



## Tertiary and University Education

# The Continuing Colonization of Higher Education in Africa: Interrogating the Modes and Channels at an African Premier University

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The paper uses a convergence of critical scholarship, theoretical inquiry, and empirical research to understand the reasons and channels for the continued colonisation of the African Academy. This paper is structured around four critical questions: i) How do faculty at African universities perpetuate the continued colonisation of African academia? ii) What are the structural, contextual, and historical factors responsible for the colonisation of African academia? iii) Whose views and experiences pass for knowledge? and iv) How has Makerere University leveraged its reputation and faculty to contribute to the decolonisation of African academia? Ten in-depth interviews and a systematic review of 86 course curricula of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology and the Department of Economic Theory and Analysis at Makerere University were conducted. Overall, faculty at Makerere University hardly use African-based reading materials and journal publications in the course syllabi. The faculty promotion and research agenda are heavily dependent on the rules and requirements of the Global North, with a focus on the number of publications in high-impact journals. Hence, the African academy is marred by inequalities and tendencies of academic colonialism. For the decolonisation of African academia and studies to gain traction, it is essential to emphasise that, contrary to the dominant paradigm at Makerere University, knowledge is socially constructed and contextual. It is possible to advance and promote African knowledge production and literature that highlights mutuality, accords respect, and contextualises what constitutes tacit knowledge.

### Practitioner Notes

#### What is Already Known

- Postcolonial scholarship demonstrates that African universities often retain colonial frameworks in curriculum design, faculty evaluation, publishing norms, and epistemological paradigms.
- Global North publishing platforms and impact indicators (indexing, citation counts) continue to marginalise African epistemologies by privileging external metrics over local knowledge.
- Decolonial initiatives are frequently relegated to the periphery of institutional priorities, treated as extracurricular rather than foundational to academic reform.

#### What this Study Adds

- Provides empirical evidence from Makerere University; a systematic review of 86 course outlines and 10 in-depth faculty interviews, revealing a stark un-

derrepresentation of African authors, publishers, and perspectives in core syllabi.

- Introduces a three-dimensional framework (structural, epistemic, personal coloniality) to analyse how Eurocentric hierarchies persist within African academia.
- Identifies an institutional disjunction: Although programmes like MakRIF and revitalised university presses signal local investment, they are not explicitly aligned with a decolonial agenda.
- Highlights faculty internalisation of Western publishing norms, impact metrics, and high-impact journals as unwitting agents of epistemic colonialism.

#### Implications for practice and policy

- Faculty-led audits should ensure syllabi integrate a substantial proportion of Africa-based scholarship; national regulators ought to incentivise curricula that foreground local and regional knowledge systems.
- Promotion and tenure criteria must be revised to recognise publications in Indigenous and university-

press journals, local impact, and community-engaged research alongside traditional metrics.

- Domestic research funding needs significant expansion to support Africa-centred agendas and reduce dependency on donor-driven priorities that shape epistemological orientations.
- Investment in African academic journals, enhanced peer review, indexing support, and digital dissemination will elevate the visibility and credibility of home-grown scholarship.
- University leadership should formalise decolonisation strategies: embed decolonial principles in mission statements, diversify editorial and governance bodies, and realign research priorities toward contextual relevance.

## Introduction

This paper draws inspiration from the publication “Decolonising African Studies” (Kessi et al., 2020). Like Kessi et al. (2020), we interrogate critical scholarship, theoretical inquiry, and empirical research to explore the ongoing colonisation of African academia. Our analysis is based on what Makerere University is doing, both intentionally and unintentionally, to decolonise the African academy. This paper contributes to the ongoing scholarly conversation on the decolonisation of the African Academy.<sup>1</sup> The concept of decolonisation has most often been used in a political and development sense to imply a postcolonial world in which Africans take charge of their developmental trajectory (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015). In the lens of higher education, decolonisation means the attempts of university education (academia) to promote perspectives grounded in African realities and experiences (Nyamnjoh, 2019). We specifically allude to Kessi et al. (2020, p. 273) observation that “Decolonial work is... an add-on, an extracurricular activity done outside of the normal day-to-day business of academia”. By extension, we argue that decolonisation is an ongoing interrogation, not of a finite or final state (Gopal, 2021). We recognise that the discourse of colonisation in Academia is not only happening in Africa and the Global South, but also the global North universities (Enslin & Hedge, 2024). Before delving into aspects of colonising in African studies, we attempt to explain the meaning of colonialism, as it is from this phenomenon that the need to decolonise arises.

Kessi et al. (2020) define colonialism as the subjugation and subjection of people, societies, and experiences to accumulate knowledge, wealth, and power that serve, directly or indirectly, white Western hegemony. In discussing the colonisation of African Academia, we borrow and use Maldonado-Torres’ (2007) concept of coloniality. Coloniality refers to a *global power structure of long-standing patterns*

*of power that emerged due to colonialism, but that define culture, labour, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations* (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 243). This definition implies that coloniality is reinforced in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in common sense, in the self-image of people, aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of modern experience (Ndlovu, 2013, p. 7).

In the context of academia, the coloniality of knowledge can also imply forms of thinking and knowing. It is a form of dominance and power structure that permeates itself in an epistemic dimension. The term epistemic relates to the study of knowledge. African knowledge and its production have witnessed epistemicides (epistemic violence), where African history remains burdened by imperialist historiography (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015). In the context of coloniality, knowledge outside European knowledge systems is often viewed as “undeveloped knowledge” (Bolarinwa, 2022). In African higher education (academia), coloniality persists through textbooks and the criteria used to assess academic performance (Maldonado-Torres, 2007).

On the other hand, decolonisation refers to a critical interrogation of “why we read some texts but not others, and truly confronting the knowledge they represent and the knowledge they elide” (Kessi et al., 2020, p. 272). They add that it also extends to reconfiguring academic accountability and authority so that it derives from mutuality and rigorous plurality, rather than top-down hierarchies of social and professional exclusion.

In an attempt to contribute to the conversation of colonisation and decolonisation of African Academia, we are aware that earlier attempts at this have met resistance. For example, Trowler (2019) shares how “the so-called Mamdani Affair” at the University of Cape Town, where his radical proposal for a compulsory first-year “Introduction to Africa” course was subsequently diluted and reframed. Several scholars have attempted to define what the African academy and studies are. Still, we chose to borrow from Ratele *et al.* (2018), who assert that African studies encompass scholarship in, by, with, for, of, on, and from Africa and Africans. In using this definition, we recognise a significant limitation of claiming that it’s only Africans who study and should engage in African studies. In this paper, we thus broaden the spectrum of scholars involved in African studies to include non-Africans who have contributed to and continue to contribute to the dialogue of African studies.

This paper is anchored on four (4) critical questions, three of which focus on continued colonisation, and the fourth focuses on decolonisation. The questions on continued colonisation are;

1. How do faculty at African universities reinforce and prop up the colonisation of African academia?

<sup>1</sup> We use the concept of the academy to denote the higher education sector. In Uganda, the academy is largely liberalised, with various universities and institutions of higher education, including over thirty registered private universities and eleven public universities (Nawangwe et al., 2021).

2. What are the structural, contextual, and historical factors responsible for the continued colonisation of African academia?
3. Whose voice, views, and experiences pass for knowledge?

To find answers to the three questions, we document the current state of affairs at Makerere University. The paper also shares Makerere University's efforts to decolonise African academics. These efforts could act as a building block upon which decolonisation efforts will be anchored. These efforts are crafted in our fourth question.

4. How has Makerere University leveraged its position, reputation, brand, and faculty to contribute to the decolonisation of African academia?

In trying to understand and explain the first three questions, we borrow Kessi et al.'s (2020, pp. 273–275) four-dimensional schema of (de) colonising. These are: structural, epistemic, personal, and relational. i) "The Structural dimension entails the distribution and access to reading material resources and opportunities, perpetuating colonial relations. Other aspects of the structural dimension include control of publishing houses and avenues (the lifeblood of academia), issues with the faculty promotion pipeline, and research budgets. ii) Epistemic decolonisation refers to the redemption of worldviews, theories, and ways of knowing that are not rooted in, nor oriented around, Euro-American theory. iii) Personal dimension: cultivating consciousness and engaging in disobedient decolonial praxis, and iv) relational dimension is hinged on the assumption that the first three dimensions depend on human relations to sustain and replicate systems of power and exclusion.

## Literature Review

### Uganda's Education Sector

Uganda's formal education system was shaped by its political history, particularly under the colonial and post-colonial regimes. The education sector is a part of the colonial history of the British education system and colonial rule, spanning from the 1890s to 1962. The colonial education system was discriminatory, and education was limited to only the urban elite (Asankha & Takashi, 2011; Oketch & Rolleston, 2007). However, after Uganda's independence in 1962, the post-colonial government immediately expanded the education system to meet national interests and needs (Asankha & Takashi, 2011; Rutanga, 2011).

The development of higher education in East Africa was a process of political negotiation, compromise, and collaboration among black and white constituencies. First, the Federal University of East Africa (UEA) was established in 1963 as part of the colonial thinking about British imperial integration (Mngomezulu, 2012). Later, a Commission was tasked with investigating and reporting on matters of native education in the British Colonies and Protectorates in Tropical Africa. A Report, Command Paper No. 2374, was generated in March 1925, marking the early stages of developing higher education in East Africa (Mngomezulu, 2012).

The Commission examined the organisation of Makerere College in Uganda (which began its operation in 1922), which later became an inter-territorial University College in East Africa with a 'Special Relationship' with the University of London (ibid). Makerere University in Uganda became an independent institution at the dissolution of the Federal University of East Africa in 1970. The colonial legacy has continued to influence much of the academic landscape in Africa through the "borrowing" of Global North curriculum, standards, educational leadership structures, rules, assessment methods, staff recruitment, and promotion procedures in the academy.

In this paper, under the Uganda Higher Education Qualifications Framework, the university is a higher education institution that offers post-secondary formal education and awards degrees (Nawangwe et al., 2021). Universities in Africa, like their counterparts in the Global North, generate powerful definitions of what constitutes knowledge and good research; however, there is a tendency to undervalue African-based research (Jeater, 2018). The academy rubrics state that academic learning is primarily constructed through research and publication in academic journals. Notwithstanding, some journals are considered more prestigious than others, with journals from the Global North having higher status than those from the African continent (Jeater, 2018). Since Global North journals are highly regarded, African scholars, both on the continent and in the diaspora, seek to publish in these 'high-impact' journals to secure tenure (Ampofo, 2016). In essence, the modern university is a European construct that has a limited focus on the importance of an African-centred approach to knowledge production in advancing Pan-Africanism and decolonisation (Ampofo, 2016). While research publications are the most critical factor in determining whether an academic gets employed and promoted, the idea of 'publish or perish' is based on the dominant Western knowledge creation realities (Amutuhaire, 2022).

Alternatively, the concept of "high impact" is another colonial notion that is assessed in diverse ways, but is always linked to claims about authority, quality, and scholarly standards (Jeater, 2018). There are doubts that research and publications, as noted by Ssentongo (2020), are crucial for faculty seeking promotion. Where they publish and the support received to enable them to publish is skewed to the colonial academy. The notion of "impact factor" is a measure of the frequency with which the average article in a journal has been cited in indexed journals in a particular year. In contrast, indexed journals" are those publications included in indexes such as Web of Knowledge, Scopus, and Google Scholar (Jeater, 2018).

Furthermore, a review of the scholarship on the colonisation and decolonisation of the African academy reveals the following key tenets. Mamdani (1993) noted that the colonisation of the African academy was constructed around five tenets, namely: (i) the superiority of colonial languages in teaching, learning, and assessment ii) The inheritance of the colonial curriculum/standards iii) The inherent inequality of African scholars due to Western scholars' real and perceived superiority as knowledge agents. iv)

Limited representation of African scholarship by Africans. Mamdani (1993) refers to the dilemma of having an African academy in a global academic landscape that is both responsive to the local and engaged with the international.

### Decolonisation of the Academy

We contend that the nomenclatures of ‘publish or perish,’ high-impact journals, indexed journals, and standards are based on the Global North’s rules of the game and are superimposed or adopted by African academia and scholars with less regard for African realities. According to Mamdani (1993, p. 11), “the hundreds of universities created after independence have stayed triumphantly universalistic and uncompromisingly foreign to local cultures, populations, and predicaments. Shahjahan et al. (2022) asserted that curricula and pedagogy are deeply implicated in grounding, validating, and/or marginalising systems of African knowledge production. Studies have also acknowledged the lack of distribution hubs and an intra-Africa book trade, curricula, pedagogy, and learning processes that are still rooted in the colonial situation and the absence of a scholarship culture (Amutuhaire, 2022), hence the continued colonisation and inequalities of academics in the global South with the dominance of the Global North.

Thus, we subscribe to the notion of decolonisation of the African Academy. African writers have consistently underscored the importance of their contributions to writing about and for Africa. For example, Madubiike (1975, p. 29) narrated that African scholars should continue to write, even when writing “in borrowed Western (colonial) languages; it will still be African if it is addressed to Africans and if it captures the qualities of African life. It will be a species of African literature written in English, French or Portuguese”. Needless to mention, the struggle to decolonise African academies has yielded some gains, especially in the Africanization of personnel; however, little progress has been made in their curricula, pedagogical structures, or epistemologies (Nyamnjoh, 2019). He further asserts that there is still naivety among African scholars who lack the will and sustained commitment to move beyond rhetoric and make a difference in terms of greater contextual relevance in epistemology and theorising. In this paper, we highlight the issues that perpetuate the continued colonisation of the African Academy and provide an analysis of the intentional and unintentional remedies offered by Makerere University to the decolonisation process.

### Methodology

Data for this paper were generated from two primary data collection methods. The first method was a systematic

review of secondary documents<sup>2</sup>, literature, and an analysis of university course curricula. A systematic literature review is a method used to comprehensively identify, appraise, and synthesise all relevant studies on a given topic (Petticrew & Roberts, 2008).<sup>3</sup> The second method was in-depth interviews with faculty from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology (DSA) and the Department of Economic Theory and Analysis (ETA) at the School of Economics. Out of the 10 in-depth interview participants, two were undergraduate program coordinators, five were senior faculty, and three were early career scholars. The study was conducted at Makerere University, the oldest public University in Uganda. Makerere University is part of the 303 institutions of higher education in Uganda (Wandera, 2025). To explore this further, we provide an overview of the historical context of Makerere University.

The authors reviewed databases of course curricula in DSA and ETA. The following criteria guided the review: the number of African authors referenced, the number of Ugandan authors, the number of African publishers, the number and names of Ugandan journals and publishers, and the number and names of Makerere University-based journals and publishers. The authors also reviewed the promotion criteria used at Makerere University, access to research funds, dissemination and sharing of research findings (knowledge sharing), and collaborations and partnerships between Africans.

In terms of ethical considerations, the study was conducted following ethical principles of doing research, namely respect for persons, confidentiality, anonymity, privacy, and data security. The study was conducted in English language which is clearly understood by all participants. Informed consent was sought and given by study participants. During data collection, analysis, and storage unique identifiers of participants were kept anonymous. The study data is kept under key and lock, and electronically under a password lock. Data can only be accessed upon request and with permission from the authors through the corresponding authors.

We acknowledge that, in part, the focus on two departments is a potential limitation to generalising findings across Makerere University or other African universities. However, the paper explores the critical and contemporary issues of decolonisation of the African academy that are cross-cutting. For example, we underscore the persistent colonial structures, reliance on Western paradigms, the use of foreign languages as a medium of instruction, and the prioritisation of the Global North’s (American and Eurocentric) research frameworks over African indigenous knowledge systems. This does not negate the need for further research involving a broader range of disciplines, including

2 We reviewed the Makerere University Strategic Plan 2020-2030, Makerere University Research and Innovations Fund (MAKRIF), Makerere University Strategic Plan 2020-2030, and Makerere University Historical Background (2021), and Uganda National Council for Higher Education Guidelines on program review and approval.

3 Systematic review helps in dealing with information overload (mountain), to distil information into a manageable form (Petticrew & Roberts, 2008).

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics which could yield more empirical evidence.

### Study Results

The study results are discussed in light of the four critical research questions posed in this paper. The first question is, “How do faculty at African universities reinforce and prop up the continued colonising of African academia?”

One crucial mechanism for reinforcing and propelling the colonisation of African academia is what is taught and the materials used by faculty in teaching and learning. Universities are arenas where knowledge is not only produced but also disseminated and shared among the broader community. In examining the role of “intellectual landscape” (Oelofsen, 2015) in perpetuating the colonisation of African academia, we present findings from a review of undergraduate course curricula of two academic units at Makerere University. Eighty-six course outlines were reviewed, 65% and 35% were from ETA and DSA, respectively. By year of study, 42%, 41% and 17% were second, third, and first curricula, respectively (refer to [Table 1](#)).

**Table 1. Number of Courses reviewed per Unit.**

Year of Study	ETA	DSA	Total
First	12	3	15 (17%)
Second	22	14	36 (42%)
Third	22	13	35 (41%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>56 (65%)</b>	<b>30 (35%)</b>	<b>86 (100%)</b>

Review results on authorship, publishing house or journal are presented in [Table 2](#).

**Table 2. Summary of Reviewed African Authorship per Unit**

Year of Study	ETA	DSA	Total
Number of Non-Ugandan African Authors	2	6	8 (1.6%)
Number of Ugandan Authors	11	10	21 (4%)
Number of African Publishers	0	0	0 (0%)
Number of Uganda-based Journals and publishers	9	4	13 (3%)
Number and name of Makerere-based journals and the publisher	0	1	1 (0.2%)

Fifty-six ETA course outlines reviewed had 280 references. In all the 56 course curricula, only two non-Ugandan African authors and 11 (4%) Ugandan authors were referenced. There were nine (3%) Ugandan publishers, all of them for a 3<sup>rd</sup> year course on the Ugandan Economy (ECO3203). It is instructive to recognise that for the 3<sup>rd</sup> year ECO 3203 course, eight (8) of the nine references are Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development documents and publications. There was neither an African

journal/publisher nor a Makerere University journal referenced.

For DSA, thirty (30) course outlines were reviewed with a total of 201 references. In all the 30 course curricula, there were only six (3%) non-Ugandan African and 10 (5%) Ugandan authors referenced. There were 4 (2%) Ugandan journals and publishers referenced (the majority being government publications), and no non-Ugandan African publishers or journals were referenced. There was only one (0.5%) Makerere University-based journal/publisher, *Mawazo*. These findings should be understood in the context that all instructors of the reviewed courses are Ugandans (and Africans). Secondly, the review accounts for course outlines in the curricula documents approved by the National Council for Higher Education in 2019.

Faculty reported various reasons for the lack of Ugandan and African references in the curricula. Some of these issues ranged from a lack of funds to get published, to deciding where to publish, a lack of faith and belief in African-based journals. A lack of funds among Ugandan and African scholars was a significant challenge. Faculty members shared their experiences in convincing publishers to publish their research works. One of these reported that:

*...while I have a pamphlet that I have attempted to get published, the funds to pay the publishers are so high. Many publishing houses require that you pay for multiple copies upfront. They have a minimum, which is usually extremely expensive.*

Some faculty noted that the desire (by Makerere University) to publish in indexed and high-impact journals discourages them from locally available journals. One of them remarked thus:

*I'm not sure about the legitimacy of the requirement to publish in an indexed journal, but whatever it is, the University should encourage faculty to publish in a local journal that can then be centrally supported to get indexed and achieve high impact. It is reverse psychology for one to seek impact from our home-grown journals, yet you don't encourage your faculty to publish there.*

Turning to the lack of faith and belief in African-based journals, a senior faculty member from the ETA noted that:

*... It boils It all boils down to how we position our journal article. As a senior Economist, I want a particular space. Mawazo would be a last resort for me. I can never write a paper targeting Mawazo or journals hosted on the African continent.*

Pressed to explain further, he continued.

*The rigour that comes with a review is what helps you grow as a scholar. Africa-based journals seem not to have that rigour.... Most African scholars are not yet ready for open academic debates and critique.*

Expressing the same sentiment from another lens, a social scientist from the DSA said;

*We, as academics, don't have faith in our writing. When I write a paper and cite top European and American schol-*

ars such as Foucault, Barth, and Bourdieu, s then that is an excellent work. However, our actions reinforce colonisation.

The above findings explicitly indicate that there were few African and Ugandan authors referenced in the course syllabi. This finding is instructive insofar as the continued colonisation and decolonisation process of African Academia is concerned. Most faculty members rely on non-Ugandan/African teaching and reading materials. As a result, this highlights the colonial legacies of undermining indigenous scholarship and knowledge. The faculty of the reviewed courses could either find African materials and references or were not confident to use “unpublished” materials. The faculty are yet to embrace the opportunities presented by African-based journals, or better still, those under Makerere University Press (MAK Press) and other Makerere University-based Journals.

However, the opportunity presented by MAK Press, some faculty had misgivings, for example, a staff member in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology remarked that:

*Makerere University is attempting to engage faculty in the decolonisation agenda of the academy by revamping and strengthening Makerere University Press to index and publish all local journals at various Colleges. I am not sure about the turnaround time of the press, the rigour and quality of review compared to other high-impact journals. In addition, even with funding from the government of Uganda, Makerere Research Innovation Fund is still limited to very few staff, and perceived to be rewarded to only a few faculty, yet it has been implemented for the last five years, with a goal of enhancing local knowledge production and innovation by academic staff members.*

The second question raised in this paper is “*What are the structural, contextual, and historical factors responsible for the continued colonisation of African academia?*”

In answering the question, we focused on several parameters namely: criteria used for promotion: access to research funds, dissemination and sharing of research findings (knowledge sharing), performance requirements, the level of competition or lack thereof within the African intellectual landscape, and collaborations and partnerships between African, European, and North American universities. The actual unpacking of each of these parameters may overlap.

### Faculty Promotions at the University

Academic ranks are essential in universities; as such, different universities have established criteria that applicants seeking to be promoted to a particular rank are measured against. At Makerere University, the Human Resources Manual 2009 (as amended) has specific promotion requirements for each rank. Except for junior faculty at the ranks of

Graduate Fellow, Research Fellow, Assistant Lecturer, and Lecturer, the ranks of Senior Lecturer, Associate Professor, and Professor must meet specific criteria (Makerere University, 2022). Promotion criteria for Senior Lecturer and above include between 3-10 publications in “peer-reviewed and high-impact journals” and/ or chapters in published books, supervising a given number of graduate students, and evidence of resource mobilisation to the University since the last promotion<sup>4</sup>. Plain and clear as they may seem, a deeper examination of some of these seemingly achievable requirements reveals tendencies of colonisation. It has been alleged to contribute to the “promotion pipeline problem”.

### Research Grants and Collaborations

Data from Makerere University’s Quality Assurance Directorate shows that faculty in the natural sciences (STEM) attract more funding than their counterparts in the humanities, social sciences, and business. The funding disparity could partly be explained by the fact that fewer funders from Europe and North America will fund research that seeks to interrogate and contest some epistemological and ontological issues around governance, climate change, political economy of aid, health, and terms of trade, among others.

A clear scrutiny of faculty in (natural) science-based colleges reveals more partnerships and collaborations, which are a sure way to publications. Publication data for the period 2017-2023, shared during the 74<sup>th</sup> Graduation held from January 29 to February 2, 2024, indicates that faculty from science-based colleges have an edge over those from other colleges (Makerere University, 2022). The best overall male and female researchers, with 271 and 153 publications, respectively, were from the College of Health Sciences. A look at the twenty-four faculty members with over 25 publications shows that all but three are from science-based colleges (Makerere University, 2022). Without a doubt, these academic awards are vital recognitions and motivate faculty members to engage in knowledge production and publishing. Voices from faculty members, however, underscored the source of funding for scholarships, primarily Western donors and academic institutions supporting research by African scholars. This line of argument was raised by most study participants. For example, an early career scholar at DSA explained that:

*... even those in charge of the review and vetting of research proposals based on criteria set by the funding agencies, mainly from the Global North. I wrote a proposal against the feminist approach, which biases gender discourse only to the female gender. Upon submitting it to the potential Western reviewer and supervisor, the proposal was rejected, and I was told I was not fit for a PhD program....*

<sup>4</sup> These are contained in the Makerere University Human Resources Manual 2009 (as Amended). It contains promotion criteria on two tracks namely the ordinary and fast tracks.

It is clear that without deliberate funding by African donors and governments to fund the research agenda of Africa for Africa, the decolonisation movement remains a mere rhetoric. Makerere University faculty are beneficiaries and partners of several research collaborations. These partnerships have various variants but include joint research, publications, and staff exchanges, among others. Focusing on joint research, Mamdani (2011) notes that some of the Ugandan (read African) co-investigators are native informers and mere supervisors of data collection (Serunkuma, 2018).

The publication of research outputs and innovations is under firm control and dominated by professionals in Europe, the US, and South Africa, where many peer-reviewed journals on African Studies are located (Smith, 2010). Due to the strict requirements on where to publish, most funded research projects are more likely than not to publish in high-impact peer-reviewed journals based in the North.

The third question raised in this paper is *"Whose voice, views, and experiences pass for knowledge?"* Epistemic colonisation is real at many African universities. The requirement that faculty publish in specific journals and publishing houses reinforces colonisation of academia. The promotion criteria presented earlier are an extension of what passes for knowledge and where the acceptable knowledge should be shared with the (global) scholarly world. The rigours and standards set for the acceptable and "official" dissemination outlets (journals and publishing houses) partly provide answers to the question of whose voice, views, and experiences pass for knowledge.

The fourth (and last) question raised in this paper is: *How has Makerere University leveraged its position, reputation, brand, and faculty to contribute to the decolonisation of African academia?*

Makerere University has, during its 100 years of existence, contributed in various ways to the decolonisation agenda of African academia. We, however, do put a caveat on our categorisation, the university has not yet branded her efforts as a decolonisation agenda.

With support from the Government of Uganda, the university has contributed to knowledge production through research for five years. This has been implemented under the Makerere University Research and Innovation Fund (MakRIF) program initiated in 2019; to support high-impact Research and Innovations that inform national development priorities (Makerere University, 2022). Over the last four Financial Years (2019/20, 2020/21, 2021/22, and 2022/23), the government appropriated UGX 105.5 billion towards MakRIF. MakRIF has funded a total of 1,028 projects across all sectors critical for development, of which 457 have been completed<sup>5</sup>. MakRIF efforts to support local and indigenous research have yielded scientific findings that contribute to the decolonisation process. Hence, contributing to rigorous and innovative knowledge production by

Ugandan and African researchers, as well as strengthening the academic and intellectual collaborations among scholars and the community.

In the realm of knowledge dissemination, the Makerere University Press has been revitalised. Many editors and editorial boards are comprised of homegrown academics who have honed their skills both locally and internationally. The Makerere University Press was established in the 1940s, focusing on publishing transformative and innovative teaching, learning, research, and service resources responsive to dynamic national and global needs<sup>6</sup>. The university publishes several peer-reviewed journals. Notable journals include *Mawazo*, the Makerere Historical Journal, the Makerere Journal of Higher Education, the Makerere Journal of Research and Innovations in Teacher Education, and the Africa Health Sciences Journal, among others. Despite these efforts, some faculty members believe that these journals are mainly based on Western scholarship and publication review criteria. One early career faculty at DSA narrated that:

*... You must refer to Western texts for your article to be considered as contributing to scientific knowledge. Here, knowledge becomes acceptable to the scientific world through, most of the time, Western texts, Western referencing styles, and Western review criteria. My thinking is that we are still reinforcing colonisation to appear scientific.*

## Discussion

Faculty at African universities reinforce and prop up the continued colonising of African academia. Some even faulted the existing publication channels. Others expressed a sense of inferiority and a need to be associated with high-impact journals, many of which are based in the Global North. Our findings are consistent with Shahjahan *et al* (2022), who observed that "curricula and pedagogy are deeply implicated in grounding, validating, and/or marginalising systems of knowledge production". Perhaps the Ugandan academy is still struggling with the colonial legacies of the British education system, which limited access to African scholarship (Rutanga, 2011). We observe that colonial and neo-colonial tendencies are perpetuated and extend beyond the political and economic realms, but also manifest in the contemporary academy.

African governments immediately expanded the education system to meet national interests and needs upon independence (Rutanga, 2011). African authorship and scholarship are still underrepresented, even at the university level. This is akin to a lack of social commitment and political engagement by African scholars, including if it means to destroy the status quo (Madubuike, 1975), as course instructors are naïve to their 'peers' reference materials.

<sup>5</sup> <https://rif.mak.ac.ug/call-for-applications-round-5/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://news.mak.ac.ug/2019/06/mak-revitalizes-its-press-house-launches-website-and-three-scholarly-books/>

We argue that the decolonisation agenda of the academy ought to be intentional in debunking and mitigating the histories that constructed the African academy. The African academy is heavily shaped by one historical experience of Western hegemony, embedded not only in political and economic dimensions but also in knowledge production. The colonial legacies were entrenched in Western universities, both in the content and language of instruction. In contemporary Africa, this hegemonic power in knowledge production has been perpetuated by African scholars as agents (gatekeepers) of “colonial legacies,” reinforcing the systemic colonial agenda in knowledge production. The African gatekeepers even practice this colonial hegemonism with even greater zeal by determining what constitutes good knowledge and scholarship, where and how it is, and how it must be disseminated or communicated; and who gets promoted by this kind of “colonial standards”.

Ssentongo (2020) emphasises the significance of research and publications in the promotion process for faculty members. The desire to get promoted is captured in a very resonating cliché of “publish or perish”. Inspired by the social and economic capital that comes with the promotion, many faculty members try to get published. However, publishing in a peer-reviewed and high-impact journal, as set in Makerere University’s HR Manual, means that not all that is published counts or matters, after all.

The Directorate of Graduate Training (DGT) has in the past shared a list of acceptable high-impact journals and those deemed fake and commonly referred to as predatory journals”. A thorough examination of the genuine and acceptable reveals that there are few Ugandan or even African-based journals that meet the standards. The implication of these findings, as far as decolonising the African Academia is concerned, is that the DGT is unconsciously contributing to the further entrenchment and capture of African Academia by Northern-based journals and publishers.

While the Appointments Board, College, School and Departmental Promotions and Appointments Committees play gatekeeping roles in quality, the inconsistencies in some decisions regarding whether a journal is acceptable or predatory have led some applicants to believe that it is not always solely about the paper (Ssentongo, 2020). Indeed, most scholars struggle to publish in high-impact factor journals. The worst coloniality tendency in the African academy is that after publishing in Western journals, the scholars or their universities must subscribe to those journals to access their research outputs. Thus, the notion of ‘publish or perish’ is nuanced in the African academy, keeping staff constantly engaged with relevant knowledge work in their fields of expertise.

While research publications are the most critical factor in determining whether an academic gets employed and promoted, the idea of ‘publish or perish’ is rooted in the dominant Western knowledge creation realities (Amutuhaire, 2022). The promotion process has been entrenched by a precise mechanism of entering, gaining access, and belonging to the “club” based on Eurocentric and Western standards. African gatekeepers or scholars often manage

access to and growth within the club in positions of power and authority. The exclusive “club” is sustained and maintained by the “kick the ladder principle,” which limits or makes it hard for those who qualify to be part of it. Once the agents of the small club are promoted in this exclusive club, “professors”, they devise more complex and dynamic colonial roadblocks, and they kick the ladder with almost impossible standards for most African scholars.

Makerere University is believed to be experiencing a promotion pipeline problem. The promotion pipeline problem, though defined as the diminishing presence of African and women scholars in higher ranks of power and prestige (Kessi et al., 2020), manifests differently in African Universities in general and at Makerere University in particular. At Makerere University, the promotion requirements are oblivious to the differences that are experienced in the Natural Sciences (STEM) and Humanities, Social Sciences, and Business disciplines. Little or no weight is given to the vast numbers of undergraduate and graduate students that faculty in the humanities, social sciences, law, and business handle. The big numbers, without a doubt, consume time that would have been used for grant writing, research, and publication. Additionally, less attention is given to the impact on society, as knowledge-creation processes are often tailored to African realities (Amutuhaire, 2022). Issues raised in the promotion pipeline are done in full awareness of the University’s core functions of teaching, research, and community outreach and are “created through inequitable distributions of labor, responsibilities, and support, resulting in some groups of people falling off the academic ladder earlier at higher rates than others” (Kessi et al., 2020). The club of gatekeepers has amplified the colonial legacies of demanding publications in indexed and high-impact factor journals. The intriguing questions are: What is indexing? And who does the indexing apart from the Western knowledge powerhouse and periodicals? On the contrary, it has been argued that the measures of indexing and impact factors have been taken out of proportion to their original intent:

*It was initially designed to help librarians make decisions regarding purchasing and subscriptions; yet, its simple measurability has made it attractive to managers within the increasingly neoliberal world of higher education, who are seeking metrics for setting targets and measuring performance (Jeater, 2018, p. 10).*

This club of colonial agents in the African academy will constantly innovate staff promotion rules, assessment tools, and criteria of the African academic and the academy in general. Such a “biblical canon” in the academy discourages the weak and fainthearted early and mid-career academics.

The requirement that faculty seeking promotion should publish in specific (and acceptable) outlets is one of the Afro-pessimistic biases (Ssentongo, 2020) present in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Afro-pessimistic tendencies toward African publishing outlets, exhibited by the promotion criteria, reinforce the continued colonisation of African studies and education. To a young faculty member who wishes

to access or get hold of the “*pro-rata*”<sup>7</sup> pay of Associate Professors and Professors, the insistence on specific journals in the league of JSTOR, Elsevier, Sage, Science Direct, and PubMed for example, is a benefit and aspiration which further, and quite unconsciously works against the decolonisation of African academia.

Research funding and budgets are yet another way of perpetuating coloniality in African studies (Kessi et al., 2020). Research funding is larger in Europe and North America. The colonisation of African studies has utilised this funding to sustain its practice through collaborative research between scholars from the North and African universities. African scholars, including those at Makerere, are mere collaborators while the Principal Investigator is based in the North. Despite the several advantages of these collaborations, there are unequal power relations, with the dominance of the Global North, which sets the research agenda, and the Global South’s actors (Sapwe, 2022).

All the above factors affect the Makerere University rankings in the global context, which is another neocolonial agenda that perpetuates inequalities in the lower rankings of African Universities based on Western criteria. Indeed, some commentators on the recent rankings of Makerere University, October 2024, decried the continued colonisation: *allowing “others” to rank us, on their terms and values, with no regard to our circumstances and priorities is the highest form of neo-colonialism.*

This practice creates what Kessi et al (2020) refer to as a political economy of research centred in the former colonial metropole, oriented around extraction and paternalism, and taking knowledge from Africa. The African knowledge production industry is entangled in colonial legacies, where data is collected in the south, published, and patented in the global north. Hence, this reproduces coloniality in Africa’s higher education institutions.

Through a systematic approach and design, Western scholars and “Africanists” have for years been cementing and buttressing epistemic colonisation. Epistemic colonisation entails promoting worldviews, theories, and approaches to knowing, while emphasising and glorifying Euro-American theory (Kessi et al., 2020). It is no surprise that “Africa contributes only 2% to global knowledge production (Thondhlana & Garwe, 2021). Epistemic colonisation is witnessed by the fact that there are few publishing outlets where African knowledge (production) can be disseminated. This fact was aptly captured by Thondhlana & Garwe (2021) when they stated that:

... due to the “colonial global knowledge production matrix, Africa is dependent on international publishing infrastructures and requires the West to legitimise its knowledge production.

Another manifestation that fosters epistemic colonisation is the clear linkages and partnerships between North-

ern universities and African universities, including Makerere University, which was founded and anchored on factors that fostered colonisation. In collaboration with and through agents who are sometimes referred to as local Principal Investigators in the South, Northern universities continue to engage in the business of gathering, producing, and disseminating knowledge (Gopal, 2021) that maintains and reinforces the colonial dominance of African academia and studies.

Pushing and advocating for journals in the North reminds us of the “existing hierarchical global higher education system that privileges certain world regions and thus possesses the epistemic privilege to articulate and shape global discourses” (Shahjahan & Morgan, 2016; Shahjahan et al., 2022; Spring, 2008). Some scholars have questioned the effectiveness and ability of decolonisation efforts in education (Andreotti et al., 2015; Battiste & Henderson, 2018; Stein, 2019), but this should not deter or prevent these efforts. We have listed Makerere University’s contribution to the decolonisation of African Academia.

## Conclusion

Most faculty of the reviewed academic units seem to reinforce and prop up the continued colonising of African academia. There is limited use of African or Africa-based reference materials in teaching and learning. The reference materials used are primarily sourced from publishing houses in the Global North. Faculty, some may unconsciously promote the colonial tendencies in academia through academic references to Western references at the peril of African knowledge production and dissemination. Thus, African faculty are themselves agents of coloniality and perpetrate academic inequality in the African academy.

In addition, the gatekeepers of the African academy, in the form of university management and the regulations in place for staff recruitment and promotions, are anchored mainly in the paradigm of colonial rules, focusing on publications in high-impact-factor journals, most of which are published by non-African publishers, and the number of publications. The system is a replica of the Western orientation of the academy and the faculty promotion processes.

For the decolonisation of African academia and studies to gain traction, there is a need to emphasise that, contrary to the dominant paradigm at Makerere University, knowledge is socially constructed and highly contextual. It is possible to advance and promote African knowledge and literature, which highlights mutuality and accords respect, contextualising what is presented as actual knowledge. Our argument is to create a paradigm shift in how the African academy can position itself in the decolonisation agenda, specifically in terms of what is taught, how and why, and how it is assessed. Whose knowledge is produced and disseminated, and indigenizing (Africanized) through the knowledge dissemination and publishing house?

<sup>7</sup> Pro-rata is a crooked reference of the pay difference between Professors and Associate Professors on one hand and the rest of other ranks on the other. It denotes the difference in the pay grades.

## Policy Recommendation

Our policy recommendations are to both the African Academy and the faculty. First, to the African academy, the research-led vision where each faculty is expected to have at least one publication each year is a step in the right direction. This then calls for the full-scale activation of college-based journals, where faculty should be encouraged to publish.

A review of the university faculty promotion policy should be made to include at least one locally published article in any of the Makerere University Press-affiliated journals, among the required number of articles to be considered for promotion to the next level.

Leveraging the increased funding for the Makerere University Research Innovation Fund, each faculty should be encouraged to use the findings from such and similar projects to inform curricula. For the start, in the mandatory curriculum review, each faculty should be encouraged to include local content and African scholars in at least 10% of the reading materials and references for each course. This aligns well with the standards and requirements of the Uganda National Council for Higher Education.

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## Conflict of Interest

The first and second authors have no conflict of interest. The study was done with utmost regard for ethical considerations and due acknowledgment of academic resources. In addition, though the third author is a University Secretary, he does not initiate and develop academic policy; rather is an implementer of the policies. His contribution in this paper is to enhance academic discourse on decolonisation of the African Academy. We do not use any classified (non-public) materials in this write-up.

## Statement on Data Accessibility

The study data is kept under key and lock, and electronically under a password lock. Data can only be accessed upon request and with permission from the authors through the corresponding authors.

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## Supplementary Materials

### **The Continuing Colonization of Higher Education in Africa: Interrogating the Modes and Channels at an African Premier University**

Download: <https://rite.mak.ac.ug/article/141971-the-continuing-colonization-of-higher-education-in-africa-interrogating-the-modes-and-channels-at-an-african-premier-university/attachment/299055.pdf>

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