

Introduction to the special issue “Educational Mosaic: Understanding BRICS States”

The collection of articles in this volume covers all levels of education, spanning from primary schools to doctoral education. Particular attention is given to how educational practices in the BRICS countries reflect global challenges — from ensuring equitable access to quality education to preparing professionals for innovation-driven economies. In addition, the studies represent most of the BRICS countries, covering gifted and talented education in Brazil (Pomortseva et al.), discussing teacher education in Russia (Ivanov et al.), overcoming social inequalities through educational opportunities in India (Gaur et al.), doctoral education in China (Niu & Xiao), promoting teacher resilience (Versfeld et al.) and supporting teacher motivation and change-efficacy in South Africa (Leask et al.). Several studies focus on the comparative analyses by covering language policies (Collins & Reagan), vocational education (Maltseva et al.), and higher medical education (Drozdova et al.) across the BRICS countries.

At the level of school education, the articles illustrate a wide range of strategies aimed at supporting teachers and learners, which is especially important in contexts marked by social and economic inequalities. In terms of school education, Versfeld et al. in the article *Measuring Teacher Resilience in the Global South* report on the intervention supporting and developing teacher resilience and social connectedness in economically challenged primary schools in South Africa. In *Motivation and Change-Efficacy of Teachers in the Adoption of Literacy Interventions*, Leask et al. shift the focus to high schools, examining the factors contributing to teachers’ adoption of literacy interventions in challenged settings of rural South Africa. Pomortseva et al. draw the reader’s attention to Brazil in their article titled *Special Teachers for Special Students: Training Educators for Gifted Students in Regular Classrooms in Brazil*, describing the increased interest of researchers and practitioners in development of gifted and talented education at school. In the paper *Double Reduction Policy in Chinese Education: Promises, Outcomes, Perspectives*, Shcheglova and colleagues present the results of a systematic literature review and describe benefits, challenges, and ways forward in terms of implementation of the double-reduction policy in schools of China. Finally, Ivanov and colleagues describe teacher workforce in Russia in the article *The Fragile Centrality of Teachers: Demographic and Institutional Strains in the Russian Education Workforce*.

Maltseva and co-authors make a successful attempt to describe the vocational education by analyzing private-public partnership in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in Russia, India, and China in the article *Private-Public Partnership in TVET: An Overview of Current Practices in the BRICS Countries*. In addition to

the cross-cultural comparison, the paper identifies some essential conditions for effective partnerships in emerging economies.

Higher education within the BRICS context also comes into focus, as it plays a crucial role in shaping the human capital required for the future development of national economies. Several articles of the special issue focus on higher education and educational outcomes. For instance, the article *Academic Track Choices, Educational Achievements and Social Inequality* by Gaur and colleagues brings to the forefront the interplay between students' marginalized backgrounds and their academic achievement, which is lower than that of their privileged peers across all education levels (high school, bachelors, and MBA). Jingjing Niu and Yu Xiao report on the development and quality assurance of the doctoral education in Chinese universities in their paper *What Drives the Transformation? Unpacking China's Reforms in Doctoral Education*.

Finally, two of the articles provided a comparative analysis across all BRICS member states at the time of the publication of this special issue. Drozdova and colleagues identified similarities and differences in the training in medical universities of the BRICS countries for future pediatricians in the article titled *Higher Medical Education of Pediatricians in the BRICS countries*. Collins and Reagan, in their turn, present a comparison of language policies across the BRICS members and propose a meta-framework for analyzing the language policies employed in each country in their paper *Language Policy and Language Planning in the BRICS Countries: Toward a Meta-Framework for Responding to Linguistic Diversity*. Such comparative perspectives not only highlight unique national solutions but also provide a foundation for the exchange of best practices among the BRICS countries.

The brief review outlines the educational mosaic of the core BRICS member states and provides some comparative studies that can shed light on the developments in the emerging economies of the Global South. The studies presented in the special issue outline the cutting-edge developments, new practices, and a great deal of research as well as theoretical gaps that could be addressed by researchers and readers. In this way, the special issue does more than document the current state of education systems in the BRICS countries; it also opens avenues for further inquiry into sustainable and innovative solutions for education in the Global South.

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