

*Theme: Culture, Science And Education As Drivers For Enhanced Cooperation
Within BRICS; Inter-civilizational Exchanges And Dialogue*

*Title: Higher Education: - The driver of collaboration in the BRICS Knowledge
Society*

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Our hyper-connected world requires unprecedented collaboration. Reaching consensus on a path forward requires a deep understanding of how the one world affects the many and how the many worlds affect the one. This, in turn, necessitates a deep awareness of local and regional cultures, perspectives and identities, and how they are responding to each other in an era in which cooperation is a prerequisite for progress ’ (Now for the Long Term - Report: Oxford Martin Commission for Future Generations, 2013. p.11)

The guideline towards collaboration amongst the different role players amongst the BRICS countries is clearly defined in the Fortaleza Declaration when it states that:

“Considering the link between culture and sustainable development, as well as the role of cultural diplomacy as a promoter of understanding between peoples, we will encourage cooperation between BRICS countries in the cultural sector, including on the multilateral basis. Recognizing the contribution and the benefits of cultural exchanges and cooperation in enhancing our mutual understanding and friendship, we will actively promote greater awareness, understanding and appreciation of each other’s arts and culture. In this regard, we ask our relevant authorities responsible for culture to explore areas of practical cooperation, including to expedite negotiations on the draft agreements on cultural cooperation.”

It is clear from the above declaration that cooperation amongst the Higher Education institutions could provide the necessary structure and capacity to implement the above vision.

This paper will provide an outline on how collaborations amongst the different role players could be implemented to bring structure to the envisaged cooperation.

Consolidating the BRICS cooperation outside governmental, diplomatic and economic spheres has the greatest chance of success through the collaboration of Higher Education institutions. This, however, has not received the attention and focus of Higher Education or Governments as an enabler of cooperation even though this could be one of the 'easier' areas of collaboration amongst the BRICS countries as most Universities have already been collaborating globally for a number of years. The fact that they have not done so amongst each other would be the discussion of this paper. This paper will also provide guidelines for such collaboration.

Higher Education collaboration can be central to the understanding of the major challenges and search for solutions to the challenges facing the BRICS countries in a globalized world. For such collaborations to be valuable and successful the BRICS institutions as a collective, as well as individuals, should recognize that collaboration will only be successful if it is amongst collaborators who treat each other as equals. This then pre-supposes that everyone would operate in a commons that is accessible to all. It also requires a common understanding of values that would guide the participants through their engagements. The paper also explores the values that would be required to provide a 'BRICS Commons' that should guide and enhance the collaboration.

All of the above, however, assumes that Higher Education institutions have access to resources and the capacity to collaborate over large distances as well as the skills to collaborate interculturally and produce new knowledge that would enhance understanding amongst a diverse group. The paper argues that project funding should be provided to see inter-national mobility amongst the different BRICS partners.