Institutional and sport management educators' implementation of reading list diversity: A congruence analysis

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ABSTRACT

This study utilised content analysis and semi-structured interviews with librarians to examine reading list diversity guidance within English higher education. Additional interviews with sport management educators evaluated their perceptions towards, and implementation of, diverse reading lists. Underpinned by congruence theory, the results evidenced incongruence between educators and librarians. Highlighting dyadic goal importance incongruence, educators disagreed that diverse reading lists can increase student attainment and engagement. Deep levels of dissimilarity regarding the pedagogical value of diverse reading lists also existed. However, educators perceived non-implementation of reading list diversity to be congruent with the diversity values expressed by their institution and department.

1. Introduction

Although the drivers vary globally (Schucan Bird & Pitman, 2020), reading lists represent one aspect of the curricular that has recently been at the centre of student diversity and decolonisation activism. Movements include #WhyisMyCurriculumSoWhite, #RhodesMustFall, and #LiberateMyCurriculum (Jester, 2018; Arday et al., 2021; Schucan Bird, 2022; Thomas & Quinlan, 2022). Within the UK, founded by University College London, 'Why is my Curriculum White?' aims to tackle the Eurocentric domination and lack of diversity within course content, including reading lists (Heleta, 2016; Shain et al., 2021). Born from student desires to heighten the diversity of readings at Oxford University, 'The Alternative Reading List Project' represents a source of alternative readings that aim to augment official reading lists and expand the perspectives within them (Schucan Bird & Pitman, 2020). Activism has not been limited to student efforts; marginalised groups of academics have also expressed a desire for increasingly diverse reading lists. Established by political science academics in the United States, 'Women Also Know Stuff' aims to provide an accessible list of expert, female scholars in the discipline (Phull et al., 2019). Despite activism, reading list diversity has been the subject of limited scholarly attention (Adewumi & Mitton, 2022; Colgan, 2017; Phull et al., 2019; Schucan Bird & Pitman, 2020; Stokes & Martin, 2008).

Within the UK, bottom-up pressure from students (Thomas & Quinlan, 2022), changes to UK higher education funding (Shain et al., 2021), the widening participation agenda and increasing internationalisation of the student body (Schucan Bird & Pitman, 2020), have driven institutional responses to decolonise and diversify the curricular. Increasingly, higher education institutes are developing reading list decolonisation and/or diversity checklists and guidance. However, little empirical evidence exists regarding the extent of implementation at the meso (institutional) and micro (educator) level (Adewumi & Mitton, 2022; Schucan Bird & Pitman, 2020). Despite the introduction of checklists, findings evidence weak levels of reading list diversity (Adewumi & Mitton, 2022; Schucan Bird

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& Pitman, 2020; Taylor et al., 2021). Although educators play a central role in implementing curriculum diversification and decolonisation efforts, the practical experiences of academics have received scant attention (Laakso & Hallberg Adu, 2023; Stokes & Martin, 2008), particularly within the context of the UK and reading lists. Contributing to the literature, this research aimed to explore the implementation of reading list diversity initiatives at English, higher education institutions. The first objective examined the extent to which reading list diversity/decolonisation guidance is provided at the institutional level. Underpinned by congruence theory, the second objective explored sport management educators' perceptions towards, and implementation of, diverse reading lists.

2. Reading lists

Positioned at the centre of taught disciplines (Phull et al., 2019), reading lists represent a longstanding, important pedagogical instrument for learning (Pecorari et al., 2012; Siddall & Rose, 2014; Stokes & Martin, 2008). They provide students with core subject texts (Siddall & Rose, 2014) and provide a sense of writing direction within the given discipline (Stokes & Martin, 2008). Although student centred curriculums provide students with greater levels of curricular autonomy, educators play a key role in the selection of curricular content, including reading lists (Adewumi & Mitton, 2022; Taylor et al., 2021). According to Stokes and Martin (2008), reading lists are developed through a sequence of socially constructed processes. Their creation is entwined with the educator's personal learning journey, leading to values and identity being imprinted on a given module. By overlooking allegiances, tutors may develop lists that contain a distorted view of the field. Reading lists may favour the Global North (Schucan Bird & Pitman, 2020), and/or demonstrate a propensity towards certain publications (e.g., those by white male authors) (Colgan, 2017; Sumner, 2018).

Reading list diversity has been the subject of several quantitative investigations (Colgan, 2017; Phull et al., 2019; Schucan Bird & Pitman, 2020; Taylor et al., 2021). Results have highlighted an overrepresentation of Western (Taylor et al., 2021) or European (Adewumi & Mitton, 2022) scholars and a pervasive gender citation gap (Colgan, 2017; Phull et al., 2019; Schucan Bird & Pitman, 2020). Demonstrating Western centricity, overarching ideologies in sport management education are largely rooted in Western colonial practices (McSweeney et al., 2022). This problem requires academics to critically assess the body of sport management knowledge, including that embedded within reading lists. Pitts and Danylchuk's (2007) examination of sport management textbooks evidenced a gender citation gap (79% of the authors and editors were male). Similarly, the dominance of male (Pedersen and Pitts, 2001) and white male (Singer et al., 2022) authors has been reported following analysis of sport management journal article authorship. Such findings support curriculum activist claims regarding the lack of diverse authorship and calls for increased scrutinisation of reading lists (Jester, 2018).

Limited research has sought to explain the persistent reading list gender citation gap. Contradicting the suggestion that the gender citation gap is caused by low numbers of female scholars, studies point to the higher likelihood of self-citation by men (Maliniak et al., 2013; Mitchell et al., 2013) and gendered personal networks (Maliniak et al., 2013). Within the sport management curricular, staff composition may exacerbate such issues. Although sport management is embedded within Sports Science and Leisure Studies (SSLS), the Advance Higher Education's Staff Statistical Report (2023) reveals that 62.1% of SSLS staff at UK universities are male (Advance Higher Education, 2023). Additional gender citation gap explanations include the tedious nature of assigning gender (Sumner, 2018),
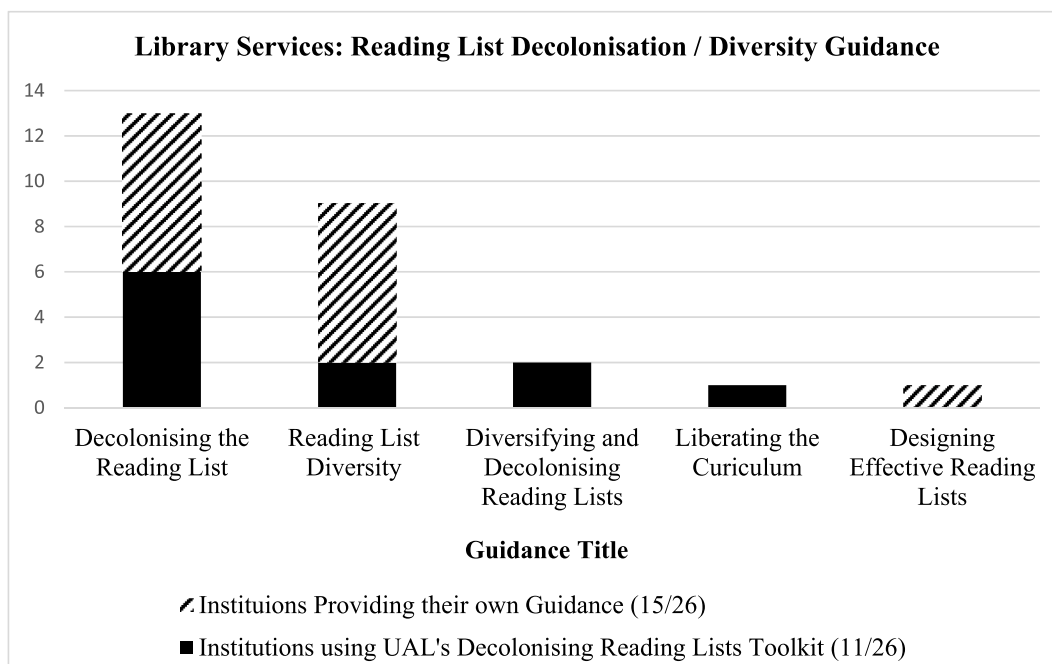

Fig. 1. Library Service's reading list decolonisation/diversity guidance titles.

weak understanding and inadequate training regarding curricular diversity integration (Darlington, 2008). However, these insights were predominantly drawn from citation counts, network or personal analysis. Despite educators' central role in the creation of reading lists, the practical experiences of academic staff have received limited attention (Adewumi & Mitton, 2022; Stokes & Martin, 2008; Taylor et al., 2021). Adding to the literature, this research responds to calls for research that investigates the perspectives and practical experiences of micro level implementors (academic staff) (Adewumi & Mitton, 2022; Stokes & Martin, 2008; Taylor et al., 2021), particularly regarding reading list diversification efforts.

3. Institutional diversity responses

Amid rising calls to decolonise and diversify the curricular, institutions have developed top down, senior manager led curriculum reform initiatives (Shain et al., 2021). Implemented initiatives often involve curriculum decolonisation/diversity checklists and toolkits (Adewumi & Mitton, 2022; Schucan Bird, 2022). University College London's Inclusive Curriculum Healthcheck (Schucan Bird & Pitman, 2020) represents one example. Mirroring institutional responses, library learning services have started implementing reading list decolonisation/diversity toolkits and guidance (Schucan Bird & Pitman, 2020). However, implementation requires cross-departmental, collaborative efforts, including colleagues from the academic departments (Adewumi & Mitton, 2022). As the module lead, academics often retain primary responsibility for reading list selection. Nevertheless, greater emphasis is being placed upon the working relationship between faculty and academic liaison librarians (Feetham, 2016; Resnis & Natale, 2020). The position of academic liaison librarian has evolved beyond functional roles (e.g., resource acquisition, information skills training) to include the promotion of library initiatives, equality, diversity and inclusion (Resnis & Natale, 2020). Increasingly, academic liaison librarians are viewed as change agents, advocates for good practice and sources of knowledge (Feetham, 2016).

The extent of implementation by micro level actors (in this case educators), is dependent upon dyadic goal importance congruence (Bøe et al., 2021; Colbert et al., 2008; Emil & Cress, 2014), value congruence (Mayhew & Grunwald, 2006) and the perceived feasibility of implementation. Dyadic goal importance congruence refers to a shared understanding regarding the importance of goals (Colbert et al., 2008). Despite representing a key feature of successful implementation (Bøe et al., 2021; Colbert et al., 2008; Emil & Cress, 2014), dyadic goal importance congruence has rarely been considered within the context of higher education. The few studies to utilise this theory have evidenced a positive link between goal congruence and faculty implementation of learning technology (Bøe et al., 2021) and programme assessment initiatives (Emil & Cress, 2014). Providing rare insights into the implementation of reading list diversity initiatives, Adewumi and Mitton's (2022) research focused upon the University of Kent's Reading List Diversity Project. Highlighting incongruence between the project goals and academics' perceptions, lecturers reported scepticism regarding the extent to which reading list diversity would narrow the awarding gap. Developing the existing literature, this research contributes further insights into dyadic goal importance congruence within the context of reading list diversity implementation. In this context, dyadic goal importance congruence is defined as the similarity between educators' and academic library services' perceptions about the importance of reading list diversity.

In the teaching context, value congruence considers the extent to which educators feel that they share the prevailing norms and values of their institution (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015). Providing rare higher education insights, Mayhew and Grunwald (2006) explored faculty incorporation of diversity related course content. Their results found that deep level similarity (in attitudes, beliefs, and values) (Harrison et al., 1998), motivated reform efforts amongst faculty. Enhanced reform efforts occurred when alignment existed between the diversity held by staff and their department (rather than institution) (Mayhew & Grunwald, 2006). The existing sport management higher education diversity research has predominantly examined students' perceptions of diversity and inclusion (Morris et al., 2019; Sauder et al., 2021. Little is known about the extent to which sport management educators value diversity. Within the sport industry, research has evidenced incongruence between the organisational value of diversity and the values held by sport industry professionals. Such incongruence has contributed towards micro level resistance to diversity initiatives (Smith & Sparkes, 2016; Knoppers et al., 2021).

This study responds to calls for research that evaluates the implementation of reading list diversity (Schucan Bird & Pitman, 2020). The first objective examined the extent to which reading list diversity guidance is provided within English Higher Education institutes. Decolonisation is defined as a pedagogical, political and epistemic endeavour that aims to understand and disrupt coloniality (Mignolo, 2011; Shain et al., 2021). The research distinguishes between decolonisation and diversity. Although diversifying reading lists may represent a component of decolonisation (Adewumi & Mitton, 2022; Arshad et al., 2021), diversification initiatives can leave colonial knowledge intact (Laakso & Hallberg Adu, 2023). In such instances, a 'diversified' reading list fails to contest the hegemony of western thinking and achieve decolonisation (Arshad et al., 2021; Tuck & Yang, 2012). Informed by previous research, reading list diversity is considered in relation to author representation (gender, ethnicity and geographical affiliation) (Schucan Bird & Pitman, 2020; Taylor et al., 2021). To support objective one, interviews were conducted with academic liaison librarians. In addition to be being advocates of library strategy, academic liaison librarians represent the link between the library and academic community (Feetham, 2016; Resnis & Natale, 2020).

Recognising that reading list initiatives are largely dependent upon implementation by educators, underpinned by congruence theory, objective two explored sport management educators' perceptions towards, and implementation of, diverse reading lists. The findings contribute new empirical insights into the sport management higher education curricular. Unlike other subject areas, this discipline has rarely been interrogated from a curricular diversity perspective (DeLuca et al., 2022; MacLean, 2022; Sauder et al., 2021). Sport management represents an interesting context given the diversity challenges within the student cohort, faculty and industry (DeLuca et al., 2022; Morris et al., 2019; Shin et al., 2023, pp. 1–21; Vianden & Gregg, 2017).

4. Methods

This qualitative research had a relativist ontology and subjective epistemology. The author began by obtaining ethical approval from their institute. During the first data collection stage, the Guardian's League table was used to generate a list of all (99) English universities offering higher education degrees. Though other tables exist, the Guardian represents an established list providing free access (Dill & Soo, 2005). To ensure trustworthiness and authenticity (Scott, 1990), the author consulted and searched the official websites of all 99 institutions using the initial key search term "reading lists". Additional search terminology included "reading list diversity", "reading(s)", "decolonise" and "decolonisation". Although the paper distinguishes between diversity and decolonisation, both search terms were included as diversifying reading lists may be viewed as a component of decolonisation (Adewumi & Mitton, 2022; Arshad et al., 2021). To ensure that the data collection remained within the scope of the article, the approach was informed by previous research to investigate institutional decolonisation responses amongst English universities (Shain et al., 2021). Focus was placed upon capturing 'strategic advancement'. Institutions were 'seen' to be responsive through publicisation of their decolonisation/diversity policy or guidance on their website. For each institution, information available on the website was copied to a separate document and uploaded to NVivo in preparation for content analysis. Twenty-six of the ninety-nine English universities had public information related to reading list diversity and/or decolonisation. Data was analysed using the systematic research method of inductive content analysis (Krippendorff, 1980). During the data analysis, Elo et al.'s (2014) checklist to improve the trustworthiness of content analysis was rigorously followed.

Using the final list of twenty-six institutions, the second research stage utilised a purposive sample (Smith & Sparkes, 2016) to identify post-1992 universities that delivered undergraduate sport management programmes. Post-1992 refers to former polytechnic institutes that were awarded university status through the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. From the list of six institutes, two were randomly selected. Sport management lecturers and librarians at the respective institutions were identified using publicly accessible information on the institutions' website and invited by email to participate in an online, video interview. To meet the inclusion criteria, the academics taught on the sport management degree and had a minimum of one year teaching experience. The academics also possessed module reading list responsibility. All of the academics were able to select reading list content at their discretion and were not required to adhere to pre-approved syllabi. Through snowball sampling, sport management educators referred academics on their programme whose details were not available on the website. The educator sample comprised 14 interviewees (6 white males, 7 white females, 1 Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) female) and positions ranged from assistant lecturer (1), lecturer (5), senior lecturer (7) and associate professor (1). All educators possessed numerous years undergraduate sport management teaching experience at their institution and taught at least two academic year groups. Academics utilised one reading list per module, which comprised textbooks and journal articles. Interviews with educators ceased when data saturation was achieved (Saunders et al., 2018). Regarding the sport management student demographics, educators reported that all cohorts were approximately 90% male. The first institution identified British males as the majority (approximately 50% White British and 10% Black British). The remaining male

Table 1
Semi-structured interview guide.

Librarians	Educators
Generic opening questions.	
Can you please describe your role as an academic liaison librarian? How does your role relate to reading lists?	Can you please describe your role as a sport management educator? How does your role relate to reading lists?
How would you describe your working relationship with educators?	How would you describe your working relationship with the academic liaison librarian(s)?
What does reading list diversity mean?	
What does reading list decolonisation mean?	
What do you think educators should consider when developing reading lists? Why? What resources do you think should be included? Why?	What do you consider when developing reading lists? Why? What resources do you include? Why?
Have you considered reading list diversity in your practice? (Why/why not?)	
Is reading diversity important to you? Why?	
Can you describe your institution's reading list diversity/decolonisation guidance/policy/practice? What are the goals? How is this disseminated? Does this influence your practice?	
Do you think reading diversity is important to your department/institution? Why?	
How would you describe student engagement with reading lists? Why do you think this is?	
Is reading list diversity important for students? (Why/why not?)	
Do you think reading list diversity has any benefits for students? (e.g., student attainment, student engagement, creating an inclusive learning experience, creating a sense of belonging).	
	Do you think reading list diversity has any benefits to yourself and/or other educators?
Have you worked with educators to diversity/decolonise module reading lists? Can you describe this? Did you provide any advice? Were there any challenges?	Have you worked with an academic liaison librarian to diversity/decolonise module reading lists? Why (or why not?) Can you describe this? Did they provide any advice? Did you change your practice? Were there any challenges?
	Have you reviewed your reading list from a diversity perspective? (Why/why not?) Will you conduct a review in the future?
In your role, have you experienced any barriers to reading list diversity? What barriers might exist?	
Have you completed any diversity/decolonisation training? Please can you describe the training? Did you make any changes to your practice? Why?	
Closing questions.	

cohort predominantly comprised international Asian students. The second institution stated that most students were British (approximately 45% White British male, 45% Black British male, 5% white British female and 5% Black British female).

To meet the inclusion criteria, the librarians were academic liaison librarians with at least one year of experience. Six librarians were from the same institutions as the academics. As data saturation was not achieved, snowball sampling was utilised to invite additional librarians from institutions contained within the original list of six. The final sample comprised 10 librarians (1 white male, 1 BAME male, 7 white female and 1 BAME female). The data collection process was completed between December 2022 and March 2023.

Prior to conducting the interviews, participants were provided full disclosure regarding the research project. They were required to read the participant information sheet before providing informed consent. A pilot interview was conducted with an academic and a librarian to ensure the relevance of questions. Semi-structured, online video interviews were used to obtain rich insight into the participant's perceptions and experiences (Bryman, 2016). Synchronous online video interviews closely resemble face-to-face interviews, although some differences exist (O'Connor et al., 2016). Whilst web cameras offered some level of visuality, certain visual cues that contribute toward rapport building in face-to-face interviews (e.g., eye contact), were absent (O'Connor et al., 2016; Smith & Sparkes, 2016). To minimise challenges in terms of building rapport, face-to-face interview etiquette was replicated as closely as possible (Bryman, 2016). A summary of the interview questions is included in Table 1. Throughout the interview, prompts (e.g., requests for examples of elaboration) were used where appropriate.

As an active sport management educator, the researcher recognised their own positionality and commonality with the academics. Researching the familiar is associated with potential benefits, including the ability to understand interviewees' nuanced reactions (Kacen & Chaitin, 2006; Padgett, 2008). However, the researcher employed vigilance to avoid projecting their own experience (Berger, 2015).

As automatic transcription was not provided by the online platform, the video interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. During transcription, participants were anonymised and pseudonyms were allocated to protect the interviewees' identity. Interview duration ranged from 37 to 61 min, with an average duration of 44 min. To provide sound methodological and theoretical foundations, Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis were followed to analyse and identify themes across the interview data. During this process, their 15-point criteria checklist was utilised to ensure rigorous application of the framework. Additionally, the researcher followed Nowell et al.'s (2017) guidelines to ensure trustworthiness during thematic analysis. Given the lack of research related to reading list diversity, a grounded research approach was adopted. Using NVivo to conduct the data analysis, themes and codes were inductively developed, and the analysis involved an iterative, theme refinement process (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). To ensure reliability and improve the trustworthiness of the coding process, a second, independent researcher double coded three interview transcripts. To calculate the inter coder reliability, the number of identical codes was divided by the total number of codes. Following an acceptable reliability indicator of 91% (Miles & Huberman, 1994), the researcher continued the coding process.

5. Findings and discussion: reading list diversity

5.1. Institutional guidance and toolkits

At the time of data collection, 26 out of 99 institutions demonstrated strategic advancement through public information related to reading list diversity and/or reading list decolonisation on their websites. In all instances, this information was included within the Library Learning Services section. Recognising the possibility that additional institutions have not made their 'policy' public, the findings support calls for heightened transparency around reading list diversity/decolonisation approaches (Schucan Bird & Pitman, 2020). Eleven (including University of the Arts London (UAL)) used UAL's 'Decolonising Reading Lists' tool. One institution added an additional point (reflect on any unconscious bias you might have displayed in selecting resources), whilst another added an additional question (will all our students see themselves reflected in the resources you are recommending?) to the toolkit. The remaining fifteen institutions provided their own guidance, which ranged from a diversity audit/curriculum health check to short guidance paragraphs. The variety of institutional guidance supports calls for methodological and analytical work regarding diversity/decolonisation toolkits, including associated outcomes (Schucan Bird & Pitman, 2020).

The majority (6/11) of institutions labelled their guidance webpage as 'decolonising the reading list'. Other institutions entitled their page as reading list 'diversity' (2/11), 'diversifying and decolonising reading lists' (2/11) and 'liberating the curriculum' (1/11). Regarding the library services that provided their own guidance, titles ranged from reading list 'diversity' (7/15), 'decolonisation' (7/15) and 'designing effective reading lists' (1/15) (see Fig. 1).

Throughout the institutional guidance, 'diversifying' and 'decolonising' were often used interchangeably. A multiplicity of decolonisation interpretations (Adewumi & Mitton, 202; Shain et al., 2021) also existed within the institutional guidance. One library stated their aim to:

> "Create a reading list for students and staff which focuses on curriculum diversification – our interpretation of a process sometimes referred to as decolonisation."

Contrarily, another stated:

> "It is important to recognise that decolonising is different from diversifying."

Supporting the latter perspective and previous research (Arshad et al., 2021; Tuck & Yang, 2012), all but one librarian distinguished between diversity and decolonisation, emphasising that they "mean different things" (Samantha - Librarian). Capturing the

need to differentiate between decolonisation and diversification, a librarian stated:

> "You can have authors of colour that are still fitting within a purely western viewpoint" (Josh - Librarian).

The librarians' perspectives supported the opinion that reading list diversification may leave colonial knowledge intact, thereby failing to contest the hegemony of western thinking (Laakso & Hallberg Adu, 2023) and achieve decolonisation (Arshad et al., 2021; Tuck & Yang, 2012). To avoid the interchangeable use of 'diversity' and 'decolonisation', universities must engage in transparent and informed discussions (Schucan Bird & Pitman, 2020) to develop a more nuanced understanding of reading list diversity and decolonisation.

Emphasising the working relationship between academic liaison librarians and faculty (Feetham, 2016; Resnis & Natale, 2020), fifteen institutions identified engaging with the academic liaison officer as 'step one' of reading list decolonisation/diversification. Contrarily, none of the interviewed lecturers had invited their academic liaison librarian to conduct a reading list decolonisation/diversity review. Recognising that the promotion of library initiatives is integrated into the librarian role (Resnis & Natale, 2020), there is potential for librarians to initiate contact with module leaders. The librarians acknowledged that initiative dissemination could develop beyond website publication and faculty wide emails, to include more frequent, personalised contact with educators. However, from the librarian perspective, the potential quality of this working relationship was largely dependent on the extent to which educators valued librarians as facilitators of knowledge:

> "I'm on a tightrope. The subject expert is the academic, so trying to say, have you considered that your reading list might be predominantly white male middle class voices, that can be quite threatening because you're challenging an academics knowledge and expertise. They don't always want to hear that" (Astrid - Librarian).

Contradicting previous research (Feetham, 2016), librarians suggested that further progress is needed for faculty to recognise librarians as sources of knowledge and partners in reading list enhancement efforts.

Analysis of the institutional guidance identified four primary, student-centred outcomes that explained the importance of diversifying/decolonising reading lists. Supporting Arday et al. (2021), the primary outcomes included increasing student attainment, increasing students' engagement, creating a more inclusive student learning experience, and creating a sense of belonging. The subsequent discussion explores the extent to which educators expressed dyadic goal importance congruence with these outcomes.

5.2. Dyadic goal importance congruence

Dyadic goal importance congruence refers to a shared understanding regarding the importance of goals and contributes towards activity alignment (Colbert et al., 2008). Capturing disputes regarding the extent to which reading list diversity can increase student attainment, educators expressed distinct levels of dyadic goal importance incongruence. Supporting Adewumi and Mitton (2022), no educators perceived diverse reading lists as an answer to the white-BAME awarding gap or mechanism to increase attainment:

> "I would like to see more of the evidence around reading lists and student attainment. And I think it's a massive oversimplification. I know there are structural factors, social factors, but there are also individual issues around literacy skills, engagement. Diversifying the reading list isn't a quick fix for attainment, those issues will still be there. Honestly, I don't think it will have any impact on attainment" (Merida - Educator).

Although there was some recognition that inequalities resided within the institution, educator perspectives largely reflected the deficit model (Adewumi & Mitton, 2022). Further evidence demonstrating the relationship between diversified reading lists and student attainment, may enhance dyadic goal importance congruence amongst educators.

Regarding the ability of diversified reading lists to increase student engagement, most educators (12/14) expressed dyadic goal importance incongruence. Capturing a shared sentiment, one educator stated:

> "They [students] don't look at the readings. They don't like reading, or they think it's boring. That isn't going to change because I put a different author on there" (Elliot - Educator).

Whereas educators' perspective of reading list diversity narrowly focused upon author composition, librarians emphasised that diversification is a more complex process than substituting traditionally white, male, authors in a tokenistic manner. Diversification transcends author composition to include broad perspectives (Adewumi & Mitton, 2022) through diverse geographical contexts, theoretical approaches, publishers, and topics.

All but one educator stated that thin and simplistic assignment reference lists (Stokes & Martin, 2008) indicated poor levels of reading list engagement, particularly during the first year of study. Given that the sampled educators failed to report conscious efforts to diversify their reading lists, consequences may include the creation of insensitive reading lists that fail to meet student expectations (Stokes & Martin, 2008). However, this risk was generally perceived as an inconsequential concern due to the perceived lack of student engagement:

> "I don't think any students read the reading list anyway" (Charlie - Educator).

This recurrent perspective echoed reading list disengagement reported by students (Pecorari et al., 2012; Stokes & Martin, 2008) and contradicted the view that reading lists represent an important pedagogical instrument for learning (Siddall & Rose, 2014). Research is needed to examine student engagement with reading lists within the discipline of sport management, including students' perceptions towards, and reactions to, diversified reading lists. Without evidence of student engagement, the findings indicate that

sport management educators are unlikely to demonstrate receptivity to institutional strategies that aim to encourage critical reading list reflection and reform (Heleta, 2016). If persistent challenges exist regarding student reading list engagement, greater consideration must be given to approaches that could engender greater student engagement (Stokes & Martin, 2008).

When considering the minority of engaged students, educators expressed greater levels of dyadic goal importance congruence, specifically regarding the potential of diverse reading lists to create a more inclusive learning experience and sense of belonging:

> "I think it is possible, if they feel like they can connect with a certain person or topic a little more, if they see a role model in the author or in the paper, that could help" (Jessie - Educator).

However, the extent to which the current reading list system would achieve these outcomes was questioned:

> "Let's say I did this, and my students were engaged with the reading. How would they know that it is diverse? I mean they can probably figure out the gender, but I'm not convinced they would even notice it" (Mardy - Educator).

Annotated bibliographies in module packs (Stokes & Martin, 2008) may alleviate such concerns. Capturing an alternative perspective shared by librarians, a librarian stated:

> "It doesn't matter if students don't know. The point is that students aren't limited to one narrative. Whether they know it or not, a diverse or decolonised reading list exposes them to different voices and perspectives" (Astrid - Librarian).

Concerns regarding the narrow representation of legitimised perspectives and ideas (Adewumi & Mitton, 2022) are pertinent for the sport management curricular. Sport management research has evidenced ideologies rooted in Western colonial practices (McSweeney et al., 2022) and the dominance of male (Pedersen and Pitts, 2001) and white male (Singer et al., 2022) authors. The findings reiterate calls for academics to critically assess the body of sport management knowledge (McSweeney et al., 2022). Additionally, librarians challenged academics to recognise their contribution to the (re)production of knowledge (Phull et al., 2019; Singer et al., 2022):

> "Academics often recommend reading that they were recommended themselves, or they're going to conferences and picking up reading from there, but it's like the whole academic structure is set up to reinforce itself" (Eden - Librarian).

Low levels of diversity amongst academics in the sport discipline (Advance Higher Education, 2023), also has the potential to contribute to the solidification of the perceived disciplinary mainstream (Phull et al., 2019). Transcending beyond a critical assessment of sport management knowledge, the findings call upon sport management academics to interrogate their own positionality, world view, and engage in critical self-reflection.

5.3. Value congruence

In the teaching context, value congruence considers the extent to which educators feel that they share prevailing norms and values of their institution (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015). Although all educators emphasised the extent to which they valued diversity, the pedagogical value of reading list diversity was not deeply embedded. Deep levels of dissimilarity (Harrison et al., 1998) between the values of educators and librarians indicated value incongruence. Most educators (12/14) perceived it unnecessary to consider the scholarly composition of reading lists:

> "Does it matter as much who is making the point? Especially if the point is addressing social inequality anyway" (Michael - Educator).

In contrast, capturing librarians' emphasis upon the importance of lived experience, one librarian stated:

> "White men can write about the topic of racism, and you can have these subject experts. But they will never have that lived experience. At the same time, you don't want only Black authors. Different individuals have different experiences and perspectives, it's about the students accessing different viewpoints, let them [students] make their own mind up about whose perspective they share" (Jane - Librarian).

Whilst librarians focused upon the benefits associated with exposing students to a diverse range of perspectives (Arday et al., 2021), this narrative was largely absent from the institutional guidance. Furthermore, only one educator reported future diversification intentions. Issues pertaining to Western centricity in the sport management curricular (McSweeney et al., 2022) and the over-representation of white male authors (Arshad et al., 2021; Colgan, 2017; Schucan Bird & Pitman, 2020), will not be resolved without a conscious commitment by academics. Recognising the unique histories of specific disciplines, collaborative, subject specific training sessions delivered by library services and subject leads may provide a useful forum to enhance reading list diversity knowledge. Such sessions could provide an opportunity to develop educator-librarian working relationships and initiate constructive (yet critical) conversations that aim to tackle issues pertaining to dyadic goal importance and value incongruence.

The extent of educators' (non) implementation was largely perceived to be congruent with the diversity values expressed by their institution and department:

> "I haven't heard anything from my subject lead, or department head, or anyone higher up in the university about the need to diversify my reading list. If this was a priority for them, we would have heard about it" (Jade - Educator).

Capturing cynical perceptions regarding the extent to which diversity represented a deeply embedded institutional value, other

educators (and four librarians) referred to diversity being a "buzz word" and/or including "tick boxing", "tokenistic" efforts. Library services guidance also failed to signify the institutional, strategic value of reading list diversity. One library service aligned the need to diversify reading lists to the institution's core value of inclusion. One other library service aligned to their institution's equality, diversity and inclusion strategy. It is recommended that institutional guidance signify the institutional value of reading list diversity through alignment with, and reference to, meso level strategy. Senior management must also signal the importance of diversity and raise awareness of relevant institutional policy.

Given that previous research has indicated that the department's values (Mayhew & Grunwald, 2006) are more important controllers of diversity commitment than university management, library services could also liaise with subject leads to instil departmental value. Recognising curricular diversity as a collective, cross-departmental effort (Adewumi & Mitton, 2022; Arday et al., 2021), departmental leads should support library services by persistently verbalising (Emil & Cress, 2014) and signalling the importance of curricular (including reading list) diversity. Although interviewees did not refer to, or demonstrate knowledge of, wider macro level policy/quality assurance processes, previous research has indicated that national level quality assurance bodies also influence curriculum development more than university management (Laakso & Hallberg Adu, 2023). One library service linked the need to diversify reading lists to macro level, higher education policy, specifically the institution's commitment under the Race Equality Charter. In addition to embedding institutional values in reading list diversity and decolonisation guides, library services could seek to foster commitment through referencing macro level policy.

5.4. Perceived viability of change

Where high levels of goal congruence and perceived viability exist, willingness to engage in reform efforts are more likely (Mayhew & Grunwald, 2006). Regarding perceived viability, the primary obstacle identified by educators related to competing workload priorities and time constraints (Adewumi & Mitton, 2022):

> "We don't have time, we are asked to do too much" (Mary - Educator).

Librarians themselves acknowledged the implications of academic's workload constraints:

> "With the number of things that academics are juggling, a reading list tends to be the last priority" (Janine - Librarian).

The findings reinforce the need for institutional support, including time (Emil & Cress, 2014; Shain et al., 2021) for educators to implement reading list diversity efforts.

Although sport management research has highlighted the dominance of male (Pedersen and Pitts, 2001) and white male (Singer et al., 2022) authors, educators did not identify low numbers of female or BAME scholars as potential barriers to enhancing reading list diversity. Although the 'white maleness' of authors within the discipline of sport management was acknowledged, with sufficient time, educators believed that diverse authors could be found. However, the content aspect of reading lists (Schucan Bird & Pitman, 2020) represented a key value and priority for educators. Concerns existed regarding the subsequent impact of reading list diversity on content quality:

> "Am I going to be able to find something content wise that is as good or is as helpful to the students. I don't want to find one that maybe is like written by someone from a certain background, but the content isn't very good" (Robbie - Educator).

This finding relates to perceptions that the Western, masculine nature of sport, invalidates the knowledge and expertise of BAME and/or female sport management academics (Shin et al., 2023, pp. 1–21). Similar to 'Women Also Know Stuff', which aims to provide an assessable list of expert, female scholars in the discipline (Phull et al., 2019), the results indicate the need for awareness raising regarding the expertise of sport management scholars from other identities.

Adding insights from the librarian perspective, the lack of diversity within the librarian faculty was perceived to create challenges. Capturing this sentiment, one librarian stated:

> "This profession is incredibly non diverse, the figure is about 98% white in the UK library workforce. So, it can be quite difficult for us to advocate for diversity" (Josh - Librarian).

Whilst the librarians expressed a commitment to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion (Resnis & Natale, 2020), diversifying faculty was perceived as a key factor that contributed towards institutionalising the value of diversity.

6. Conclusion

The research contributed insights into the implementation of reading list diversity initiatives at English, higher education institutions. The frequent, interchangeable use of diversity and decolonisation, indicates the need for a strategic, sector wide response. Transparent and informed discussions with multiple stakeholders (Schucan Bird & Pitman, 2020) are required to develop a more nuanced understanding of reading list diversity. At the micro level of implementation, although educators expressed curiosity regarding the extent to which their reading lists were diverse, impetus to implement change was limited by high levels of dyadic goal importance and value incongruence. From a dyadic goal importance perspective, further evidence regarding the relationship between reading list diversity and student attainment/engagement is required. Alternatively, a re-evaluation of these student-centred outcomes may be warranted. Transcending outcomes focused justifications, there is potential to explore the embedment of moral justifications into institutional guidance.

To enhance value congruence, it is recommended that library service's guidance signifies the institutional value of reading list diversity through alignment with, and reference to, meso level strategy. Commitment could also be fostered by referencing macro level policy (Laakso & Hallberg Adu, 2023; Stokes & Martin, 2008). Recognising curricular diversity as a collective effort (Adewumi & Mitton, 2022; Arday et al., 2021), departmental leads must persistently signal the importance of curricular (including reading list) diversity efforts and allocate sufficient resources to alleviate workload constraints. Although value (Mayhew & Grunwald, 2006) and dyadic goal importance (Bøe et al., 2021; Colbert et al., 2008) can encourage reform and activity alignment, reading lists are developed through a sequence of socially constructed processes (Stokes & Martin, 2008). Academics are therefore called upon to interrogate their own positionality.

Limitations and future research

The focus of this curricular diversity research was limited to reading lists, which only represent one component of broader, holistic, curricular diversity efforts. Although data saturation was reached, the findings were limited to the perceptions of sport management educators at two English universities. Further investigation is needed to explore whether the findings are shared by additional sport management educators. A comparative congruence analysis could also provide interesting insights regarding the value of readings lists within different disciplines. The analysis of intuitional guidance was also limited to higher education institutes demonstrating strategic advancement through the publicisation of decolonisation/diversity policy or guidance. Future research could provide a more comprehensive implementation through including an examination of non-public policies and the associated dissemination activities. Reiterating the need for research that examines student perspectives (Schucan Bird & Pitman, 2020), future qualitative research could examine students' understanding of, expectations of, and responses to, reading list diversity. Research is also needed to exemplar 'good' reading list diversity/decolonisation practice.

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Data Availability Statement

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CRediT authorship contribution statement

Stacie Jade Gray: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization.

Declaration of competing interest

The author has no competing interests to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.

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