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Letter From the Editor

HAPPY NEW YEAR

- **Gregorian** (Common Era/Western): 2026
- **Islamic** (Hijri): 1447–1448 AH (lunar calendar, starts with the Hijra)
- **Hebrew**: 5786–5787 AM (used in Israel and for Jewish holidays)
- **Persian** (Solar Hijri): 1404–1405 SH (used in Iran and Afghanistan)
- **Ethiopian**: 2018–2019 (roughly 7-8 years behind the Gregorian calendar)
- **Chinese**: Based on 60-year cycles, often using the Huangdi era or reign years
- **Thai Solar**: 2569 BE (Buddhist Era, based on 543 BC)
- **Indian National**: 1947–1948 Saka Era (based on the vernal equinox)
- **Juche**: 115 (used in North Korea, based on 1912)
- **Bengali**: 1432–1433 BS

In all corners of our world, by now we have entered a new cycle – by whichever calendar system we term it. No matter the cultural lens, we have more in common than not as peoples in our world. In this issue of IFOTS, we explore this truth in the context of our education profession.

At IFOTS, we value the experiences and voices of our colleagues from around the world. And this issue, once again, brings you insights from studies and praxes within the contexts of continents and countries from which our contributors hail. The current articles juxtapose cultural differences and commonalities in our craft of teaching and study, grounded in our diverse values, worldviews, and beliefs. The contributions also illustrate the blending in which we engage as a collegial community of learning. And those colleagues working in places different from their birthplaces, are capable of experiencing and analyzing dichotomous ideas and practices. Such **cultural amalgamation** is beneficial. That is, when we first understand our own cultural realities and assumptions and then listen to and reflect on the voices describing what is different from our own. In this way, we arrive at *new learning* as we extrapolate insights from the exchanges.

The current articles have a common theme of transformation in systems and practices. In this issue, we feature colleagues from China, Namibia, and the USA, each with familiarity in countries other than their homeland - or culture, too. You will read about the global relevance of professional development that is informed from culturally-informed perspectives. You will learn about the transformative potential of implementing teacher-constructed materials. In the context of qualitative studies, you are pointed toward the value of an arts-based method. Comparison of Mezirow's Habermasian roots with Confucian self-cultivation and quiet reflection will find you fascinated about the depth of inter-cultural commonalities. There are detailed practical how-to's embedded in articles anchored solidly in real practices from three continents. Lastly, we added a book review that essentially reminds us to practice mindfulness and intention. In short, cultivating **deep reflection** on our shared experiences of a community often leads to the most meaningful growth and connection.

For all of us this year, I wish for deep and fruitful reflection on these fine contributions, rooted in the shared realities by our members of our IFOTS community.

Gabriele Strohschen
Chicago, March 8, 2026

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