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Critical perspectives

Educating managers for equity and social justice: Integrating Indigenous knowledges and perspectives in Australian sport, recreation and event management curricula

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ABSTRACT

The past two decades have witnessed a shift from stand-alone and critically reflexive leisure studies programs into an assortment of sport, tourism, hospitality, events, and (outdoor) active recreation management-focused programs. This shift, driven by student and University led demand for more vocational and employability oriented degrees, has reduced the criticality of leisure studies and, consequently, its capacity to evaluate the particular relationships between Indigenous peoples and leisure, sport and recreation in Australia. In this article, we introduce the concept of 'Indigenisation' and demonstrate the demand for leisure and sport studies curricula that embed Indigenous-related content, knowledges and perspectives. We provide a case study of efforts to Indigenise the Sport, Recreation and Event Management program at Edith Cowan University in Western Australia. This case study provides the context for a critical reflection from a leisure studies educator, and a set of recommendations for how criticality and reflexive teaching and learning practice can be more effectively integrated into twenty-first century leisure and sport studies education.

1. Introduction

A critical perspective on leisure studies education and, by extension, sport studies (including sport, active recreation and event management education) is limited. Spracklen (2014) has recently called for educators to return vibrancy and critical sociology to the current branches of leisure studies subject fields by challenging students to think more critically about the world around them. The concept of Indigenisation provides a critical lens in this endeavour, with its emphasis on the incorporation of Indigenous-related content, perspectives and knowledges into tertiary curricula. By engaging with Indigenisation in the context of a sport, recreation and event management program at an Australian university, we offer ways for leisure studies educators to move away from the delivery of narrowly focused managerial and professional programs to develop curricula underpinned by notions of equity, social justice and change. We also discuss ways for leisure studies educators to be critically reflexive through the questioning of basic assumptions, discourses and practices that inform and dominate contemporary, tertiary management education (Cunliffe, 2004). We argue in this paper that the critically reflexive leisure studies educator can do much at the course level to "enhance the goals of empowerment, distributive justice and social inclusion" (Rojek, 2005: 14) by incorporating non-Western knowledges into the curriculum through Indigenisation.

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The study of leisure emerged within the humanities, as a multidisciplinary subject field based in the critical social sciences. A focus on “increasing knowledge about the function of leisure and sport in everyday lives, while helping policy-makers to make leisure central to their planning” (Spracklen, 2014: 21) was the basis for the growth of undergraduate leisure studies programs. Critical sociology was core to leisure studies and, subsequently, the leisure studies curriculum (Spracklen, 2014). Major themes debated in leisure-related social and cultural theory included inequality, globalisation, authenticity, and leisure on the margins (Rowe & Lawrence, 1998). In such a disciplinary context, there is great potential for innovative teaching and learning which addresses systemic and substantive inequalities, including those experienced by Indigenous people and communities.

In recent years, however, the field of leisure studies “has been in a state of flux, as institutions and, more specifically, the programs and the academics that run them have been forced to meet the market-driven demands of student course preferences” (Sibson, 2010: 380). Global trends of neoliberal higher education are evident in the shift towards a management-focused leisure studies with the creation of a range of new undergraduate programs in countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand over the last 20 years (Sibson, 2010; Spracklen, 2014). Further, leisure studies at an undergraduate level no longer remains as a degree in, and of, itself (as it did in the 1980s). Instead, the field of leisure studies is now consumed by an assortment of sport, tourism, hospitality, events and (outdoor) active recreation management programs and courses, focused on vocational and employability outcomes (Spracklen, 2014). This positioning of leisure studies education as leisure management (and, by extension, the management of sport, tourism, hospitality, events and recreation) potentially undermines the very essence of leisure theory and its historic examination of the power relations inherent in leisure choice and patterns of power (Rojek, 2005). Yet, whilst the decline of the field of leisure studies has received quite some attention (see, for example, Rojek, 2010; Rowe, 2002; Spracklen, 2009, 2014; Veal, 2002), the current state of broader leisure studies curricula has received insufficient attention.

Whilst critiques of tourism curricula as being overly vocational are increasingly commonplace (Caton, 2014; Young & Maguire, 2017), this criticality remains limited in the other areas of leisure studies identified here. As university teachers, we are interested in how we can educate our students to be critical thinkers who are ethically mature and committed to social justice and equity in relation to race and ethnicity. We argue that one of the ways to achieve this is by decolonising the curriculum through Indigenisation (Young & Maguire, 2016). In doing so, we can generate knowledge, confidence and conversations about relevant issues affecting the sport, recreation and events sectors and society more generally. Further, our graduates can take this knowledge and understanding into the wider community to develop sport and active recreation programs which have the potential to deliver development and social outcomes for Indigenous communities in Australia (Rossi, 2015).

In the next section, we theorise the concept of Indigenisation in terms of curricular design. We proceed to an historical overview of the study of sport and leisure in Australia, with particular focus on how a critical sociological perspective has explored the relationship between Indigenous peoples and Australian sport and leisure. We then introduce the case study of Edith Cowan University in Western Australia, and examine the means by which it has attempted to incorporate Indigenous-related content and perspectives into the Bachelor of Sport, Recreation and Event Management degree. This following section reflects on the extent to which this specific program has been ‘Indigenised’ and what more it may require. Finally, we make recommendations for future progress in the Indigenisation of sport and leisure studies education.

2. Indigenising curricula

Indigenous education and the Indigenisation of curriculum are vital national priorities in higher education in Australia (Behrendt, Larkin, Griew, & Kelly, 2012: 22). The Indigenisation of curricula requires the sensitive and appropriate incorporation of Indigenous-related content and perspectives in university courses and programs (Maguire & Young, 2016: 97). Indigenised pedagogy requires the integration of Indigenous perspectives at the core of material taught in courses across all disciplines, rather than the addition of Indigenous perspectives as options in a few selected courses. This goal was expressed in the Federal Government’s *Review of Australian Higher Education*:

Higher Education providers should ensure that the institutional culture, the cultural competence of staff and the nature of the curriculum recognises and supports the participation of Indigenous students... Indigenous knowledge should be embedded into the curriculum to ensure that all students have an understanding of Indigenous culture. It is critical that Indigenous knowledge is recognised as an important, unique element of higher education, contributing economic productivity by equipping graduates with the capacity to work across Australian society and in particular with Indigenous communities. (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent, & Scales, 2008: 33)

This imperative is supported by professional organisations that are increasingly requiring Indigenous content within professional higher education programs. Many universities now make reference to the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in their statements of graduate attributes. Furthermore, inclusive and equitable quality education for Indigenous peoples is an international priority cited in the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2015).

The implementation of Indigenised curricula can increase the knowledge of all students and educators on Indigenous histories, cultures and knowledges. Such curricula can shape skills and attitudes that enable all students to contribute to a multi-cultural society, particularly in an Indigenous context, both professionally and personally. According to Nakata (2007), effective Indigenisation acknowledges the complexities and anxieties at cross-cultural interfaces and the need for negotiation between Indigenous knowledges, standpoints or perspectives, and Western disciplinary knowledge systems. In the following section we step back to provide a brief historical overview of sport and leisure studies in Australia and consider how Indigenous peoples’ relationships to sport, more particularly, have been examined.

3. The study of sport and leisure in Australia

The 1970s marked a period of great change for sport, leisure and recreation in Australia. In 1973, a national *Department of Tourism and Recreation* was established. Over the next two decades, continued government involvement, the formation of various groups and the commissioning of a number of reports focused on the future directions and the funding allocations of sport and recreation, along with the development of significant sport and sport-related infrastructure, and the commercialisation and mediatisation of sport, saw the transition of sport from a largely amateur to professional model of management practice (see, [Shilbury & Kellett, 2011](#)). The need to understand this commoditisation of sport and leisure structures, ideologies and practices led to the pioneering work and the foundation of an enduring critical scholarship in the sociology of sport and leisure in Australia in the 1980s and 1990s (for example, [Lawrence & Rowe, 1986](#); [Rowe & Lawrence, 1990](#); [Rowe & McKay, 1987](#); [McKay, 1991](#)). This era also saw the initial emergence of first, bachelor and coursework postgraduate degree programs under the heading of ‘recreation education’, and then in the 1990s the consolidation of a more diverse and broader range of undergraduate degree programs, as well as research masters and doctoral courses (see, [Sibson, 2010](#)).

According to [Spracklen \(2014\)](#), whereas in the 1980s “leisure studies became legitimate routes for sporty students to enter higher education”, the global popularity of watching and playing sport over the last 20 years has given sport a new legitimacy and seen the creation of new sport studies and related management degrees. In a shift which has appealed to prospective students and their parents, and universities marketing the revised programs, these degrees have substantially re-worked the leisure studies curricula to focus more on sport and less on critical theories of leisure. As a consequence of this new era of sport, and the many changes experienced within it, there has been an increased demand for employees with professional business skills and knowledge (for example, management, marketing, finance, law and communications) across a range of sport and recreation organisations and facilities, as well as in government departments, at all levels of the delivery system. This demand has led to the development of sport management as a specific field of study which is now well represented across many degree programs in Australia, New Zealand and worldwide ([Shilbury & Kellett, 2011](#); [Veal, Darcy & Lynch, 2013](#)). Although only a brief summary has been provided here, it broadly gives an insight into why [Spracklen \(2014: 22\)](#) has asked whether the exciting multidisciplinary subject field of leisure studies which emerged over three decades ago “is dead”? or whether it is “the end of leisure studies”? And just as he answers “I think not”, we similarly agree.

Although the critical study of sport and leisure in Australia has a relatively short history of 30–35 years, it is the legacy of the contributions of those discussed above that continue “to resonate around the halls of sports studies” ([Hallinan, 2015: 449](#)). [Hallinan \(2015\)](#) identifies as one of a number of researchers who have extended the trajectory of a critical sociology of Australian sport, and his work in the scholarship of Indigenous sport is particularly influential in this regard. This paper now moves to a discussion of how academics can use the concept of Indigenisation and the criticality of a leisure studies approach to develop and deliver curricula which both meets the demands of the neo-liberal education system and the professionalisation of sport and recreation as industries, and make significant pedagogical contributions to the current generation of students.

3.1. The study of Indigenous peoples and sport in Australia

From its foundations in the 1980s, in the works of [Broome \(1980\)](#) and [Tatz \(1987\)](#), sport sociologists sought to document the racism experienced by Indigenous athletes. [Hallinan and Judd \(2012\)](#) describe a more recent second phase of research sport sociology in Australia which, led largely by non-Indigenous researchers in the 1990s and early 2000s, focuses on critical assessments of the ways by which discussions of Indigenous peoples and Australian sport are largely constructed within an Anglo-Australian nationalist discourse. [Hallinan \(2015: 450\)](#) states that the field of Australian Indigenous sports studies is, at its current point, “where the terms of reference are being re-examined, reworked and reconstructed by Indigenous academics”. Significant contributions in this regard were made in a special issue of the journal *Sport in Society* (2012), where both Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars of Australian Indigenous Studies brought together their critical insights to investigate the racial and cultural implications of Australian sports ([Hallinan & Judd, 2012](#)). In this special issue, [Gorman \(2012\)](#) discusses Indigenous participation in Australian Rules football, sport and Australian society in general. He argues that although the steps taken by the Australian Football League to stamp out racism in football are to be commended, there remains the need to ask simple questions such as “Why are there no Indigenous commentators, coaches, administrators, team managers, umpires or journalists working within mainstream AFL circles?” ([Gorman, 2012: 1023](#)).

[Hallinan \(2015\)](#) points out that reflexivity, related to the ways in which scholars undertake research, construct interpretations and provide conclusions, has been at the forefront of recent practice. Importantly, he notes that this should allow those undertaking Indigenous sport studies research to consider whether their approaches reproduce the ‘shackles of colonialism’ or whether they will address situations such as the underrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in decision-making, management and leadership positions in sport. [Hallinan \(2015\)](#) further suggests that this progress should allow more sensitive considerations of diversity rather than generalisations, and that a process of consultation, consent and/or partnership by non-Indigenous researchers with Indigenous researchers or communities is an essential first step. In the following case study, we examine the ways in which Indigenous content is incorporated into the curriculum of a sport, recreation and event management program at an Australian university. We examine the program and course learning outcomes, and present a content analysis of course materials, including the lecture content and use of the prescribed textbooks. The purpose of this analysis is to inform critically reflexive practice in sport, recreation and event management education, particularly in the teaching of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges in Australian sport curricula.

4. Introducing the case study: Edith Cowan University, Western Australia

The second author of this paper has an academic background in critical leisure studies and a postgraduate degree in sport sociology. She is a non-Indigenous educator who has taught and coordinated in the sport, recreation and event management program (with a small teaching team) at Edith Cowan University (ECU) in Perth, Australia, for the past 12 years. ECU has a strongly stated position of commitment towards advocating for change and reconciliation. These goals are specifically stated in the *Reconciliation Action Plan 2015/16 – 2017/18* (ECU, 2015) with the university committed to working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and providing an environment that values and respects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander¹ peoples and knowledge. In all publicly available documents, ECU acknowledges and respects its continuing association with the Nyoongar People, the Traditional Custodians of the lands upon which its three campuses stand. Recently, ECU has created Indigenous Cultural Reflective spaces and opened Ngoolark – built with a number of Nyoongar-inspired design features to incorporate and celebrate Nyoongar culture – to house the student and research services centre at the ECU Joondalup campus (ECU, 2015, 2016). In terms of the broader curriculum at ECU, Indigenous programs date back to 1975 when the Aboriginal Teacher Education Program was first established at one of its predecessor Teacher College institutions (ECU, 2016). Today, ECU's Centre for Indigenous Australian Education and Research – Kurongkurl Katitjin – and ECU's Indigenous Consultative Committee, along with the University's third Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), play a vital role in assisting the University to meet its commitment to Indigenous peoples and its vision for reconciliation.

In recent years, ECU's engagement with Indigenous Cultural Competence through its curriculum has matured through its first RAP with the initial development of a definition of the term 'Cultural Competence' and, where relevant, providing for the incorporation of "Indigenous Australian Studies with a Cultural Competence component" in degree structures (ECU, 2011: 6). Through the current RAP (ECU, 2015: 12-13), the University seeks to build on prior achievements and "continue to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives into all undergraduate [degrees]". The requirements of the Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency's (TEQSA, 2011) Higher Education Standards Framework and the University's curriculum framework approach has also facilitated this action where students in all undergraduate degrees are required to demonstrate achievement of appropriate and relevant Cultural Competence. The wider Higher Education landscape and initiatives such as the National Best Practice Framework for Indigenous Cultural Competency (Universities Australia, 2011) inform ECU's actions in these areas.

4.1. The Bachelor of sport, recreation and event management degree at ECU

As one of the undergraduate degrees offered through the School of Business and Law, the Bachelor of Sport, Recreation and Event Management (SREM) comprises sixteen core courses, fourteen of which are specific to sport, recreation and events. As part of the learning outcomes for this degree, internal program documentation states that graduates must be able to "demonstrate broad and coherent knowledge in inclusive practices encompassing cross-cultural awareness and Indigenous cultural competence and its application to sport, recreation and event management". Through program mapping, two courses are identified as explicitly developing and/or demonstrating this outcome. This is not to say that these are the only courses in which Indigenous content is covered, however, as they are explicitly identified as doing so, they form the focus of this paper. Both are introductory courses taken in the student's first year of the SREM degree. The first course is *Introduction to Recreation/Leisure*. This course examines the history, concepts and theoretical perspectives of leisure, as well as exploring the importance and social trends of recreation/leisure behaviour in contemporary society. The mandatory textbook is the fourth edition of *Australian Leisure* (Veal et al., 2013). The second course is *Introduction to Sport Management*. This course examines the structure and function of sport delivery systems and focuses on the key agencies that support individual participants in their chosen sport at whatever level they are able to achieve. The extent to which contemporary sport organisations adopt a Sport for All approach (which emphasises both pathways of sport development and sport equity initiatives) is also evaluated in this course with reference to specific historical, socioeconomic and political imperatives, and the increasing globalisation of competitive sport. This prescribed textbook for this introductory course is the most recent and fourth edition of Shilbury and Kellett's (2011) *Sport Management in Australia: An Organisational Overview*.

Before this paper moves to a more detailed discussion of how Indigenous cultural knowledges and perspectives are presented in the course materials, it should be acknowledged that the current SREM degree evolved from a Bachelor of Leisure Sciences to meet the demands of potential students and industry for a preference for sport and event related degrees. This shift occurred in the mid-to-late 2000s when a decline in named leisure studies degrees occurred across a number of Australian and New Zealand universities (Sibson, 2010), as discussed above. The second author of this paper guided and facilitated this change, and has been involved in coordinating the program and these courses in both their previous and current forms. This article provides the opportunity for us to explore how to unite the key features of these evolving approaches to sports and leisure studies in Australian higher education over recent decades, particularly with a view to promoting critical, reflexive and Indigenous curricular development.

5. Indigenous content in sport, recreation and event management at ECU

The following discussion focuses on the ways by which Indigenous cultural knowledges and perspectives are presented in the

¹ ECU (2015: 1) notes that "from March 2014, Edith Cowan University uses the preferred term Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander in its publications. The term Indigenous is used consistent with historic or external naming conventions".

course materials of the two introductory courses described above. For each one we analyse all course materials, including the content of lectures and/or seminars, the set readings from prescribed textbooks, and the course assessment items. Following the analysis of course materials, the lecturer leading their delivery, who is also the convenor of the program, reflects on her teaching practices. In doing so, the reflexive piece provides insight into some of the challenges faced by sport, recreation and event management educators in Indigenising curricula.

5.1. Indigenous content in the Introduction to recreation/leisure course

As part of a weekly seminar focusing on the history of leisure in Australia in the introductory leisure/recreation unit, the role of 'leisure' in the lives of Aboriginal people pre-colonisation is examined. Students are required to read the relevant chapter in the textbook, which covers the topic in some detail, and the in-class seminar material draws exclusively on this information. They are first introduced to the notion that it is not possible to speak of only one Aboriginal culture and that there are a number of acknowledged difficulties and inherent limitations in presenting a 'just' or 'true' view of Aboriginal cultures over the 40–60,000 years prior to European colonisation (Veal et al., 2013). It is important for students to appreciate that written accounts of pre-contact Aboriginal cultures and the role of 'leisure' in their social lives have been constructed by anthropologists:

Leisure is one of those words which, in the context of discussing traditional Aboriginal culture, must be seen as an invention of the present-day interpreter... It is clear that in traditional Aboriginal cultures the division between work and non-work was not a distinct one and that there were no apparent concepts of leisure and work similar to the ones which now prevail in the mainstream of Australian cultures (Veal et al., 2013: 29).

Through reference to the textbook, specific examples of activities such as games, storytelling, music, dance and art are described and shown as to how "pleasures, satisfactions and playfulness" (Veal et al., 2013: 32) were traditionally experienced by Aboriginal people in their day-to-day lives.

Further reference to Indigenous peoples are made in a subsequent weekly seminar which focuses on specific population groups and contemporary leisure practice. In this session, course material focuses on inclusion (for example, "providing access for all through recognition of difference") of low participation 'groups' which are defined by the Western Australian State Government Department of Sport and Recreation (DSR, 2015) as "those that are not adequately resourced to enable them to achieve participation rates equal or close to those of the total population". It includes those such as Indigenous peoples, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD) peoples, peoples with disabilities, youths at risk, and peoples of low socio-economic status. Students are directed to the key readings in the textbook which focus on leisure and diversity and address all of these identified 'groups', including the chapter on *Leisure and Aboriginal culture from Federation* written by Lynch and Adair (2013). A guest speaker from the DSR is often engaged to present this seminar and discuss how a community development approach enables them to work with the community on programs and projects which encourage participation, create inclusive environments and facilitate education and training in inclusive practices. In the most recent delivery of the course, the guest speaker made explicit reference to the role of Aboriginal Sport Development Officers in the Community Inclusion team of the Community Participation department at the DSR.

Following on from this seminar topic is the second assessment item which focuses on the course learning outcome: "Explain the influence of class, gender, race, disability and culture (including indigenous cultural perspectives) on recreation/leisure participation, including the factors that can both facilitate or limit access to such opportunities". As a small group oral presentation to the class, students are informed that they have been employed as recreation consultants to research, design and present a recreation/leisure activity for a client group from a list of specified choices (e.g. gender, disability, age etc.). One of the choices is *cultures and ethnicity*, thus, students have the opportunity to explore and research the participation of Indigenous peoples in contemporary leisure through this assessment item, although this is not mandatory.

In an earlier iteration of this course (when it was part of the Bachelor of Leisure Sciences degree), the focus of another weekly seminar was given solely to the topic of *leisure and ethnicity* and a significant portion of this class and material was focused on Indigenous experiences of contemporary leisure practice. Key topics include: Australia's treatment of Aboriginal peoples; the Indigenous population today; influences on Indigenous culture and leisure with specific references to the impact of colonisation on Aboriginal cultures and social structures; racism and race relations in Australia; how differences in ideologies have seen different political responses to Indigenous issues and Indigenous participation in leisure activities, such as sport, and 'deviant leisure' activities, such as drinking and gambling, and their impacts on Indigenous communities. The seminar material was drawn from the relevant chapters in the textbook and with further references to additional sources, including the use of in-class videos to stimulate discussion on the topics and recommended readings. However, the change to a SREM degree with its managerial focus, and a more recent reduction in the number of specific recreation/leisure courses being offered within this degree (where the content of four courses have been coalesced into two), has meant that this weekly topic has now been removed from the course.

5.2. Indigenous content in the Introduction to sport management course

In this course, the introduction of modern, organised sporting practices in Australia, particularly in regards the debates about the origins of Australian Rules Football and the role of Aboriginal people, are explored in the weekly seminar on the origins and history of sport. Students are directed to read the relevant chapter in the textbook, which provides some reference to the "pre-colonial activities of indigenous Australians" (Shilbury & Kellett, 2011: 39). In the following weekly seminar, students are introduced to the concept of "sport for all" which is defined as an inclusive approach that encompasses the two key components of sport development (for

example, pathways and competitions for participant development) and sport equity (for example, competitions and programs that cater for participants of all ages, sexes, ethnicities, and abilities). Here, the roles of Indigenous sport programs are more broadly discussed in regard to sport equity initiatives. As one case study example from a contemporary sport organisation, the national community engagement framework of [Cricket Australia \(2014: 1\)](#) was most recently presented to show how this sport organisation is seeking to “engage Australia’s diverse communities” by improving future participation levels of a number of specified population groups. For example, as one of these target groups, it is stated that by 2017/2018 there will be an increase in Indigenous participation in cricket from 1.6% to 2.14%. The directed textbook reading for this topic provides one reference to similar programs and the sport for all philosophy when it notes that “Indigenous involvement in sport is becoming an increasing priority” ([Shilbury and Kellett, 2011: 261](#)).

In the first assessment item, students are required to choose one of eight sports (as nominated by the lecturer) and produce a brochure which answers the question “to what extent does [the sport] cater for ‘Sport for All’?”. In this assignment, students are expected to research and show how the sport organisations at different levels (for example, local, state and national) in Australia cater for different population groups, including their initiatives for Indigenous communities. Through the second assessment of a case study essay, students must choose a biography or an autobiography of a prominent Australian sport participant and analyse how sport delivery systems enabled that individual to maximise their potential. Thus, students have the opportunity to choose a sports person who identifies as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (and many students have chosen athletes including, for example, Cathy Freeman, Nova Peris, and Anthony McLeod), although again this is not mandatory.

6. Educator reflections: The inclusion of Indigenous content in the bachelor of sport, recreation and event management

Our analysis of the sport, recreation and event management course material discussed above reveals that there are two main foci through which Indigenous content is incorporated into the sport, recreation and event management curriculum at ECU. The first involves the provision of historical perspectives of traditional Aboriginal cultures and how these are related to (or, more appropriately, differentiated from) the modern concepts of leisure and sport. As part of this focus, there is some reference to contemporary Indigenous participation and contributions to leisure activities (including sport, music, the arts, dance etc.), as well as insight into issues of disadvantage, although this is often optional and/or dependent upon student interest and engagement with the course materials (for example, textbook readings) and assessment item topics. The second means of Indigenisation in the SREM course material involves an examination from a management perspective of the social inclusion of Indigenous peoples by government and sport organisations.

Higgins-Desbiolles cites [Keefe and Schmider \(1988\)](#)’s work on ‘Aboriginal education’, in which they argue that to ensure best practice engagement with Indigenous perspectives:

[T]he curriculum must be rational, coherent, fundamental, contemporary, socially relevant, action-oriented, broad and balanced, learnable and teachable, intrinsically interesting and meaningful, developed with Aboriginal participation, a clearly defined rationale and aims and [sitting] within a well thought-out curriculum framework. ([Higgins-Desbiolles, 2017](#))

More recently, scholars and educators have argued that the inclusion of Indigenous content (in a tourism context) in the curriculum ‘needs to be done in a critical and reflexive manner and necessitates adherence to certain practices and protocols’ ([Higgins-Desbiolles, 2017](#)). Similarly, [Maguire and Young \(2016\)](#) have demonstrated the importance of developing curricula that acknowledge the dispossession of Indigenous peoples which was authorised by imported Anglo-Australian law. Their reasoning may be extrapolated to other disciplinary contexts, which are challenged to examine and expose the distinct relationships between Indigenous peoples and areas of study at the tertiary level.

It is legitimate here, then, to pose the question of whether these critical questions have been addressed in the SREM degree? Dr Ruth Sibson (the second author of this paper) as an educator, coordinator and researcher in this program for over a decade, has considered this and provides the following reflection:

As an educator, my teaching philosophies and principles are underpinned by a practice of drawing on real world experiences and everyday issues so students can develop their understanding of relevant theories and practices. My own journey into sport studies academia was at a time in the 1990s when a critical sociology of Australian sport was being articulated, and I was very much influenced by the pioneers and the works that [Hallinan \(2015\)](#) identifies. I want students to think critically about their chosen industry, the way it operates and the reasons for its existence, to understand the multi-dimensional and functional nature of Australian and global business systems, and the organisations and people that operate within them, and to consider the ethics of management practices. I would like students to reflect upon and, if necessary, challenge the beliefs they might have about their chosen industry, and to search for more about the unknown rather than relying on what they think they might know, or be capable of.

In this way, I have always sought to understand, engage with, and teach this Indigenised content in a culturally sensitive manner and meaningful way. I have used the course textbooks to provide initial guidance and sought additional reference sources to broaden my and my students’ knowledge. Given that this program is taught from a Business and Law School, and a management perspective, I have also sought to examine and explain how and why Australian government authorities and sport organisations at different levels use a social inclusion approach to Indigenous people in their sport and recreation programs. In doing so, I have also drawn upon the experiences of expert guest speakers from industry. Although not discussed above, there have also been opportunities in the classroom (both in and outside of the named courses) to discuss present day issues of racism and race relations as they occur in sport settings (e.g. the recent racial abuse directed towards Australian Rules footballer Adam Goodes – see [Heenan & Dunstan, 2013](#); [Johns, 2013](#)) and the wider societal responses and expectations towards these. Where possible, I have asked students to discuss and reflect upon the beliefs they may have in this regard.

Even with the loss of much of the Indigenous content from what was taught in mid-2000s to now, if taken from the perspective of the University, the SREM degree may be judged as appropriately embedding Aboriginal knowledge and cultural perspectives into its curriculum. Similarly, the course outcome of graduates being able to demonstrate “broad and coherent knowledge in inclusive practices encompassing cross-cultural awareness and Indigenous cultural competence and its application to sport, recreation and event management” are also arguably met, although perhaps the area of event management practices per se could be an underrepresented part in the whole.

Until embarking on this journey of engagement and reflection, however, I could not say that I have been as critical or self-reflexive of my pedagogical approach as I might have been. As a non-Indigenous educator, I have not consulted or engaged with Indigenous educators, experts and/or community representatives to discuss or be involved with the content and delivery of course materials. Nor have I read and researched as widely on Indigenous issues and sport, recreation and/or events as would be advantageous. It must also be acknowledged that, with the shift from the Bachelor of Leisure Sciences to the current SREM degree, and its overall reduction in leisure studies course content, there has been a loss of a critical focus of knowledge and understanding of Indigenous peoples and their experiences of contemporary leisure practices (including the impacts on, and disadvantages faced by, Indigenous communities in terms of health, education and employment). It has also meant that more of a choice has been provided for in course readings and assessment items and, although it is valuable for students to have this opportunity, it is likely they will attach greater significance to items that are compulsory rather than optional in a course. This raises a dilemma for all educators attempting Indigenous curricular design – considering the time constraints and mandated curriculum requirements, it can be challenging to ensure that Indigenous-related content and perspectives are integrated by the best means possible. The current situation that sees this degree as meeting the university's requirements in terms of furthering its stated commitment to advocating for change and reconciliation, and appropriately developing Indigenous cultural competence, should also be questioned given the loss of content (as outlined above) that would genuinely assist in these outcomes. Greater critical attention could have been paid to the symbolism of Indigenous athlete success and performance which is often used by sport organisations, government and the media as evidence of progressive race relations. Further, the lack of representation of Indigenous peoples in positions of management and leadership (see Gorman, 2012; Hallinan & Judd, 2009; Hallinan, 2015) has also remained relatively unexplored in the course content to date.

A lack of reflexivity in teaching practice is not unusual in management education (Cunliffe, 2004). In the neoliberal higher education system, student learning outcomes are increasingly directed towards vocational outcomes (Ayikoru, Tribe, & Airey, 2009). This demand, along with the globalisation and popularisation of sport in contemporary society, has seen ‘the critical sociology of leisure studies’ depicted as ‘too anti-sport in its content’ and the field of pedagogy transformed in response (Spracklen, 2014: 22). Arguably, for university educators, administrative and external engagement roles that enhance the curriculum through the creation of work-ready graduates have, in many ways, superseded criticality in the leisure studies curricula. We put forward Dr Sibson's reflection above as a reminder of what can be gained from critical reflection on the part of educators tasked with curricular design.

7. Recommendations

The ways in which Indigenous perspectives are taught in tertiary curricula in this case study are not just as an ‘add-on’ or as ‘stand-alone’ topics (Maguire & Young, 2016), but are integrated to provide historical and contemporary perspectives in understanding leisure and recreation and, more specifically, sport. It is important for students studying this degree to understand how and why sport organisations have taken important steps in seeking to stamp out overt racism in their sport. It is also important for students to know that there have been a range of positive outcomes for Indigenous people in sport at both an elite and professional level as well as the broader community and again, that there are many initiatives undertaken by governments, sport organisations and corporate partners that are pro-active and seek to meet the needs of Indigenous communities. Using Australian Rules Football as an example, Gorman (2012) points out:

Football and our appreciation of it can and does assist in developing a greater awareness about the spectrum of people who come to the game and the contributions they can make. In some small way we can watch television or go to a football game on any weekend during winter and we can come to a greater appreciation of what football means to Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians alike. This then can lead to greater engagements and appreciations on other levels and the spirit of coexistence in Australia can take root. In a post-Apology Australia, and in a country that loves its sport, this seems a fitting path to take.

Recent racism suffered by Adam Goodes, an Aboriginal footballer (see Heenan & Dunstan, 2013; Johns, 2013), have received significant media coverage and public interest. This situation provides evidence that first, there is still a long way to go if a member of the community (albeit a young one) is calling Goodes an “ape” on the football field and then, in the same week, a high-profile AFL Club President and media commentator suggests on his radio show that Goodes could promote the musical show of King Kong, the fictitious, giant gorilla. But, that second, the high profile of sport in Australian society does provide an opportunity to heighten awareness of the issues of racism still facing Indigenous peoples. Again, as Gorman (2012: 1016) points out, it is because of the celebrated achievements of a number of well-known Indigenous Australian Rules football players that the sport “is a space where one can investigate both positive and negative historical issues regarding race relations in Australia. In this way football ceases to be just a game but becomes a teacher and through its lessons we become, as Australians, a better team”.

However, following on from Hallinan and Judd (2009), students and graduates of sport management and related degrees also need to understand that Indigenous peoples face ‘disadvantage’ and that it is not necessarily their ‘own fault’ and that there are social, economic, political and culturally charged histories to all of these issues (see also Gorman, 2012). Our students should also come to understand that although there may not be as much overt racism in sport/society today, that Indigenous participation in sport is still limited largely to playing, rather than non-playing (for example, coach, administration or management) roles, and that this will not change until the common assumptions about Indigenous people and the ideas which frame the Indigenous and non-Indigenous

relationship, and thus the structural inequalities of sport are confronted (Hallinan & Judd, 2009). Further, as Hallinan and Judd (2009) argue, until sport organisations, in their case the Australian Football League (and, similarly, one could argue the same applies to government agencies), make a genuine commitment to change and seek to challenge the common sense ideas and assumptions about Indigenous peoples in everyday practice then reconciliation will not be achieved. Thus, these are key areas where a more critical focus would provide additional value and commitment to the course content on Indigenous studies in this program.

The Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program of Reconciliation Australia has three focus areas of Relationships, Respect and Opportunities, and ECU's third RAP (2015) is structured around commitments and outcomes aligned to these areas. It is stated that Learning and Research (and the consequent curriculum developments) at ECU are about Respect and Opportunities. However, as we have argued previously (Maguire & Young, 2016; Young & Maguire, 2017) and, as this paper has also argued, creating and building relationships and developing and delivering relevant curriculum in consultation with Indigenous experts and community representatives is of paramount importance. Unless there is more discussion and understanding of leisure or recreation, sport and events from Indigenous perspectives, the action items may continue to be achieved but little progress may be made, and reconciliation will remain far from complete. We, therefore, make the following recommendations for leisure studies subject field educators:

- Relationships: Indigenous content is developed and delivered in consultation with Indigenous experts and community representatives and they are appropriately recognised and acknowledged (for example, payment for expert and letter of thanks for paid government/sport organisation representative). It is important here that what is being taught in the classroom is examined and constructed by Indigenous perspectives.
- Respect: Ensuring that the curricula of any leisure studies subject area program continues to place an emphasis on learning to value individual differences and diversity, as well as highlighting areas of impacts and disadvantage in specific population groups. In regards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders specifically, ensuring that the teaching and learning approach and environment respects histories, country, cultures, peoples and identities is crucial. Pedagogically, continuing to use in-class discussions with students would increase knowledge, confidence and conversations about the relevant issues affecting the sport, recreation and events sectors.
- Opportunities: Continuing to increase student knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues, particularly in regards those related to health and social well-being and sport and recreation program initiatives in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Working with both industry representatives and Indigenous experts and community representatives as guest speakers. Engaging, for example, one of our graduates who now works in the industry and has previously identified as an Indigenous person as a guest speaker. There may also be opportunities here to work with these communities in culturally sensitive ways to undertake research which could increase understanding and awareness of the academic as an educator, as well as assist in developing appropriate program outcomes from a community perspective. Similarly, improving access and participation opportunities in university degrees, such as the Bachelor of Sport, Recreation and Event Management, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students could assist in addressing the disadvantages experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in higher education and to assist in the process of reconciliation. As a further note under this point – and one that relates more broadly to the Higher Education sector rather than to leisure studies educators per se – is that it is paramount that all lecturers (and university staff) are given opportunities and encouragement to engage in personal and professional development as it relates to Indigenous Cultural Competence, and to discuss and better understand many of the matters raised here regarding the Indigenisation of curricula. To educate for a better future, higher education institutions are obliged to empower as many staff and students as possible to act as agents of change.

8. Conclusion

Spracklen (2014: 23) recently argued that the various programs underpinned by leisure studies 'will be improved pedagogically, ethically and politically by taking a strong dose of criticality into their curricula'. This paper offers a starting point for further research into how Indigenous content is incorporated into the various branches of leisure studies curricula. We propose that the case study set out above could usefully be replicated at other Australian institutions to assess progress on Indigenisation.

It is only through exposure, elaboration and undertaking critical reflection on our past and current actions that we can extend ourselves to reflect on what might be appropriate for future actions. As the ECU RAP (2015: 2-3) points out "People now recognise that reconciliation is a journey rather than a destination; that we are on a journey together; that we might make mistakes; but that the work done over time will enable us to correct and learn from the mistakes, as well as the successes".

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