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Letter from the Editor

To introduce this issue of our IFOTS journal, allow me to hark back to a book (Strohschen, 2009) in which Senior Professor Gergen and Director of the Taos Institute provided the foreword,

As we confront the future of our professional endeavors, we tend to rely with confidence on longstanding and widely honored assumptions about the world and ourselves. We believe we have accumulated sturdy structures of knowledge, effective practices, and sound values. Yet, we rely on these resources with scant consciousness that in the long run our assumptions, practices, and values may not only be inimical to the viability of our profession, but as well, oppressive in their effects on others. There is at least one assumption – common across many professions and cultures – that is of particular significance. It is the assumption that the world is made up of discrete entities or units. There are not only the species of plants and animals, for example, but there is me as opposed to you, us vs. them, my business enterprise in competition with yours, our nation or religion and yours. And with this assumption of separable units, we assemble ways of sustaining and protecting those units of which we feel a part. We erect buildings, laws, schools, governments, and armies to ensure that what is inside the boundary will nourish, and what is outside cannot threaten us. In effect, the assumption of a world of independent entities establishes the way in which we understand and conduct ourselves within relationships. In my view, to sustain this orientation into the future – in a world in which geographic distance ceases to insulate the world's peoples from each other – is to invite disaster. The manifestations of conflict are everywhere – the West vs. the rest, Christianity vs. Islam, First vs. Third world, the haves vs. the have nots, conservatives vs. liberals, and so on. How can we do otherwise? [...] My sincere hope is that as the kinds of ideas and practices represented in this book become active throughout the educational process – and throughout the world – that the very idea of independent units would give way to the shifting tides and the shifting shores. (2009, p. ix, xi)

Since its inception in 2004, the IFOTS journal was imbued with these values of and consideration on interdependence, leading to the community of scholars and practitioners we invited and with whom we built a truly international teaching and learning community. And 20 years later, I am again honored to share an issue of our IFOTS journal; this time in which we amplify voices from India, Namibia, Sierra Leon, and the rural and urban cities in the USA. As we engage in asynchronous dialogue by reading and examining these perspectives, we once again find common ground – not only in the call for inclusive and critically examined practices but also in the realization that educators around the globe strive for rather similar self-awareness and mutual understanding, as do the learners.

To me, those are essential elements for education to accomplish its stated goal: that of nourishing (*educere*) and leading forth the talents and knowledge (*educare*) of, for, and with peoples around the world to live safely and in health, and to contribute to a sustainable society. For that, clearly, we need to listen and hear one another's voices to understand self and others. We ought to establish a dialogue across our unexamined and paradigmatic assumptions (Brookfield, 1995) about one another and acknowledge that we each toil in our respective fields facing challenges, which are rather similar across content, contexts, and continents (Strohschen, 2009).

Again, this issue does not disappoint in its portrayal of perspectives on cultural influences, the need for engaging myriad stakeholders in the development of relevant and meaningful curricula, relevant and task-appropriate methods and tools, transformative leadership, transformational learning, and transnational and cross-cultural problem-posing – all pivotal to find solutions to our shared global challenges and the assets with which to meet them. As I have for the past 20 years, I continue to invite you to the discourse for a co-construction of globally-informed and critically examined education praxes.

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