

International Perspectives on Truth Telling and Educational Praxes: Promoting a Global Vision for Transformative and Reparative Educational Futures

Around the world, different countries are struggling to define, apply and sustain initiatives to educate about harmful histories or past atrocities that inevitably have ongoing systemic justice implications, particularly for racialized and Indigenous peoples (Baker et al., 2022; Crosby & Lykes, 2019; Madden, 2019). As evidence of this global shift towards truth and justice, in the last 50 years, an increasing number of countries have completed formal processes to confront colonial harms and legacies through government and NGO-supported truth commissions such as South Africa, Canada and Australia, which are designed to find the ‘truth’ which can then support healing and reconciliation (Hayner, 1994; Kochanski, 2020). Across contexts it is becoming clear that just educational futures through reparative frameworks demand a rethinking of pedagogy and a more critical and relational approaches to educational research and policy (Sriprakash, 2023). Coming from distinct national, regional, historical, and institutional contexts, contributions to this symposium converge on relationality not as a pedagogical add-on, but as a necessary response to educational harm produced through exclusionary policies (Done & Knowler, 2023), settler-colonial legacies (Reid, 2024) and managerial cultures of teaching in higher education (van Houten & van Uden, 2020) which originate from logics responsible for the attempted erasure of Indigenous peoples, cultures and knowledges (Hou, 2025).

The relationship between truth telling and relationality in classrooms is a complex and uncomfortable space (Gannaway, 2025) but such discomfort is valuable for creating pedagogical spaces for honest dialogue (Hsieh, 2017). As Starblanket and Stark (2018) remind us: “We are always in relationship and are also always aiming to nurture and expand these relationships” (p. 193). Fruitful developments have emerged in an increasing number of disciplines and educational spaces such community-engaged learning (Dobrich, 2025), medical education (Williams, 2016), mental health education (Akbar et al., 2025) and legal education (Eaglewoman et al., 2022).

This symposium offers a platform to explore truth-telling pedagogies and praxes across diverse cross-cultural contexts. We argue there is a need for education in all areas, from higher education, initial teacher training, and community-based learning, to move beyond procedural or compliance-based approaches for confronting historical harms and instead cultivate relational

pedagogies that can sustain truth-telling, repair, and collective responsibility across diverse learning communities. The papers in this symposium come from Australia, Canada, England, and Taiwan. Each paper shares an example of a local innovation for truth-telling which connects to the global vision for supporting education about confronting difficult truths.

Paper 1 (Australia): Paper 1 examines the experiences of discomfort in truth-receiving within a compulsory subject in an initial teacher education subject in Melbourne, Australia. Through Andreotti and Stein's layers of deep learning (2022), this paper examines 'where the truth lands' and the implications for designing pedagogies of witnessing and truth-telling.

Paper 2 (Canada): Paper 2 explores how collective agency was fostered amongst a group of immigrant women in Canada learning about the presence of Indigenous peoples, which includes reflections on what actions they could take to be in good relation. Relationality was key to supporting the reflective process and sharing knowledge and ideas in a collective manner, which encouraged these women to consider taking action in ways they had never thought about before.

Paper 3 (England): Paper 3 describes and critically reflects on the work of the Eugenics Legacy Education Project (ELEP) at University College London (UCL). The project examined how universities confront their historical entanglements with eugenics. Its findings emphasise truth-telling as an educational practice, i.e: naming harms, centring marginalised voices, and making archival silences visible. ELEP's work demonstrates that reparative praxis requires more than acknowledgement; it involves curriculum change, refusal of celebratory narratives, active mobilisation of reparative pedagogies, and ongoing institutional accountability, linking historical reckoning to present-day inequalities and responsibilities within teaching, research, and public engagement,

Paper 4 (Taiwan): Paper 4 explores the tensions between knowledge production in academic dissertations and in Indigenous truth-telling. We write from the perspectives of an advisor and advisee in the dissertation process who are collaborating with Ljavek, a mainly Paiwan Indigenous community in Taiwan. By reflecting on our research thus far, we surface several findings related to how, contrary to academic research, Indigenous truth-telling re-centers Indigenous self-determination, relationality, and the nonlinear unfolding of community priorities.

We reflect on what Ljavek has taught us about carrying out research to invite otherwise possibilities.

Our symposium situates relationality within the TERA Conference 2026 & WERA Focal Meeting theme of “Bridging Cultures, Co-creating Knowledge: Local Innovations and Global Visions in Education” by encouraging critical reflection through international perspectives and discussion on how truth-telling can be approached respectfully and relationally with regard for culture and local context. The symposium papers offer concrete practices and conceptual tools for making such relationality actionable in classrooms or communities, and that are vital to develop our own and our learners' capacities for staying with the discomfort that will inevitably arise.

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