

Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad

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Introduction: Accepting the Challenges to Our Ways of “Knowing”

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Introduction

It is my distinct pleasure to provide the introduction to Volume 34, Issue 4 of *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad (Frontiers)*. Having served in the role of Editor for the past two years has reinforced my passion for the impact of global education now more than ever. Despite challenging issues that we face across our campuses and our global programs, the need for greater understanding, knowledge, experience, and education is vital—now, more than ever. This issue of *Frontiers* has an amazing and diverse array of research articles, essays, case studies and a special section on the important issue of global education in Historically-Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Across this diverse work there is however one important thread that is core to the mission and scope of our journal to “communicate the latest research on education abroad within a multi-disciplinary forum to reflect on critical issues and concerns for academics and professional practitioners”. To realize this mission, we engage across various disciplines, topics, perspectives, and methodologies to address complex opportunities and challenges within global education today and in the future. However, one central question remains at the

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forefront of all that we do in achieving our purpose—how to we address challenges to our ways of “knowing?”

Frontiers on “How Do We Know” Questions

Throughout its history and within the current issue of *Frontiers*, we provide a forum for the latest research, practices, and writing on critical issues that researchers, academics, and professional practitioners face within the global education space. Our journal provides an important forum in its scope and open-access content to explore, document, and disseminate different ways of thinking about all aspects of what we do within the enterprise of global education. However, in pursuing this goal, we often must pause and reflect on a few challenging and necessary questions:

- How do we know that we are accomplishing our objectives within our global education courses, projects, and global experiences?
- How can we know that our models, approaches, tools, and techniques are adding value to the goals we pursue within global education?
- How do we know whether or not we are effective in adjusting to a changing landscape that is more dynamic, diverse, and complex than what we have witnessed in our past?

Indeed, how do we know? Whether as faculty, administrators, researchers, practitioners, or advocates, we frequently ask our institutions and ourselves these essential questions. Prior research on competency-based education has examined and re-examined the challenges posed by these “how do we know” questions for decades (Chappell et al., 2020). There would be little objection to the statement that answering these “how do we know” questions is especially challenging given the past few years as we went through a global pandemic, social protest, and necessary conversations around diversity, equity, and inclusion. Some may study these as challenges that disrupt global learning experiences, as we witnessed during the COVID global pandemic. Others look at these same challenges not as disruptive but as opportunities for new ways of learning. Clearly, the truth is that both views are relevant and both perspectives matter (Wilson, 2020). It is timely that several papers in this issue examine global education through the lens of “transformative learning.”

Our Current Issue

Throughout this issue, we address both challenges and opportunities that lie ahead, as we are faced with the need to examine and perhaps re-examine our focus on knowledge acquisition, knowledge application, or knowledge sharing/transfer within global education. Across the research articles, essays, and case studies within this issue we find several different ways to ask and respond to these “how do we know” questions. From transformational learning to intercultural competence, to colonial tourism, we must continue to face and not shy away from asking these hard questions and also admitting that sometimes we don’t have clear answers. Within our academic programs, our global experiences and our ongoing research, the journey towards knowing remains vital.

Interestingly, research outlines that there are different ways of knowing that include knowing what, knowing how, and knowing why (McMyler, 2022). Coupled with situated learning theory, this tells us that students do not come to us with a singular type of knowledge and skills. Instead, they acquire knowledge and skills within a specific context that shapes both the content and the process of learning (Savicki, 2020). This perspective reminds us that learning is a social process and requires authentic contexts. In my professional field of management education, situated learning challenges us to see learning not just within an isolated academic context but within the context of an individual’s lived and real-world experiences. This enables us to create dynamic, complex, social, diverse, and global learning environments that engage all types of learning, both inside and outside of our academic contexts (Wright et al., 2019).

Global Education in HBCUs

One of the innovative ways *Frontiers* focuses on the various “how do we know” questions is by a new feature of a special section of work that can focus on emergent, transformation, and/or nontraditional topics that require our attention and focus. Within this issue, that special section focuses on a topic that has not received sufficient attention as research, programs, and approaches to global education within Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). As a proud graduate of Howard University, I am a witness to the unique knowledge space provided by HBCUs in content, approach, and culture. The collection of papers within this special section is our signal of a renewed focus and

commitment to provide a forum for authors to address a range of different “how do we know” questions in new and different ways.

This need and approach are captured within what is known as a cultural integrity (CI) perspective as a useful framework to approach these knowledge questions (Sankofa et al., 2019). Looking through a CI lens makes us focus and re-examine our understanding of the link between culture and education, especially within a global context. The CI perspective is grounded in the framework of situated cognition in which learning contexts are important to personal development because they contain the elements upon/with which learning must be done while acknowledging the value of context. It recognizes that context is shaped by important dimensions such as identity, shared understanding, social interactions, and diverse experiences. It prompts us to redefine global education by acknowledging different ways of “knowing” via shared experiences as we co-create new understandings and new ways of knowing. It also prompts us to not ignore different experiences, identities, and realities of learners, faculty, and providers. Within this issue and the unique learning context within HBCUs, these diverse authors explore how we define, develop, and enhance the impact of global education within their unique spaces of knowledge.

Final Thoughts

While all the issues posed by “how do we know” questions cannot be addressed in a single issue, the content and contribution of this special section and entire issue of *Frontiers* is a necessary and invaluable step forward. Let us continue asking these challenging “how do we know” questions as we seek innovative solutions and approaches. It is my pleasure to be part of this issue and to be the editor of a journal that provides a forum this type of transformational inquiry.

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