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BRICS and International Collaborations in Higher Education in India

Abstract International cooperation and collaborations played an important role in the economic and educational development of several countries. In the 1950s and 1960s external aid was an important modality to establish cooperation between countries, especially between developing and developed countries. Cross-border activities in higher education used to take place mostly through cooperation projects and academic exchange programmes. The political returns to aid declined during the post-cold war period. Therefore, incentives to extend aid declined and markets and trade became more accepted modes of cooperation and collaboration in all sectors including education. International collaborations of today are very often motivated by economic incentives and are mediated through markets. The franchising and twinning arrangements, establishment of branch campuses, and promotion of cross-border student mobility are examples of market-based collaborative efforts in higher education. This paper discusses Indian cooperation and collaborations with foreign institutions focusing also on such efforts among the BRICS countries. It argues that the collaboration efforts among the BRICS countries may be more influenced by government-to-government efforts than mediated by markets. The paper shows that the BRICS countries at present are more engaged in cooperation and collaborations in higher education with developed countries. Collaborations among the BRICS countries are rather limited and are still at the nascent stages. Therefore, government initiatives and public action are needed at this stage to promote cooperation and expand collaboration in higher education among BRICS countries.

Keywords international cooperation, collaboration, franchising, twinning, massification, university ranking

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Introduction

International cooperation and collaborations have played an important role in the development of countries, especially less developed countries. In the 1950s and 1960s external aid was an important modality to establish cooperation between countries. It stemmed from the belief that the missing link in economic development was capital, the developing countries lack it and the private direct investment will not flow to countries where markets are underdeveloped. Therefore, government-to-government cooperation and collaboration was needed and external aid was the modality to facilitate cooperation. The foreign aid was expected to provide capital, promote markets, and accelerate economic development (van de Walle, 2005), thus facilitating the “catch-up” of the developing countries.

The political rationale for extending foreign aid to developing countries was to maintain colonial links in some cases and to “contain communism” in other instances. Foreign aid was considered a good instrument to promote democracy, prosperity, and peace, and to contain communism through accelerated economic development (Coleman & Court, 1993). The underlying rationale for providing foreign aid by the US was “the defeat of communism” (Tarnoff & Nowels, 2004, pp. 2–3). The nature of cooperation also associated with the flow of aid. During the cold war period, the European foreign aid went more to their former colonies, and U.S. aid more to those countries that were aligned with them. Soviet aid flowed more to countries that supported them politically (Moyo, 2009).

With the end of the cold war the rationale for extending aid was re-examined in many donor countries and it was felt that political returns to aid were diminishing. This led to the revival of markets in international cooperation and collaborations in all spheres including education.

Many in the developed countries viewed trade as a more effective and more development-friendly modality than aid (Vincent-Lancrin, 2005). In the context of globalization more and more countries were aligned to the markets facilitating increasing flows of foreign private capital and expanding the domain of markets. The creation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) in 1995 provided the framework for cooperation and collaboration between countries through trade.

External aid played a crucial role in the development of education in many countries. Multilateral organizations, bilateral agencies, and private foundations

were active in providing higher education aid to developing countries. Over the years, the orientation of higher education aid changed from providing graduate training in the universities of donor countries to establishing new institutions and strengthening the existing institutions of higher education to provide tertiary education in the aid recipient countries (Varghese, 2010). The share of aid declined from the 1990s and more and more countries were brought under the framework of trade in all sectors including education. From the perspectives of market and trade, education is a profitable venture, cultural activities are commercial products, the public act as customers, the university is a provider, and the learner is a customer or purchaser of services (Schugurenskyas cited in Yang, 2005, p. 99).

International cooperation in education implies cross-border activities. Cross-border activities in education used to take place mostly through cooperation projects and academic exchange programmes which were less reliant on markets (Knight, 2006). Under GATS, international collaborations take place through four modes: mobility of programmes, students, institutions and teachers. In the context of globalization markets are expected to promote free entry and exit of institutions and borders and national systems as such tend to become blurred or disappear (Teichler, 2004).

International cooperation in higher education in the context of globalization has become a market mediated activity to promote production of skills for the global labour market. Many of the collaborative arrangements are motivated by economic interests and their revenue-generating capacity. For example, franchising and twinning arrangements, establishment of branch campuses, promotion of cross-border student mobility, etc. are market-based and are influenced by commercial approaches.

It is not correct to attribute all cooperative activities and collaborative projects in higher education to market operations. While cooperative projects in the past were mostly between developing and developed countries, now this is spreading to cooperation among developing countries. Regional cooperation in higher education development is becoming a wide spread phenomenon both in the developed and developing countries. Within the framework of the Bologna Process most of the 46 countries constituting the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) have adopted efforts to harmonize and facilitate cooperation in higher education. In Latin America the Inter-American Organization for Higher Education initiated a programme to create a Latin American and Caribbean Higher Education Area; in West Africa, 15 countries signed an agreement to promote intraregional student mobility by giving students from other West

African Monetary and Economic Union (WAMEU) states equal access to higher education. The Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization, Regional Centre for Higher Education (SEAMEO RIHED) has taken initiatives to create a Southeast Asian higher education space (Varghese, 2012). These experiences indicate that there is a need for initiating harmonization efforts among the BRICS countries that may include a credit transfer system, a quality assurance framework, a diploma supplement, formation of research clusters, etc.

This paper attempts to discuss the Indian cooperation and collaborations with foreign higher education stakeholders focusing also on such efforts among the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) countries. This paper argues that the cooperation and collaboration efforts among the BRICS countries may be seen more through the lens of cooperative development than through the prism of profit motivated market operations. This paper shows that BRICS countries at present are engaged in cooperation and collaborations in higher education with developed countries, and that cooperation and collaboration among the BRICS countries is still in its nascent stages.

The next section discusses issues related to higher education development in BRICS countries followed by a discussion on some aspects of higher education in India in the third section. Section four discusses international cooperation between India and other countries focusing mainly on the student flows and institutional collaborations. Section five deals with the possibilities of higher education collaborations among BRICS countries. The final section makes some concluding observations.

Higher Education in BRICS Countries

The BRICS countries are large and they have experienced high rates of economic growth in the recent decades. The BRICS are emerging as global players in education and they may become economic power houses in the future (O'Neil, 2001). The high rate of economic growth combined with the demographic dividend that countries such as India enjoy give them an advantage over many matured economies in terms of their potential to play an influential role in the higher education arena in the future. The BRICS group includes economies such as China which have already made great leaps in economic development. According to the UN estimates for the year 2012, China is the second largest economy in the world and it accounts for more than half of the BRICS countries' share of world economic output. The other countries in the group are also large economies. For

example, in terms of economic output Brazil occupies seventh position, Russia eighth position, India tenth position and South Africa 29th position (IMF, 2014).

The growth prospects of the BRICS economies will be influenced by the technological advances they make on the one hand and improvements they make in their higher education system on the other. The research and development (R&D) activities and their contribution to knowledge production will shape their position among the world economies. The BRICS countries have the demographic advantage to expand higher education. Such an expanded higher education will have high the potential to contribute to improving national competitiveness in the future. The BRICS countries account for nearly 42% of the world population and some of the countries such as India are still in the early stages of enjoying the benefits of their demographic dividend. Given the fact that higher education is in a stage of massification in all BRICS countries except Russia, the potential for expansion of higher education is very high in the BRICS countries.

The higher education system has been expanding globally in the past decade. The BRICS countries have contributed considerably to the fast expansion of the sector. The BRICS countries together accounted for more than two-fifths of the total global higher education enrolment in 2010. The enrolments in higher education in the decade ending in 2010 more than quadrupled to 31.5 million in China; more than trebled to reach 6.9 million in Brazil (UIS, 2012) and enrolment more than doubled in India to reach 28.56 million (AISHE, 2013). China and India, as of 2010, occupy first and second positions in the world in terms of the size of higher education enrolment (UIS, 2012).

In terms of Gross Enrolment Ratios (GER), Russia with a GER of 76% occupies the highest place among the BRICS countries followed by Brazil at 36.7%, China at 26% and India at 18% (UIS, 2012) According to Martin Trow's (2006) classification of stages of development of higher education, Russia has already universalized higher education while other BRICS countries are in a stage of massification of higher education. Among the BRICS countries China and India have the highest potential to contribute to the expansion of the higher education sector. Given its large size, low GER, its demographic dividend and the double digit rate of growth of enrolment in higher education the country experienced in the past, India may enrol a larger number of students in higher education in the next decade than any other country in the world.

The positive and the optimistic picture becomes blurred when one looks at the relative position of BRICS institutions of higher education in the world university rankings. Peking University is the top ranking university in the BRICS

group and it occupied 44th place in the QS world university rankings in 2012. This is closely followed by China's Tsinghua University which occupies 48th position. Other BRICS countries do not come close to this level at all. Among the BRICS countries, China is making fastest progress towards improving its position in world university rankings. Most of the top ranking universities among the BRICS countries are concentrated in China. For example, according to the QS rankings of universities in BRICS countries in 2012, China occupies six out of top ten positions among the BRICS countries.

The BRICS countries realize the importance of the quality of higher education systems to attain higher levels of development and economic competitiveness while competing with the other leading economies in the world. All the BRICS countries are making heavy investments both to expand the system and improve the quality of higher education. The strategies adopted to expand the system do not rely on public financial support alone and they have often adopted strategies to transfer the financial burden of education to students and their households (Carnoy et al., 2013).

Many of the BRICS countries have started targeted programmes and collaborations with foreign institutions to improve the quality of their higher education. The BRICS countries are also putting concerted/committed efforts towards establishing world class universities.

Brazil too has many pockets of excellence in research. Brazil has established "universities of excellence" which are characterized by highly qualified teachers and talented students, high levels of internationalization, excellence in research and education, substantial investment, and efficient and autonomous administration. Similarly under the programme of Science without Borders, Brazil expects to enroll 100 thousand students in the best universities in the world by the year 2014 (Luiz Claudia Casta in conversation with Times Higher Education in 2014). Russia has many high quality higher education institutions and the new government is trying to reinforce high quality institutions in Russia. According to a news in the PIE NEWS (Smith, 2014, July), the Russian Department of Education has just assigned nearly 10.15 billion Rubles (USD 300 million) in grants to 14 of its top-performing universities through a targeted initiative that aims to see five of the country's universities enter the top 100 globally ranked higher education institutions by 2020.

India has an elite group of specialized institutions. The Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT), Indian Institute of Management (IIM) and many centrally funded and managed institutions in the engineering and medical education are examples of good quality higher education institutions. China, through its targeted

programmes invested heavily in the quality of higher education from the 1990s with a focus on research and graduate studies and by extending support to the leading universities. It seems these efforts are paying dividends now (Baty, 2013, December) and China is improving its position in the world university rankings.

The BRICS countries are also making serious efforts to increase international collaborations. One of the indicators of this trend is the increase in the number of students studying abroad. India and China together account for more than one-fifth of the total cross-border student flows. Among the BRICS countries Russia, with around 130 thousand international students, hosts the largest number of foreign students, followed by China, South Africa, India, and Brazil (UIS, 2012). While China and India send the largest number of cross-border students, Russia hosts the largest number of foreign students among the BRICS countries. From this point of view Brazil has the least globalized higher education system among the BRICS countries. The proficiency in English language is an advantage for India in terms of collaborations with foreign institutions. Among the BRICS countries the only country to have found a place in the EF English Proficiency Index of 2013 is India. But the language proficiency acts as a constraint for Brazil in its efforts to internationalize higher education. Brazil too started new programmes of study abroad in the recent past, especially for training of their technological and scientific personnel in the USA.

The collaborations of higher education with foreign institutions are seen as one of the important elements in their efforts to develop quality higher education systems and to develop cooperation within BRICS countries. The BRICS countries at present are mostly looking towards developed countries for collaborations and most of the collaborative programmes are with institutions from the developed countries. However, efforts have been initiated towards the collaborations and the expansion of the domain of cooperation among BRICS in higher education.

Higher Education Development in India

India has the second largest higher education system in the world by number of enrolments and the largest higher education system in the world by the number of institutions. With around 28.56 million students (AISHE, 2013), and 35,540 colleges and 700 universities in 2011–2012 (UGC, 2013) the higher education sector in India is large. India with an enrolment ratio of 23% is in a stage of massification of higher education. Even at low levels of GER, the disparities in access to higher education continue to be large. The GER in India varies between

47% in Delhi and 9% in Assam. The group disparities continue to persist. The gross attendance ratio varies between 8.3% for rural females and 30.5% for urban female and between 7.7% for the Scheduled Tribe population and around 44.9% for the Christian population (Planning Commission, 2013, p. 102). Although there has been progress towards gender equality, the gender parity index remains at 0.78. In some of the states where GER is relatively high, the number of girls enrolled is larger than that of the boys, resulting in a gender parity index of greater than unity.

The growth and expansion of higher education in India during the post-independence period can broadly be categorized into three stages: a) a stage of limited access and high resource availability in higher education; b) a stage of declining growth in enrolment accompanied by a relative decline in the share of resources allocated to higher education; and c) a stage of revival and massive expansion of enrolment in higher education (Varghese, 2014, November).

India at independence adopted a public sector-led strategy of development in all sectors of activity including education. Most of the higher education institutions established in India in the 1950s and 1960s were public universities and colleges (Varghese, 2014, November).

Access to higher education was limited and the enrolment ratio in higher education remained below 5% for a fairly long period till the 1980s. Although access was limited, this phase was marked by an emphasis on quality of higher education. India established national bodies such as the All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE) and the University Grants Commission (UGC) to maintain overall quality in the system. The strategy adopted to enhance quality was establishment of institutions of excellence. India established several institutions of national importance in the areas of professional and technical education. The establishment of IITs, IIMs, Regional Engineering Colleges (RECs) and several medical colleges reflected the government's accent on high quality institutions in higher education. Many of these institutions were established in collaboration with foreign countries such as USA, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), West Germany, etc.

These institutions of national importance followed specific student admission policies and staff selection procedures and received good public funding support. All these provisions and procedures helped these elite institutions maintain a high quality comparable to international standards. It seems the strategy was to link higher education development with economic growth by transforming Indian higher education as a basic input and catalyst to develop a modern economy. The focus on engineering, technology and management institutions also indicated the

political commitment to self-reliance on the one hand and the national aspiration to promote economic growth on the other.

In the next stage of development, in the 1970s, the higher education sector experienced slow growth and also a decline in the share of resources allocated to higher education. The experience during this stage of expansion of higher education was more through affiliated colleges and institutions. The affiliated colleges proliferated partly due to the fact that many of them were financially supported through grant-in-aid transfers. It may be right to state that public universities and private aided colleges became a common feature of higher education development in India. More than three-fourths of student enrolment and an equal share of institutions belonged to the private aided sector. The institutions in the aided sector were very similar to those in the public sector in many respects.

The institutions in the aided sector followed the same study programmes, offered the same courses and the students appeared for the same examinations conducted by the public university to which these institutions were affiliated. The private institutions did not have the authority to award degrees and degrees were awarded by the affiliating public universities. The student fees in these private aided colleges were comparable to public institutions and were, very often, fixed by the state governments.

The planned allocations to higher education continued to be low in the 1980s while the demand for higher education continued to increase. The declining financial capacity of the state forced many public institutions to diversify their sources of funding. It marked the beginnings of privatization of public institutions in India (Varghese, 2013). Some of the state governments established self-financing courses in public institutions and later started establishing self-financing public institutions. The perspective plans and the committees appointed by the government pointed to the possibilities of reducing subsidies and recovering costs from students. The committees appointed by UGC—the Punneya Committee of 1992–1993—and AICTE—Dr. Swaminathan Panel, 1992—recommended privatization through cost recovery in higher education. It needs to be noted that the role of the public sector remained dominant even when sources of funding varied during the phase of privatization. The approach was not to promote a private sector in higher education.

The next stage in development of higher education is marked by a revival and fast expansion of the sector from the 1990s. This period saw a move from privatization of public institutions to promotion of private institutions. The success of self-financing public institutions opened avenues and scope for

establishment of self-financing institutions in the private sector (Varughese, 2006). The self-financing colleges, which are commonly known as “capitation fee colleges” (Tilak, 1994), were mostly for-profit private institutions. Most of these self-financing institutions were colleges established in the subject areas of engineering, medicine, and management (Agarwal, 2007). The southern states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu and the western state of Maharashtra led the private higher education (self-financing colleges) revolution in higher education in India.

With the expansion of the private institutions of higher education, many of them sought greater freedom to operate with fewer interventions and regulations by the government. One of the areas which was in the exclusive domain of the public sector was the authority to award degrees. Only public universities were authorized to award degrees. To escape from the regulations by the public authorities, private providers wanted to attain the authority to award degrees and they demanded that a status of deemed university be given to private institutions (Agarwal, 2007). Many private institutions attained the status of deemed to be a university. The same considerations later led to the demand for establishment of private universities in India. The Private Universities Bill was presented in the parliament in the late 1990s and was not passed even after prolonged discussions.

Starting from 2002, several state governments passed Private Universities Acts and established several private universities. The private universities proliferated in many states of India. Some of the private universities are large and multidisciplinary while others offer courses and award degrees in a limited number of subject areas which are more closely aligned to the employment market. The distinguishing feature of development of higher education at this stage was that expansion of the sector did not rely entirely on public institutions and public funding. The private institutions contributed to the growth and expansion of higher education. It can be argued that the higher rate of growth of 14.6% experienced during the 2005–2011 period was substantially due to contributions by the private sector.

The evolution of policies and initiatives in higher education in India in the past six decades clearly indicate that the country has moved from a public sector dominated higher education system to a private sector mediated system. In 2012 nearly three-fifths of the enrolment in higher education in India is accounted for by private higher education institutions (AISHE, 2013). According to the Twelfth-Five Year Plan perspectives the enrolment will increase from 21.79 million to 30.74 million between 2011–2012 and 2016–2017 (Planning Commission, 2013, p. 96). A major share of the expected expansion will be

accounted for by the private institutions.

International Collaborations in Higher Education in India

International cooperation and collaboration in education before GATS used to take place through cooperation projects and academic exchange programmes. This was facilitated by liberal award of financial support and scholarships by several developed countries. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Fulbright programme, Colombo Plan, British Council and Commonwealth scholarship programme, and the German Academic Exchange Service, commonly known as DAAD, are examples of national efforts by the developed countries to promote collaborations and cross-border education (Altbach & Knight, 2006).

In the context of globalization, education is emerging as an important area of collaboration for countries across the globe. One economic reason for this trend is a fear that the expansion of the knowledge economy may be constrained by the lack of skilled labor force. It is expected that in the knowledge economy, a post-secondary education is a necessity to cope with the skill requirements in the labor market (Varghese, 2014). It is also a concern in the developed countries that if heavy investments are not made in higher education, it may change both the way they live and the freedoms they enjoy (Davies, 2006). All the countries are for more cooperation and collaboration in higher education.

Trade has become a more common framework for cross-border cooperation now than in the past. As noted earlier, cross-border trade in education takes place through study abroad programmes of students, institutional collaborations and mobility of institutions, mobility of programmes and teachers. Among these modes cross-border interactions and trade through students have been the most common. The cross-border mobility of institutions and programmes is of relatively recent origin. Let us look at the cross-border flow of Indian students and institutional collaboration between India and other countries.

International Participation through Cross-Border Flow of Students

The BRICS countries play an important role in cross-border education primarily by sending sizeable number of students. China and India are the countries with a maximum outflow of students while the USA is the largest host country for BRICS students. In 2010 China (563 thousand) and India (201 thousand) sent the

largest number of students abroad. They accounted for nearly one-fourth of the cross-border student flows in higher education in 2010. In 2010 the BRICS countries together sent 846.4 thousand students for studies abroad. Of this, 245.6 thousand students, accounting for 29% of the students from BRICS countries were studying in the USA and a majority of the remaining students were studying in other developed countries (UIS, 2012).

The USA and the UK have been the favorite destinations for Indian students seeking cross-border education. While these countries still remain favorite destinations for Indian students, the destinations of Indian cross-border students changed over a period of time. The share of Indian students going to USA has been declining, from 78.5% in 1995 to 51.8% in 2010 (Table 1). The share of Indian students seeking higher education in UK increased substantially from 5.5% in 1995 to 19.0% in 2010.

Table 1 Changing Destination of Indian Students Abroad

Host Countries	1995	2004	2010
USA	78.5%	67.6%	51.8%
UK	5.5%	10.6%	19.0%
Germany	1.7%	4.2%	—
Canada	2.6%	—	2.3%
Australia	—	5.2%	10.2%

Source: UIS. (2006). *Global Education Digest 2006*. Montreal, Canada: UNESCO Institute for Statistics; UIS. (2012). *Global Education Digest 2012*. Montreal, Canada: UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

It seems the Indian students are finding a new destination for studies at higher education level in Australia. Australia accounted for 10% of the Indian students abroad in 2010. The flow of students among the BRICS countries is rather limited. In all BRICS countries, except the Russian Federation, the first choice of students is studies in USA.

India hosts only a limited number of foreign students (27 thousand; UIS, 2012) and it is a very small number in comparison to the number of students the country is sending abroad for studies. To promote international collaboration and to attract a larger number of students to India, the government of India is offering fellowships to international scholars specializing in Indian studies. The fellowships are offered through Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR). The ICCR has established 108 chairs of Indian studies in various foreign

universities including those in the BRICS countries. It has established chairs in Hindi in Peking University, Beijing; in social sciences in Shenzhen University, Guangzhou; peace studies in the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, etc.

Institutional Collaborations

India has been establishing institutions of higher education in collaboration with foreign institutions. As already stated, India established many institutions of excellence in collaboration with foreign countries. For example, some of the IITs and IIMs were started in collaboration with countries such as USA, USSR, and West Germany etc. These collaborative efforts were a reflection of the country's quest to achieve and maintain international standards in higher education.

After these initial collaborative efforts, such ventures were not very common. The attention seems to have been on relying on domestic institutions. The trend is changing and foreign education and institutional collaborations are sought after arrangements in recent times. The main difference one notices is that in the 1950s the institutional collaborations saw India as a beneficiary. The relationship was of a donor-recipient nature. The collaborations in the recent past place the country as an equal partner in development. This is a very important change and it indicates growing economic strength and potential expansion of the Indian educational market.

Many collaborative efforts have been taking place for several years in India. Unlike in other countries these collaborations were not in the form of establishing independent foreign institutions (branch campuses) in India. They are in the form of partnerships with the existing institutions. As per the existing regulations in India, foreign institutions are not permitted to open and operate branch campuses in India. However, they can have collaborative ventures.

A study of 131 foreign-affiliated institutions in India showed that 59 of those partnered with universities in the UK and 66 partnered with universities in the USA. Many of these collaborations resulted in offering collaborative courses and a majority of the courses (nearly 80%) offered by foreign collaborated institutions in India were either in business or hotel management (Bhushan, 2005). Since these courses are market-friendly and employment-oriented, the demand for them continues to increase in India.

The demand for and realization of collaborations with foreign higher education institutions are on the increase. According to the Association of Indian

universities (AIU, 2012), the foreign collaborations with Indian higher education institutions increased from 144 in 2000 to 631 in 2010. The largest number of the collaborating institutions were from the UK (158), followed by Canada (80) and the US (44). It was also pointed out that many of the collaborating arrangements were not approved by the regulatory bodies. For example, of the 60 foreign education providers, who have programme collaboration with local institutions, only 25 local institutions were affiliated to Indian universities or approved by regulatory bodies. Similarly, only 32 of the 49 foreign institutions operating under twinning arrangements have approval or affiliation (Dhavan, 2012, June).

Several high-level delegations are visiting India to establish institutions as branch campuses or collaborations with Indian institutions. The British Prime Minister visited India in 2013. He was accompanied by the minister responsible for higher education. During the visit agreements for many programmes involving twinning arrangement between British and Indian institutions to offer joint degree programmes, research collaborations and teacher training programmes were signed. Some of the concrete results of the negotiations during the visit was a collaborative venture between University of Cambridge and the government of India to establish a Chemical Biology and Therapeutics Institute in India; the agreements signed by the Warwick Business School, London School of Economics, Open University of UK, Southampton University etc. with Indian institutions. The total investment of these collaborative ventures is estimated to be valued at around USD 152 million (Misra & Sharma, 2013, March).

The president of France visited India in 2013 and was accompanied by the Higher Education Minister of France. Seventeen university collaborative agreements were signed which included student exchange programmes, mobility of researchers to promote joint research projects, cancer research, renewable energy and energy storage for deployment projects etc. The collaborations signed included those between Delhi University and SciencePo, The French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS) and Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore etc. (Misra & Sharma, 2013, March).

There are instances of Indian institutions establishing campuses abroad. This is a new trend. Some Indian institutions are establishing institutions abroad either independently or in collaboration with the existing national institutions. The Indian private institutions are establishing campuses abroad too. For example, the JSS Academy of Technical Education has established an independent institute in Mauritius while DY Patil Post-Graduate School of Medicine in 2009 at

Quatre-Bornes, was established in partnership with the University of Technology, Mauritius (UTM). An off-shore campus of Manipal University operates in Malaysia and Amity University operates campuses in the USA, UK, China, and Singapore. There are four Indian private institutions represented in the Dubai International Academic City. Another interesting development is that one of the southern states of India—the State of Kerala—recently decided to set up an International Academic City along the lines of Dubai International Academic City (Mathews, 2014, September).

The discussions show that the Indian approach to international collaborations has been looking towards developed countries. The institutions in India are more eager to enter into collaborative arrangements with institutions in the developed countries.

Collaboration between India and BRICS Countries

The collaborations in higher education among the BRICS countries take familiar modes such as student exchange programmes, teacher exchange programmes, collaborative research programmes, twinning arrangements, institutional collaborations especially in research etc. The number of Indian students studying in BRICS countries is rather limited. Most of the Indian cross-border students go to USA, UK and Australia for their higher studies. These three countries account for nearly 80% of Indian students studying abroad. Among the BRICS countries, Russia accounts for the largest number (around five thousand) of Indian students. Student flow to other BRICS countries is relatively very low. The student flow from BRICS countries to India too is also very limited. In 2011 India received 951 students from China, 206 students from South Africa, 27 students from Russia and 6 students from Brazil (UIS, 2012).

The IBSA Dialogue Forum (India, Brazil, and South Africa) is an international tripartite grouping for promoting international cooperation among some of the BRICS countries. It represents three important poles for galvanizing south-south cooperation and greater understanding between three important continents of the developing world namely, Africa, Asia, and South America. The forum provides the three countries with a platform to engage in discussions for cooperation in the field of agriculture, trade, culture, and defense among others.

At the first ministerial meeting on science, technology and innovation held in Kleinmond, South Africa on 10–11 February 2013, the BRICS countries adopted

a declaration to strengthen cooperation in science, technology and innovation within the BRICS framework. The Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation is expected to be signed in Brazil in 2014. As per the plan, each country would head one of the five thematic areas. Accordingly Brazil is supposed to head the theme on climate change and natural disasters; Russia on water resources and pollution treatment; India on geospatial technology and its application; China on new and renewable energy and energy efficiency; and South Africa on astronomy (Maconi, 2014, February). The work plan adopted in the BRICS summit in Durbin in 2013 also emphasized the importance of STI training programme in the BRICS countries.

Education ministers from the BRICS countries met in UNESCO, Paris during the General Conference of 2013. The meeting was organized by the Minister of Higher Education of South Africa. Education Ministers from all the BRICS countries attended the meeting. After deliberations the ministerial meeting agreed to establish a mechanism at the “highest political and technical level” to coordinate and implement collaboration, especially in higher education. The need for strengthening collaboration between BRICS universities, partnerships and knowledge exchanges on technical and vocational education and training, and the portability and transferability of qualifications between BRICS countries were discussed. The focal points for follow-up had already been established for each BRICS country to work out the details for various areas of cooperation (Lee, 2013, November).

India and Russia have been major trade partners for a long time mostly in the area of military technical cooperation. In the field of education there is a serious effort to attract Indian students to Russia. The Russian Education Fairs were held in 2013 in four Indian cities of Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai and Mumbai. The expectation was to attract 300–400 Indian students to enroll in the medical, engineering and humanities streams in the universities of Russia. With a view to attract more international students, Russia adopted the Bologna process and started offering most of the international courses in English language (Gera, 2013, May). It seems Russian medical courses are particularly popular in India partly because most of the graduates, if not all, pass the qualifying examination on their return to India. The delegations from Russian universities are visiting many universities including the Jawaharlal Nehru University New Delhi (Nikushkina, 2012, May) to further widen the collaborative efforts.

The nature of collaborations is also decided by the laws governing such efforts in the respective countries. The Indian laws do not permit foreign institutions to

establish branch campuses in India. The government of India prepared a Foreign Educational Institutions (Regulation of Entry and Operations) Bill and it has been pending in Parliament since 2010. However, according to the recent regulations by the UGC (2012), the foreign institutions are invited to establish collaborations with any Indian higher education institution. They are free to design course curricula under joint collaborations and twinning arrangements.

As per the new UGC regulation on foreign collaborations: a) Indian institutions need at least a grade B accreditation to enter into collaboration with foreign institutions; b) Indian institutions should have experience of at least five years offering educational programmes at the level of degree and post-graduate diplomas; c) Government institutions are exempted from an accreditation clause for the purpose of these regulations (UGC, 2012).

In a circular dated September 17, 2014 the UGC has requested all universities and affiliated colleges to obtain prior permission from the UGC before they sign MoUs, collaborations with foreign educational institutes, host promotional activity in a foreign land or student exchange programmes. This seems to be an attempt to regulate the collaborations that may take place between Indian and foreign institutions.

Conclusions

The discussions in the paper show that collaborations in higher education among BRICS countries are still at a nascent stage. It seems all BRICS countries are looking more towards the developed countries for collaborative ventures than among themselves within the BRICS group. This is very much understandable since one of the objectives of cooperation and collaboration is to improve the quality of higher education. The high ranking universities are located mostly in the developed countries and therefore, this attitude of looking for collaborations with developed countries by the BRICS countries is justifiable. The favorite destination for the majority of internationally mobile students from BRICS countries, except Russia, is universities in the USA and UK.

Another factor that influences collaboration and especially student flow is the language of instruction. Since the language of instruction in most of the BRICS countries is different from the one followed in Indian universities, the flow of students between India and BRICS countries becomes more difficult. In fact, English is becoming the language of globalization. An OECD survey notes that

“English is the premier language of business and the professions and the only global language of science, research and academic publication” (OECD, 2008, p.20).

Another important factor limiting student flow among BRICS countries is the employability of the graduates. Many countries adopted a favorable arrangement for visas for Indian students to stay and look for jobs in the host country after their studies. Such employment opportunities are limited in the BRICS countries. Furthermore, a degree from the developed countries from the Anglophone tradition enjoys a higher premium in the labor markets in India both in terms of getting a job and getting a higher salary.

What needs to be done to initiate and strengthen collaborations among BRICS countries? There is a need to improve the quality of education in the BRICS countries. There is a need to achieve higher positions in the world university rankings to change the perception of quality among the collaborating countries. Language seems to be a serious constraint. Although some of the BRICS countries have started offering international programmes in the English language, there is a need to make these efforts more visible and wide spread. One of the crucial elements to increase collaborative efforts among BRICS countries is to internationalize the faculty and student bodies. It seems, given the above constraints, collaborations among the BRICS countries through market mediated arrangements may not be a sustainable proposition. Government intervention and public action become the dominant mode to provide a framework for collaboration among higher education institutions among in BRICS countries at least in the present stage.

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