

Stepping into Standpoints: Indigenous Standpoints Guiding Decolonial Reflexivity in Business Education

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Abstract: In the face of ongoing colonial legacies embedded within education systems, this paper calls on non-Indigenous academics to seek out Indigenous standpoints as vital guides for the ethical and effective decolonisation and Indigenisation of educational practices. Rather than relying on superficial inclusion, meaningful transformation requires engagement with Indigenous knowledge systems as they are expressed through Indigenous Standpoint Theory (IST). These standpoints emerge in diverse and often non-textual forms, including story, art, yarning, data, and poetics, and offer grounded, relational insights capable of disrupting and expanding western educational paradigms. We argue that IST provides a powerful method for shifting how knowledge is valued and who is recognised as a knower. For non-Indigenous allies, this means entering into a reflexive, accountable relationship with Indigenous voices and perspectives. This paper outlines how Indigenous standpoints can guide the transformation of curricula, pedagogy, and institutional culture by challenging power structures and fostering inclusivity and relational accountability. Ultimately, we contend that IST is not merely an academic tool, but a pathway toward educational practices that honour Indigenous knowledge, advance self-determination, and contribute to collective transformation.

Keywords: curriculum and course design, equality and diversity, Indigenous standpoint theory, decolonial reflexivity, educational transformation

Terminology

Lower case in western and eurocentric is used intentionally to decentre colonial linguistic dominant discourse (Lenette 2022).

Introduction

Decolonising education, particularly in business and management, requires sustained engagement with the legacies of colonialism and capitalism, which continue to shape educational systems. This paper emerges at a moment of intensified calls, both globally and locally, for business schools and higher education institutions to reckon with colonial legacies, including through truth-telling processes, Indigenous-led policy reforms, and increasing demands from students and communities for meaningful change. Business education, in particular, is being challenged to respond, as conventional business education has long been dominated by eurocentric paradigms that marginalise Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies (Allen & Girei, 2023; Dar et al., 2021; Jones et al., 2023). Scholars have critiqued these dominant approaches as largely superficial, noting that tokenistic inclusion of Indigenous content often fails to challenge higher education institutional structures or disrupt colonial power relations (Bastien et al., 2022; Hrenyk & Salmon, 2024; Love & Hall, 2022). These critiques highlight what has been termed an “apartheid of knowledge” (Love & Hall, 2022, p. 203), in which Indigenous knowledges are excluded from meaningful participation in curricula and pedagogy. To move beyond this impasse, the application of Indigenous Standpoint Theory (IST) is critical. IST offers a framework that centres Indigenous voices and perspectives, not as supplementary to dominant narratives, but as transformative in their own right (Foley, 2003; Moreton-Robinson, 2000, 2013; Nakata, 1998).

IST enables Indigenous academics to articulate knowledge from within their own lived experiences, providing critical insights that can expand and challenge entrenched epistemic boundaries. As Allen and Girei (2023) argue, decolonial reflexivity requires individuals, particularly those in dominant groups, to confront the discomfort of their own complicity within colonial systems. This process cannot be achieved through inclusion alone. Mere additions to curricula risk perpetuating dominant capitalist paradigms (Abreu-Pederzini & Suarez-Barraza, 2020; Pinto & Blue, 2016). Gaudry and Lorenz's (2018) Indigenisation spectrum offers a helpful model, distinguishing between surface-level Indigenous inclusion, intermediate reconciliation Indigenisation, and the deeper structural transformation required in decolonial Indigenisation. Only the latter meaningfully engages with Indigenous knowledge systems, disrupts hegemonic institutional structures, and places Indigenous perspectives at the centre of academic work. Integral to this transformation is a critical reassessment of pedagogical practices. Case studies, commonly used in business education, have been shown to reproduce deficit discourses about Indigenous peoples unless intentionally developed in partnership with Indigenous communities (Hrenyk & Salmon, 2024; Price, Skopec et al., 2022; Price, Hartt et al., 2022). When crafted reflexively, case studies can become tools for relational pedagogy that reflect Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing.

This paper is written for non-Indigenous scholars, educators, and higher education institutional leaders who are seeking to move beyond symbolic inclusion and take responsibility for decolonial change. It emerges in response to increasing calls for higher education institutions to dismantle systemic racism, uphold Indigenous data sovereignty, and meaningfully engage with Indigenous-led scholarship. We focus on business education because it remains one of the most resistant and under-theorised disciplines in decolonial discourse, despite its powerful role in shaping leadership, economies, and decision-making across sectors. IST and decolonial reflexivity together offer a pathway for fostering more inclusive, ethical, and relational academic environments (Allen & Girei, 2023; Cooms & Saunders, 2024; Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018; Hrenyk & Salmon, 2024). Moreover, IST highlights the broader societal value of Indigenous knowledge systems, such as ecological knowledge relevant to sustainable resource management (Arbon & Rigney, 2014; Bullock et al., 2018). These insights reinforce the imperative to prioritise Indigenous perspectives in both curriculum and institutional design. Allyship, when grounded in IST, is not about acting on behalf of others, but about learning through Indigenous standpoints to critically assess one's own position and practice (Barkley & Kivi, 2022; Maddison & Nakata, 2020; Moreton-Robinson, 2015). This form of allyship requires continual reflexivity and accountability. When embraced within educational contexts, it enables non-Indigenous scholars to challenge hegemonic knowledge systems and co-create spaces where Indigenous knowledge can flourish.

This paper presents a conceptual analysis grounded in a critical reflective methodology informed by Indigenous research principles, relational accountability, and IST. As Indigenous scholars, our analysis is grounded in lived experience, literature, and pedagogical practice. We draw on our own standpoints to explore how IST can inform educational transformation, particularly within business schools. This approach resists extractive analysis and instead prioritises ethical engagement, community accountability, and the amplification of Indigenous voices. To support this, later in this paper we offer a typology of Indigenous standpoints (Table 1) as a practical tool for understanding the diverse ways these perspectives may be engaged.

Clarifying Key Concepts

- Decolonial reflexivity refers to the ongoing, critical self-assessment of one's positionality within systems of colonial power and knowledge. For non-Indigenous scholars, it requires acknowledging complicity in colonial institutions and undertaking relational, accountable change.
- Allyship in this context means learning with and through Indigenous standpoints, not speaking on behalf of Indigenous peoples, but co-creating space for their leadership.
- Parallax, as used in this paper, is the movement between standpoints that makes visible different truths and illuminates complexity.

Decolonisation

Decolonising business education is a necessary and urgent task, requiring a critical interrogation of how institutional norms and knowledge systems have been shaped by colonial ideologies and structures (Love & Hall, 2022; Motta & Allen, 2022). Business schools, historically operating within hierarchical models grounded in colonial logic, have long excluded marginalised voices, reproducing systems of inequality and maintaining Eurocentric dominance in knowledge production (Allen & Girei, 2023; Dar et al., 2021; Hrenyk & Salmon, 2024; Ojediran & Anderson, 2020). As a result, business education remains peripheral to broader decolonial discourse, despite being implicated in its reproduction.

Meaningful decolonisation in this context requires a comprehensive examination of how colonialism continues to influence every level of institutional operation. This includes challenging dominant modes of knowledge dissemination and creating space for alternative knowledges grounded in Indigenous worldviews (Jammulamadaka et al., 2021; Motta & Allen, 2022; Woods et al., 2022). Informed by postcolonial and critical theory, decolonial approaches aim to dismantle systems that perpetuate marginalisation and exploitation, calling instead for frameworks that prioritise relationality, self-determination, and inclusion (Foley, 2003; Smith, 1999; Tuck & Yang, 2021; Wilson, 2008). Beyond institutional practices, business education is also embedded in broader structural forces, including capitalism, racism, and settler colonialism, which collectively reproduce global racial hierarchies (Dorries et al., 2019; Gerrard et al., 2022; Randell-Moon, 2023). These forces underpin curricula that prioritise profit maximisation and western-centric ideals while ignoring the social, cultural, and environmental consequences of business decisions (Dar et al., 2021; Gerrard et al., 2022; Jones et al., 2023). As Moreton-Robinson (2015) highlights, settler colonialism has historically entrenched non-Indigenous property rights while systematically dispossessing Indigenous peoples. This legacy persists in the epistemic and material exclusions seen in contemporary business education. Racial capitalism—the entwinement of racial hierarchies with capitalist exploitation—remains foundational to these inequities (Issar, 2021; Jammulamadaka et al., 2021; Moreton-Robinson, 2015). Neoliberal ideologies further intensify these dynamics by promoting market-driven solutions that obscure systemic barriers and maintain the marginalisation of Indigenous and other equity-deserving groups (Habibis et al., 2020; Issar, 2021).

The work of Allen and Girei (2023) on decolonising management, organisation, and knowledge (MOK) foregrounds how colonial legacies continue to shape contemporary power structures. Decolonial efforts in this space aim to transcend these logics by reconfiguring how knowledge is produced, valued, and applied in organisational contexts. This necessitates attention to the Indigenisation spectrum (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018), as well as a rigorous critique of institutional racism and privilege within the academy (Banaji et al., 2021; Côté & Evans, 2023; Hrenyk & Salmon, 2024). IST plays a central role in this work. As a framework grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing, IST enables the interrogation of dominant knowledge systems and supports the development of decolonial reflexivity. When applied effectively, IST exposes the limitations of Eurocentric paradigms and helps create the conditions for transformational change through the centring of Indigenous knowledge systems.

Context of Business Education: Colonial Legacy of Business Education

This section outlines how colonial knowledge continues to shape business education and explores key barriers and transformative frameworks, including the concept of colonial load, systemic privilege, and the Indigenisation spectrum, that inform decolonising educational practice.

Perpetuation of Colonial Knowledge and Violence

Business education continues to perpetuate colonial violence by upholding Eurocentric knowledge systems, privileging western values, and marginalising Indigenous voices (Banerjee, 2022; Dar et al., 2021; Jammulamadaka et al., 2021). Leadership within academia plays a critical role in either sustaining or dismantling these structures; despite this, white privilege remains embedded in the hierarchy of higher education institutions, reinforcing historical imbalances and obstructing the inclusion of Indigenous knowledges (Blaise et al., 2024; Dar et al., 2021; Riley et al., 2019). The dominance of western epistemologies sidelines relational, sustainability-oriented Indigenous worldviews (Kwek, 2003; Motta & Allen, 2022). The erasure of Indigenous narratives within business education reproduces systemic harm and undermines the field's potential contributions to justice, equity, and sustainability (Dorries et al., 2019; Moreton-Robinson, 2015; Watson, 2016; Wolfe, 2006). Without deep interrogation of curricula, pedagogy, and institutional values, colonial patterns will persist. These institutional dynamics are not accidental but structurally embedded within academic systems that privilege western epistemologies and gatekeeping practices. Patterns of exclusion, including the underrepresentation of Indigenous and other scholars of colour in leadership roles and editorial boards, further reinforce these dynamics (Bhambra et al., 2020; Doharty et al., 2021; Mbembe, 2016).

Reassessment of Values and Priorities

Decolonising business education requires a fundamental reassessment of the values and priorities underpinning curricula and pedagogy. Dominant models rooted in extraction, individualism, and material accumulation must be questioned and reoriented (Habibis et al., 2020). Business schools have long reinforced economic systems that disconnect success from communal wellbeing, sustainability, or justice (Bastien et al., 2022; Cooms, 2022; Everett, 2023; Hrenyk & Salmon, 2024). Indigenous values offer alternative frameworks grounded in reciprocity, relationality, and environmental stewardship. These include prioritising holistic wellbeing of people and place, respecting interconnectedness, and valuing shared responsibility (Evans & Williamson, 2017; Kwaymullina & Kwaymullina, 2014).

Watson (2023) highlights how, for many Indigenous peoples, resources such as money are viewed as communal tools to be shared (not hoarded), exemplifying radically different conceptions of value. Embracing these perspectives challenges capitalist norms and supports more inclusive and sustainable business education models (Habibis et al., 2020; Kwaymullina, 2005; Martin / Mirraoopa, 2003).

Systemic Barriers: The Colonial Load

The persistence of systemic barriers within business schools is deeply rooted in the legacy of stolen land and labour (Cooms, 2015; Dorries et al., 2019; Leroy-Dyer, 2021; Moreton-Robinson, 2015). These institutions continue to operate within frameworks that marginalise Indigenous knowledge and fragment relational ways of knowing (Battiste, 2002; Dar et al., 2021). Curricula and pedagogy often fail to reflect Indigenous lived realities and exclude Indigenous conceptualisations of success, leadership, and economy. This exclusion contributes to student disengagement (Gray & Beresford, 2008), feelings of alienation among Indigenous learners (Nakata et al., 2012), and diminished cultural safety within academic environments (Page & Asmar, 2008). Indigenous students may experience a “cultural interface” (Nakata, 2007) where they are forced to navigate conflicting epistemologies without institutional support, resulting in compromised educational outcomes. Further, the failure to incorporate Indigenous content meaningfully can result in tokenism, where Indigenous topics are included superficially, reinforcing deficit perspectives rather than challenging them (Rigney, 2001). These dynamics not only disadvantage Indigenous students, but also limit the educational potential for all learners by maintaining narrow, Eurocentric knowledge systems.

Inseparability of Colonialism, Capitalism, and Education

Black Marxist, Indigenous, and decolonial scholars point to the structural entanglement of colonialism, capitalism, and education (Blaut, 1989; Gerrard et al., 2022; Rodgers & Liera, 2023). Within business education, this manifests in curricula and managerial practices that reproduce hierarchies, promote exploitation, and disconnect knowledge from context and community (Allen & Girei, 2023; Dar et al., 2021; Hrenyk & Salmon, 2024).

Education has long served as a tool of colonial indoctrination, disciplining bodies, identities, and aspirations in line with settler norms (Bargallie, 2020; O’Sullivan, 2021; Watson, 2016). In the business school, this results in the reproduction of extractive logics that further marginalise Indigenous peoples (Ojediran & Anderson, 2020). Addressing this legacy requires more than critique: it demands the active cultivation of Indigenous standpoints to inform new pedagogies and practices. Transformation must be relational, grounded, and accountable, rooted in recognition of these complex intersections and in a commitment to systemic change (Blaut, 1989; Boswell, 1989).

Indigenisation Spectrum

The Indigenisation spectrum, as articulated by Gaudry and Lorenz (2018), offers a practical and relational framework to guide business educators and institutions through the complexities of decolonising and Indigenising academic practice. This framework does not suggest a linear progression or a fixed destination, but instead invites critical reflection and accountability in addressing colonial legacies. Crucially, it acknowledges that full decolonisation may not always be immediately achievable, particularly within systems steeped in Eurocentrism and institutional privilege, but it remains an ongoing ethical imperative.

From an Indigenous standpoint, Indigenisation is not a checklist or a symbolic gesture. It is a practice grounded in Country, community, and collective responsibility. As such, non-Indigenous academics must actively seek out Indigenous standpoints to guide their efforts. These standpoints can take many forms: lived experience, community knowledge, story work, academic scholarship, and the work of Elders; and all must be engaged with humility, reciprocity, and respect.

Drawing on Bunda (2022), two fundamental components of decolonisation within education are:

1. **Deconstructing colonial legacies:** This involves critically analysing the enduring impacts of colonialism embedded in knowledge systems, pedagogies, and institutional structures. It means asking difficult questions: Who developed this knowledge? For what purpose? Who was excluded? How is this system maintained? For non-Indigenous allies, this step requires cultivating competence in Indigenous IST and committing to ongoing decolonial reflexivity.
2. **Promoting Indigenous knowledges, practices, and worldviews:** This involves actively engaging with Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing, not as supplementary content, but as epistemological foundations that offer alternative, culturally grounded pathways for knowledge and education. This step restores cultural agency to Indigenous communities and requires institutions to restructure systems to accommodate Indigenous ontologies.

The spectrum includes three overlapping approaches that help contextualise where an institution or academic might sit in their journey.

- **Indigenous inclusion:** This is often the entry point for institutions, where efforts focus on supporting Indigenous students and staff within existing systems. While inclusion is necessary, it risks maintaining colonial structures if not paired with deeper transformation.
- **Reconciliation Indigenousisation:** This approach acknowledges historical injustice and seeks to build relationships with Indigenous communities. It may involve curriculum reform or symbolic actions, but, without structural change, it can become performative.
- **Decolonial Indigenousisation:** This is the most transformative position on the spectrum. It demands institutions centre Indigenous knowledges, challenge dominant paradigms, and engage with Indigenous peoples as equal knowledge holders. It requires a dismantling of hegemonic norms and a rebuilding of educational practices that are relational, ethical, and grounded in Country.

To move towards genuine Indigenousisation, non-Indigenous scholars must be willing to step into Indigenous standpoints, not to extract or translate, but to be led. This is not a neutral act. It requires discomfort, decentring of self, and sustained commitment to transformation. As Gaudry and Lorenz (2018) assert, true decolonisation will not emerge from within the dominant logic unless Indigenous frameworks are not only consulted but embedded at every level. Engaging with the Indigenousisation spectrum in this way supports the development of inclusive, culturally safe learning environments that uphold Indigenous sovereignty and honour diverse epistemologies. Guided by IST, this process builds the critical reflexivity needed to challenge institutional whiteness and opens space for relational accountability within business education.

Applying Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being, and Doing

Decolonisation in hegemonic business education is not a performative gesture, but a substantive and ongoing transformation that must be grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing. These ontological and epistemological orientations are not monolithic; they are richly diverse and can be activated through multiple pathways, including Indigenous knowledges, Indigenous studies, and Indigenous perspectives (Bunda, 2022; Drummond, 2020). Indigenous knowledges represent sophisticated systems of understanding cultivated through generations of relational learning, oral transmission, and land-based practices (Kwaymullina et al., 2013; Martin / Mirraboop, 2003). Indigenous studies involves the critical scholarly examination of Indigenous histories, cultures, and systems of thought, providing institutional and pedagogical pathways for engaging Indigenous conceptual frameworks on their own terms (Nakata, 2007; Smith, 1999). Indigenous perspectives reflect the lived and embodied experiences through which individuals interpret and interact with the world, centring principles of reciprocity, collective wellbeing, sustainability, and respect for Country (Foley, 2003; Moreton-Robinson, 2013; Nakata, 1998).

Indigenous perspectives and practices are most powerfully mobilised through Indigenous standpoints. These standpoints are not only epistemological positions, but lived commitments to being in right relation with knowledge, with land, with ancestors, and with community. As Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis (2002) argue, standpoint is shaped by social location and identity. Yet IST expands this concept to include place-based ontologies and the sovereignty of Indigenous knowledge systems (Foley, 2003; Nakata, 1998). Rather than suggesting a singular application of IST, we recognise that standpoints are multiple and plural, emerging in academic theory, in cultural practices, in activism, in art, and in ceremony. The table below outlines these different forms to help clarify the multiple and valid expressions of Indigenous standpoints that can guide the decolonial transformation of business education.

Table 1: Forms of Indigenous Standpoint Theory and their Epistemic Expressions

Form of Standpoint	Description	Example(s)
Academic standpoint	Scholarly articulation of Indigenous epistemologies, methodologies, and critiques of dominant knowledge systems	Foley (2003); Nakata (2007); Smith (1999)
Place-based standpoint	Standpoint grounded in Country and shaped through cultural knowledge systems and relationships with land and kin	Kwaymullina et al. (2013); Martin / Mirraboop (2003)
Cultural standpoint	Embodied in ceremonial practices, kinship systems, oral traditions, and intergenerational learning	Arbon (2008); Martin (2003)
Political standpoint	Emerges in struggles for sovereignty, land rights, and policy reforms; rooted in collective activism	Moreton-Robinson (2015); Walter (2018)
Creative standpoint	Expressed through art, performance, storytelling, and poetics that carry knowledge in culturally resonant ways	Cooms & Saunders (2024); Sameshima (2007)
Relational standpoint	Centred in reciprocal responsibilities to Country, ancestors, and community; values care and connection	Coates et al., (2021); Graham (1999)

These standpoints do not merely inform curricula; they shape how knowledge is recognised, who is permitted to hold and transmit it, and under what conditions it may be engaged. Parallax theory, as articulated by Sameshima (2007), helps us understand how multiple, interconnected standpoints expand what is visible and knowable. Cooms and Saunders (2024) extend this to suggest that standpoints in conversation can reconfigure the boundaries of knowledge itself, if approached with integrity and relational accountability.

For institutions to meaningfully engage in decolonisation, they must create space for standpoints to speak back to colonial and capitalist logics. This means refusing extractive modes of engagement and instead centring Indigenous voices, authority, and governance. As Hrenyk and Salmon (2024) demonstrate, case studies in business education must be developed in genuine partnership with Indigenous peoples to reflect Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing. If standpoints are misappropriated or instrumentalised, they risk being co-opted by the very systems they seek to dismantle (Berghs & Dyson, 2022; MacKinnon, 2015; Moreton-Robinson, 2015). This is why decolonial reflexivity must be grounded in Indigenous-led research principles, Indigenous data sovereignty (Walter, 2018) and clear recognition of Indigenous intellectual property (Kukutai et al., 2020). Without these, institutional efforts risk reproducing harm rather than enabling transformation (Cooms et al., forthcoming; Nakata, 2007; Smith, 1999).

Drawing on the Indigenisation spectrum (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018; Hrenyk & Salmon, 2024), this work must be iterative and embedded in practice, not just policy. The Four Rs of IST—Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, and Responsibility—offer a scaffold to hold this complexity (Ardill, 2013; Cox et al., 2021; Foley, 2003; Jones, 2023). Respect demands the validation and inclusion of Indigenous perspectives within academic and public discourse. Relevance amplifies First Peoples' voices in decision-making processes. Reciprocity reflects the commitment to self-determination and an emancipatory political and scholarly agenda. Responsibility ensures the continuation of Indigenous autonomy, practices, and epistemic diversity (Foley, 2003). These principles do not serve the needs of non-Indigenous actors, nor should they. They serve the continuity of Indigenous knowledge systems, and any institutional shift must follow their lead.

Parallax and the Importance of Indigenous Standpoint Theory

To further deepen the relational approach to decolonial education and allyship, the concept of parallax becomes essential. Drawing on Sameshima's (2007) pedagogical theory of parallax, our understanding of the world is enriched when we engage with multiple perspectives and experiences. This aligns with standpoint theory, which asserts that individual standpoints, shaped by social positioning, offer distinct and valuable insights. Parallax, in this context, enables the coexistence and interconnection of diverse standpoints, forming a dynamic space for critique and transformation (Cooms & Saunders, 2024). Decolonial reflexivity operates within this parallax, where diverse standpoints are respected and mobilised to challenge colonial legacies and ongoing systemic inequities (Allen & Girei, 2023; Sameshima, 2007). IST, as articulated by Foley (2003) and Nakata (1998), affirms that creating space for Indigenous perspectives is not optional but essential for any meaningful decolonial effort. Without these perspectives, institutions are unable to realise the full potential of parallax.

Hrenyk and Salmon (2024) demonstrate that case studies in decolonising business education must be co-developed with Indigenous peoples to reflect Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing. The colonial project, in its totalising nature, seeks to absorb or erase diversity, which underscores the importance of buffers, such as IST and decolonial reflexivity, that enable genuine parallax shifts (Berghs & Dyson, 2022; MacKinnon, 2015; Moreton-Robinson, 2015).

Efforts to decolonise at the Indigenous or Indigenist level reflect the tensions outlined by Motta and Allen (2022), who highlight the challenges inherent in decolonising the academy. These tensions demand humility, openness, and accountability in undertaking decolonial and de-westernisation work (Cooms, 2022; Gates et al., 2023). Decolonial reflexivity must be embedded within Indigenous-led and governed research frameworks, guided by right stories and right ways (Coates et al., 2021; Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003). This includes respecting Indigenous data sovereignty (Walter, 2018) and recognising Indigenous intellectual property, without which parallax is undermined by ongoing epistemic exploitation (Kukutai et al., 2020). Creating protected spaces through decolonial processes, where Indigenous knowledge is safeguarded from appropriation, is consistent with the principles advocated by Cooms et al. (forthcoming), Nakata (2007), and Smith (1999). These scholars emphasise deep listening, self-reflexivity, and centring First Nations voices as fundamental for sustainable and authentic transformation. These parallax-informed shifts in perspective compel institutions to reconsider whose knowledge is centred, how it is engaged, and what structures must change to enable Indigenous epistemic authority. Anchored in the Indigenisation spectrum, this approach is necessary for enabling parallax to function as a genuine epistemic tool for decolonial change (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018; Hrenyk & Salmon, 2024; Sameshima, 2007).

The foundational principles of IST (Four Rs of Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, and Responsibility) deepen the decolonial and Indigenisation potential of business education (Ardill, 2013; Cox et al., 2021; Foley, 2003; Hrenyk & Salmon, 2024; Jones, 2023; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991). These Four Rs function as navigational tools, guiding business education along the Indigenisation spectrum toward genuine recognition, meaningful representation, and deep respect for Indigenous knowledges. In this way, IST enables the ongoing establishment and maintenance of Indigenous epistemologies within academic discourse (Allen & Girei, 2023; Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018; Jones, 2023).

IST, Decolonial Reflexivity, and the Colonial Foundations of Business Education

Unlike other disciplines, Australian business schools have consistently failed to attract, retain, and advance Indigenous scholars (Altman et al., 2017; Gainsford & Evans, 2021). This ongoing underrepresentation must be understood in relation to the foundations of business and management, which are inherently tied to colonial, Eurocentric capitalist systems (Leroy-Dyer, 2021, 2022). These systems—what Tom et al. (2019) call the “death project” (p. 7)—require the maintenance of exploitative relationships with both people and the environment, driving systemic harm such as ecological degradation and structural inequality. In this context, IST becomes a critical tool for disrupting the reproduction of colonial knowledge and reorienting business education toward justice. Given the scarcity of Indigenous scholarship within the discipline and the structural bias embedded in its epistemologies, IST provides a necessary lens to expose and unsettle the dominance of western ways of knowing, being, and doing.

Previous work by Indigenous scholars has highlighted the importance of providing clear guidance to challenge the often-implicit reproduction of colonial norms in academic practice (Bennett, 2022; Fredericks et al., 2020). IST supports this work by offering a relational and situated approach to decolonial reflexivity. Grounded in an awareness of power, privilege, and social location, IST draws on Bourdieu’s (1984) theorisation of capital to show how one’s positionality, informed by cultural, economic, and social capital, shapes their relationship to knowledge. Crucially, decolonial work can be undertaken from any standpoint, but the nature and impact of that work is deeply contextual. First Nations peoples in Australia often hold the least capital in dominant institutions, yet their perspectives illuminate the limits and violences of western epistemologies most acutely (Bourdieu, 1984). In this sense, Indigenous standpoints are not simply perspectives to include, they are essential entry points for understanding how business education might be reimagined and transformed.

This is particularly evident when examining the field of management education. Figure 1 below highlights foundational theorists of management Frederick Taylor, Henry Ford, Max Weber, Mary Parker Follett, Elton Mayo, and others, whose theories overwhelmingly reflect western industrialist and human relations paradigms. These figures represent a canon rooted in Eurocentric assumptions, prompting critical questions about who is absent, why these absences persist, and how they are maintained.



Figure 1: Foundational Management Scholars

These foundational thinkers shaped an entire discipline, yet their theories emerged in isolation from, and often in opposition to, the values and realities of Indigenous communities and other non-western societies. Their continuing dominance within management education reinforces hegemonic knowledge systems and silences alternative ways of thinking about leadership, economics, and collective wellbeing.

By contrast, Figure 2 below highlights foundational Indigenous thinkers, such as Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Lilla Watson, Aileen Moreton-Robinson, Martin Nakata, Bronwyn Fredericks, Dennis Foley, Marcia Langton, Mary Graham, and Bronwyn Carlson, whose contributions remain marginalised in business curricula despite their deep relevance to questions of governance, sustainability, entrepreneurship, and social change.

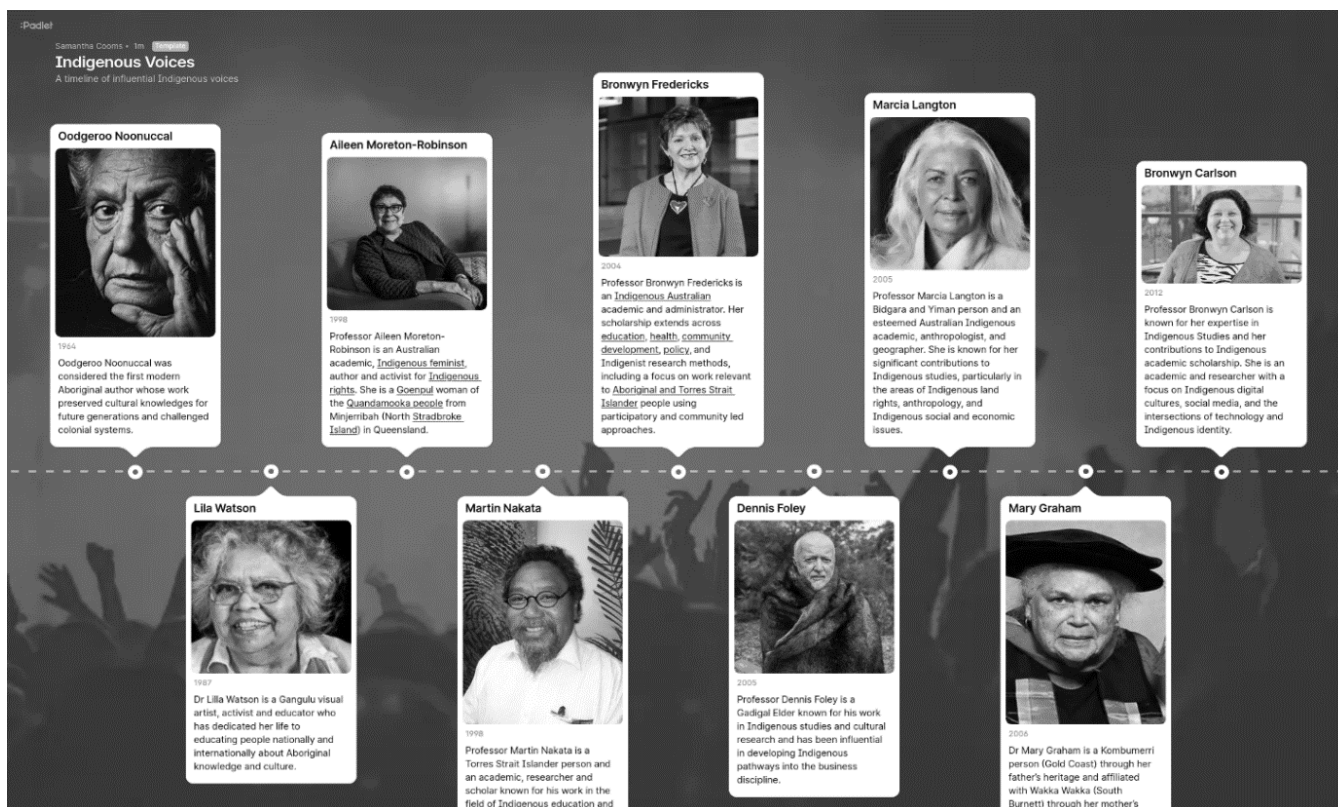


Figure 2: Foundational Indigenous Voices

These scholars offer intellectual frameworks grounded in relationality, collective responsibility, and cultural continuity, principles that directly challenge the extractive logics of mainstream management theory. The continued exclusion of these thinkers from business education is not accidental; it reflects the persistence of what Bennett (2022) describes as systemic epistemic bias.

IST foregrounds these voices not only as valid but as vital. Seeking out Indigenous standpoints is not an optional exercise in inclusion; it is an ethical imperative and a methodological necessity for institutions committed to decolonisation. Doing so requires reflecting critically on the knowledge structures we uphold, the voices we centre, and the responsibilities we carry within systems of education that have historically worked to erase us.

Indigenous Standpoint Theory and Transformative Change

IST is a foundational framework for the decolonisation of business education. It confronts entrenched systems of hierarchy, control, and Eurocentrism by making visible the colonial biases that shape dominant paradigms (Henry & Foley, 2018). As observed in the operation of parallax (Cooms & Saunders, 2024), IST provides a critical means of understanding societal issues through Indigenous perspectives. In doing so, it performs a dual function: disrupting hegemonic knowledge systems and guiding decolonial reflexivity.

As a disruptive force, IST enables the interrogation of Eurocentric paradigms that have historically excluded Indigenous voices from business and management knowledge (Foley, 2006; Kwaymullina, 2018; Nakata, 1998). By centring Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing, IST compels a re-evaluation of accepted practices and ideologies, revealing the harm embedded in dominant frameworks and offering alternative modes of understanding. In this way, IST provides the grounding from which decolonial reflexivity emerges, ensuring that reflexive practice remains

accountable to Indigenous knowledges and lived realities. Because of this, IST is not just a theoretical tool but a necessary foundation for building meaningful decolonial reflexivity. Reflexivity in this context must be robust, acknowledging and challenging the institutional power structures that have marginalised Indigenous knowledge while prioritising Indigenous contributions to reframe what counts as legitimate knowledge. This depth of reflexivity lays the foundation for a more ethical and accountable model of allyship, one that moves beyond surface engagement and centres relational responsibility. This positions IST as central to movement along the Indigenisation spectrum (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018), particularly toward its decolonial end.

IST transcends theory. It is a dynamic praxis that both dismantles exclusionary norms and offers pathways for institutions to reshape themselves. Within business education, this means more than acknowledging colonial legacies, it demands a sustained commitment to challenging capitalist epistemologies and elevating Indigenous leadership, knowledges, and methodologies. By embedding IST in curricula and research practices, business education becomes a site of transformation. It provides mechanisms for incorporating Indigenous knowledges and prioritising self-determination, which are critical for building decolonial reflexivity. As such, IST is both theory and practice, a catalyst for reshaping the educational landscape in ways that are inclusive, equitable, and grounded in Indigenous worldviews (Jones et al., 2024).

One example of IST in practice can be seen in the use of Oodgeroo Noonuccal's poetic work "The Unhappy Race: The Myall Speaks" within an employment relations course at The University of Queensland to introduce students to a Quandamooka perspective on labour, power, and workplace relations. As a creative expression of cultural and political resistance, Oodgeroo's poem offers more than historical critique, it activates a relational and embodied standpoint that speaks to the lived experiences of colonisation and dispossession. In the classroom, engaging with this poetic text becomes a site of Indigenous-led curriculum transformation, enabling students to consider how colonial structures have shaped economic and managerial systems. Through guided discussion and reflective analysis, non-Indigenous students are invited into a reflexive space where they must grapple with the dissonance between dominant management logics and Indigenous experiences of systemic exclusion. This pedagogical approach exemplifies how IST, when embedded through cultural and creative standpoints, can shift the terms of engagement in business education, foregrounding Indigenous knowledge, disrupting settler-colonial assumptions, and fostering relational accountability.

Benefits

The application of IST in business education contributes to the development of inclusive learning environments that centre Indigenous and marginalised perspectives (Bunda et al., 2012; Kidman, 2020; Le Grange, 2020). These environments facilitate deeper engagement with diverse lived experiences, especially in areas such as entrepreneurship and sustainability (Kwaymullina, 2005, 2018; Woods et al., 2022). IST also supports the cultivation of decolonial reflexivity, particularly by exposing how cultural, economic, and social capital (often held by non-Indigenous academics) shapes knowledge production and institutional authority (Bourdieu, 1984). It highlights the limitations and harms of dominant paradigms and positions Indigenous knowledges as essential to ethical scholarship.

The incorporation of Indigenous perspectives into business education supports more nuanced decision-making and problem-solving (Greenwood, 2008; Jones et al., 2023). These perspectives, rooted in relationality, sustainability, and collective responsibility, offer critical insights into addressing complex challenges such as climate change, social justice, and economic inequality (Guto, 2020; Nyong et al., 2007; Schultz, 2020). Recognising and engaging with Indigenous standpoints is thus a fundamental step for transforming both institutions and broader decolonial practice (Smith, 2012).

Challenges

Despite its transformative potential, applying IST within academic systems presents significant challenges. Dominant knowledge systems continue to privilege western epistemologies, systematically marginalising and excluding Indigenous perspectives (Bunda et al., 2012; De Plevitz, 2007; Fredericks et al., 2020; Jones et al., 2023; Kidman, 2020). This exclusion sustains colonial hegemony and perpetuates forms of epistemic violence against Indigenous peoples (Cram et al., 2016; Ormond et al., 2006).

A "colonial algorithm" operates within academia, reinforcing white dominance while suppressing Indigenous ways of knowing (Fredericks et al., 2021; Walter & Andersen, 2016). This algorithm upholds systemic privilege and maintains the racialised disadvantage of non-white scholars (Bargallie, 2020; Lilley, 2017). Academic search engines and publishing systems also exacerbate exclusion. Biases in search algorithms render alternative or marginalised literature invisible, compounding the dominance of privileged voices (von Hippel & Buck, 2023). Top-tier journals have historically

upheld exclusionary practices, where scholars from marginalised backgrounds face higher barriers to publication and, when published, receive less attention and recognition (Boyd, 2021; Boyer et al., 2023; Lundine et al., 2018; Willis et al., 2021). To counter these challenges, decolonisation must involve structural change. This includes increasing the visibility and representation of Indigenous scholars, shifting authorship and publication protocols to promote epistemic and cultural diversity, and amplifying the legitimacy of Indigenous knowledge systems (Ward-Fear et al., 2020). Doing so will foster more inclusive, equitable, and culturally responsive academic environments (Bennett, 2022; Courtenay & Gair, 2009).

Conclusion

This paper has argued that IST is not only a critical theoretical framework but a necessary methodology for transforming business education. Rooted in Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing, IST provides the epistemic clarity needed to disrupt entrenched Eurocentric paradigms and guide institutions toward decolonial Indigenisation. In doing so, it moves beyond tokenistic inclusion to centre Indigenous perspectives as indispensable to understanding, critiquing, and reshaping the foundational assumptions of business and management. Through the lens of parallax, IST reveals the interconnected yet distinct standpoints that shape knowledge systems. It makes visible the colonial algorithm embedded within academia and demands intentional reflexivity that is grounded in accountability to Indigenous peoples and knowledge. This requires not only the amplification of Indigenous voices but also a critical reassessment of who is considered a knower, what counts as knowledge, and how that knowledge is produced and validated.

As demonstrated throughout this paper, IST enables the exposure of harm, the reframing of power, and the articulation of alternatives. It is both theory and praxis, a pathway to dismantling exclusionary systems and building educational environments that are structurally and relationally just. By embedding Indigenous standpoints into the core of business education, institutions can contribute to a broader project of decolonisation, cultural resurgence, and self-determination. In this way, IST is not simply a contribution to business education, it is a necessary condition for its ethical and epistemic future.

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Please cite this article as:

Cooms, S., Watson, G., & Leroy-Dyer, S. (2026). Stepping into standpoints: Indigenous standpoints guiding decolonial reflexivity in business education. *International Journal of Indigenous Business*, 1, pp. 121–135. DOI: 10.64222/QJEM8875



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