, indigenisation, social work, Uganda

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INTRODUCTION

While there is growing consensus about the urgent need to address the social injustice issue of white Western colonial dominance in social work in Africa, the lingering question remains: *how do we do this?* This article analyses indigenisation and decolonisation as approaches suggested to free social work in Africa from its past and ongoing colonisation manifested through the imposition of Eurocentric ideologies, languages, and epistemologies. The analysis is a response to the confusing interchangeable use of the two approaches, which although related, are different processes conveying different ideas. The end goal of the analysis is to come up with a recommendation on which approach is appropriate for creating a culturally appropriate and locally relevant social work, taking a case of social work in Uganda.

BACKGROUND

While some social workers around the world are resisting and seeking to undo past and ongoing colonisation in social work (Gray et al., 2013; Tusasiirwe, 2020; Tascon & Ife, 2020), others remain in denial arguing that colonisation is a thing of the past that cannot be blamed for what is happening in the present. Some of the people arguing that colonisation is a thing of the past are trying to avoid confronting the reality of colonialism which can be discomfiting as it involves difficult but possible processes of unlearning and re-learning to be able to move forward. Others have mistakenly confined colonisation and colonialism to an era (Bulhan, 2015). An era in the Ugandan context would mean limiting colonialism to the 68 years of British colonial rule (from around 1894 to 1962 when Uganda got its independence). However, this is a narrow definition of colonisation and colonialism, which remain unfinished business in the so-called independent nations. As Bulhan (2015) elaborates, “colonialism from the very beginning was economic, political, cultural and psychological. Its political and economic motives were obvious at the beginning; [but] the cultural and psychological motives integral to it all along became more intense and manifest later” (p.240). In other words, colonisation has kept on evolving in its methods and manifestations. In contexts like Uganda, colonisation, and colonialism which started with direct plundering and exploitation of human and material resources continues to happen through what Bulhan (2015) calls neocolonialism. Neocolonialism is the rule of the coloniser but from the backdoor or behind the scenes. The former colonisers control the social, economic, political sectors of the so-called independent nations through dictating flawed policies, systems, and programmes that serve colonial interests. Some examples include the neoliberalisation of colonial economies, the implementation of Structural Adjustment policies under the rule of International Monetary Fund, World Bank, or even the United Nations' top-down policies, programmes, standards, which have little or no consideration of the masses who cannot even read or understand the colonial languages their policies are written in, and therefore cannot demand accountability.

Colonisation of language remains persistent in most of the colonised contexts where colonial languages have remained hegemonic at the marginalisation of indigenous or mother tongues. It is worthy to be concerned about marginalisation of indigenous languages because as East African scholar Ngugi Wa Thiongo (1986) argued, language is not just a mere tool of communication, language is culture, identity, and includes a wealth of traditional or indigenous knowledge. In reading the Constitution of Uganda, for example, it clearly states how the English language remains the official language of Uganda when over 70% of Ugandans cannot speak the language (Nassenstein, 2016). The impact of such a language policy in social work is that social work policies, standards, are written in a language that excludes the very communities they are working with. A foreign language is imposed on communities with their own indigenous languages and cultures. Of the 56 languages, Uganda has over six major or widely spoken community languages (Ateso/Akaramojong, Lugbara, Runyankore-Rukiga, Runyoro-Rutooro, Luo, and Luganda) but all these languages remain unofficial, denoting the legacy of colonisation and language injustice (Mulumba & Masaazi, 2012).

The most concerning the legacy of colonialism is 'the ideology of the colonised' which is responsible for the enduring cultural and epistemological genocide and western dependency (Tusasiirwe, 2020). The ideology of the colonised is where the colonised themselves have internalised and come to believe the colonisers' doctrine and positioning as superior and theirs as inferior. Without even disrupting the binarisation of inferior/superior which is in itself a reflection of white western enlightenment, the colonised have come to believe that what is needed in African or Ugandan contexts is western knowledges, languages, education systems, theories, models, among others. Thus, the colonised, for example, send their children to the expensive schools in the West to learn and acquire western knowledges with the belief that western knowledge and systems are superior. Also, the ideology of the colonised is manifested in the academia in both western and non-western contexts where the colonial education systems originally established to serve colonial interests by erasing knowledges of the colonised, are still revered. This is the persistence of epistemic colonisation.

Epistemic colonisation remains undisrupted as social work education itself (in Africa and worldwide) continues to marginalise epistemological diversity while imposing presumed universal white western knowledge systems and perspectives of what social work is and how it operates (Gatwiri, 2020; Tascon & Ife, 2020; Tusasiirwe, 2020). African and indigenous knowledges remain devalued, denigrated, or regarded as inferior,

unscientific, and in need of being updated (for instance through empirical evidence) to meet acceptable western standards. There is less acknowledgement that all knowledges are contextual and culturally constructed and that knowledge systems and the constructions of social work they influence can be different and diverse, but equal. 16 years on, Gray & Fook's calls for "room for many types of social work across widely divergent contexts" are yet to materialise (Gray & Fook, 2004, p.626).

However, there are also social workers in Uganda and around the world who are disrupting, resisting white western colonial dominance in social work (Gray et al., 2013; Tusasiirwe, 2020; Tascon & Ife, 2020). The resistance of colonial thinking in social work has been manifested through different approaches proposed in Africa and around the world. The most predominant approaches proposed are indigenisation and decolonisation which I have found their interchangeable use very confusing, leaving me with unanswered questions about what the terms mean and when or how to use these terms. There are arguments that indigenisation and decolonisation, although interrelated, are different processes conveying different ideas (Tascon & Ife, 2020). In this paper, I will analyse the two approaches to find out which one would be appropriate to progress the process of finding culturally appropriate and locally relevant social work in an African, Ugandan context. The structure of the article is as follows: First, a case for indigenisation will be provided in the article, followed by critiques of this approach which have resulted in calls for decolonisation, which is then examined. This article advances the argument that decolonisation and indigenisation are different approaches and in contexts like Uganda, decolonisation needs to proceed indigenisation to facilitate undoing of past and ongoing colonialism, which will then allow for genuine recentering of the once devalued and marginalised indigenous knowledges, theories, philosophies, models. Decolonisation involves two sides: (1) questioning, challenging, decentering the current privileging of white western worldviews and ways of knowing and conceptualising social work which is often racist and inapplicable to African contexts like in Uganda. (2) articulation and centering of alternative knowledge systems and constructions of social work that are more important for the lived experiences of the people we work with.

A CASE FOR THE INDIGENISATION APPROACH

Renowned Ugandan social work scholar Janestic Twikirize has argued strongly for an enduring need to indigenise social work if we are to achieve a locally responsive and culturally appropriate profession. Indigenisation, she argues, "essentially connotes a process of trying to fit imported knowledge and models into the local context, implying maintenance of strong links with the original material" (Twikirize, 2014, p.79). The importation and adaptation in practice can take place through varied multi-dimensional models. For example in indigenisation, ideas can be "received and implemented; received, modified, and implemented; or newly generated [ideas] within a country or culture as a product of the local political, social, and economic contexts [can be implemented]" (Ferguson (2005) as cited in Twikirize, 2014a, p. 88).

Indigenisation can also go beyond adapting or modifying western social work theory, practices, or even policies to fit Ugandan context to include *generation*, *respect*, and *integration* of indigenous helping processes developed through culturally relevant practice. In their recently edited book on social work practice in Africa, Twikirize & Spitzer (2019) provide examples of generation, respect, and integration of indigenous helping processes in Uganda and Africa broadly. As Gray et al. (2008) argue, in indigenisation, local helping interventions are *integrated* into mainstream social work as some elements of mainstream social work are also adjusted to fit local contexts. From my understanding of Ugandan context which comes from my experience as a social work student and social work educator in Uganda, what Gray et al (2008) mean by mainstream social work is white western social work given that social work in Uganda is a colonial product and tool that remains predominantly grounded in white western perspectives, epistemologies, practices, languages, and policies (Tusasiirwe, 2020).

In Uganda and Africa more broadly, two main issues continue to cripple the chances that an indigenisation approach can deliver a contextualised model of social work. The two issues are the uncritical imitation of and the imposition of knowledges, agenda, models, systems from the West and the shunning or marginalisation of indigenous models and knowledges. I share extensively elsewhere (Tusasiirwe, 2020, 2021) how the dominance of western epistemologies in social work in Uganda remains deep-rooted. From my experiences as a social work student in Uganda, Sweden, and Australia, and as a social work educator in Uganda and Australia, social work remains taught from a predominantly European and North American perspective, as shaped by western ideas, cultural values, and events, consequently silencing the teaching and learning about social work in our local contexts as shaped by local ways of doing and knowing (Tusasiirwe, 2020).

Drawing from their attempts to indigenise social work at the University of Botswana in Africa, Osei-Hwedie & Boateng (2018) highlight that attempts to ground social work in indigenous ways of being and knowing have been dismissed on the basis that this limits the global competitiveness and international marketability of social work graduates and academics from non-western contexts. They lament how western theories, models, are being promoted at all costs over alternatives rooted in the local culture. What we can learn from their experiences is that indigenisation approach has an *inherent* challenge of nurturing a culture of consuming what others, especially the West, have produced (Tusasiirwe, 2019). Shunning of Indigenous or African epistemologies, practices in social work is not only a challenge among social work academics but also students as Mupedziswa (2001) notes, with

utmost sadness, that “there have been complaints from some academics to the effect that African students have tended to shun indigenous materials, probably as a result of the legacy of ‘professional imperialism’” (p. 292).

Based on such experiences, Osei-Hwedie & Boateng who have been strong proponents for indigenisation of social work in Africa have called indigenisation an elusive or an almost impossible task due to challenges related to the persistent thinking that western models and theories are “global, fashionable, and functional, if not perfect” (Osei-Hwedie & Boateng, 2018, p.1.). Similarly, Nigerian social work scholar Ugiagbe has called indigenisation a failed project because “international frameworks have proved remarkably resilient and impervious to cultural transformation and continue to dominate across diverse cultural contexts” (Ugiagbe, 2017, p. 272). Ugiagbe argues for one major thing: that social workers need to engage with development policy at the macro level, hence going beyond just engaging local cultures and traditions. Social workers in contexts like Uganda need to understand the complex relationships between their national governments and international financial institutions like the World Bank, which continue to predominantly influence and administer most of the western models, policies, and programmes in the global South. In other words, Ugiagbe (2017) calls for addressing what Bulhan (2015) called neocolonialism or the rule of the former colonisers through ‘the back door’.

From my Ph.D. research (Tusasiirwe, 2019), social policy makers in Uganda talked of related concerns where the overreliance on foreign funding from mostly former colonisers has meant that western expatriates, models, agendas, continue to be imposed in Uganda while indigenous models, knowledges, human resources are left in the periphery. A current example that I discuss in detail elsewhere (Tusasiirwe, 2020) is the case of Social Assistance Grant for Empowerment (SAGE) programme, a social protection programme for older people. The piloting of the programme that ran from 2010 to 2015 was managed by a British private consulting firm, Maxwell Stamp, and the evaluation of the pilot was headed by a team of consultants from Oxford Policy Management. The current SAGE programme, rolled out in 2016, is being managed by the UK-based consulting firm Maxwell Stamp in association with Development Pathways (Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development, 2019). SAGE is a donor-led program that has undermined, bypassed and looked down upon the human resources and existing systems of the Ugandan government. SAGE demonstrates how the West, that is, the UK, continues to view itself as “the centre and wellspring of knowledge” (Gray et al., 2008, p. 2). Donors, riding on their financial privilege, dictate the agenda, the models and systems to be used, even when the countries they are “helping” have their own alternative systems, agendas, and indigenous models that could be drawn upon.

As in SAGE programme above, the uncritical imitation and imposition of western expatriates, agenda, models of helping, and the consequent shunning, marginalisation, lack of recognition of indigenous models and knowledges demonstrate the ongoing colonisation, which, unfortunately, is not being addressed by the indigenisation approach. Thus, ongoing colonisation and colonial thinking explain why unilateral exchanges in social work remain endemic yet “social work in African contexts is rich in history and creativity and has unique characteristics and concepts despite prolonged periods of imposed theories from outside” (Spitzer, 2014, p. 25). Ongoing colonialism is behind why calls to bridge the gap between ‘Western dominance and African understatement’ are not heeded to by both Africans and their international partners (Spitzer, 2014). It is behind why there is still endemic or prolonged professional imperialism or why reciprocal international social work exchanges remain endemically scarce in Africa (Midgley, 2008). Ongoing colonialism explains why the so-called ‘partnerships’ or exchanges between Africa and the West are still predominantly imbalanced, lacking in mutual respect and equal participation in decision making (Spitzer, 2014). The perception of the West-as-best or West-as-superior in Western and non-Western contexts can be directly linked to past and ongoing colonialism which trivialises and belittles African ways of knowing and being, reinforcing a sense of inferiority and inadequacy and consequently reinforcing Western dependency. Decolonisation approach openly and directly seeks to question, dismantle, and reverse this past and present colonialism and its impacts (Tusasiirwe, 2019).

A CASE FOR DECOLONISATION APPROACH

I define decolonisation as an analytical and activist process that recognises the impact of colonialism and actively seeks to reverse and dismantle it to create opportunities for local and indigenous approaches, epistemologies, ways of being, and doing to take central and center stage in our contemporary settings. Decolonisation approach involves questioning and dismantling the dominance of white western social work in African contexts and consequently restoring, revaluing, recentering of African knowledges, cultures, models in social work practice, education in Africa. Decolonisation seeks to reverse and invert the unfinished business of colonisation which happens when one imposes their own worldviews, own philosophies, agenda, ways of being and doing on other people who have their own and consequently results into devaluing, marginalising, ignoring, denying the ways of being and doing, knowing of the people being colonised (Ife, 2016).

Using the SAGE example given earlier, decolonisation involves questioning and challenging the imposition of such western models of helping, expatriates, systems, among others. In social work, employing western expatriates to manage the SAGE programme is a replica of the colonial situation and one that demonstrates the persistent undervaluing of the capacities and abilities of Uganda's human resources, systems, and knowledges. The positioning of the UK as the originator of models of helping, producers of knowledge, human resources, must

be disrupted and so is the positioning of Uganda as the modifier, or recipient of imported knowledges, systems. As Le Grange argues, decolonisation includes undoing neo-colonisation and neo-liberalisation where superpowers like the international monetary bodies continue to heavily influence the former colonies that received 'technical independence' from their colonial rulers (Le Grange, 2018).

Decolonisation is also a responsibility of the colonisers. Colonisers who are often in a privileged position have to re-examine their privilege and their role in marginalisation and to start to address that. In other words, this obligation to decolonise requires the donors themselves to re-examine their complicity in colonisation. Donors need to be critical and dismantle their colonial and unidirectional flow of ideas regarding interventions for vulnerable groups, however consciously or unconsciously this is done or however good the intentions to help the poor and vulnerable are. Because donors have the financial privilege, they are abusing this privilege to donate funds and impose their own models of helping, systems, marginalising local knowledges, ideas. As European scholar Spitzer (2014) eloquently stated, "in the context of North-South-relationships, paternalistic behaviour and one-way interventions where there is a clear demarcation between who the supplier of ideas or the 'donor' is on the one hand, and who the recipients of 'beneficiary' is on the other, are out of place" (Spitzer, 2014, p. 25, citing Spitzer, 2009). Asking the questions below can be a starting point to a dialogical, decolonised approach to helping the vulnerable, based on their strengths and expression of what they want. Like we have seen in the case of the SAGE programme discussed earlier, instead of imposing own models, agenda, systems, a decolonial, dialogical conversation involving a 'donor' asking a 'beneficiary' (which can be a government or NGO, community) can start like:

In our [donor's] context, we do help vulnerable groups/older people this way, how about in your context?

In our context, we have these interventions, what initiatives or models exist in your communities that we can strengthen to support these vulnerable groups?

or

How do you want to be supported? What initiatives do you need us as donors to support and or strengthen, build on? (Tusasiirwe, 2019, p. 246).

Such a dialogical conversation where donors recognise and put at the centre the knowledges, ideas, voices, worldviews, models of the communities being helped may not happen unless the colonial thinking and hegemony is reversed and inverted through a *decolonisation-first approach*.

AUTHOR'S RECOMMENDED APPROACH: A CASE FOR DECOLONISATION FIRST, FOLLOWED BY INDIGENISATION

I conclude this article by advocating that given the ongoing colonisation happening in social work in Uganda and indeed Africa, there is a need to engage in decolonisation first and then indigenisation. I advocate that decolonisation needs to *precede* indigenisation because decolonisation is the critical process that creates space and opportunity for indigenous ways of being and knowing to take their rightful central space. The goal of decolonising first is to dismantle the very structures of colonisation and colonial thinking that continue to relegate African knowledges, experiences, models, voices. Social work scholars in favour of indigenisation in Uganda (Twikirize, 2014; Twikirize & Spitzer, 2019) have advocated for the *integration* of indigenous knowledge into Western social work, but this article advocates otherwise. It advocates for *centering* instead of integration. In indigenisation approach, indigenous ways of being and knowing, our philosophies will just be an 'add-on' yet these are meant to occupy central space in influencing social work practice, education, policy, research.

It is possible to indigenise without decolonising first although this is not what this article advocates for. In fact indigenising without decolonising is tokenistic, if not dangerous. Indigenising without decolonising can be seen where indigenous models, methods, philosophies have been created especially in our African contexts but these have no or a periphery place in social work education, practice, policy, research. The status quo has remained unchanged, western theories, models, methods continue to be taught as the 'legitimate' or 'universal' social work. Some social work educators cannot find a place for Indigenous knowledges and models in their curriculum dominated by white western knowledge systems. Some who try to cover indigenous knowledges, theories, philosophies just mention them in the passing, while western knowledges remain the major focus. Indigenous knowledges and authors are just added in or squeezed in while the course outlines and reading lists remain dominated by western social work authors and literature. In examinations, students 'cram and reproduce' these western theories, models, philosophies, ethics and values which some find little if any application in their practice contexts in Africa. Social work lecturers are seen as the only knowledge creators or producers in a classroom while students are the consumers of the content created. No attempt is made in the social work classroom to examine and disrupt the past and on-going colonisation which is responsible for the relegation and marginalisation of indigenous knowledges and ways of being in the first place.

Decolonisation is a project of *re-centering* (Mbembe, 2015). It is not simply about de-westernisation of knowledge or total closure of the door to European or other traditions, “it is about defining clearly what the centre is” (Mbembe, 2015, n.p). Indigenous social work, which in the Ugandan/African case can be Ubuntu/Ubuntu social work (Tusasiirwe, 2020), should be the mainstream and foundational social work, and other relevant models of social work, be it western social work or other constructions of social work around the world, could be integrated into it (Tusasiirwe, 2019). Western social work becomes the add-on to give a broader picture of what social work is like in other contexts like in the US or UK. The theories, models, philosophies, worldviews of African people become the mainstream because these represent the lived realities, ways of doing, being and helping of the African peoples.

A decolonisation first approach ensures that Indigenous models take centre stage other than the peripheral like it happens when we advocate for integration, inclusion, or simply the addition of indigenous knowledges, models, without questioning and dismantling the structures of colonisation that resulted in the marginalisation of these models and knowledges in the first place. The risk of indigenisation without decolonisation is that it does little to disrupt the status quo where western knowledges, systems, remain the mainstream while indigenous or African knowledges, ways of being, and doing are just inserted or integrated. To claim that “indigenisation is decolonisation fails to acknowledge the oppressive and racist nature of colonisation” (Harms Smith & Nathane, 2018, p.8) which decolonisation directly seeks to question and dismantle. Indigenisation ignores the role of coloniality, colonial indoctrination, ideology of the colonised, and the impact these have had on the persistent marginalisation of indigenous ways of being and doing, by both Western and African scholars. Decolonisation first seeks to dismantle the colonial indoctrination and mentality to ensure recognition of indigenous knowledges, voices, ideas as legitimate and of central importance to social work education, practice, research, theory in Africa.

The story of a greedy but cunning tortoise in African animal tricksters conveys the main argument and advocacy that this article is putting forward.

Once upon a time, all of the birds were invited to a feast in the sky and the tortoise persuaded the birds to lend him feathers to make wings so that he could attend the feast as well. As they travelled to the feast, the tortoise also encouraged them to take new names for the feast according to custom. He chose a name and told the birds that his name would be "All of You." When they arrived at the feast, the tortoise asked his hosts for whom the feast was prepared. They replied, "For all of you." Tortoise proceeded to eat and drink the best parts of the food and wine. The birds were displeased at receiving only scraps; they decided to take back the feathers that they had given to the tortoise so that he was unable to fly home.

The moral lesson I pick from this story in relation to decolonisation is that we must take back what belongs to us. Our knowledges, ways of being, knowing, cannot remain in the margins in our own education systems and in our social work with our own people. Just like the birds, we cannot continue to eat the scraps yet we are the guests. Superficial add-ons of African or indigenous knowledges in curriculums that still centre western theory and epistemologies are nothing but just 'scraps' served to us the invited guests. We must reclaim our thinking, conceptualise and construct social work centered on our own philosophies, ways of being, and doing. The education system must start consciously teaching colonisation, explaining to the students how professional social work was a colonial product that must be rediscovered and reconstructed to center African ways of being, knowing, and doing. Social workers need to understand the subtle ways in which colonisation and colonialism are still manifesting, particularly the thinking that western models, knowledges, are superior and ours are inferior, ‘backward’. In other words, the ideology of the colonised discussed earlier must be disrupted. The mind must be freed of colonial thinking. We must believe and value what we know and draw on it in our social work with the people we work with. I understand that the ideology of the colonised or colonisation of the mind is the hardest to address because it involves unlearning the deficit narrative of the coloniser by beginning to revere what was devalued, trivialised, regarded as superstitious, demonic. However, we have to start, we cannot continue to lack the confidence to teach, practice, and write in journals our own ways of knowing and being. In fact, for me to utilise an African story above to help me make sense of our experiences is a powerful start to decolonisation. Rarely do you see such orature centered in our social work publications, education and practice yet this is the African way of knowing.

There is an African saying that “*when you follow in the path of your father, you learn to walk like him*”. Current policy, practice, and education in social work demonstrate the same paths that the colonialist fathers took: paths that decentred, devalued, and disregarded indigenous ways of doing and thinking and promoted their own western ways and worldviews as superior. We must not follow the same path we must question, dismantle and disrupt this path to attain culturally appropriate social work practice and education that centers rather than 'add-on, or includes, or even just integrates our ways of being and knowing.

While aware of the limitations of tabular representations, below I present a table summarising how a decolonising first approach might be thought about/imagined in different social work dimensions including theory, history of social work, social work literature and epistemologies, approaches to teaching, and assessments for

students, social work practice and ethics., among others. The purpose is to encourage and invite readers to develop and articulate decolonisation alternatives or to share experiences of how they are practically decolonising their social work practice, education and classroom, assessments and the lessons learnt. While a decolonising movement is growing in social work, stories or experiences of how decolonisation is being done in practice remain scanty. This is an area that social workers can endeavour to contribute.

Table 1: A decolonise first perspective in social work, how different might it be from indigenising without decolonising first approach

<i>Component/Aspect of social work</i>	<i>Indigenising social work in the African context as per current understanding in the literature (Maintaining the status quo but integrate, incorporate, include, add, Indigenous Knowledges, cultures, models, adapt western models in the mainstream social work practice, etc)</i>	<i>Decolonising social work in African context (questioning, dismantling the dominance of white western social work, and restoring, revaluating, recentering of African knowledges, cultures, models in social work practice, education in Africa)</i>
Philosophy and Theories	Include African philosophy and theories e.g., Ubuntu/Obuntu amidst western theories (western theories often taught, thought of or presumed as universal, only truth).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • African philosophical thought and theory like Ubuntu/Obuntu is at the centre of social work education and practice; only those western theories that may be relevant to African context are included. • Western theory is not taught as a given/truth or universal but rather its cultural and epistemological assumptions are critically analysed and their application debated.
History of social work	<p>History of western social work (often European or Anglo-American history of social work taught).</p> <p>Incorporate teaching the history of Africans who contributed to the development of social work and social services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach colonisation and colonialism and how social work is a colonial product, to create awareness about the devastating impacts of colonialism and the need for decolonisation. Colonialism impacts how we view and sometimes marginalise our indigenous knowledge systems and the constructions of social work. • Centre teaching pre(post) colonial social work history, grounded in the cultures, epistemologies of the people social workers are to work with. • Teach European and American history of social work as an ‘add-on’, only where relevant and may contribute to understanding Obuntu/Ubuntu social work.
Social work literature and knowledges	<p>Include among others African social work books that use African perspectives.</p> <p>Indigenous knowledges as an addition</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centre African literature and orature in teaching social work. • Encourage students, educators, practitioners to theorise from orature (proverbs, storytelling, metaphors, etc) to influence social work that is culturally appropriate and aligned with the long-held oral tradition. • Centre community elders or older people who are custodians of indigenous knowledge in our teaching and learning. • Recognition that Indigenous knowledge and literature is counter-weight to western ways of knowing and doing.

Student assessments	Current status quo of assessment that privileges written forms of evaluating student learning like 3 hour written exams, or written essays.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessments that encourage imagination, creation of alternative social work, grounded in the cultures and epistemologies of the people we work with. • Include a diversity of ways of assessing students learning beyond the predominantly written ways of assessments like written essays. This includes visual format assessments, assessments in oral formats, etc.
Approach to teaching	The status quo still positions a teacher as a lecturer/only-expert source of knowledge that students need to learn and apply.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decolonised approach to teaching views the classroom and a co-learning and knowledge exchange environment where the student and teachers are co-learners and co-creators of knowledge. Classroom allows for redistribution of different kinds of knowledge from the students and the teachers. • Challenges the approach that positions the teacher as an only expert/source of knowledge that students need to cram and apply everywhere.
Social work practice	Include or add or integrate indigenous models of social work practice to the mainstream western models of doing social work, without dismantling the colonial, racist structures and prejudices that resulted in marginalisation and devaluing of the indigenous models in the first place.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decolonising requires questioning and challenging the status quo including the current dominance of western models in the African context where donors are still positioned as sources of finances and also knowledge/models on how to do social work. • Requires assertion by Africans of Indigenous models of doing social work, which must be exhausted and centered, before any western models are sought.
Social work ethics, principles, and values	Integrate Ubuntu/Ubuntu ethics of caring, interconnectedness with the environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Question presumed universalisation of western social work principles and values of individualisation, self-determination, especially in collective communities like in Africa. • Centre Ubuntu/Ubuntu ethics of interconnectedness with others and environment, the value of communalism/collectivity in African contexts.

CONCLUSION

In this article, I have analysed indigenisation and decolonisation as approaches being proposed by social workers in Uganda and Africa to achieve the goal of creating a social work education approach that is culturally and locally relevant. I have advocated that considering the Ugandan context, where ongoing colonisation and colonialism in social work education, policy, practice are still undisrupted, there is a need for social workers to engage in decolonisation first, followed by indigenisation. Decolonisation requires social workers to confront and dismantle colonial thinking that still privileges western knowledges, methodologies, practices and consequently relegates to the margins local and indigenous ways of doing, being, and knowing and how these construct a culturally grounded social work. I have argued that a *decolonisation first* approach will create spaces, structures, and environment, where African epistemologies, models of helping take center stage in social work education, practice, policy, rather than being add-ons, or being squeezed into the currently predominantly westernised social work, as it is likely to happen when we indigenise without decolonising first. Considering the ways of being and doing of the communities we work with as social workers, African or indigenous social work must be the mainstream in Africa in which only the relevant aspects of western social work are integrated and not vice versa.

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