

Letter From The Editor

Welcome to our Spring 2021 edition of IFOTS. In times of nature's push toward renewal and rebirth in the Northern Hemisphere, IFOTS, too, brings you seedlings of thought to lead us toward growth in our profession. In this issue, a common theme that emerged from our authors' contributions is focused on Democracy and Education. In the USA, there has long been a direct relationship of adult education, social justice, and concerns with inequity, defined by gender or color or economic status. Historically, the idea of social justice and adult education as being connected and opposed to oppressive systems has been the mantra by many so-termed radical adult educators, for example.

And, this has been true in many other parts of the world as well, albeit under different monikers than adult education. Movements and goals have been dedicated to teaching and learning as a means to make changes for the benefit of people, and more specifically by, with, and for the people. The common threads in the vast knowledge base under the rubric of democracy and education, emphasize that a democratic education is both a goal and a method of instruction. This includes principles of cooperation, shared decision-making among teachers and learners, and a sense of community wherein a healthy interdependence is negotiated as stakeholders self-govern this process of teaching and learning. Democratic education values mutual trust, respect, and fairness for all.

In varying ways, this issue's authors make solid arguments for one fundamental aspect of what I suggest we ought to consider a *democratic education*: the application of democratic values in education ought to lead to radical analysis, critical thinking, and authentic engagement in communal life. Here, we hear from international and so-termed minority voices on this theme. You will read about practical applications of instructional methods that are relevant to students' needs and about suggestions for using technology to enhance communal interactions. We are beckoned to heed the call for analyzing the potential benefits and challenges of technology for supporting the growth in self-efficacy and enhance students' capacity to control their motivation, behavior, and social environment. We are introduced to the efforts of two countries to re-engineer its educational systems toward a more democratic model. And we are asked to keep an open mind to get a glimpse into the political realities of democracies that may only be understood if our denizens are able to critically think. Which should have our thinking arrive at those fundamentals I mentioned above: *that the application of democratic values in education ought to lead to radical analysis, critical thinking, and authentic engagement in communal life.*

In these springtime days here in our part of the world, we look with hope toward a swift renewal of nature's beauty and bounty; as you read these fine thoughts in IFOTS, it is our hope that the presented ideas and practices take root in our human spirit and move us toward new beginnings in our field.

Dr. Gabriele Strohschen, Professor Emerita
Editor-in-Chief
DePaul University
Chicago, Illinois, USA