

BRICS 2026

What It Means for the Global Skills Ecosystem

From TVET and Skills Forecasting to Qualifications, Employment, Entrepreneurship and Workforce Mobility

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This analysis looks at BRICS 2026 not as a calendar of meetings and declarations, but through the lens of the systems that connect skills, education, employment and economic participation.

Executive Summary

The global skills conversation is changing. The central challenge is no longer simply how many people can be trained, but whether countries can build workforce systems that identify changing skills needs, connect education and training with employers, support transitions into work, recognise qualifications across borders, and enable people to keep learning as economies change.

BRICS 2026, under India's chairship, brought many of these issues into a single cooperation agenda. Across its education, labour and employment, technical and vocational education and training (TVET), industry, youth, women, innovation and entrepreneurship tracks, the grouping discussed or advanced mechanisms relating to skills forecasting, skill-gap assessment, TVET cooperation, qualification recognition, employment, digital skills, industry partnerships, entrepreneurship and workforce mobility.

One of the most significant developments was the emphasis on **skills intelligence**. The proposal for an international BRICS skill-gap study and discussions around skills forecasting point towards a more systematic approach to understanding where labour-market demand is emerging and where training systems are falling short. If developed effectively, such mechanisms could help countries move from retrospective estimates of skill shortages towards more forward-looking workforce planning.

The TVET agenda also moved beyond training delivery towards questions of quality, relevance, technology, industry participation and international cooperation. Discussions around good practices, digital and green TVET, AI-enabled learning and stronger industry linkages suggest an attempt to position vocational education as part of broader economic and workforce transformation.

Another important dimension was the relationship between **skills and mobility**. Cooperation on qualifications and professional recognition could, over time, make it easier for skills acquired in one BRICS economy to be understood or recognised in another. This is particularly relevant as labour markets become more interconnected and countries face different combinations of demographic change, skill shortages and workforce surpluses.

The employment agenda added another layer. Initiatives such as BRICS CONNECT seek to bring skills, employability, new technologies and labour-market cooperation closer together. Alongside digital employment, youth entrepreneurship, startup cooperation, MSME capability building and women's economic participation, this broadens the definition of a skills ecosystem—from preparing people for jobs to supporting participation in changing economies.

However, the significance of these developments should not be overstated. BRICS 2026 did **not create a unified global skills system**, nor do all announced mechanisms represent completed or operational programmes. Some are agreements or institutional developments; others remain proposals, areas of cooperation or initiatives whose effectiveness will depend on implementation by individual countries.

The more important question, therefore, is what happens next.

If BRICS can turn shared skills intelligence into policy, connect TVET with real labour-market demand, improve qualification portability, strengthen industry participation and create pathways from skills to employment and entrepreneurship, its 2026 agenda could become relevant well beyond the BRICS grouping—particularly for South-South cooperation and countries seeking alternatives or complements to existing international models of workforce development.

BRICS 2026 is therefore best understood not as the creation of a new global skills architecture, but as a significant attempt to **bring several previously separate parts of workforce development into a more connected conversation.**

Its real test will be practical: whether countries become better at identifying skills demand, aligning training with it, recognising capabilities and connecting people to work.

Key Takeaways

1. Skills intelligence is becoming central.
2. TVET is moving closer to industrial and labour-market needs.
3. Skills recognition could become as important as skills acquisition.
4. Employment, entrepreneurship and skills policy are converging.
5. AI and digitalisation are changing the nature of skills demand.
6. South-South cooperation could become a significant channel for workforce innovation.
7. Implementation—not declarations—will determine the lasting significance of BRICS 2026.

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1. Introduction: From Skills Training to Workforce Systems

A conventional skills-development model can be represented simply:

Training → Assessment → Certification → Employment

For decades, much of the international skills-development conversation has revolved around this model and a familiar question:

How many people can we train?

This remains important. But it is increasingly insufficient.

Modern labour markets are more complicated. Occupations are changing. Technologies are altering tasks within existing jobs. New occupations are emerging. Some skills are becoming less relevant while others are becoming more valuable. Employers increasingly need combinations of technical, digital, foundational and human skills.

A training system can therefore produce large numbers while still failing to address the needs of employers. A qualification can be formally valid while having limited recognition outside its country of origin. A person can complete training but struggle to find employment. An industry can report skill shortages while training institutions continue producing graduates in different fields.

The challenge, therefore, begins before training.

The more important aspects that need attention are:

What is changing?

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What skills will be needed?

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Which occupations will be affected?

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What should education and training systems change?

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How will employers recognise those capabilities?

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Can workers use those qualifications across borders?

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How can people find employment or create enterprises?

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How will workers continue learning as requirements change?

The International Labour Organization's 2026 work on lifelong learning similarly highlights how digitalisation and artificial intelligence, the green transition and demographic change are reshaping skills demand globally, while employers increasingly require combinations of technical and foundational capabilities.

This points towards a broader concept of the workforce system.

A country needs labour-market intelligence to understand future demand. It needs education and TVET institutions to respond to that demand. It needs employers to participate in curriculum, training and assessment. It needs qualifications that communicate what a person can actually do. It needs mechanisms that help people transition into employment or entrepreneurship. And as labour markets become increasingly interconnected, it needs systems through which skills and qualifications can be understood and recognised across borders.

The skills ecosystem therefore becomes more than:

Training → Certificate

It is closer to:

Labour-market intelligence → Skills identification → Education and training → Industry connection → Assessment and qualifications → Employment → Mobility → Entrepreneurship → Continuous learning

This is the context in which the BRICS 2026 agenda becomes significant.

Across its different tracks, the discussion was not confined to vocational training. It extended into skills forecasting, labour-market intelligence, qualifications, employment, digital transformation, industry participation, entrepreneurship, MSMEs, youth, women, innovation and mobility.

Individually, none of these areas is new.

The significance lies in their increasing interconnectedness.

BRICS 2026 brought several elements of this workforce chain into a single cooperation agenda. The question is whether this convergence can eventually produce practical systems—systems that can better identify changing skills demand, align education and training with economic needs, connect people with employment and enterprise opportunities, support mobility, and enable workers to continue learning as economies change.

That is where the global significance of the 2026 agenda will ultimately be tested.

2. Why BRICS Matters to the Global Skills Conversation

BRICS is not a global skills regulator.

It does not operate as a single education or labour-market authority, and its member countries have very different economic structures, qualification systems, labour markets and institutional arrangements.

That diversity is precisely why its skills cooperation is worth examining.

BRICS brings together large and diverse emerging economies across Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East.

The 2026 BRICS Labour and Employment discussions explicitly positioned the grouping as a forum where the Global South could exchange practical approaches to labour-market challenges. The ILO also described BRICS cooperation in 2026 as an opportunity for South-South and triangular cooperation and highlighted peer learning across skills, employment, social protection and digitalisation.

This creates a potentially important role for BRICS:

Not to replace existing global skills institutions, but to become a stronger platform for sharing experience and developing solutions among large emerging economies

3. From Skills Gaps to Skills Intelligence

One of the strongest signals from 2026 is the increasing importance being attached to understanding labour-market demand.

Under the BRICS-TCA, India proposed an **International Skill Gap Study**, alongside a BRICS Skills Competition and a Compendium of Good Practices. The August 2026 BRICS-TCA meeting specifically examined digital, green and demographic shifts affecting skills and workforce needs.

At the Labour and Employment level, BRICS countries committed to strengthening cooperation in **forecasting skills needs** by analysing labour-market trends in digital, green, care and other priority sectors.

This represents a potentially important change in approach.

The traditional question

Where is there a skills shortage today?

The emerging question

Where could skills shortages or surpluses develop next?

The second question requires a different kind of system. It requires:

- labour-market data;
- employer demand;
- occupational information;
- technology trends;
- sector forecasts;
- demographic information;
- education and training capacity;
- employment outcomes; and
- continuing feedback from industry.

A skill-gap study can provide a snapshot.

A skills-intelligence system needs to become a **continuing process**.

This will determine whether the proposed BRICS cooperation becomes genuinely useful.

4. Why a BRICS Skill Gap Study Could Matter Beyond BRICS

A common skill-gap exercise could have value beyond producing another international report.

If countries use comparable methods to identify:

- occupations;
- skills;
- shortages;
- emerging occupations;
- training capacity;
- qualification requirements; and
- employment opportunities,

they may become better able to compare workforce needs across countries.

That could support:

→ **Skills forecasting**

→ **training planning**

→ **industry cooperation**

→ **qualification comparison**

→ **worker mobility**

However, this is a potential benefit, not yet an established outcome.

Different BRICS countries have different labour-market data systems, occupational classifications, qualification frameworks and institutional arrangements.

Therefore, the technical challenge is considerable.

The real test will be whether the eventual methodology can produce **meaningful comparability without forcing countries into artificial uniformity**.

5. TVET: From Institutional Cooperation to Workforce Relevance

Technical and Vocational Education and Training occupies a central place in the emerging BRICS skills agenda.

The BRICS-TCA has become an important mechanism for cooperation, while the 13th BRICS Education Ministers' Declaration recognised the Alliance's role in information exchange, resource sharing and joint development of TVET. It also supported stronger links between TVET institutions and industry and alignment of training with changing market demands.

This adds value because TVET systems face a familiar problem worldwide:

Training can become disconnected from the workplace.

A training programme may have:

- a curriculum;
- instructors;
- equipment;
- assessment;
- certification;

and still struggle if the skills taught do not match actual production processes or employer requirements.

The 2026 BRICS agenda therefore points towards a more connected model:

TVET Institution → Employment → Qualifications → Labour Market Information → Industry

The direction is significant.

But the actual impact will depend on whether industry participation moves beyond consultation into curriculum design, workplace learning, equipment decisions, assessment and employment pathways.

6. The Qualification Question: Can Skills Travel?

Training people is one challenge.

Making their skills understandable and trusted elsewhere is another.

The 13th BRICS Education Ministers' Meeting placed **Mutual Recognition of Qualifications** among its five priority areas. The Ministers' Declaration also recognised the importance of cooperation on qualifications and mobility.

This could become one of the most important long-term aspects of BRICS cooperation.

Imagine a skilled worker trained in one BRICS country seeking employment, further training or professional progression in another.

The receiving institution or employer needs to understand:

- what the qualification represents;
- what the learner actually learned;
- how competence was assessed;
- what level the qualification occupies;
- how quality was assured; and
- whether additional requirements apply.

That requires more than simply translating certificates.

It requires **trust and comparability**.

The possible global significance

If BRICS develops practical approaches to qualification comparison and recognition, these could contribute to wider discussions on skills mobility.

But it would be premature to say that BRICS has established a common recognition system.

The 2026 developments represent continued cooperation and further work rather than a completed global framework.

7. BRICS CONNECT: Bringing Skills and Employment Closer Together

The adoption of **BRICS CONNECT — BRICS Cooperation Network for Capacity Building, Employability, and New Skills and Technology** is another important development.

The initiative was unveiled at the 12th BRICS Labour and Employment Ministers' Meeting in Hyderabad.

Its purpose includes technical cooperation, knowledge exchange and capacity building across areas including skills and employability, alongside wider labour and social-protection priorities. The ILO has described BRICS CONNECT as a platform for voluntary cooperation, peer learning and capacity development.

The importance of BRICS CONNECT is partly conceptual.

It places skills within the wider labour-market system.

A person does not move from training directly into a successful career simply because they received a certificate.

They also need:

- access to employment information;
- employer connections;
- career guidance;
- labour-market services;
- opportunities for further learning;
- appropriate social protection;
- and, increasingly, digital access.

This makes **employability** broader than training.

8. Digital Employment and the Changing Geography of Work

The New Delhi Declaration notes the initiative to establish an **International Digital Platform for Remote Employment for BRICS Countries**.

This potentially connects two developments:

cross-border skills

and

cross-border digital employment.

The implications could be considerable.

A worker may increasingly be able to provide services to an employer in another country without physically relocating.

But this creates new questions:

- How are skills verified?
- How are qualifications recognised?
- How are workers matched with employers?
- What labour standards apply?
- How are contracts enforced?
- How are payments made?
- What social protection applies?
- How are disputes handled?

The platform therefore cannot be viewed simply as a job portal.

If developed meaningfully, it would sit at the intersection of:

Skills + qualifications + employment services + digital infrastructure + labour regulation + social protection

That makes it particularly relevant to the future global skills ecosystem.

9. A New Relationship Between Skills and Industry

Another important feature of 2026 is the closer connection between skills and industrial transformation.

India joined the **BRICS Centre for Industrial Competencies**, established with UNIDO, in February 2026. The initiative provides integrated support to manufacturing companies and MSMEs, with an emphasis on Industry 4.0 competencies; India's National Productivity Council was designated as the India Centre.

Meanwhile, the BRICS Industry Ministers' Meeting advanced cooperation around MSMEs, Industry 4.0, start-ups, logistics and other industrial priorities. India also proposed a BRICS Incubator Network and Startup Innovation Fund.

This matters because industrial transformation and workforce transformation cannot be separated.

Consider a simple chain in which invisibly takes place when a new Technology is adopted, there becomes a new production process which follows new tasks, new competencies required, training/ upskilling requirement occurs and finally we get productivity and employment outcomes.

If a country modernises its factories without developing the people/ upskilling the existing workforce who operate, maintain and manage those systems, the technology investment can face a capability gap.

Conversely, training people for technologies that employers are not adopting can create a relevance gap.

The emerging BRICS approach increasingly places both questions in the same conversation.

10. AI and Digital Skills: Beyond Training for a Technology

AI is another area where the global skills conversation needs greater precision.

The challenge is not simply:

“How many people should learn AI?”

The more important questions are:

- Which occupations will be affected?
- Which tasks will change?
- Which workers need AI literacy?
- Which occupations need advanced AI skills?
- What new jobs will emerge?
- Which foundational skills become more important?
- How should education and training systems respond?

The BRICS ICT and Education Tracks placed digital skills, capacity building and technology-enabled education within broader cooperation.

The ILO's 2026 global skills analysis similarly points to the need for combinations of technical skills with digital literacy, social abilities, critical thinking and other foundational capabilities.

This suggests an important principle for the global skills ecosystem:

AI skills should not be treated as a replacement for foundational skills. They increasingly need to be built on top of them.

For emerging economies, this distinction is particularly important because digital transformation will affect both technology-intensive occupations and traditional occupations.

11. Youth and the Broader Meaning of Economic Participation

The BRICS Youth Track has placed **education and skills, youth entrepreneurship, science and innovation** among its priority areas. The August 2026 Youth Ministers' Meeting adopted a Joint Statement covering education, training and skills, entrepreneurship, science and technology, youth inclusion and cross-border cooperation.

This broadens the workforce question.

Young people can participate in economies through:

- formal employment;
- self-employment;
- entrepreneurship;
- start-ups;
- freelancing;
- digital work;
- apprenticeships;
- innovation; and

- community-based enterprise.

A global skills ecosystem therefore needs to support **multiple pathways from learning to economic participation**.

This is particularly relevant for emerging economies where large youth populations create both an opportunity and a policy challenge.

The ILO's 2026 analysis of decent work for youth in BRICS countries highlights unemployment, informality, skills mismatch and difficult school-to-work transitions as interconnected issues requiring coordinated responses involving education, skills, employment policy, entrepreneurship, labour rights and social protection.

12. Entrepreneurship: Skills Are Also About Creating Work

The connection between skills and entrepreneurship deserves more attention than it traditionally receives.

A workforce strategy often assumes:

Skill → job

But another pathway is:

Skill → enterprise → jobs

The BRICS Industry Track's proposed **Startup Innovation Fund** and **BRICS Incubator Network** reflect an effort to strengthen the wider innovation ecosystem.

The primary implication of this is in whether BRICS can create stronger cross-border pathways for entrepreneurs to access:

- knowledge;
- mentors;
- incubators;
- technology;
- markets;
- investment;
- industry partnerships.

However, the distinction between an institutional proposal and an operational funding mechanism must be maintained.

The **Incubator Network** and the proposed **Startup Innovation Fund** should not be treated as equivalent outcomes.

13. Women: Skills Do Not Automatically Become Economic Opportunity

The Women's Track adds another important dimension to the skills discussion.

Its priorities included women's:

- governance and leadership;
- digital and financial inclusion;
- entrepreneurship and skill development; and
- participation in climate action, food security and nutrition.

The 2026 track also produced a **BRICS Women Digital Repository of Best Practices** and **BRICS Women Digital Capacity Building Guidelines**.

The larger lesson is important:

Access to training is only one part of economic participation.

A woman may acquire a qualification and still face barriers involving:

- digital access;
- finance;
- care responsibilities;
- mobility;
- workplace conditions;
- market access;
- networks;
- entrepreneurship support.

The global skills ecosystem therefore needs to consider the conditions under which skills can actually be converted into economic opportunity.

14. Green Skills and the Care Economy

The labour agenda also brought attention to skills needs associated with **digital, green and care sectors**.

The New Delhi Declaration specifically calls for cooperation in forecasting skills needs across these areas.

These sectors illustrate two different challenges.

Green transition

The transition to lower-carbon production will affect existing occupations as well as create new ones.

A manufacturing worker may need new environmental or technology-related capabilities without changing occupation.

A construction worker may need to work with new materials, standards or energy systems.

A technician may need to maintain new equipment.

Therefore, green skills policy cannot focus only on creating new “green jobs”.

It must also consider **greening existing jobs**.

Care economy

Care work presents a different challenge.

Demand for care-related services is connected to demographic change and social needs.

Yet the workforce system must consider not only training but also:

- quality;
- recognition;
- working conditions;
- career progression;
- formalisation;
- social protection.

This makes the care economy both a skills issue and a labour-market issue.

15. The Global South Dimension

This may be one of the most important implications of BRICS 2026.

Many emerging economies face similar workforce challenges:

- large youth populations;
- informal employment;
- rapid digitalisation;
- limited training capacity;
- employer skills shortages;
- uneven access to technology;
- pressure to create productive employment;
- changing industrial structures.

The value of South-South cooperation is that solutions can be exchanged among countries operating under conditions that may be more comparable than those in high-income economies.

The ILO's 2026 engagement with BRICS explicitly highlighted South-South and triangular cooperation, peer learning and the potential for practical collaboration beyond the BRICS grouping.

This does not mean that a solution developed in one BRICS country can simply be copied elsewhere.

It means BRICS could become a stronger **knowledge-sharing and experimentation space for emerging economies**.

That could be one of its most consequential contributions to the global skills ecosystem.

16. Could BRICS Influence Global Skills Mobility?

Three 2026 developments are particularly relevant here:

- **Skills forecasting**

- **Mutual recognition of qualifications**
- **Digital employment**

Together, they point towards a possible future in which skills become more visible and portable across borders.

But there is a long distance between these three policy areas and an integrated mobility system.

For meaningful mobility, countries need compatibility across:

- occupational classifications;
- qualification levels;
- competency standards;
- assessment systems;
- quality assurance;
- professional regulation;
- employment services;
- labour rights;
- social protection.

The 2026 BRICS agenda does not yet provide all of these.

What it does provide is a policy direction in which these issues are increasingly being considered together.

That is significant.

17. BRICS Does Not Replace the Existing Global Skills Architecture

A critical assessment also requires understanding what BRICS is **not** doing.

The global skills ecosystem already includes major institutions and frameworks involving organisations such as:

- ILO;
- UNESCO;
- World Bank;
- UNIDO;
- regional development banks;
- national governments;
- employers;
- universities;
- TVET institutions;
- qualification authorities;
- international development agencies.

BRICS is entering an ecosystem that already exists.

Its potential contribution is therefore more likely to come through:

coordination + peer learning + South-South cooperation + experimentation + knowledge exchange

rather than institutional replacement.

The ILO's participation in BRICS labour discussions in 2026 illustrates this relationship. The organisation provided technical support and described its continued role in labour-market data, policy analysis, capacity development and South-South and triangular cooperation.

This suggests that BRICS and existing international institutions can potentially be complementary rather than competing systems.

18. What Could Change for the Global Skills Ecosystem?

The implications can be grouped into seven areas.

1. More attention to skills intelligence

If the International Skill Gap Study develops into a robust and continuing mechanism, it could strengthen evidence-based workforce planning among participating countries.

2. Greater emphasis on skills portability

Mutual recognition discussions could contribute to wider thinking about how qualifications and competencies are understood across borders.

3. Stronger South-South skills cooperation

One plausible role for BRICS is as a platform for emerging economies to exchange practical models for TVET, digital skills, workforce planning and employment services.

4. Closer integration between industry and skills

The Industry and TVET tracks increasingly recognise that workforce development must follow industrial transformation.

5. Expansion of digital employment pathways

The proposed remote employment platform could potentially create new cross-border opportunities, while also forcing greater attention to worker protection and qualification verification.

6. Broader understanding of employability

Employability could increasingly be understood as a combination of skills, labour-market information, employment services, mobility, digital access and continuing learning.

7. More integrated workforce policy

Perhaps the biggest potential change is conceptual.

Skills policy may increasingly be viewed as part of a larger system involving:

Education + industry + labour markets + employment + social protection + entrepreneurship + mobility

rather than as an isolated training programme.

19. What Could Prevent These Developments from Having Global Impact?

A credible analysis cannot discuss opportunities without examining constraints.

Fragmented national systems

BRICS countries have different qualification systems, labour markets and institutional structures.

Data comparability

A common skills study is only as useful as the data and definitions behind it.

Implementation gaps

Declarations and platforms require national institutions to translate commitments into practical programmes.

Uneven industry participation

Skills forecasting without strong employer participation can become disconnected from actual demand.

Qualification differences

Mutual recognition requires detailed technical work, not only political agreement.

Digital divide

A digital employment or learning platform can expand opportunity for connected workers while leaving others behind.

Regulatory complexity

Cross-border employment raises concerns that cannot be solved by a digital platform alone.

Continuity across Presidencies

BRICS initiatives need sustained attention beyond the country holding the Chairship in a particular year.

This last point is particularly important.

India's 2026 Chairship can initiate mechanisms.

Their long-term significance will depend partly on how subsequent Presidencies and member countries continue them.

20. From India's Chairship to BRICS' Next Phase

India's 2026 Chairship has placed a substantial workforce agenda on the BRICS table.

The final New Delhi Declaration records the adoption of BRICS CONNECT and continued cooperation on skills forecasting, TVET-industry linkages, worker mobility and the proposed remote employment platform.

The next phase should therefore be assessed through implementation indicators rather than announcements.

Professionals should watch for:

Skills intelligence

- methodology for the International Skill Gap Study;
- participating countries;
- sectors covered;
- occupational definitions;
- publication and updating mechanisms.

TVET

- BRICS-TCA progress reports;
- industry partnerships;
- joint projects;
- good-practice compendium;
- skills competition development.

Qualifications

- progress on mutual recognition;
- qualification comparability;
- quality assurance;
- practical mobility pathways.

Employment

- operation of BRICS CONNECT;
- labour-market information exchange;
- skills forecasting;
- employment-service cooperation.

Remote work

- design of the international platform;
- employer participation;
- worker protection;
- skills verification;
- cross-border payment and social-protection arrangements.

Industry

- BCIC activities;
- Industry 4.0 capacity building;
- MSME technology adoption;
- workforce implications.

Entrepreneurship

- functioning of the Incubator Network;

- cross-border incubation;
- progress on the Startup Innovation Fund.

These will provide a better measure of progress than the number of meetings held.

21. A Possible Emerging Global Skills Model

If the 2026 initiatives develop as intended, an emerging model can be visualised as follows:

1. Understand the Labour-market intelligence

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2. Anticipate Skills forecasting

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3. Identify Skill-gap analysis

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4. Prepare Education + TVET + lifelong learning

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5. Connect Industry + employers + training institutions

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6. Validate Assessment + qualifications + quality assurance

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7. Recognise Qualification and competency recognition

↓

8. Move Employment + mobility + digital work

↓

9. Create Entrepreneurship + start-ups + MSMEs

↓

10. Adapt Continuous learning + reskilling + upskilling

This is not yet a BRICS-wide system.

It is better understood as an **emerging policy architecture suggested by the combination of initiatives advanced during 2026.**

That distinction is essential.

22. The Most Important Test: Does the System Improve Outcomes?

Ultimately, the success of any skills ecosystem cannot be measured only by:

- number of training programmes;
- number of certificates;
- number of meetings;
- number of agreements;
- number of platforms.

The harder questions are:

For learners

Did they acquire relevant capabilities?

For employers

Did they find people with the skills they need?

For workers

Did skills lead to better employment, earnings, mobility or career progression?

For governments

Did skills intelligence improve policy decisions?

For enterprises

Did workforce capability improve productivity and innovation?

For women and youth

Did access to skills translate into meaningful economic participation?

For countries

Did cooperation help them respond faster to technological and economic change?

These are the indicators that will ultimately determine whether the BRICS 2026 skills agenda has wider significance.

23. What BRICS 2026 Could Mean for Different Stakeholders

Stakeholder	Potential relevance
Governments	Better labour-market intelligence and policy coordination
Skill ministries	Stronger international cooperation on TVET and skills forecasting
TVET institutions	Greater industry and international collaboration

Stakeholder	Potential relevance
Qualification bodies	New conversations around comparability and recognition
Employers	Potentially stronger cross-border skills and talent access
MSMEs	Access to technology and industrial competency support
Training providers	Opportunity to benchmark approaches and emerging skills
Universities	Research, innovation and academic cooperation
Start-ups	Cross-border incubation and market connections
Young people	Skills, entrepreneurship and international opportunities
Women	Digital inclusion, skills and entrepreneurship pathways
International organisations	Additional platform for South-South and triangular cooperation
Development agencies	Potential new channels for workforce and capacity-building cooperation

The important word here is **potential**.

The 2026 outcomes create opportunities; they do not guarantee outcomes for these stakeholders.

24. What Professionals Should Take Away

For professionals working in the global skills ecosystem, seven developments deserve particular attention.

1. Skills intelligence may become as important as training capacity.

Knowing what to train for is becoming as important as knowing how to train.

2. TVET is increasingly being positioned as part of industrial policy.

Training systems will need stronger connections with changing production systems.

3. Qualifications are becoming an important part of workforce mobility.

A certificate's value increasingly depends on whether others can understand and trust it.

4. Employability is becoming broader than skills.

Employment services, labour-market information, digital access and social protection matter too.

5. AI is changing jobs, not simply creating an “AI skills” category.

Workforce planning needs to consider how tasks and occupations change.

6. Entrepreneurship is part of the workforce equation.

Skills can create not only job seekers but also enterprise creators.

7. South-South cooperation deserves greater attention.

Countries with similar workforce challenges may have valuable solutions to exchange.

25. Conclusion: A Possible New Role for BRICS in Skills

BRICS 2026 should not be described as the creation of a new global skills system.

That would go beyond the evidence.

But it would also be too narrow to describe 2026 simply as another year of ministerial meetings and declarations.

Something more useful has emerged.

Across education, TVET, labour, industry, ICT, youth and women's cooperation, BRICS has increasingly connected questions that are often addressed separately:

What skills are needed?

How can those needs be identified early?

How should people be trained?

How should training connect with industry?

How can skills be assessed and recognised?

Can qualifications become more portable?

How can workers find employment across changing labour markets?

How can technology expand employment opportunities?

How can people create enterprises rather than only seek jobs?

How can workers continue learning throughout their careers?

This is where the real significance of BRICS 2026 lies.

The grouping has not yet created a common skills market.

It has not created a common qualification framework.

It has not established a unified labour-market information system.

And several of its most ambitious initiatives remain at the proposal, development or cooperation stage.

But it has created or advanced mechanisms that **could connect these areas more closely over time.**

For the global skills ecosystem, particularly the Global South, that makes BRICS worth watching.

The next few years will show whether these initiatives remain largely within the BRICS policy process or develop into practical models of South-South cooperation that influence the wider conversation on skills, employment and workforce development.

The measure of success will ultimately be simple:

Can countries become better at anticipating change, preparing people for it, recognising what they can do, and connecting those capabilities with productive and decent work?

If the answer increasingly becomes yes, the significance of BRICS 2026 will extend well beyond the meetings in which these initiatives were announced.

Appendix: Reading the 2026 Outcomes Correctly

A useful way to interpret the BRICS 2026 skills agenda is to classify developments according to their current stage.

Development	2026 position	What it could lead to
BRICS-TCA	Continuing cooperation	Joint TVET projects and knowledge exchange
International Skill Gap Study	Proposed/advanced	Comparable skills intelligence
BRICS Skills Competition	Proposed	Skills excellence and visibility
Compendium of Good Practices	Under development	Cross-country learning
BRICS Education Ministers' Declaration	Adopted	Continued education/TVET cooperation
Mutual Recognition of Qualifications	Further cooperation required	Greater qualification portability
BRICS CONNECT	Adopted	South-South capacity building and knowledge exchange
Skills forecasting	Political commitment	Better anticipation of labour-market change
Remote Employment Platform	Initiative to establish	Potential cross-border digital employment
BRICS Centre for Industrial Competencies	Established framework	Industry 4.0 and MSME capability development
BRICS Incubator Network	Proposed/advanced	Cross-border start-up cooperation
Startup Innovation Fund	Proposed/further consideration	Potential innovation financing
Youth cooperation	Joint Statement adopted	Skills, entrepreneurship and innovation cooperation
Women's digital capacity initiatives	Welcomed	Digital inclusion and entrepreneurship support

Summary

The strongest way to understand BRICS 2026 is not as a collection of skills-related announcements.

It is as an attempt to connect **the different parts of a workforce system**.

The significance for the global skills ecosystem will depend on whether that connection becomes practical.

From information to forecasting.

From forecasting to training.

From training to industry.

From qualifications to mobility.

From employment to entrepreneurship.

And from one-time training to lifelong learning.

That is the direction to watch.

Key sources used to ground the analysis

The report draws primarily on official BRICS/Indian government material and the ILO's 2026 BRICS work:

- [BRICS New Delhi Declaration — 12 September 2026](#) — particularly important for skills forecasting, BRICS CONNECT, worker mobility, TVET-industry linkages and the proposed remote-employment platform.
- [13th BRICS Education Ministers' Meeting — Ministry of Education](#) — TVET, mutual recognition, research/innovation and education cooperation.
- [BRICS-TCA Symposium and Joint Management Committee Meeting — MSDE](#) — International Skill Gap Study, Skills Competition and Good Practices Compendium.
- [12th BRICS Labour & Employment Ministers' Meeting — Ministry of Labour & Employment](#) — BRICS CONNECT and the future-of-work agenda.
- [ILO: Building partnerships for decent work — BRICS 2026](#) — useful for the South-South cooperation and global-skills interpretation.
- [ILO: Lifelong learning and skills for the future, 2026](#) — provides the broader global context around AI, digitalisation, green transition, demographic change and evolving skills demand.
- [BRICS Centre for Industrial Competencies — DPIIT/PIB](#) — Industry 4.0, MSMEs and workforce competencies.
- [BRICS Industry Ministers' Meeting — PIB](#) — MSMEs, Industry 4.0, start-ups, incubator network and Startup Innovation Fund.
- [BRICS Youth Ministers' Meeting — PIB](#) — education, training, skills, entrepreneurship and youth cooperation.
- [BRICS Women's Track — PIB](#) — women's digital inclusion, entrepreneurship, skills and capacity building.