



## **Education and Forms of Participation in the BRICS Context: some elements for an approach to the theme**

***Educação e Formas de Participação no Contexto dos BRICS: alguns elementos para uma aproximação ao tema***

***Educación y formas de participación en el contexto BRICS: algunos elementos para una aproximación al tema***

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**Citação:** GOUVEIA, Andréa Barbosa; MENDES, Geovana Mendonça Lunardi; EBERSOHN, Liesel, FERRAZ, Marcos Alexandre dos Santos FERRAZ; KOSARETSKY, Sergey. Education and Forms of Participation in the Brics context: some elements for an approach to the theme. Jornal de Políticas Educacionais. V. 18, e97948T. December de 2024.



<http://10.5380/jpe.v17i0. e97948T>

**Abstract:** The article presents the special issue of the Journal of Educational Policy on education and

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participation in the BRICS context. In opposition to the global agenda based on the hegemonic interests of the North, it asks about an articulation between countries of the Global South that could allow for other international dialogues in the education context. The dossier was called for in 2023. Therefore, the focus was strongly on the group of countries in the initial formation of the group. In this context, this presentation focuses on perspectives from Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa based on the following axes: 1) education as a public policy, in the context of the BRICS debate; 2) the educational approaches and dialogues needed to innovate the international cooperation agenda; and 3) Presentation of the 9 articles in the special issue, highlighting how the researchers approached the challenges of participation, from original perspectives, in each of their contexts considering the following emphases: innovative experiences and their impact on local contexts; different modes of social participation; the BRICS from the perspective of the Global South; and Higher education and the challenges for the BRICS.

**Keywords:** Education Policies; BRICS; Global-South.

**Resumo:** O artigo apresenta o número especial do Jornal de Políticas Educacionais sobre educação e participação no contexto do BRICS. Em contraposição a agenda global a partir de interesses hegemônicos do Norte, pergunta-se sobre uma articulação entre países do Sul Global que possa permitir outros diálogos internacionais no contexto da educação. A chamada para o dossiê foi realizada em 2023. Portanto, o foco foi fortemente endereçado ao grupo de países da formação inicial do grupo. Neste contexto, esta apresentação privilegia olhares a partir de Brasil, Rússia, Índia, China e África do Sul a partir dos seguintes eixos: 1) a educação como política pública, no contexto do debate BRICS; 2) as abordagens e diálogos educacionais necessários para inovar a agenda de cooperação internacional; e 3) Apresentação dos 9 artigos do dossiê, destacando como os pesquisadores abordaram os desafios da participação, a partir de olhares originais, em cada um de seus contextos considerando as seguintes ênfases: experiências inovadoras e seus impactos nos contextos locais; diferentes modos de participação social; o Brics na perspectiva do Sul Global e Ensino superior e os desafios para o BRICS.

**Palavras-chave:** Políticas Educacionais; BRICS; Sul-Global.

**Resumen:** El artículo presenta un número especial de la Revista Jornal de Políticas Educaciones sobre educación y participación en el contexto de los BRICS. Frente a una agenda global basada en los intereses hegemónicos del Norte, se pregunta por un vínculo entre países del Sur Global que permita otros diálogos internacionales en el contexto de la educación. El dossier estaba previsto para 2023. Por lo tanto, la atención se centró en gran medida en el grupo de países de la formación inicial del grupo. En este contexto, esta presentación se centra en las perspectivas de Brasil, Rusia, India, China y Sudáfrica en torno a los siguientes ejes: 1) la educación como política pública, en el contexto del debate sobre los BRICS; 2) los enfoques y diálogos educativos necesarios para innovar la agenda de cooperación internacional; y 3) presentación de los 9 artículos del dossier, destacando cómo los investigadores abordaron los retos de la participación, desde perspectivas originales, en cada uno de sus contextos, considerando las siguientes énfasis experiencias innovadoras y su impacto en los contextos locales; diferentes modos de participación social; los BRICS desde la perspectiva del Sur Global; y la educación superior y los desafíos para los BRICS.

**Palabras clave:** Políticas Educativas; BRICS; Sur-Global.

The BRICS initiative gives shape to an economic initiative of highly populated countries to voice collaborative ways in a multipolar world took. BRICS is an acronym for the initial cooperation between Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. In 2024, the block welcomed five other countries as permanent members – Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Ethiopia, and the United Arab Emirates.

The cooperation was strengthened with the New Development Bank (NDB), officially founded in 2015. However, politically, the mobilization was wider. The block has held annual meetings since 2009 known as the BRICS Summit. In each meeting the leaders

approve a declaration that provides insight into the debates surrounding cooperative relations. Since 2009, there have been 16 uninterrupted Summits, producing a series of the group's positions on issues such as the economy, international relations, peace, development, inequalities, and the environment.

Lobato (2018) highlights that education became a central topic of discussion in the 6th Summit, emphasizing articulation with development and economic growth. This included cooperation negotiations through meetings with education ministers and articulations centered on higher education. In 2024, the 16th BRICS Summit resulted in the Kazan Declaration, which included two key points related to education: the first point emphasized advancing discussions on "the expansion of the BRICS Network University and the broadening of its research areas, including mathematics, natural sciences, social sciences, humanities, sustainable agriculture and food security, and health sciences" (BRICS, 2024). The second point highlighted a commitment to "strengthening cooperation in BRICS Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)" (BRICS, 2024).

Since 2015, in addition to this process, an initiative known as "BRICS Civil Forum" has gathered members of civil society to draft a declaration to the group's leaders in advance. In 2024, this activity took place in Moscow and generated a wider debate on Education and Human Development. The discussions emphasized the "potential within national education systems, science, and civil society to develop equitable and high-quality educational solutions for all" (CIVIL FORUM, 2024).

These highlights align with the central theme of this Dossier on Education and Participation in the BRICS Context. In contrast to a global agenda shaped by the hegemonic interests of the North, the discussion explores the possibility of fostering international dialogues among the Global South in the context of education. The call for contributions to this dossier was issued in 2023 with a strong focus on the founding members of the group. Within this context, the discussion presented here prioritizes perspectives from Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.

The debate introducing this Dossier's themes is organized around three subtopics: 1) Considering education as public policy in the context of the BRICS debate; 2) Discussing which educational approaches and dialogs are necessary to innovate the international cooperation agenda; 3) Presenting the Dossier's articles by highlighting how researchers approached the participation challenges through original perspectives in each context.

## **1. Educational policies and participation in BRICS' context.**

The BRICS countries are distinguished by their territorial scale and the ethnic, linguistic, religious, urban, and rural diversity of their population. Many population groups were (and continue to be) culturally, socially, and economically marginalized for many years. The five countries of the first group constitute more than three billion people facing different challenges and with different resources – dependent on their contexts. Significantly, this population volume implies specific challenges regarding occupation and distribution within these territories.

In Brazil, the population density is 24.9 people per km<sup>2</sup> (IBGE, 2024), whereas in India, it reaches 423.5 people per km<sup>2</sup>. Regarding infant mortality, China reports 4.9 deaths per 1,000 live births (IBGE, 2024), while South Africa faces a significantly higher rate of 24.1 deaths per 1,000 live births (IBGE, 2024). Regarding education, Brazil, China, and South Africa have an average of approximately 10 years of schooling among individuals aged 15 and older, while Russia and India approach an average of 13 years (IBGE, 2024). These and many other factors create specific challenges for public policy development and may also need diverse forms of participation.

The participation of different groups in decision-making concerning educational policies, content, and approaches is necessary to guarantee connectivity among people, social cohesion, and the sustainable development of nations. Establishing conditions and mechanisms for participation, particularly in contexts where various forms of inequality persist is a critical tool for overcoming exclusion and inequality in education. More broadly, it contributes to building an inclusive and egalitarian society.

The historical past of the BRICS nations, including a colonialist legacy and authoritarian regimes, demands continuous protection of the representative democratic institutions. Therefore, education in the BRICS countries is, potentially, a pillar and a resource to promote democratic values and a culture of participation.

But when we formulate these generalizations for all the BRICS nations, are we using the same concepts? There is the hypothesis that the differences in the interpretations and conceptualizations of “participation” in the development and governance of education are indeed significant (EDWARDS & KLEES, 2015). We observe how different approaches compete with each other, both among BRICS countries and within them, in the emerging

models of governance and educational policy reforms concerning centralization/decentralization over the past few decades (DERVIN & ZAJDA, 2016). Some of these approaches are deeply rooted in neoliberal concepts.

Educational research in BRICS can broaden the comprehension of the relationship between education, democratization, and participation. Although education has long been recognized as a necessary condition for democracy (DEWEY, 2024), the causal impact of education remains unclear (PERSON, 2015; WILLECK & MENDELBERG, 2022). Therefore, the question remains as to which content and educational practices contribute to the development of appropriate values and skills, both at the individual and social levels.

Moreover, the predominant body of research circulating globally is centered on the relationship between education and the forms of democracy and participation that have developed in Global North countries. Meanwhile, within the BRICS context, especially in Brazil, a fundamentally different approach prevails—a “public education,” which is not merely an educational method but an “alternative model for social change at the popular level” (GROSSI, 1985; FREIRE, 1970).

Similarly, BRICS is understood as an association of nations that struggle for autonomy and sovereignty, resisting the hegemony of the Global North and defending the structural transformation for a “more equitable, fair, democratic, and representative international political and economic order” (BRICS, 2017). It is important to note how BRICS strengthens its position as an alternative center to coordinate discussions and practical interactions on central development issues. Education can become one of the key areas of manifestation of BRICS' counter-hegemonic agency and stance. To this end, the debate surrounding the Civil Forum initiatives and the BRICS leaders' Declarations must be widely recognized to enable dialogue with the multiple arenas of discussion across the different countries.

In the last third of the 20th century, and the beginning of the 21st, the hegemony of international organizations involved the transfer of power to them by nation-states to not only shape the educational development agenda but also to assume responsibility for its implementation (BERTEN & KRANKE, 2022). However, today, there is evidence of deception and the erosion of trust given unfulfilled promises (BECKERT, 2020; AULD & ELFERT, 2024). In this context, there is a demand for a multilateral approach, a new architecture for authority and sovereignty, the relationship between creditors and

debtors of educational reform, mechanisms for development cooperation, and for the transfer of new models and alternative indicators. These egalitarian processes have just started and demand researchers' attention (CHISHOLM & STEINER-KHAMSI, 2009; MARTINI ET AL., 2024; STEINER-KHAMSI, 2007).

So far, however, the results do not allow for a definitive conclusion that the educational cooperation of BRICS produces a counter-hegemony to the neoliberal global governance of education. BRICS' educational agenda remains dual—on the one hand: "benchmarking", "excellence", "competition", "human resources development for economic growth", and, on the other: "solidarity", "cooperation", and "social development". However, BRICS' educational cooperation perspective as a possibility of building a counter-dependence structure is preserved (THOMAS & DE, 2018).

The interaction mechanisms between BRICS nations are under development. It is fundamental that they are not limited to the higher level (national) of decision-making and implementation, but include subnational actors and horizontal multi-level networks: a channel for advancing bottom-up initiatives. This is particularly true for large and diverse countries, with different interests and identities (LECOURS, 2008). In this context, paradiplomacy offers opportunities for democracy and participation on the one hand, and, on the other, brings diplomatic practices closer to the population while mobilizing local resources (CHATTERJI & SAHA, 2017)."

There can also be partnerships among universities, unions, NGOs, and other organizations in education. Regarding universities, these partnerships can be observed in discussions on the internationalization of higher education, going beyond the idea of exporting and importing "academic services" (HEITOR, 2015). NGOs, in turn, can play a role in transnational advocacy for education, with the "power to influence and, perhaps, democratize the structure of world politics". Additionally, they can use 'global-level visibility to level changes at the national level' (MUNDY & MURPHY, 2001).

In comparison to the Global North, BRICS countries have a relatively young population, and, in some countries, it is predominantly young. According to data prepared by IBGE for the 2024 Summit, The Brazilian population, under 15 years of age, is 42 million (19% of the total population); In China, it is 230 million (around 24% of the total); In India, 350 million (roughly 27% do total); In Russia, 25 million (around 18% of the total), and, in South Africa, 17.3 million (around 27%) (IBGE, 2024). This demands

mechanisms to support the action and participation of children and youth in shaping the image of future education and educational management. It seems that in light of growing uncertainty, instability, and weakness of old elites (literally and figuratively) in administration, it is worthwhile investing more boldly in the energy, creativity, and responsibility of the new generation. Education plays a crucial role in developing appropriate skills and provides experience in agent behavior and participation.

Children's participation has been one of the most observed aspects of the Convention on Children's Rights. Theory and practice have gone through great advances (LANSDOWN, 2009). However, they are rarely accompanied by empirical investigation, especially cultural and traditional differences (GAL & DURAMY, 2015).

As is the case with many other phenomena, the participation of children and youth has been studied on a greater scale in "western or privileged societies, without appreciating and addressing the complexities and obstacles of a purposeful and valid application of participatory rights across different realities" (DURAMY & GAL, 2020). One of the first studies to encompass BRICS countries (Brazil, China, and South Africa) found that there is no single concept of participation among the youth in these countries. (JAMIESON et al, 2022)

These are the different dimensions that participation, democracy and educational policies can represent in terms of dialog from the Global South perspective. However, it is worth thinking more directly about the content of the policies, which brings us to the second point of the debate.

## **1. Educational dialogs for rethinking education in the BRICS context**

"Our school is special because we are authors" wrote a nine-year-old South African student in a rural primary school. Earlier the same year his group were distraught because they realized: "We don't know how to read." Their words embody collective self-efficacy, summarizing the agentic experience of participating in a cross-country intervention study to address literacy (Enabling Schools Toolkit).

"I had never seen our family name printed in books," was the proud, yet emotional comment of a tribal chief attending a school-based, mini-library launch with other tribal leaders, family members, core community representatives from hospitals, the police, faith

based organizations, as well as school leadership and teachers. Each participating school celebrated the 306 storybooks in the local Setswana language which were co-generated by 1.900 6-9-year-old students, community volunteers, and early childhood teachers. The focus of these home-language storybooks? Child-perspectives on the culture and context of a rural Afrocentric space that enable education, health, and wellbeing (<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/ioe/enabling-schools>)."

"Now they are knowledge creators, not only knowledge consumers." This feeling was expressed in a meeting of the South African Interprovincial Committee on Rural Education as a reaction to the collective initiative of creating storybooks. At the national level, the books demonstrated a positive educational result when existing contextual and social-cultural resources (local knowledge, language, and partnerships) were activated in a highly unequal post-colonial environment. As a result, the storybooks were included in a national database of educational materials. In the future, all beginning readers of Setswana in South Africa will be able to read books created by their peers, in the language they know, and reflect the context and culture they revere.

This short report shows the participatory contribution by local role-players to promote positive educational outcomes when the context predicts the opposite. The vignette sharply contrasts with the global narrative about BRICS, the emerging economies, and low and middle-income countries (ECLMIC). In other words, according to a global, dysfunctional narrative, the assumption is placed on "what does not work" in emerging economies: the challenges, resource restrictions, and the need for help and external answers. Most of the time, the standards to assess "what works" and what is necessary to support positive educational results are determined by the Eurocentric Global North and high-income countries (CHRISTENSEN & WISTOFT, 2019; NEAL-JACKSON, 2018; PARSONS ET AL., 2018; VALDEBENITO ET AL., 2018; WELSH & LITTLE, 2018; ZIEF ET AL., 2006). An underlying assumption, cultivated and maintained by these narratives and practices, is that Global South nations, or ECLMIC spaces, are 'failing' and need help to 'get it right', to conform to a universal standard of a good life determined by outsiders.

Another counter-hegemonic perspective for this discourse is to conceptualize the results of education—to experience a good life, quality of life—in terms of locally representative cultural and contextual knowledge. Therefore, a responsive defensible

development agenda requires the documentation and deliberate inclusion of lived experiences and knowledge on what enables or hinders good life—including quality education—in Brazil, India, Russia, and South Africa or any emerging country: Indonesia, Bangladesh, Turkey, Vietnam, Nigeria, and Mexico.

This is the objective of the Dossier “Education and forms of participation in the BRICS Context”: To present a well-developed set of evidence as a catalyst for reflecting on contextually relevant differences that can inform educational policies in BRICS nations and related countries. The local evidence provides insights into facilitators and the constraints for quality education contextualized in emerging economies, which can serve as a foundation for policy-making.

“Local evidence” does not imply research that includes local participants and researchers while still using external measures, conceptualizations, and methodologies foreign to BRICS. Instead, local evidence results from an egalitarian process of investigation in which local participants and researchers are partners in defining valid conceptualizations of what constitutes well-being (a good life), reliable measures for data collection, as well as relevant methods to generate trustworthy data that can accommodate power imbalances related to language, worldview, education level, and the urban-rural continuum, for example.

Local evidence, meaningful for the development of education, makes the most of collectivist culture. An interdependent worldview is frequently undervalued, given the post-colonial history of emerging economies but is often central to the values, beliefs, and practices, synonymous with these geopolitical spaces. The Global Collectivism Index (GCI) measures collectivism around the world, covering 99.9% of the world’s population, and found that collectivist values are significant in many parts of the world—although the degree of collectivism varies, with some countries exhibiting stronger collectivist traits than others (PELHAM et al., 2022).

Collectivist cultures are widespread, mainly outside Western countries, which are, in general, more individualistic. Considering the prominence of an interdependent worldview, focused on others and seeking harmony, how can research, politics, and educational practice prioritize group needs over individual desires to emphasize the importance of relationships, community support, and social harmony in contrast to individualistic cultures that prioritize personal autonomy and individual achievement?

How can educational practices foster a sense of unity and interdependence, influencing many aspects of school life, policy development, teacher education, curriculum development, and school leadership?

Collaboration between school and community to combat severe contextual adversities is not limited to Global South. There is extensive knowledge about asset-based development strategies (KRETZMANN & MCKNIGHT, 1993) and community schools (HEERS et al., 2016) in the Global North to support institutions in high-risk environments (whether in urban centers or remote areas), aiming to achieve unexpected positive results. In the BRICS context, however, school-community initiatives draw on collectivist worldviews to mobilize limited but accessible contextual enablers while navigating constraints that impede transformative change.

Unlike the financial support given to community schools by the United States of America, for example, community schools (or countries) with a collectivist worldview operate even in the absence of structural support (FERREIRA & EBERSÖHN, 2012). The collectivist intent is based on acting authentically without seeking financial compensation and guided by values aimed at addressing community needs (e.g., quality education and child well-being) through shared resources mobilized by community support.

In BRICS nations, the partnership between schools and the community—encompassing health professionals, social workers, community safety authorities, municipal and urban policymakers, religious leaders, and family members—fosters positive outcomes in education and well-being. In the absence of this collaboration, children, teachers, and school leaders may fall victim to helplessness, apathy, and negative results regarding education and well-being, given the relentless presence of poverty and restricted access to limited quality services.

An example of a relevant educational partnership to the BRICS context is the Grandmother Project (<https://grandmotherproject.org>). In collaboration with the national government, local school districts, school leadership, grandmothers, and school partners receive training on how to engage grandmothers as active partners in schools. This approach not only addresses the challenges of teacher shortages and high demand but also compensates for teaching and learning materials that underrepresent local knowledge and values (AUBEL & COULIBALY, 2023). Including grandmothers in classrooms enhances the self-esteem and sense of belonging of children, teachers, and

families within schools and their communities, creating a fertile environment for place-based learning and well-being.

Another partnership that requires evidence to inform policies for the BRICS is the coordinated prioritization of intersectoral alliances (systemic) to foster the development of skills as well as technical and vocational education. Therefore, youth can have systematic opportunities to develop their entrepreneurial careers and enhance their employability. Instead of remaining vulnerable in a BRICS context, marked by high unemployment and scarce job opportunities, systemic coordination can foster autonomy for youth to generate income, create jobs, and enhance their self-esteem and well-being.

In addition to the sociocultural and human capital, which is typical of the BRICS context, natural resources brought to these regions power agents from around the world for many generations. However, even though curriculum and education pedagogy uses intergenerational knowledge that sustains health and human-nature well-being, they remain under-researched and underrepresented in policy development within the BRICS.

How can educational practices promote a sense of unity and interdependence in relation to solutions that cultivate helplessness and external dependence when they should be producing results that use resources available in the community (typically social resources) for the collective gain (EBERSÖHN, 2019). The evidence of these locally responsive structures serves as alternative structures and metrics for the development and political analysis—different from those that emerged in contexts not comparable to emerging economy spaces. Locally relevant and evidence-based structures for educational development demonstrate that the extreme, chronic, and cumulative inequality characteristic of post-colonial environments requires pragmatic solutions.

Rather than a litany of "what is wrong" with education in large-scale global educational assessment in the BRICS context, it is worthwhile developing a credo about "what is right" in BRICS and associated contexts. Instead of concentrating on the funding of international research on "barriers to education," a similar investment on "education facilitators" could result in a rich alternative agenda for education development.

This is not a great challenge and can be summarized in one of the positions presented in the BRICS Civil Forum Final Document: "Our opinion is that educational practices should include linguistic diversity, national traditions, geographical

opportunities, cultural initiatives, and efforts led by a diversity of socially active groups" (CIVIL FORUM, 2024).

This scenario can redesign the future of education. Therefore, this dossier aims to contribute to the voices of some researchers in this dialog. Thus, we move on to the third point of this presentation.

### **1. Education and participation in BRICS countries: The authors speak.**

The Dossier presented here is composed of nine articles, four of them are international and five are Brazilian. In the international articles, we have the contribution of Russia, South Africa and India, which, together with the Brazilian texts propose a set of theoretical reflections and empirical results that enhance the complexity and diversity of educational experience in these contexts.

The works explore different models ranging from participatory models in Brazil such as the National Education Conferences (CONAEs), and participatory models Russia, to innovative interventions in South African schools.

Texts that approach international issues, such as Angola's educational policies, are also presented, while other studies examine the geopolitics of knowledge and international solidarity, supporting an intercultural integration based on inclusive and egalitarian principles.

Although we have not organized the texts into blocks, in order to facilitate understanding and enrich the content of the Dossier, we grouped the works into four main theme areas:

- Innovative experiences and their impact on local contexts
- The different types of social participation
- The BRICS discussion through the perspective of the Global South
- Higher education and the challenges for the BRICS

In the first block, we have the contribution of two international texts. The first one, by Vandana Saxena, from India, is titled "India's National Education Policy 2020: A Path to a Culturally Rooted Global Ecosystem." The article offers a comprehensive analysis of India's National Education Policy (NEP 2020). It discusses the key features of the policy,

its impacts on the Indian education system, and the challenges faced in integrating a culturally rooted vision into the global educational landscape.

The second is an article from South Africa, by Karien Botha e Ronél Ferreira, titled "Addressing food and nutrition insecurity in families through an enriched school curriculum," which reports a participatory intervention carried out in primary schools in South Africa to combat food insecurity and promote healthy eating practices. The project "Wellness in Lifestyle, Intake, Fitness and Environment" (Win-LIFE) was implemented as part of the national school curriculum and demonstrated that schools can be agents of social change in vulnerable communities.

The second theme block is composed of three articles, one from Russia and two from Brazil. In the article "Educational Policies in Brazil: CONAEs as a participative model for BRICS National Education Plans," by Luciane Terra dos Santos Garcia, Rute Regis de Oliveira da Silva, and Antonio Jorge Gonçalves Soares, there is an analysis of the National Education Conferences (CONAEs) as examples of democratic participation for the formulation of national educational policies in Brazil. The article discusses CONAEs' potential as a model for BRICS countries in the face of neoliberalism's challenges.

The article, "The FNDEP and social movements around BRICS: a past experience to inspire future struggles", authored by Mariléia Maria da Silva and João Carlos Cichaczewski presents the history of the National Forum for the Defense of Public Education (FNDEP), highlighting its relevance in the fight for inclusive educational policies and inspiring new collaborations in the educational field of the Global South, especially within the BRICS context.

The article "The Agency of Students Involved in the Practice of Participatory School Budgeting," authored by Mikhail Goshin, Boris Kupriyanov, and Pavel Sorokin, examines Participatory School Budgeting (PSB) in Russia. The study demonstrates how this practice promotes student agency, allowing them to influence change in their school communities. The research highlights the benefits of student participation for personal and social development.

In the block that discusses Global South issues, there are two articles, one from Brazil and another from South Africa. The Brazilian article "Educational Cooperation in Africa: An Analysis from the Angolan Educational Policies and the Counter-Hegemonic Potentials of the BRIC," authored by Filipe Joaquim Kalenguessa and Ivan Penteado

Dourado, analyzes Angolan educational policies and the role of Brazil and the BRICS in building counter-hegemonic international cooperation initiatives, based on the Freirean legacy and the confrontation of neocolonialism.

The article "The TAPESTRy Framework: Equalizing an Unequal Global Knowledge Base to Inform Relevant, Responsible, and Responsive Educational Policies and Practices Based on Evidence," authored by Liesel Ebersohn, Karen Murphy, and Liz-Marié Basson, proposes the TAPESTRy framework as a tool to balance the global knowledge base. The model seeks to value evidence produced in marginalized spaces of the Global South, ensuring educational policies that are more aligned with local challenges and resources.

Finally, in the last section, on BRICS' challenges in Higher Education, the article titled "Paradiplomacy and the Internationalization of Higher Education: The International Relations Center of Mato Grosso (Nurimat)," authored by Déberson Ferreira Jesus, Joira Aparecida Leite de Oliveira Amorim Martins, and Caroline Pereira de Oliveira, explores paradiplomacy in the context of higher education, focusing on the International Relations Center of Mato Grosso (Nurimat). The study highlights the importance of subnational international partnerships for strengthening educational cooperation within BRICS.

The article "Geopolitics of Knowledge, International Solidarity, and South-South Academic Cooperation in BRICS," authored by Mário Luiz Neves de Azevedo, discusses the possibilities of cooperation between BRICS universities, exploring international solidarity and the geopolitics of knowledge. Based on the theories of Paulo Freire and Ernst Bloch, the author analyzes the construction of a more just and collaborative "Global South," addressing common challenges through initiatives like the BRICS University Network.

Each of the articles in this special issue contributes uniquely to the debate on the role of education as a tool for social transformation and resistance in contexts of global inequalities. We hope that the reflections presented in this dossier inspire new initiatives and collaborations in the field of Education, among BRICS countries and beyond.

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*Recevid in December 2024  
Published in December 2024*

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