



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

# BRICS

## Building Education for the Future



## Recommendations for Cooperation

In recent years, Brazil, the Russian Federation, India, China and South Africa – BRICS – have transformed the world map of education, bringing millions into school, establishing centres of world-class learning, driving innovation, and sharing expertise and knowledge. In November 2013, Ministers of Education from the BRICS met at UNESCO headquarters in Paris to discuss for the first time opportunities for cooperation in education. The conclusion of this landmark meeting was unanimous agreement that the BRICS and the wider international community stand to gain hugely from enhanced collaboration among their five countries. The 6<sup>th</sup> BRICS Summit, held in Fortaleza, Brazil, in July 2014, brought this commitment to the next level, when BRICS leaders affirmed the strategic importance of education to sustainable development and inclusive economic growth and pledged to strengthen cooperation. *BRICS: Building Education for the Future* is a contribution to this important effort to forge a new partnership for progress in education. Developed by UNESCO in consultation with experts from the five countries, the report recommends the following 12 areas for collaboration.

# 12 Recommendations for Cooperation

## Strengthen education systems for quality and equity

### 1. Share knowledge of governance and financing mechanisms, to enhance equity and quality in public schools

BRICS are innovating with different ways of allocating authority, responsibility and financial resources across national and sub-national levels of government. Sharing this breadth of experience through structured policy dialogue would benefit countries committed to tackling education inequities and raising standards in public schools.

### 2. Compare experiences in designing and implementing national assessments of student achievement

All BRICS are investing considerably in national systems for assessment. There is wide scope for BRICS to learn from one another, in particular in designing assessment; managing and using data to inform policy reforms; and weighing the benefits of participating in regional and international assessments.

### 3. Join forces to improve the quality of education data

As BRICS pursue their commitment to enhance the quality of education data, they face many common challenges, such as: how to gather data across large, often decentralized, education systems; how to collect disaggregated data to better capture equity gaps; and how to report data that are comparable across states/provinces and across countries. BRICS could establish a technical working group comprised of representatives of their statistical agencies to share experience and solutions in these areas.

Improving the reporting of comparable data will be essential for effective policy dialogue on education among BRICS. Enhanced collaboration among BRICS statistical agencies, and between them and international organizations such as the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), would help to improve international data reporting and enable more robust monitoring and analysis of education trends across BRICS, for example via a regular BRICS Education Report and wider coverage of education in the BRICS Joint Statistical Publication. These efforts would strongly complement the commitment made by BRICS leaders in the Fortaleza Declaration to work on the development of joint methodologies for social indicators.

## Aim for excellence in higher education

### 4. Manage the rapid expansion of higher education

To absorb the increasing demand for higher education, BRICS must identify sound policies that enable them to make quality higher education available to all. BRICS should share their considerable breadth of experience in this area, which provides valuable opportunities for policy dialogue on questions such as how to manage the growth of private providers; how to make higher education accessible to low-income and marginalized groups; and how to understand the potential benefits and risks of new technologies (including online programmes and distance education).

### 5. Facilitate the mobility of students and teaching personnel, in particular among BRICS

All five BRICS countries emphasize exchanges between higher education and training institutions in their proposals for

cooperation or in their current policies, but these exchanges remain underdeveloped compared with those between BRICS and neighbouring countries. One practical first step would be to scale up exchanges of students, teachers and trainers by creating networks of BRICS universities and training institutions, such as envisaged in the initiative to establish the BRICS Network University. Such networks would enable teachers and trainers to jointly develop and/or deliver courses and facilitate the mutual recognition of qualifications and the transfer of credits between participating institutions.

An important related step would be for BRICS to make greater use of UNESCO Regional Conventions for the recognition of qualifications and to engage in and support the process for developing a global convention. The efficient use of international standard-setting instruments and qualifications frameworks is crucial to ensuring quality in cross-border higher education and coherence across bilateral and multilateral efforts to increase student mobility.

## Improve skills development for growth that benefits all

### 6. Develop labour market information systems and capacity for skills analysis and forecasting

BRICS could all benefit from creating a common TVET Labour Market (TVET/LM) Observatory, supported by a network of BRICS institutions in charge of TVET/LM information systems. In the first instance, the Observatory could take the form of a shared website, housed by one member country or by a relevant international partner like UNESCO/UNEVOC, through which BRICS could share information, models and promising practices for skills monitoring, analysis and forecasting. The website would be fed by a network of relevant BRICS institutions, who would cooperate to strengthen their capacities to collect, process and disseminate data and information on TVET/LM and, where relevant, develop comparable indicators.

### 7. Design and implement national qualifications frameworks and standards for skills

Qualifications frameworks are a key way of making qualifications easier to understand and compare within and between countries. All BRICS are reforming their qualifications systems and increasingly linking frameworks with arrangements for quality assurance and the validation of non-formal and informal learning. Creating a platform for

dialogue and/or peer review of progress would help BRICS design and implement national qualifications frameworks. It would also enable BRICS to develop relevant approaches to the cross-border recognition of qualifications, helping to facilitate the mobility of learners across the countries.

### 8. Strengthen the links between companies and TVET institutions, and facilitate workplace learning, in particular at the secondary level

All BRICS are looking at ways to strengthen the link between skills training and labour market needs. One strategy actively encouraged by all BRICS is the expansion of apprenticeship systems and other forms of workplace learning. Creating a platform for dialogue and/or peer review where policy-makers and representatives of the private sector can examine different issues – such as developing coordination mechanisms to engage companies in planning, standard-setting and curricula design – would help BRICS in establishing more effective co-operation between vocational schools and employers. Another valuable joint initiative would be the establishment of a BRICS alliance for cooperation between companies and TVET institutions for workplace learning. The alliance would bring together major companies, employers' federations and labour administrations in BRICS to share practices and develop advocacy campaigns to strengthen collaboration between companies and TVET institutions.

## **9. Design policies to meet the training needs of women and disadvantaged groups, and facilitate their transition to the labour market**

Meeting the training needs of women and disadvantaged groups and improving their participation in the labour force is a common policy challenge for all BRICS. Creating a network where policymakers and other interested parties can examine policies and programmes that make TVET available to excluded groups would help BRICS to enhance gender and

social equity, reduce unemployment and improve economic productivity. Issues that could be addressed include how to make apprenticeships and workplace training more attractive, relevant and accessible to women across different sets of occupations and better support women's transition into the labour market. There is also rich scope for exchange on how BRICS have sought to remove financial barriers to TVET for poor and marginalized groups and reform TVET institutions to make them more responsive to the training needs of disadvantaged populations.

## **Support education in other developing countries**

### **10. Establish a hub to share information and data on development cooperation in education**

The creation of such a hub would help BRICS to enhance the impact of their development assistance, identify areas for cooperation (for example, through joint technical assistance) and avoid duplication. This hub could be housed at UNESCO, ensuring wider visibility and learning from the BRICS experience.

### **11. Create a joint fund/programme to support education in Africa**

Africa is the region that needs the greatest education assistance and a priority target for development cooperation among BRICS. A joint fund could be housed at UNESCO (paralleling the IBSA Fund in the United Nations Development Programme), and start with one or two pilot programmes. Where relevant, these programmes could also draw on technical expertise from BRICS. As plans for the proposed BRICS Development Bank become clearer, BRICS might also consider extending its mandate beyond infrastructure to support other sectors, like education, that are central to inclusive economic development.

### **12. Engage in joint advocacy for education**

BRICS have the potential to significantly raise the profile of education in intergovernmental fora – such as the United Nations, the G20 and regional summits – and hence catalyse greater political and financial support for education. In particular, by championing the Muscat Agreement, which proposes a global goal and targets for education post-2015, BRICS could play a decisive role in ensuring a strong commitment to education in the future development agenda. The Fortaleza Declaration represents an important contribution to this collective advocacy, with BRICS leaders affirming that the development agenda beyond 2015 should “ensure equitable, inclusive and quality education and lifelong learning for all”.

*BRICS: Building Education for the Future* shows that their combination of shared aspirations and different development trajectories provides a rich context for BRICS to exchange knowledge and engage in joint activities, helping to spur education progress both within BRICS and globally.