

Chapter 7

Exploring Knowledge Activities for Bringing Saudi Arabia and the BRICS Together

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the promotion of knowledge cooperation between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa). The knowledge activities considered include knowledge creation, diffusion, utilization, and sharing. The chapter introduces a knowledge assessment framework based on UNESCO knowledge society paradigm, and on available international indicators. The framework gives an index of “28 indicators.” It provides a criterion for comparing the measured values of the indicators among countries to enable identifying prioritized knowledge cooperation opportunities that bring countries together. The framework is used to investigate these opportunities between the KSA and the BRICS. It has been found that knowledge activities in KSA enjoy high enablement levels from which the BRICS can gain, while knowledge activities in the BRICS emphasize knowledge productivity from which KSA can gain. Bridging the gap between the two sides will be useful to both, and to building global knowledge societies that lead to world peace and prosperity.

INTRODUCTION

The countries identified as the BRICS, Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, have grouped together, in the early years of the 21st century, to become an important economic block that enjoy advanced development, and that also represent an emerging powerful global economic power (BRICS, 2017). Identifying cooperation opportunities between the BRICS countries and the GCC countries, of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, which also represent an important global economic block, would be beneficial to both (ITU, 2005). This chapter is concerned with assessing knowledge

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cooperation opportunities between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), the largest economic power of the GCC block, and the BRICS.

This introductory section aims at providing the necessary background that enables addressing the problem considered. The given background has three main parts:

- The first highlights the international drive toward knowledge as a source for development.
- The second identifies international views on assessing knowledge issues in different countries.
- The third introduces the work presented in this chapter.

The International Drive Toward Knowledge for Development

At the turn of the century, that is in the year 2000, world leaders gathered in the United Nations (UN) and issued the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) that set development directions toward better world. Among these development directions were: education, global partnership, and the availability of new technology, especially the information and communication technology (ITU, 2005).

In the year 2003, the world leaders met again in Geneva in what is known as the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), which emphasized knowledge activation as a mean for development, through the widespread use of information and communication technology (ICT) (WSIS, 2005). In 2005, the UN Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) started replacing the term information society with that of knowledge society emphasizing the need to create knowledge and to utilize it for supporting development (UNESCO, 2005).

In 2010, UNESCO introduced a paradigm for the knowledge society. The paradigm identifies knowledge activities as consisting of knowledge creation, knowledge preservation, knowledge diffusion and knowledge utilization (UNESCO, 2010). In 2013, UNESCO stressed the need for spreading the drive toward building global knowledge societies in order to promote human development alongside technological innovation. It considered that the core aspiration for peaceful and sustainable knowledge societies must acknowledge the interest of all stakeholders. If every country plans and drives its ways toward building its own knowledge society according to these principles, global knowledge societies seeking peace and development can be reached for the benefits of all (UNESCO, 2013).

International Assessment of Knowledge Issues

Various international indices and international databases provide indicators, with periodically updated data, on different knowledge related issues. Four important sources of such indicators have been used in this chapter. They are as follows: the “Global Innovation Index: GII” (Dutta et al, 2016) the “Global Competitiveness Index: GCI” (Schwab et al, 2016); the “International Telecommunication Union: ITU Measures of the Information Society” (ITU, 2016); and the “World-Bank Database” (World Bank, 2017). It should be noted that indicators and data provided by these sources are usually of mixed origins and not necessarily originated by the source concerned. For example, “education related issues” in all of these sources are mostly taken from UNESCO (2017), which may in turn depend on national data produced by the countries concerned.

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