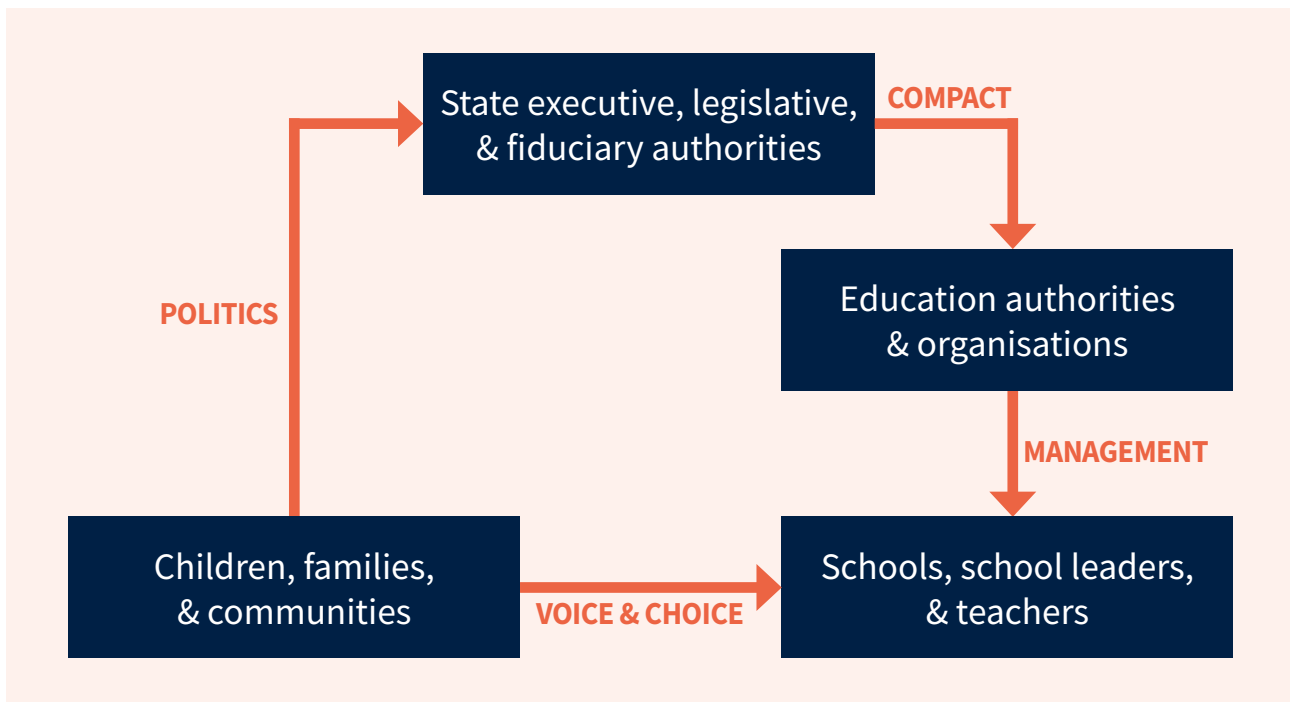# RISE
RESEARCH ON IMPROVING
SYSTEMS OF EDUCATION

The RISE Education Systems Diagnostic Toolkit

**A set of tools
to select strategic priorities
for improving learning for all children**

State executive, legislative, & fiduciary authorities

COMPACT

Education authorities & organisations

POLITICS

MANAGEMENT

Children, families, & communities

VOICE & CHOICE

Schools, school leaders, & teachers

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February 2023

The RISE Education Systems Diagnostic Toolkit

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1 Inception

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Note: If the hyperlinks in this document to the Planning and Analysis Tools and the Example Materials from the Pilot Studies no longer work, please check https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-Misc_2023/09 and https://riseprogramme.org/tools/rise-education-systems-diagnostic for the most recent versions of the Diagnostic toolkit.

Part 1. **OVERVIEW**

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What is the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic?

The RISE Education Systems Diagnostic is a set of tools to support local actors in selecting high-level strategic priorities to improve student learning based on the latest education systems research.

The Diagnostic can be implemented at the national, regional, or local levels. As of 2022, the Diagnostic has been implemented in seven field-based studies across Africa, Asia, and Latin America, led by diverse teams spanning NGOs, think tanks, consultancies, academic researchers, and government counterparts.[1] These teams have used the Diagnostic for a range of objectives, including:

- **Policy prioritisation**: Diagnosis of key misalignments between different parts of the education system, in order to identify and prioritise the policies that might resolve these misalignments and improve student

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[1] For an overview of these applications of the Diagnostic, see *Applications of the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic*.

learning. This objective would lend itself to strategic exercises and reviews of sector priorities and education sector plans.

- **Programme design**: Diagnosis of the alignments and misalignments between an ongoing or planned educational programme and different parts of the wider education system. This objective would be useful to organisations trying to ensure a soon-to-be-launched programme "lands" within the wider system and achieves its intended impact.
  - **Retrospective policy analysis**: Backward-looking diagnosis of the education system and a policy in question to explain the success or failure of a reform and its impact on student learning. This objective would be useful to organisations seeking to understand success or learn from failure.

Systems thinking in the Diagnostic

This Diagnostic was developed by the RISE Programme, a long-term, multi-country research endeavour studying how education systems can overcome the learning crisis[2] and cultivate learning for all children. A key premise of RISE and of the Diagnostic is that the challenges facing education systems are complex. Systemic educational challenges involve interactions and feedback loops among different actors, structures, processes, and resources. These interactions mean that introducing a standalone policy reform can have unpredictable consequences for schools, classrooms, and students. Instead, we need to look at education systems holistically and to identify reform priorities strategically. This attention to complexity, interactions, and different parts of a system is called systems thinking.

Accordingly, the Diagnostic is anchored in the RISE Education Systems Framework (Pritchett 2015; Silberstein and Spivack, 2023). This framework is encapsulated in a 5x4 matrix that lays out the key relationships of an education system, the elements that characterise them, and the interactions between them.[3]

Using this framework, RISE has designed, piloted, and refined this Diagnostic approach to identify constraints and priorities for reform in an education system. The approach identifies the key actors in the education system, specifies the relationships between them, identifies the primary alignment(s) of these relationships, exposes misalignments within the system, and identifies priorities for reform.

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[2] The "learning crisis" refers to the fact that although the overwhelming majority of children today receive at least some schooling, many school-going children are not given meaningful opportunities to learn, such that large proportions of children finish primary school without learning how to read or to do basic arithmetic. For more on this, see https://riseprogramme.org/systems-thinking/learning-crisis.

[3] For more on this framework, see *Understanding the RISE Systems Framework*.

Figure 1. The Diagnostic is based on the RISE Systems Framework, which maps the relationships between actors in an education system and explores the effects of these relationships on systemic outcomes.
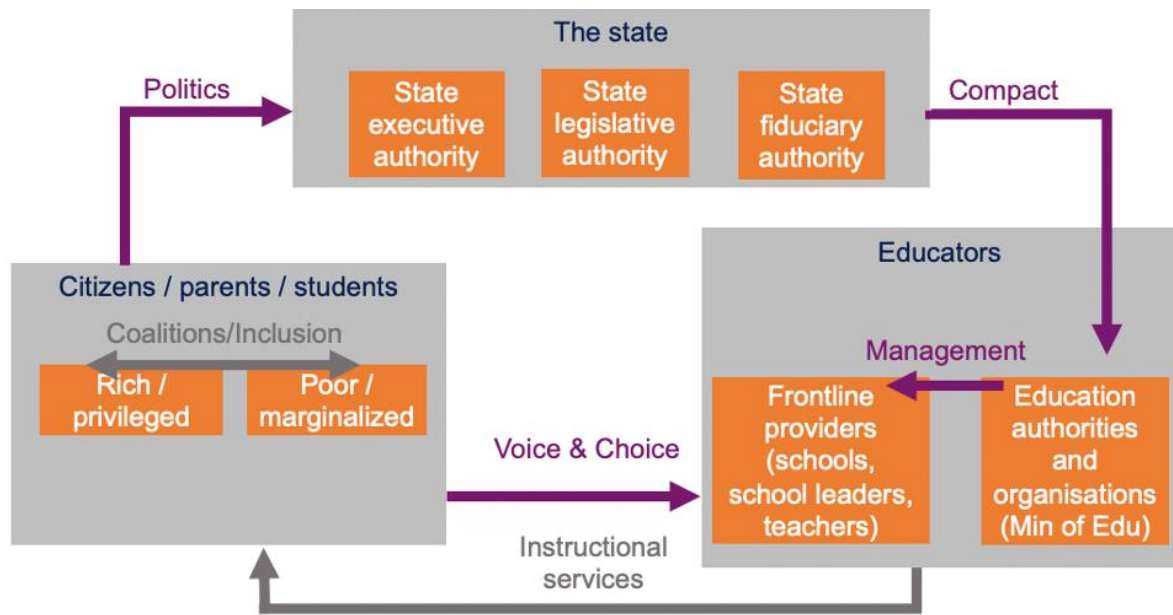
Source: Adapted from Pritchett (2015)

The Diagnostic in practice

The RISE Education Systems Diagnostic has three purposes:

- **Diagnose**: Facilitate the use of systems thinking to diagnose the components of the education system that are not working together as well as they could to deliver learning.

- **Prioritise**: Facilitate high-level prioritisation of one or two key areas of the system for reform in order to create better alignment around improving learning outcomes.

- **Build consensus**: Foster a common understanding across stakeholders of both the diagnosis and the priorities.

To achieve this, the Diagnostic analysis involves three components:

- Identifying the **main alignment(s)** of each accountability relationship between different actors in the education system.

- Identifying **key misalignments** within the education system.

- Identifying **priorities for intervention** to improve system outcomes.

Typically, the Diagnostic is led by a local team. This team could be based at a range of organisations, such as a think tank, government advisory organisation, civil society organisation, consultancy, or a university. It often involves a collaboration with government. However, other configurations are possible, such as a research organisation conducting the diagnostic on its own, or an organisation conducting the diagnostic with stakeholders other than government. Additionally, a steering committee comprising stakeholders from government and other parts of the education system should be formed to advise the research team. This steering committee will be involved in formulating recommendations based on the Diagnostic fieldwork and analysis.

The Diagnostic aims to generate a shared understanding among actors about the challenges the education system faces, and to facilitate the identification of priorities for intervention. Accordingly, the process is highly participatory. Workshops with government and other stakeholders form the core of the diagnostic data collection process, and the final recommendations of the process are generated by the steering committee, based on the analysis conducted by the research team.

Besides this shared understanding, the tangible final output of the diagnostic is a final report: a narrative-driven document describing the major misalignments within the education system that hinder children's learning, and outlining top priorities for reform. From inception to final report, teams should plan on a timeline of approximately six months for implementing the Diagnostic.

How to use this toolkit

The RISE Diagnostic Toolkit comprises eight sections, all of which facilitate the implementation of the Education Systems Diagnostic. These eight sections are divided into three parts.

Part 1: Overview

Introduction

This introductory section aims to acquaint readers with the Diagnostic and to offer a **preview** of the rest of the toolkit.

Applications of the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic

This section lets users **explore** the range of its possible applications. It gives a brief description of the Diagnostic pilot studies conducted thus far. Each pilot study is discussed in terms of its context, purpose, implementation partners, implementation approach and adaptations, and key findings.

Prospective users of the Diagnostic may find these summaries of prior diagnostic studies useful for determining whether the Diagnostic would be a good fit for their contexts and goals.

Part 2: Implementation

Understanding the RISE Systems Framework

This section lays out the conceptual background necessary to **understand** the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic. It describes the RISE 5x4 framework and how this framework applies systems thinking to education reform.

Key concepts explored in this section include: accountability relationships, the elements of these relationships, alignments of these relationships with various key objectives, and the types of misalignments that can emerge in education systems.

Guide to Applying the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic

This section provides step-by-step guidance in order to **apply** the Diagnostic through its six phases:

- inception,

- desk review,

- stakeholder workshops and interviews,

- analysis,

- prioritisation workshop, and

- final report.

This guide highlights points to consider in designing a diagnostic study, as well as potential adaptations of the Diagnostic approach to better suit different contexts.

Planning and Analysis Tools

The Planning and Analysis Tools, which take the form of a Microsoft Excel workbook,[4] enable users to **analyse** the key alignments and misalignments within their education systems.

Three of these tools facilitate planning during the inception, desk review, and stakeholder workshop and interview phases.

- Tool #1. Steering committee list

- Tool #2. Stakeholder list

- Tool #3. Document list.

The other four tools should be used throughout data collection and analysis. These tools are designed to both inform the research process and record emerging observations during the desk review, workshops and interviews, analysis, prioritisation, and final report writing.

- Tool #4. Compact analysis

- Tool #5. Management analysis

- Tool #6. Voice & choice relationship

- Tool #7. Misalignments analysis

Part 3: Resources

Glossary

Users can **refer** to the glossary for quick explanations of all of the terminology used in the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic Toolkit.

Training Video and Slide Decks

This video recording of a Diagnostic training session conducted in March 2022, along with slide decks from this and other training sessions, can help users to **equip** themselves (during the inception phase) for

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[4] Specifically, a macro-enabled Microsoft Excel workbook—with the file extension .xlsm rather than .xlsx—to take advantage of a macro that allows guidance notes in the spreadsheets to be shown or hidden as needed.

implementing the Diagnostic. The slide decks may also be adapted for informing local stakeholders about the diagnostic.

Example Materials from the Pilot Studies

This section showcases a selection of materials from the Diagnostic pilot studies conducted in 2022. It includes examples of data collection tools and workshop slide decks that have been used in the field, together with examples of inception reports, desk reviews, and final reports. The hope is that this section will **inspire** users as they design and implement their own Diagnostic studies.

References

Pritchett, L. (2015). Creating Education Systems Coherent for Learning Outcomes. RISE Working Paper Series. 15/005. https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-WP_2015/005.

Silberstein, J., & Spivack, M. (2023). Applying Systems Thinking to Education: Using the RISE Systems Framework to Diagnose Education Systems. RISE Insight. 2021/028. https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-RI_2021/028.

Applications of the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic

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1 Inception
2 Desk review
3 Stakeholder workshops & interviews
4 Analysis
5 Prioritisation workshop
6 Final report

More details on each phase are available in the Application Guide (Part 2).

Introduction

The RISE Education Systems Diagnostic aims to facilitate and support governments and organisations in selecting high-level strategic reform priorities to improve learning, based on the latest education systems research.

The RISE Programme has developed a framework for conceptualising an education system. This RISE accountability framework (Pritchett, 2015), also known as the RISE systems framework or the 5x4 framework, can be used to identify the key actors in the education system, specify the relationships between them, identify the primary alignment(s) of the relationships, and pinpoint any misalignments between different parts of the system.

This framework has been adapted to create a diagnostic tool meant to identify constraints to education progress and priorities for system reform (Silberstein and Spivack, 2023). Between 2019 and 2022, the RISE Programme worked with partners on seven field-based pilots of the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic. Each

pilot took place in a different country with a different partner organisation. The pilots were conducted with a focus on various levels of the system. Some pilots were conducted in close collaboration with and on behalf of the national government, others with state or provincial governments, and others focused on district level government with results applied to NGO programmes. The RISE Programme internally conducted three additional desk-based exercises that used the approach for retrospective analysis of education policies or programmes.

The primary intended audience for this document is teams considering whether to use the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic. It attempts to answer some of the important questions that attend the invention of any new tool, especially "Where has this been done before?" and "What was the outcome?" This document serves as an entry point for those exploring the tool, while the other resources in the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic Toolkit paint a fuller picture of the diagnostic process.

This document has three subsections. The first provides a high-level overview of the ten existing applications of the Diagnostic. The second focuses on the seven existing field-based pilots, and describes the context, notable departures from the guide to applying the Diagnostic, and main findings from each. The third summarises the three desk-based case studies produced using the Diagnostic.

Overview of the ten applications of the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic

Table 1 below provides an overview of the ten completed projects that have used the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic. They illustrate the diversity of use cases for the Diagnostic. It has been used successfully by academics, think tanks, consultants, and non-profit organisations. It is also flexible enough to speak to different primary audiences, which have included national governments, sub-national governments, and education organisations.

The Diagnostic can serve at least three broad objectives:

- **Policy prioritisation:** Diagnosis of key misalignments between different parts of the education system, in order to identify and prioritise the policies that might resolve these misalignments and improve student learning. This objective would lend itself to strategic exercises and reviews of sector priorities and education sector plans.
- **Programme design:** Diagnosis of the alignments and misalignments between an ongoing or planned educational programme and different parts of the wider education system. This objective would be useful to organisations trying to ensure that a soon-to-be-launched programme "lands" within the wider system and achieves its intended impact.
- **Retrospective policy analysis:** Backward-looking diagnosis of the education system and a policy in question to explain the success or failure of a reform and its impact on student learning. This objective would be useful to organisations seeking to understand success or learn from failure.

The earliest pilot, launched in late 2019, was in Ghana. The RISE Education Systems Diagnostic was still being developed at the time of this launch, and some RISE Directorate members travelled to Ghana to co-develop the tool and participate in fieldwork and analysis. The pilots in Balochistan (Pakistan), Ecuador, Gauteng (South Africa), a state in northern India, and Uganda, together with a set of pilots in Global School Leaders partner countries were all launched around the same time in 2022.[5] These teams participated in training

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[5] The details of some pilots have been anonymised. There was a long break between the initial pilot in Ghana and subsequent pilots due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

sessions with the RISE team on the fully drafted diagnostic tool. RISE team members conducted regular check-ins (approximately every six weeks) with pilot leads, and three all-group meetings were held with the teams to allow for opportunities for peer feedback across the pilots. The desk-based exercises were conducted in 2021 and 2022 by RISE Directorate team members and were published in working papers (Kaffenberger and Spivack, 2022; Kaffenberger, Silberstein, and Spivack, 2022).

Table 1. Overview of pilots of the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic.

	Geographic focus	Pilot lead(s)	Pilot lead organisation type	Government counterpart and/or level of analysis	Objective
Field-based	Balochistan, Pakistan	Verso Consulting and Juniper Policy Consulting	Consultancy	Provincial government	Retrospective policy analysis to support longstanding engagement with elected officials to prioritise quality education
	Ecuador	SUMMA and former Ecuadorian government officials	Think tank	National Ministry of Education	Policy prioritisation
	Gauteng, South Africa	University of the Witwatersrand	Academic researchers	Provincial Ministry of Education and National Planning Committee	Policy prioritisation
	Ghana	Education Partnerships Group	Consultancy	National Ministry of Education	Policy prioritisation as part of the World Bank Ghana Accountability for Learning Outcomes Project (GALOP)
	GSL partner countries	Global School Leaders (GSL) and affiliated researchers	NGO and academic researchers	Various	Programme design to guide GSL programmes and policy advocacy
	A state in northern India	Central Square Foundation	NGO	State Ministry of Education	Policy prioritisation
	Uganda	Economic Policy Research Centre	Think tank	Education Policy Review Committee	Policy prioritisation
Desk-based	Sobral, Brazil	RISE Directorate team	Academic researchers	No counterpart, analysis at city level	Retrospective policy analysis of successful municipal efforts to improve foundational learning
	Indonesia	RISE Directorate team	Academic researchers	No counterpart, analysis at national level	Retrospective policy analysis of Indonesian teacher pay reforms' failure to improve learning outcomes
	Eastern Cape, Limpopo, and Western Cape South Africa	RISE Directorate team	Academic researchers	No counterpart, analysis of an NGO called Funda Wande	Retrospective policy analysis to understand an NGO's success

A note on the repeated references to the concept of "misalignment" in the pilot findings described below: The Diagnostic is designed to identify different types of misalignments in the education system. There are **two broad types of misalignment**s:

- The first type of misalignment occurs when a part of the education system is designed to primarily achieve **a purpose other than learning**. Although education systems can and should fulfil multiple purposes, cultivating children's learning is a fundamental purpose of any education system. The Diagnostic distinguishes between alignment for learning and alignment for selection, access, compliance, and patronage/special interests.

- The second type of misalignment is **between different parts of the system**. This can be between different education stakeholders—such as politicians and civil servants—or between different educational processes—such as the goals prescribed by education authorities (e.g., curriculum) and the information used to measure progress against those goals (e.g., assessments).

For a much more detailed discussion of (mis)alignment, see *Understanding the RISE Systems Framework*.

Field-based cases

Balochistan, Pakistan

Pilot context

The Balochistan diagnostic was led by a team of policy consultants and government advisors collaborating across two organisations: Verso Consulting and Juniper Policy Consulting. This team has been working in Balochistan for many years and was involved in helping to craft education sector plans in 2013 and 2019.

In 2010, responsibility for education provision in Pakistan devolved to the state level. While this led to increased political attention, spending, and policy reforms for the education sector in Balochistan, both schooling access and learning outcomes have remained largely unchanged. The team used the pilot to retrospectively diagnose why. They focused on reforms between 2013 and 2018 related to the establishment of new public schools in Balochistan.

The team identified two counterparts in government: 1) a small number of senior bureaucrats, and 2) the Strategic Planning and Reforms Cell (SPRC) based in the Planning and Development Department of the Government of Balochistan. In addition to tailoring the Diagnostic to the needs of the SPRC, the team intends to use the results of their diagnostic to inform their own activities, in particular their plans to work with political parties to improve their education reform platforms.

Implementation approach and notable adaptations

The Verso and Juniper team followed the approach laid out in the guide to applying the Diagnostic. One notable adaptation was that, given the team's extensive experience in the education sector in Balochistan, the team started by filling in the [Diagnostic analysis tools](#) through a series of internal discussion sessions. This

allowed the team to take advantage of their expertise and to use the desk review[6] and subsequent fieldwork to target specific knowledge gaps or points of contention.

Uniquely among the other pilots, the team also made politics a focus of their study. RISE did not provide supporting materials to analyse the politics relationship,[7] so the team created their own template. The team believed that politics was a key driver of the alignment of the other parts of the system to the extent that leaving it out would severely limit the study.

Findings

The overall finding of the study is that **the education system is well aligned—but around patronage, not learning**. In analysing the school construction reforms, the study is careful to distinguish between de jure (on paper) and de facto (actual) reform goals. The reforms were de jure about improving access, and this is backed by adequate financing and functional information systems that reported on inputs. However, the de facto priority, whether in the relationship between the highest state executive and education authorities or in the relationship between education authorities and schools, is centred around patronage. New schools were built according to political criteria rather than community need. Budgets have therefore been spent inefficiently, and available data was ignored. There is a misalignment between patronage-driven goals and access-oriented finance and information.

The study also describes how patronage has perverted teacher human resource (HR) systems. On one hand, reforms introduced an examination-based teacher recruitment policy. By ensuring that **the teacher recruitment is conducted a rules-based manner**, this policy has helped insulate this aspect of teacher HR from the patronage in the surrounding system. However, **teacher assignment is still driven by patronage and connections**, allowing teachers to transfer out of undesirable rural posts and leaving many schools severely understaffed. Thus, access-aligned reforms in one part of the system (i.e., school construction) are undermined by patronage-aligned norms in another (i.e., patronage-based teacher assignment).

The study also highlights the **misalignment that exists between teacher pay (finance) and incentives to teach (motivation)**. Government teachers are highly paid, with the stated goal of attracting talent, but there are few intrinsic or extrinsic motivators to teach well. The study concludes that high salaries have done little to motivate teachers in the absence of concomitant changes to school culture and teacher career ladders.

For more on this diagnostic pilot study, see this [blog by the JPC-VERSO team](#), as well as their inception report (pp. 5–22), analysis tools (pp. 191–199), and final report (pp. 309–331) in the [example materials from the Diagnostic pilot studies](#).[8]

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[6] For more on the desk review and other phases of the diagnostic, see *Guide to Applying the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic*.

[7] RISE provided detailed supporting material to analyse the other three relationships that comprise the education system: compact, management, and voice and choice. However, an analysis of the politics relationship would require a more in-depth political economy approach, so it has not been included in the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic thus far. For a discussion of alignments of the politics relationship in the RISE Systems Framework, see Belafi (2022). For a discussion of the political economy of education and entry points to align politics around children's learning, see Levy (2022).

[8] Note: If this hyperlink to the example materials from the Diagnostic pilot studies no longer works, please check https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-Misc_2023/09 and https://riseprogramme.org/tools/rise-education-systems-diagnostic for the most recent versions of the Diagnostic toolkit.

Ecuador

Pilot context

The Ecuador pilot was conducted by a team from at SUMMA Laboratorio de Investigación e Innovación en Educación para América Latina y el Caribe, including two former senior government officials (including a former minister) who had served in the Ecuador education system. The team took advantage of its strong networks in government to convene a high-level steering committee, which was the main audience of the diagnostic exercise.

Following a 2008 constitutional reform, Ecuador greatly increased spending on education. While learning outcomes improved between 2006 and 2013, they have stagnated since. The team sought to diagnose why progress on improving learning has stalled based on the current alignment of the system.

Implementation approach and notable adaptations

The team followed the approach laid out in the guide to applying the Diagnostic. One addition they made was to conduct an impact/influence mapping exercise with their steering committee to identify the highest-priority misalignments and potential approaches for addressing them.

The team also translated some of the supporting material to implement the Diagnostic (along with the final report) into Spanish to allow for sharing and discussing key concepts with the steering committee and respondents. *Note*: later in 2023, SUMMA will be launching a Spanish and Portuguese version of the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic Toolkit.

Findings

The pilot's central finding is that the Ecuadorean **education system is predominantly aligned around compliance with centralised administrative requirements**. Many people in the system see their primary job as filling in reports. The emphasis on reporting and tight supervision is a logical or even necessary development aimed at making the system more transparent and less vulnerable to corruption.

However, the report offers multiple illustrations of how **the system's alignment around compliance is also limiting in that it conflicts with the goal of improving learning**. One clear example is that while budgetary decision making has been deconcentrated to the district level, schools still do not have sufficient autonomy over their budget to achieve learning goals. Schools create mandatory improvement plans that include requests for support, but these plans and requests are often unconnected to budgeting decisions and go unfunded. The lack of decentralised autonomy to adapt the curriculum in order to meet learning goals is another good example. Legal and administrative provisions both ask schools to contextualise the curriculum to the local context (including the language of instruction). However, this is misaligned with the standardised guidelines, standardised teacher evaluations, and constant centralised initiatives to change the curriculum, all of which result in the delivery of a one-size-fits-all national curriculum.

Finally, the report highlights the **misalignment between delegated goals around improving teaching quality and the lack of support to achieve these goals**. There are far too few staff assigned to offer pedagogical support. Both these pedagogical support staff and school leaders have multiple roles. By default, they tend to focus on administrative roles such as oversight and reporting rather than offering support. Results on national assessments are not accompanied by targeted feedback to schools. Teachers are overburdened by reporting requirements, and the training they receive is mostly online, asynchronous, and

one-directional without face-to-face feedback that helps them apply their training to classroom practice. The system consistently pursues top-down compliance without offering substantial support.

For more on this diagnostic pilot study, see this [blog by the SUMMA team](#), as well as their desk review report (pp. 33–76), workshop slide deck (pp. 184–190), and final report (in Spanish on pp. 332–367 and in English on pp. 368398) in the [example materials from the Diagnostic pilot studies](#).

Gauteng, South Africa

Pilot context

The Gauteng pilot was led by a team of researchers at the University of the Witwatersrand. Some members of the team have been deeply engaged with the Gauteng Department of Education for many years, and this agency was the government counterpart for this project.

The main question the Diagnostic sought to address was why the province-level Gauteng education system, in alignment with the national Department of Basic Education, has been inconsistent in acting on the large body of existing research and evidence on how to improve early-grade learning in South Africa.

Implementation approach and notable adaptations

The team mainly followed the approach laid out in the guide to applying the Diagnostic, with some key exceptions. For example, the team conducted a significant portion of their analysis via their desk review, consulting an especially wide range of documents at the national, provincial, and district levels. These included planning documents, legislation, policy documents, press releases and newspaper articles.

The team mostly used their interviews and workshops to verify desk-based findings, rather than to gather new data.

Findings

The diagnostic exercise identified two key misalignments that were preventing the system from focusing on learning. First, there was a **gap between goals and measurement at multiple levels of the system** (or, in the vocabulary of the Diagnostic, a "misalignment between delegation and information"). The goal of improving the quality of education—including the quality of education in the early years of school—is clearly articulated by most levels of the system (national, provincial, district, families). However, the only reliable measure of "quality" in terms of learning outcomes is the Grade 12 exam. This gap leads to a disproportionate focus on the Grade 12 National Senior Certificate pass rates, and a damaging lack of attention to early-grade learning. The absence of systemwide information on early-grade reading and mathematics achievement also constrains actors within the system: districts have limited ability to hold schools accountable for learning; families have limited ability to exercise their considerable de jure power on school governing bodies in order to improve student learning; and families also have limited ability to exercise the considerable choice available to them to select between public schools on the basis of learning outcomes.

Second, across the national education system, the **relationship between districts and schools is strongly aligned for process compliance rather than for learning**. This problem is linked to a range of factors, including inadequate human resources, lack of trust, and the wide range of administrative tasks they need to perform. Consequently, districts' main de facto purpose is to function as "pass through" or "post office" administrative units in a top-down relationship with the province. This is in tension with more learning-

oriented policies and rhetoric stating that the districts have a key role to play in supporting quality teaching and professional development according to bottom-up demand from school and teachers. The current dominance of the top-down compliance relationship is visible through many different symptoms: district staff are diverted from support functions to complete administrative tasks; districts are under-resourced in terms of the minimum standards for support (e.g., number of schools and teachers assigned to support staff); district staff are selected without regard to their ability to provide support; and the district's focus on monitoring, rather than supporting, promotes and reflects a lack of trust between district and school.

The team were asked to present their findings at a meeting of the National Planning Commission.

For more on this diagnostic pilot study, see this blog by the University of the Witwatersrand team, and their final report (pp. 200–260) in the example materials from the Diagnostic pilot studies.

Ghana

Pilot context

The Education Partnerships Group (EPG) was engaged by Ghana's Ministry of Education to create an accountability for learning framework for Ghana. The framework was a loan-linked government deliverable within a large World Bank project.

EPG approached RISE for technical input, and EPG and RISE entered into a partnership to adapt the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic as the basis for this accountability for learning framework. The main audience within government were the high-level officials in the Ghana Education Services (GES) who were responsible for drafting the framework.

Implementation approach and notable adaptations

The Ghana pilot took a different approach than the later pilots. This was both because the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic was still being developed at the time, and because the tool was being used instrumentally to inform a specific government policy document. As a result of government expectations, the Ghana diagnostic was far narrower in scope that the subsequent pilots. It zoomed in on the major data-collection processes of the education system—national assessments, school-level monitoring, inspections, and the national EMIS—and mapped responsibilities and reporting on these processes through 10 layers of the bureaucracy. (The framework was a precursor to a data dashboard to be developed later in the World Bank project cycle.)

This pilot was a learning experience for RISE and directly informed a number of refinements to the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic before further pilots took place. For example, the narrowed scope in Ghana meant that it was difficult to draw conclusions about major misalignments in the system; subsequent pilots emphasised this big-picture systems lens. The data gathered in Ghana was mostly collected through 1-to-1 interviews; subsequent pilots largely conducted workshops with groups of participants to build consensus between stakeholders within the system and formed steering committees to further guide and refine findings. After the project in Ghana, RISE developed additional supporting materials for implementing the Diagnostic, including the guide to applying the Diagnostic and the planning and analysis tools with detailed illustrative indicators to help structure the analysis.

Findings

The Diagnostic found that **data systems in Ghana are mostly aligned around measuring access rather than the quality of learning**. There is relatively little learning-oriented information in the system, and the information that does exist is generated by compliance-oriented processes that report data upward within the bureaucracy but are rarely used to make decisions. For example, the Diagnostic found that the information collected by headteachers and circuit supervisors (the civil servants that interface between the district and school levels) is focused on enrolment and attendance, rather than what has happened inside the classroom. The teaching practices that are included in these monitoring routines—such as the presence of lesson plans or the presence of marked student exercise books—relate to compliance rather than the quality of teaching. The information passed upward in the system focuses on "thin" metrics of whether monitoring was carried out (e.g., number of visits) rather than on the quality of monitoring or its outcomes (e.g., the kind of feedback delivered).

Another set of findings focused on school inspections conducted by the semi-independent National Schools Inspectorate Authority. The Diagnostic found that **the inspection process was mostly aligned to measure teaching and learning**, including observation of classroom practices and student assessment data. **However, there was no systematic process for using the inspection reports**, either to relay the reports back to the school level and help schools act on them, or to aggregate inspection results into a usable input to national policy.

Based on the diagnostic findings, EPG drafted recommendations as to how the government could articulate and strengthen an accountability for learning framework. EPG presented this draft accountability framework to the MOE and Ghana Education Services (GES), and the framework was subsequently adapted and adopted by the government.

For more on this diagnostic pilot study, see [Ghana: Accountability for Learning Framework](#).

Global School Leaders partner countries

Pilot context

Global Schools Leaders (GSL) is a non-profit organisation that aims to improve education systems in low- and middle-income countries by strengthening school leadership. They achieve this by collaborating with governments, schools, other NGOs, and funders to equip school leaders with high-quality, context-appropriate training and tools. In addition, they collaborate with partner NGOs in Brazil, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Kenya to generate practice-based evidence on school leadership and student outcomes.

GSL are using the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic as a tool for cross-country organisational learning, to better understand the systemic misalignments that hinder school leaders from improving teaching and learning. At the time of writing, GSL had piloted the Diagnostic in one partner country with a focus on school leaders, and in another partner country with a focus on the barriers that education officers face in attempting to support school leaders. They intend to implement the Diagnostic in other partner countries, to guide future GSL programmes and policy advocacy.

Implementation approach and notable adaptations

The team drew on the approach laid out in the guide to applying the Diagnostic, making adaptations to suit the contexts of their partner countries as well as their organisational goals. For example, because GSL aims not only to enhance their programme design but also to contribute to the academic research base on school

leadership, their desk review went beyond documents and research reports on the partner countries in question toward the wider research base on educational management, school leadership, and organisational learning.

Another notable adaptation is that, in partnership with a university-based academic, GSL developed a survey instrument for school leaders in order to complement stakeholder feedback from the diagnostic workshops with input from a much larger sample of school leaders across a range of locations. This survey instrument is centred on the RISE education systems framework and additionally draws on a range of existing survey instruments (e.g., PISA, TALIS, the Development-World Management Survey). Among other functions, the survey is intended to gather data on school leaders' actual, on-the-ground experiences, as distinct from what is de jure written in policy documents.

Findings

The team found that school leaders are expected to spend large amounts of time on administrative reporting upward, but there were no clear mechanisms for feeding this information back to the school level in order to improve teaching and learning. In the language of the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic, this suggests that, **in the management relationship between education authorities and schools, there may be a misalignment between the delegated goal of cultivating student learning and the way in which information is used.**

Another finding was that **there is a misalignment between the responsibilities that are delegated to mid-tier education officers and the finance and support that they receive to fulfil these responsibilities**. Specifically, education officers in this context are expected to partner with school leaders to improve school management, teaching, and learning—but they do not have either enough resources to deliver such support nor the autonomy to effectively solve school-level problems.

For more on this diagnostic pilot study, see [this blog from the GSL team](#). For the survey instrument that GSL developed, which can be adapted to other contexts, see pp. 163–183 in the [example materials from the Diagnostic pilot studies](#).

A state in northern India

Pilot context

The pilot in a northern Indian state was conducted by the Central Square Foundation (CSF). Their team was able to incorporate the pilot into a larger engagement with the state government, one of 12 such engagements CSF has with states in India to support their implementation of renewed efforts to improve foundational literacy and numeracy.

This diagnostic pilot was incorporated into CSF's ongoing partnership and work with the state. The pilot began at a time of political transition after state-level elections resulted in a change of government. This created an opportunity for the findings of the Diagnostic to influence the approach of the incoming state government, including through presentations and workshops with state administrative, academic, and political leaders.

Implementation approach and notable adaptations

The team mainly followed the approach laid out in the guide to applying the Diagnostic, with two key adaptations. First, due to a request from the state-level steering committee, the team designed the data-collection workshops and interviews to be as representative of state-wide education stakeholders as possible. They held discussions in several districts across the state and spoke not only with top bureaucrats, other government officials, headteachers, and teachers, but also with NGOs, parents, and children.

Second, while the team explained the diagnostic analytical framework to the steering committee, they did not do so during stakeholder workshops. Instead, they developed questionnaires using familiar local terminology that allowed them to facilitate the stakeholder meetings as group discussions framed in the vocabulary of the stakeholders present, rather than emphasising the less familiar conceptual framework and vocabulary of the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic.

Findings

Overall, the Diagnostic found that **the state education system is aligned toward access and selection, but is beginning to shift toward alignment to learning**.

The Diagnostic also uncovered some ongoing challenges in the process of shifting toward an alignment for learning. For example, **there is a need to further unpack the idea of "quality education"**. It is currently interpreted by different parts of the system according to criteria that relate more to access than learning (e.g., in terms of enrolment, inputs, teaching time, exam scores). Quality needs to be more closely linked to clear learning outcome goals. Similarly, the education system needs to reorder priorities for teachers, such that "good teachers" are defined in relation to "good teaching". Teacher recruitment, teacher pay, teacher training, teacher appraisal, and teachers' most important responsibilities are not currently related to a clearly defined set of teaching competencies and practices.

Another unresolved issue is that **the budgeting process is highly centralised, leaving little room for the district level or below to inform budget allocations or flexibly meet local needs**. Financing is mostly tied to administrative processes and budget headings related to access, and relatively little financing is tied to or monitored in terms of its impact on learning.

For more on this diagnostic pilot study, see this [blog by the CSF team](#), as well as their data collection instruments (p. 77–147) in the [example materials from the Diagnostic pilot studies](#).

Uganda

Pilot context

The diagnostic pilot in Uganda was initially suggested by counterparts at the UK government's Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office. The RISE team sought out EPRC, a think tank, to conduct the pilot.

The EPRC team reviewed the stakeholder context and won approval from the Ministry of Education and Sports to conduct the pilot. The pilot focused on primary education. EPRC formed a steering committee comprising representatives from the Ministry of Education and Sports, Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, the National Planning Authority, civil society organisations, faith-based foundation bodies (involved in establishing many primary schools), and the Education Policy Review Commission (a government-sanctioned committee working to review and rewrite the white paper that guides the high-level strategic vision for the education sector in Uganda).

Implementation approach and notable adaptations

The team largely followed the approach laid out in the guide to applying the Diagnostic.

One notable adaptation was the careful sampling at the district level. While the team conducted key informant interviews with central government officials, the bulk of the qualitative fieldwork was conducted through focus group discussions at the district level. The team sampled districts in eight different regions and conducted nearly a full week of fieldwork per region. This allowed them to speak with different groups of stakeholders on different days (e.g., District Education Officers, school inspectors, school principals and school management committee representatives, teachers, and parents) since the team felt that even small hierarchical differences between respondents would preclude open and honest discussions.

Findings

Even at the primary school level, the study finds that **most parts of the Ugandan system are aligned around selection—identifying and furthering the education of top-performing students—rather than ensuring learning for all**. Government officials, the education bureaucracy, and parents all focus predominantly on pass rates on the primary school leaving exam (PLE) rather than curriculum mastery or learning gains. One symptom of this is how the multiple "contradictions" between the primary curriculum and PLE exams are resolved. In Uganda, the curriculum and exams are prescribed by different government bodies, and amidst the resulting misalignments the pressure to teach to the test often wins out. Teachers call this "delivery of the curriculum in an examination format," where the curriculum is taught through test questions. Another telling symptom was that teachers have largely ignored a newly adopted "abridged curriculum" which emphasises continuous, formative assessment. Instead, teaching remains focused on training students to take the summative PLE since this is the ultimate arbiter of both student and teacher performance.

The study also emphasised **misalignments between the curriculum and the support offered to teachers to help them deliver the curriculum**. Changes to the curriculum—even changes launched as long ago as 2003–2004—are not well understood at the school level due to insufficient in-service training offered through broken cascade models. Pre-service training also often does not match on-the-job expectations. For example, curriculum reforms state that the early grades of primary school must be delivered in local languages, but pre-service preparation is still in English for all teachers.

Finally, the report notes that **some parts of the Ugandan system are aligned to promote access**. Most prominently, financing of public schools is tied to school enrolment levels, so this is a major preoccupation for the Ministry of Education. For example, school inspections emphasise enrolment-related information, paying relatively little attention to what is actually happening inside classrooms.

For more on this diagnostic pilot study, see the data collection instruments (pp. 148–162) and final report (pp. 261–308) from the EPRC team in the [example materials from the Diagnostic pilot studies](#).

Desk-based cases

Pilot contexts

All three of the desk-based pilots were conducted by members of the RISE Directorate as inputs to working papers.[9]

- One case study mapped a series of education reforms in the Brazilian city of Sobral beginning in 2001 to the RISE systems framework to understand their dramatic success in improving foundational learning outcomes. The results contributed to Section 3 of Kaffenberger and Spivack (2022). See Table 2.

- The second case study mapped a major 2005 reform which effectively doubled teacher pay in Indonesia to the 5x4 framework to understand why the reform failed to improve learning outcomes. The results contributed to Section 4 of Kaffenberger and Spivack (2022). See Table 3.

- The third case study mapped the programmes of a well-known South African NGO, Funda Wande, to the 5x4 framework to understand the organisation's success since 2017 in improving foundational learning outcomes. The results contributed to Section 3.2 in Kaffenberger, Silberstein, and Spivack (2022). See Table 4.

Implementation approach and notable adaptations

The approach of the desk-based pilots differed from that of the field-based ones. Rather than considering the different possible orientations of each relationship in a system, the desk-based reviews each took an episode of reform or a programme and mapped it on to the RISE 5x4 framework. In all three instances, this mapping was based entirely on desk research. The outcome of the mapping exercise was to highlight the role that system alignment played in the success or failure of the reform efforts in being studied.

Findings

Each case study mapped out a narrative of how the reform or programme in question impacted —or failed to impact—different parts of the education system. The analyses of the Sobral reforms and the Funda Wande programme show how each worked across multiple parts of the system, moving those parts of the system into greater alignment with learning and, ultimately, producing positive outcomes. In contrast, the analysis of the teacher policy reform in Indonesia shows how it narrowly impacted a single dimension of the system— financing—but neglected to move surrounding levers in the system into alignment with learning and therefore ultimately failed to have an impact. The key contention in all three case studies is that learning only improves when a critical mass of the system's constituent parts is pushed into greater alignment to learning.

The analyses from the three case studies are each summarised in the tables below. Conceptually, each cell in these tables represents a different "part" of the system in the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic.

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[9] Both of these papers are slated for publication as chapters of edited volumes.

Table 2. Diagnostic analysis of the Sobral, Brazil, case study

Five design elements	Principal-agent relationships of accountability			
	Politics	**Compact**	**Management**	**Voice & Choice**
Delegation		• Mayor delegates explicit learning goals, including universal literacy in first two years of primary, and remediation for children in older grades, with • Slogan of "Alphabetizatio n (literacy) at the Right Age"	• Secretariat of Education delegates goals to schools and teachers and brings other system elements in line with the delegated goals	• Parents expressed initial resistance to reform, but regular dialogue from the mayor and Secretariat increased support. Parents were encouraged to reinforce learning goals, ensure their children attend school, and more.
Finance		• Federal education funding increased for poor municipalities, including Sobral	• Financial autonomy devolved to school level, giving more financial independence and responsibility for results	
Support			• Teachers provided with sequenced learning objectives, structured teaching and learning materials, training and professional development, and ongoing feedback and support through classroom observations, all aligned with learning goals.	
Information	• Information on low learning from new assessments were shared publicly by the mayor to increase citizen buy-in for improving learning		• Use of information on learning a top priority for education leadership, with 1/3 of time and effort dedicated to this. • Twice-yearly assessments used by education leadership to measure progress and inform course-correction and strategy. • Teachers supported to use continuous assessment in classroom for regular feedback on student progress and to inform adjustments to instruction.	
Motivation			• Financial incentives for teachers, in-school pedagogical coordinators, and principals for achieving learning goals • Public recognition events for high-performing teachers	

Source: Kaffenberger and Spivack (2022)

Table 3. Diagnostic analysis of the Indonesia teacher reform case study.

Five design elements	Principal-agent relationships of accountability			
	Politics	**Compact**	**Management**	**Voice & Choice**
Delegation	• Teachers' groups argue that higher salaries and professional status will improve performance. • Pressure from teachers' groups to dilute aspects of the law, in particular the teacher certification process.	•Intended reform: delegation from legislative authorities to adopt pay raises for certified teachers to improve learning; Enacted reform: legal provisions on teacher certification significantly diluted producing a de facto universal salary increase.	• Intended reform: Delegation of quality improvement for teaching through merit-based certification process; Enacted reform: merit-based components replaced with superficial effectively universal certification process	
Finance		•Additional financial resources needed for salary increases financed by a constitutional amendment passed around the same time mandating 20% of government spending go to education	• Intended reform: Finance provided to raise salaries for teachers who pass external evaluation for merit-based certification; Enacted reform: Finance provided to raise salaries for teachers who submit a portfolio and/or complete two-week course.	
Support			• Intended reform: comprehensive support and training to teachers who do not pass the certification process; Enacted reform: completion of a two-week course allows nearly automatic certification	
Information			• Intended reform: rigorous external evaluation to verify quality of teacher pedagogical knowledge; Enacted reform: Teacher quality superficially verified through portfolio review or two-week course.	
Motivation			• Intended reform: salary increase for teachers who pass rigorous certification process; Enacted reform: de facto nearly universal salary increase, not contingent on performance.	

Source: Kaffenberger and Spivack (2022)

Table 4. Diagnostic analysis of the Funda Wande case study.

Five design elements	Principal–agent relationships of accountability			
	Politics	**Compact**	**Management**	**Voice & Choice**
Delegation		• Build government support for the foundational learning agenda with clear goals (100% of children reading for meaning and calculating with confidence by 2030)	• Align materials and training with government mandate to teach in local languages. • Ensure that materials are aligned with mandated curriculum and officially sanctioned by authorities	
Finance		• Focus attention on leveraging philanthropic money to improve public sector performance	• Develop reading materials for children in local language, print them in anthologies to reduce costs and make them affordable for low performing schools.	
Support			• Develop teacher training and coach training programs aimed at preparing teachers to teach reading and basic math in local languages.	
Information				
Motivation			• Offer teacher trainings in foundational skills instruction as part of a degree certificate at a university	

Source: Kaffenberger, Silberstein, and Spivack (2022)

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Part 2. **IMPLEMENTATION**

➜ Understanding the RISE Systems Framework

➜ Guide to Applying the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic

➜ Planning and Analysis Tools

Understanding the RISE Systems Framework

The RISE Education Systems Diagnostic Toolkit

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Part 3 RESOURCES

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Each section of the toolkit should be consulted during the indicated phases of the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic:

1 Inception
2 Desk review
3 Stakeholder workshops & interviews
4 Analysis
5 Prioritisation workshop
6 Final report

More details on each phase are available in the Application Guide (Part 2).

Introduction

Most education systems in low- and middle-income countries are experiencing a learning crisis. The last 30 years have seen dramatic success in the expansion of schooling access and attainment for children around the world. Education systems in the majority of low- and middle-income countries have become very successful at achieving schooling for all (or nearly all) children. However, they persistently fail to produce learning for all (Pritchett, 2013, World Bank, 2018). Prior to the pandemic, the World Bank estimated that 53 percent of children in low- and middle-income countries, and nearly 80 percent of children in low-income countries will reach the end of primary school without being able to read a simple text (World Bank, 2019). Recent analysis also shows that this problem has been getting worse, not better over time. Analysing repeated cross-sectional data across 88 countries shows that the "quality" of education—defined as the literacy rate of adults with a given level of schooling—was either stagnant or declining in most developing countries between 1960 and 2000 (Le Nestour et al., 2022).

It is not just the poorest and most marginalised who are being left behind. Even children from households among the socio-economic elite in many low- and middle-income countries fail to master the basics (Pritchett and Viarengo, 2021). If the majority of the children in an education system lack the foundational skills needed

not only to succeed in higher levels of education but also to reach their full potential as adults, then education systems are failing to deliver on one of their fundamental objectives.

How is it that education systems have succeeded in expanding schooling access and grade attainment, and yet consistently struggle to achieve learning for all? How can governments, donors, and civil society better understand the constraints to the achievement of foundational skills in national education systems and identify priorities for reform? Many efforts to address this crisis do not account for the systemic features of education, meaning that they fail to consider the ways that interactions and feedback loops produce outcomes. An accurate and comprehensive diagnosis of why education systems persistently deliver poor learning outcomes is the first step in understanding how national education systems can transform into learning systems, capable of delivering high quality education to all.

This essay summarises a framework for understanding education systems by specifying the system's components and the ways that those components interact to cultivate or undermine learning for children.[10] Since education systems are complex and involve complex interactions, a structured framework for characterising their features can help identify problems and the way towards solutions to overcome them.

Discussions of systems thinking in education can sometimes induce eye-rolls and groans. It is perceived as the purview of academics who want to develop abstract theories or donors who want to spend money on "capacity building", and in either case far removed from the practical, pressing concerns facing policymakers, teachers and students.

To deliver learning for all children, it is certainly correct that the interactions between teachers and students in tens of millions of classrooms around the world will need to improve. Conventional wisdom asserts that those who wish to be useful to policymakers should provide actionable solutions. But an approach that starts with a solution in mind and tries to adapt that solution to fit the context is much less likely to succeed than an approach that starts with a careful definition of the problem and then makes an effort to develop a solution (Andrews, Pritchett, and Woolcock, 2017). Rushing to point to a solution to improve teacher–student interactions ignores the fact that teachers and students are embedded in larger systems that might be the cause of their poor performance and that determine the scope for intervention to improve it.

For example, if too little water is coming out of your tap, increasing the water pressure might seem like an obvious solution. But if the cause of your slow waterflow is a leaky pipe, raising the pressure might just exacerbate the problem. Systems thinking can be a useful approach to diagnose the underlying problem so that solutions are effective.

This document outlines the conceptual thinking behind the RISE Systems Framework and offers a practical approach for how the framework can be applied to diagnose constraints in an education system. It opens with a discussion of what systems thinking is and how it can be useful in understanding outcomes in service delivery sectors like education. Next, it presents the RISE Framework for understanding education systems, including practical guidance for how this framework can be applied. It concludes with a discussion of how a systems perspective—and the RISE Framework in particular—can be used to understand observed outcomes

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[10] This framework builds on, adapts, and expands a general accountability framework for service delivery in the 2004 World Development Report "Making Services Work for the Poor", adapted to education systems in a 2015 paper by RISE Research Director Lant Pritchett, and further illuminated by research and synthesis as part of the RISE Programme.

in education systems and for moving beyond a description of problems towards a diagnosis of why the problem exists and how it can be addressed.

Systems thinking

A system is made up of constituent parts that are connected to each other through complex sets of interactions and feedback loops which cumulatively produce the system's outcomes (Meadows, 2008). Ecosystems are a very familiar example of a system and Table 5 shows a simplified illustration of the components, relationships, and functions of the marine ecosystem.

Table 5. Simplified illustration of the components of a system

System	Components	Relationships	Functions/ emergent properties
Ocean life ecosystem	Sun Chemicals Water Fish Seaweed	Sun shines Water is heated by sun Fish get oxygen from water, and put carbon dioxide into the water Seaweed takes carbon dioxide from water, and light from sun to grow, it puts oxygen into the water Fish eat plants, excrete nitrogen, die and decompose to fertilise seaweed Fish eat other fish Plants use nitrogen to grow	Sustain life New species evolve Struggling species become extinct

Source: Authors' illustrative example based on Meadows (2008)

The components of the system are its visible parts, whether organisms, objects, processes, or the like. But its essential "system-ness" is that there are relationships between the components. These relationships produce the emergent properties of the system. Often, these emergent properties or outcomes are not the explicit goal of any individual element (Meadows, 2008). Sun, water, chemicals, plants, and animals all interact to produce the marine ecosystem. But the sun does not shine so that the seaweed can grow, and the seaweed does not grow so that it can feed the fish. The evolutionary pressures produced by the system—which over time produce advantageous adaptations, and then entirely new species—are not under the control of any single participant in the ecosystem.

Though systems are made up of their components and the relationships between them, they exist as ontologically distinct "things" from those components and relationships. Studying the individual animals and plants of marine ecosystems reveals some useful information, but studying the interactions between the species and how these interactions produce system outcomes can reveal a great deal more.

Because the system's properties are produced by interactions between components, interventions in the system that focus on one element can have unintended consequences. To take a specific example from marine life, in the Pacific Northwest killer whale populations have been steadily rising since the mid 1980s—a victory for conservation of this endangered species. At the same time, though, Chinook salmon populations have been declining. Both species are protected under different provisions of the endangered species act, but provisions of the law only allow for interventions that protect individual species. There are no provisions for

interventions to support the ecosystem when both a predator and prey species are designated for protection (Marshall et al., 2015). A component-by-component approach is insufficient in this case; a solution that takes the interactions and the overall system into account is needed.

Distinguishing between symptomatic and diagnostic thinking

It is relatively easy to grasp the import of systems thinking in physical systems, but it can be harder to see these connections in social systems like education. Medicine is a familiar social system where systems thinking is both essential, intuitive, and commonplace. When a person gets sick, their symptoms can be treated one by one, but correctly diagnosing their ailment first is likely to lead to a better outcome.

Table 6 shows a (highly stylised) list of symptoms and treatments for a mystery ailment. Without a correct diagnosis of what is making the patient ill, treating the symptoms might offer temporary relief, but it cannot offer a cure. Moreover, in some cases treating the patient without an accurate diagnosis could lead to prescriptions that do more harm than good.

Table 6. Symptom-symptom by treatment of disease

Symptom	Symptom Treatment	Possible diagnosis	Possible diagnostic treatment
Fever	Fever reducer	COVID-19 Influenza Bacterial tonsilitis	Plasma with COVID-19 antibodies Tamiflu Antibiotic
Cough	Cough suppressant		
Sore Throat	Pain killer		
Aches	Pain killer		
Weakness	Hydration		
Chills	Warm blankets		
Sweating	Cold compress		

Source: Authors

Poorly performing education systems face many problems. Poor teacher training, poor teacher attendance, poor teaching materials, high dropout rates, and poor learning outcomes are all symptoms of a poorly performing education system.

One way to think of these symptoms is as potential "proximate determinants" of the low learning outcomes of a particular child. A child might emerge from her basic education without foundational skills because her teachers were not adequately prepared to teach her, because there were inadequate or inappropriate teaching and learning materials in her classrooms, because she dropped out of school, or because of some combination of these and other factors. We could point to any one of these as the "cause" or proximate determinant of her low learning outcomes at the end of primary school (Pritchett, 2015).

To improve outcomes, the interactions between teachers and students have to change. Those who want to help facilitate that change often begin by asking: "What needs to be different about this classroom for the student to emerge prepared?" This line of thinking leads to a focus on all of the symptoms/proximate determinants mentioned above. A well-intentioned NGO or government official interested in improving outcomes might observe that there are no textbooks in a classroom. Having identified this symptom, they might reasonably think: "There are no textbooks in this school, so we will provide textbooks. Students will be able to study at home now, follow along better in class, and their learning will improve".

The problem with this symptom-only way of thinking is that it fails to acknowledge that the teacher and student are embedded in a larger system. It doesn't ask why there no books in the classroom in the first place. Failing to develop a diagnostic understanding of the problem can lead to a false conclusion about the cause, and to an intervention solution that has little effect on learning (as in the Glewwe, Moulin, and Kremer, 2009, example discussed below).

Since education systems in developing countries face so many constraints, symptom-by-symptom thinking is tempting. Examples abound of project or programme interventions that look like the "symptom treatments" in the right-hand column of Table 7. Textbooks are missing, so provide them; teachers are absent, so monitor their attendance and enforce it with payment rewards or punishments; students drop out, so provide cash incentives for them to stay in school; and so on. Moreover, the symptom-by-symptom approach is also conducive to the "project dominated" approach to education aid favoured by many donors, making it even more attractive to the sector (Nino Zarazua, 2016).

Table 7. Symptom-by-symptom treatment of the education system

Symptom	Symptom treatment (programme)
Students lack textbooks	Provide textbooks
Weak teaching	Teacher training
Teacher absenteeism	Cameras in classrooms
Students drop out	Scholarships
Weak management	Management training
Poor teacher motivation	Raise teacher salaries

Source: Authors

All too often, programmes are designed to address one of these symptoms, are implemented faithfully, and yet fail to improve learning outcomes. When a programme fails to have the desired impact, it is tempting to look for a devil in the details; i.e., some aspect of programme design or execution that could be tweaked and to produce better performance. But often the devil is in the system, not in the details (Silberstein, 2020b). The programme failed not because of an internal design flaw, but because of a mismatch with the external system.

One example is a 2009 study of the distribution of textbooks to Kenyan schools. A randomised-control trial found no effect of the books on pedagogy or average test scores, but a positive effect on test scores of the best performers. The authors noted that the textbooks were in English and so were inaccessible to most of the students, who could not read English well. The books were the standard government textbooks for this grade level, so the fact that they were in a language that most children could not read reflected the elite orientation of the Kenyan curriculum at the time. The intervention was designed under the assumption that lack of resources for textbooks was the constraint to performance in Kenya. But, as the evaluation revealed, the deeper cause of poor performance in the Kenyan system was a curriculum that moved too quickly and left students behind (Glewwe, Moulin, and Kremer, 2009). This type of systemic misalignment is common in education systems in low- and middle-income countries (Hwa et al., 2020).

A second example can be found in a study of a teacher policy reform effort in Indonesia in the early 2000s. The 2005 Teacher Reform Law, as originally proposed, aimed to improve teacher quality by providing financial incentives for teachers to receive higher certifications that were meant to include rigorous external assessment. Pressure from teacher lobby groups diluted the law, and the certification process eventually adopted was much a much weaker portfolio submission process and two-week training for those who did not pass. The reform ultimately resulted in the near-universal doubling of civil servant teacher salaries (World Bank, 2013, de Ree et al., 2018). Researchers worked with the government to randomise the rollout of these

increases so that teachers in a group of treatment schools were able to have higher pay sooner, allowing for an assessment of the effects of the salary increase. They found that while teachers were more satisfied with their jobs, the pay increase had no effect on teacher attendance, subject knowledge, or student learning (de Ree et al., 2018). Changing just one component of teacher's employment—their salary—without changing anything else about the system teachers were embedded in did not change their behaviour.

A final example comes from a more recent study conducted as part of the RISE Programme. In this case, a randomised evaluation studied a large-scale management reform meant to improve teacher performance initially implemented in Madhya Pradesh, India, and then scaled to hundreds of thousands of schools nationally. The programme was modelled on state-of-the-art management approaches, and process evaluations revealed it was implemented faithfully. The results? No impact could be detected on any of the performance indicators the study followed: student absence, teacher absence, monitoring and support by managers, or student test scores. The bureaucrats responsible for implementing the programme filled out paperwork and developed plans for improving schools, as they were required to, but when it came to transforming these plans into actions and changes in teachers' behaviour, the programme broke down. The authors found a "disconnect between the programme's objectives and how it was actually perceived by those implementing it" (Muralidharan and Singh 2020, p. 20). In other words, there was a mismatch between the programme and the system, not a problem with the programme per se (Silberstein, 2020b).

These examples do not prove that providing more textbooks, higher teacher wages, or school improvement plans do not contribute to student learning. Instead, they show that attempts to address these individual problems without considering the wider system are likely to fail.

The RISE Systems Framework

The RISE Systems Framework[11] provides the scaffolding for considering the key relationships in an education system, the elements that constitute each relationship, and the ways in which these relationships jointly produce the system's outcomes. With a clear picture of these in mind, it becomes possible to move beyond symptom-by-symptom responses and to design reforms and interventions that move the system toward producing learning outcomes.

Relationships

In considering the relationships between the components of the system, the RISE Framework draws on the paradigm of a principal-agent relationship. A principal-agent relationship is a model used to describe a situation where one actor (the principal) wants a task accomplished, so they engage another actor (the agent) to complete the task. The principal sets out what is expect of the agent and how the agent will be rewarded for completing the task(s) the principal lays out—in other words, how the principal will hold the agent accountable.[12]
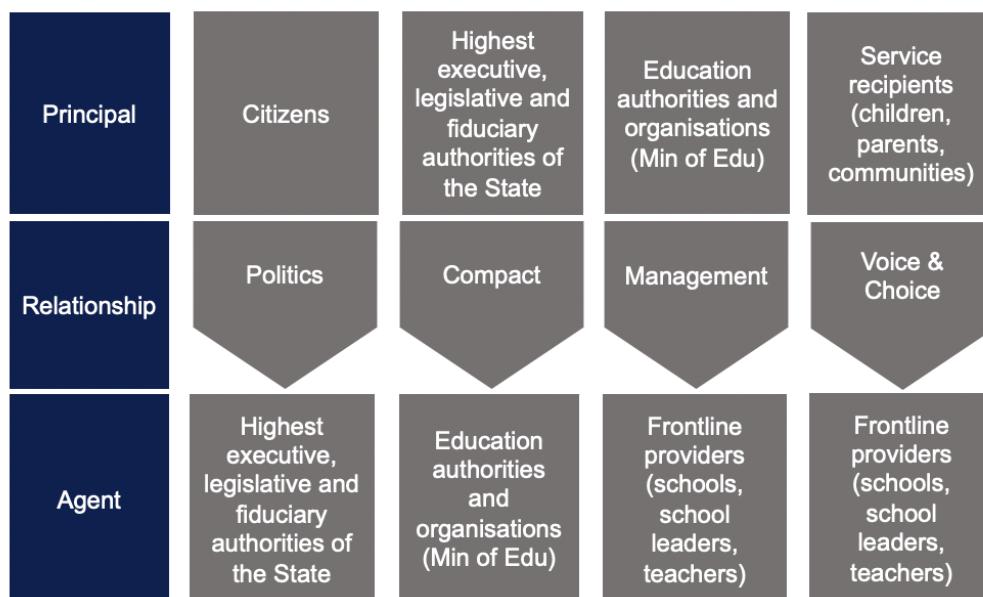
As shown in Figure 2, the RISE Systems Framework describes four key relationships of accountability between the key stakeholders in an education system: citizens; the highest executive, legislative, and fiduciary

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[11] Sometimes referred to as the "5x4", the "accountability triangle", or the RISE accountability framework.
[12] This is why the RISE Framework is sometimes referred to as the "Accountability Framework".

authorities of the state; education authorities and organisations; schools, school leaders, and teachers; and children, families, and communities.

Figure 2. **Four accountability relationships in the education system.**

Principal	Citizens	Highest executive, legislative and fiduciary authorities of the State	Education authorities and organisations (Min of Edu)	Service recipients (children, parents, communities)
Relationship	Politics	Compact	Management	Voice & Choice
Agent	Highest executive, legislative and fiduciary authorities of the State	Education authorities and organisations (Min of Edu)	Frontline providers (schools, school leaders, teachers)	Frontline providers (schools, school leaders, teachers)

Source: Adapted from Pritchett (2015)

Politics is the relationship between citizens[13] (the principal) and the highest executive, legislative and fiduciary authorities of the state (the agent). The citizens can act in their role as the principal in the politics relationship in a number of different ways. These include participating in elections, participating in party activities, and engaging in civil society activities. While the mechanisms through which these activities operate differ between democratic and non-democratic regimes, they are relevant to both.

The executive authority of the state is usually embodied in a President, Prime Minister, or other chief executive. The role of the legislative body in education and budget-setting differs across countries, so its importance in the relationship of accountability varies. The fiduciary authority (i.e., organisation(s) within government that make decisions about budget allocations) usually rests in the Ministry of Finance. In most countries the Ministry of Finance is tightly controlled either by the executive or the legislature (depending on how budgeting is conducted), so the framework groups them together as a joint agent in this relationship.

The politics relationship is the starting point of what has been termed "long route of accountability" because, while the ultimate accountability for service delivery originates with citizens, that accountability passes through political leaders and government agencies before reaching the frontline, where services are actually delivered (World Bank, 2003).

Compact is the relationship between the highest executive, legislative and fiduciary authorities of the state (the principal) and education authorities and organisations (the agent). The principal in the compact relationship is the highest executive, legislative, and fiduciary authority. The organisations and

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[13] Using the term "citizen" here is not intended to suggest that the views and needs of non-citizen residents are not important in the politics relationship. Instead, this is partly a term of convenience and partly a term to highlight the importance of electoral politics in many contexts.

individuals that comprise the agent in the politics relationship are the principal in this relationship. In this way the principal in the compact relationship acts as a conduit to convey the objectives of the politics relationship to the organisations responsible for delivery of education.

The agents of the compact relationship include the Ministry of Education. In many systems, there are other government or non-government organisations that executive, legislative, and fiduciary authorities also delegate education responsibilities to. These can include national curriculum boards, regulatory agencies, or religious authorities that run schools in parallel with the Ministry of Education.

A second set of agents in the compact relationship are private sector actors in education—for example, private schools and private providers of textbooks and other education materials and services. These private actors are another group of organisations, alongside government agencies, responsible for delivery of education. They are often regulated by government and operate with the implicit or explicit permission of government. In this sense, they are an agent of the highest executive authorities.

Management is the relationship between education authorities and organisations (the principal) and school leaders and teachers on the frontline (the agents). In some education systems the management relationship exists within a single organisation: the Ministry of Education. This would be the case if all or most education functions fall under the remit of a single ministry. In others the relationship is more complicated, with multiple organisations in the "education authority" role, and each with their own set of frontline workers. For example, in some systems there are schools that fall under the authority of the Ministry of Education, and other schools that are managed by a religious authority. Also, some areas of authority over schools might be held by the Ministry of Education, while others may be held by the Ministry of Local Government.

The management relationship also includes interactions on at a smaller scale, as between an individual and their boss (i.e., school leaders and teachers), but the framework emphasises the relationship between the leaders or centre of the education organisation, and the frontline providers. This emphasis on the main centre-frontline relationship is partly because every education system's configuration of smaller-scale management relationships is unique to how authority and discretion are distributed in that particular context.

Voice & Choice is the relationship between families and communities (the principal) and school leaders and teachers (the agent). Students, parents, and communities can hold schools and teachers accountable for education primarily in two ways: through exercising their voice to exert pressure on a school or teacher to change, or by using exit (i.e., choice) to leave a school or teacher they are unhappy with and select a different one.

Parents can participate in school committees or parent associations to enhance their ability to exercise voice. As for choice, parents usually exercise choice as an individual decision, not intending to have a systemic effect, but the collective choices of many parents to shift from one school to another, or out of the public sector and into private schools, can have significant effects on the education system overall. Local communities can also exert pressure on schools via representative local government, village groups, or traditional leaders, who can use their platforms to pressure schools and sometimes also control the provision and use of supplemental funds to schools.

School leaders and teachers are in the particularly challenging position of being accountable to two different principals. They are directly accountable to parents and communities in the voice and choice relationship, but they are also accountable to their supervisors at the school or district level, in the management relationship.

Figure 3 shows the "accountability triangle", a graphical illustration of the relationships between the various actors within the system.

Figure 3. Accountability triangle of an education system.
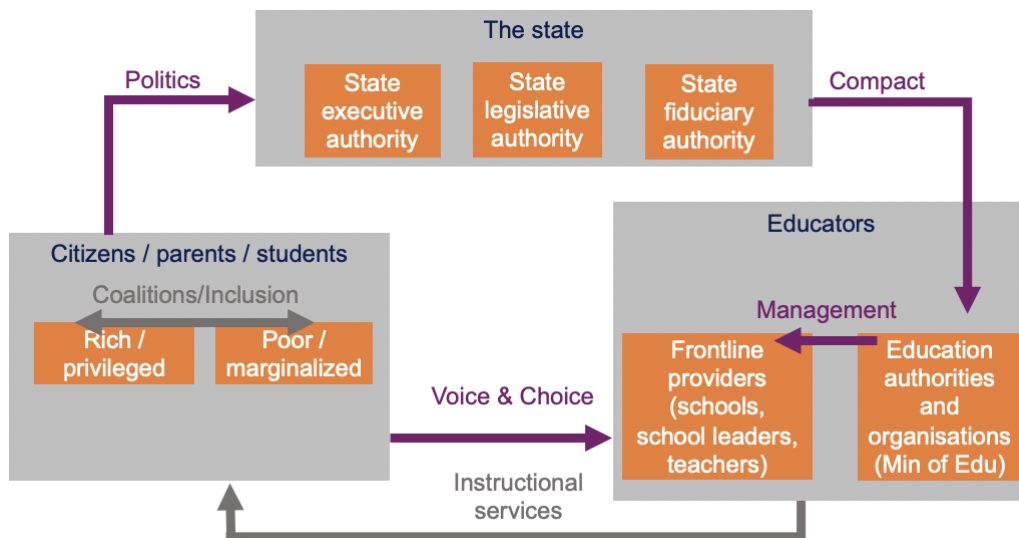
Source: Adapted from Pritchett (2015)

Elements of relationships

There are five elements that are helpful for describing each relationship. These elements describe the nature of the relationship between the principal and the agent in terms of what the principal asks the agent to do, how the principal equips the agent to do it, and monitors and incentivises their performance.

Delegation is what the principal wants the agent to do. For example, in the management relationship the Ministry of Education delegates what should be taught to students via the curriculum.

Finance refers to the resources the principal has allocated to the agent to achieve their assigned task. For example, in the compact relationship the Ministry of Finance allocates budget to the education authorities to carry out educational activities.

Information is how the principal assesses the agent's performance. For example, in the voice & choice relationship parents can gather information about their children's school experience by asking their children how they feel about school or by reviewing their children's test scores.

Support refers to the preparation and assistance that the principal provides to the agent to complete the task. For example, in the management relationship the Ministry of Education may prepare teachers for their job by providing pre- and in-service teacher training.

Motivation refers to how the principal motivates the agent, including the ways in which the agent's welfare is contingent on their performance against objectives. Motivation can be extrinsic (mediated by principal) or intrinsic (mediated by agent). For example, in the voice & choice relationship parents or community groups may directly pressure teachers to improve their attendance at school by calling them out in community meetings for failing to do so.

Combining the four key relationships and five features together, as shown in Table 8, produces the RISE Systems Framework, also known as the 5x4 framework.

*Table 8. **The 5x4 education systems framework***

Five features of each relationship of accountability (Principal (P) to Agent (A))	Principal-agent relationships			
	Politics: Citizens (P) and the highest executive, legislative and fiduciary authorities of the state (A)	**Compact**: Highest executive, legislative and fiduciary authorities of the State (P) and education authorities and organisations (A)	**Management**: Education authorities and organisations (P) and frontline providers (schools, school leaders, and teachers; A)	**Voice & Choice**: Service recipients (parents/children; P) and providers of service (schools, school leaders, teachers; A)
Delegation: What the principal wants the agent to do				
Finance: The resources the principal has allocated to the agent to achieve assigned task				
Information: How the principal assesses the agent's performance				
Support: Preparation and assistance that the principal provides to the agent to complete the task			e.g., Teacher training as part of new curriculum or pedagogical approach	
Motivation: How the principal motivates the agent, including the ways in which agent's welfare is contingent on their performance against objectives				
The performance of the agent is the endogenous, or organic, outcome of the interactions between the actors in the system. The interaction between the actors in the system are characterised by the elements of the relationships. Systems delivers student learning when strong relationships of accountability are aligned across elements for learning objectives.				

Source: Adapted from Pritchett (2015)

Emergent properties: Diagnosing system (mis)alignment

Education systems deliver learning when strong relationships are aligned around a learning objective across their elements (Crouch, 2020). There are at least two types of systemic misalignment that often cause education systems to fail to deliver learning outcomes: 1) Interactions between the parts of the system produce alignment with an objective other than learning; or 2) Interactions between the parts of the system are misaligned with each other.

System (mis)alignments can be thought of as the emergent properties of the system. The emergent properties of the system are the result of the interactions between the constituent parts, and are not under any single part's control. Innovation is an emergent property of an economy, just like a fish's gills are an emergent property of an ecosystem. It may seem like there is an "invisible hand" creating the economy or a "mother nature" orchestrating evolution, but these features emerge from system pressures, not from any intentional

plan. Similarly, alignment and misalignment are outcomes of the system even though they are not intentionally created by any actor in the system.

Alignment around an objective other than learning

Systems deliver learning when relationships of accountability are aligned around learning objectives, but in many systems relationships are aligned around other objectives. The framework can help identify and evaluate the alignment of a relationship of accountability.

Examining each relationship of accountability and its features can point towards the overall alignment of the relationship, which may be implicit or different from explicitly stated purposes. This alignment analysis is best suited to understanding the compact, management, and voice & choice relationships. Analysing the politics relationship requires a different approach and is beyond the scope of this discussion.[14] A primary alignment can be identified by defining the actors and organisations that compose each relationship and then asking what delegation, finance, information, management, support, and motivation look like from the perspective of both the principal and the agent in the relationship.

The most common alignment in education systems is alignment for access and attainment. In relationships aligned for access, the delegation of objectives, the financing of activities, the information used to evaluate performance, the support provided to improve performance, and the motivation to deliver are all geared towards expanding the number of children in school and the years of school they complete. The alignment for access and attainment in most education systems is evidenced by the rapid expansion in enrolment and grade attainment over the last 50 years.

More generally, common alignments include:

Alignment for learning. Elements of the relationship are aligned around learning objectives. Clear goals for learning are articulated, financed, and supported. These types have cohesive voice that advocates for learning for all.

Aligned for access and attainment. Elements of the relationship are aligned around expanding enrolment and grade attainment (getting all children to go to and stay in school). While these systems may talk about educational "quality", it is usually not defined in relationship to learning outcomes, and is instead connected to a laundry list of inputs (e.g., things measured by EMIS) which together set the standard for a minimum "quality" school. Systems like these usually place an emphasis on accounting over accounts, narrowing accountability to a set of thin indicators and paying limited attention to thick narratives that justify actions and explain outcomes (Honig and Pritchett, 2019).

Aligned for socialisation. Elements of the relationship are characterised by an emphasis on spreading or maintaining a socialisation or ideological goal for society through the education system.

Aligned for selection. Elements of the relationship are aligned to select top performers to continue in their education and have access to subsequent opportunities. These "filtration" systems select the lucky minority

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[14] Because an analysis of the politics relationship would require a more in-depth political economy approach, it has not been included in the RISE education systems diagnostic thus far. For a discussion of alignments of the politics relationship in the RISE Systems Framework, see Belafi (2022). For a discussion of the political economy of education and entry points to align politics around children's learning, see Levy (2022).

of children who will graduate and win a place at university, or in the labour market. They prioritise exam scores and signalling.

Aligned for process compliance. Elements of the relationship are dominated by a focus on logistical tasks like keeping to scheduled activities and meeting reporting targets. While these may have originally served a purpose, they are now bureaucratic compliance for the sake of compliance. The technical core[15] and purpose is weak or lost all together, and instead the relationship is dominated by support functions such as human resources, information technology, or procurement (Hwa and Pritchett, 2021). Isomorphic mimicry, a process through which systems adopt the external form of more capable organisations without developing the associated capability (Andrews et al., 2017), may emerge in these types of systems to hide the underlying focus on process compliance. Systems like these usually place an emphasis on accounting over accounts (Honig and Pritchett, 2019).

Aligned for patronage and/or specific interest groups. Elements of the relationship are aligned for a purpose other than education. In the case of patronage systems, short-term, clientelist political objectives dominate. Politicians and those in power use the system as a patronage mill (e.g., to hire teachers, or to build schools for certain constituencies). Another variation of this type of system are those unduly influenced by special interests in which a particular group (e.g., employment/wage concerns of teacher unions, or profits of textbook producers) ensures that their needs are prioritised. When these systems diverge far enough from any core educational purpose, often those who can will opt out of the public system (resulting in a large low-cost private school sector). These systems may try to hide their focus through isomorphic adoption of features of other types of systems, but in reality they do not deliver learning or schooling for all, or subvert the rules in process compliance systems to favour the dominant group.

Some alignments are more relevant to specific relationships. For example, socialisation is most relevant to a discussion of the compact relationship since control over the socialisation function of education is usually contested and monopolised by the state (this alignment may also be pursued by groups of non-state schools in the management relationship, or families in the voice relationship, but more rarely at systemic scale). Process compliance is most relevant to the management relationship since it is typically arises as an administrative approach of an organisation (acting as a principal) seeks to supervise a large number of distributed agents. Table 9 matches the various alignments to their relevant relationships.

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[15] Hwa and Pritchett (2021) define the technical core of an organisation as having two components: a purpose shared by key actors within the organisation and a set of technical practices shared by the actors that advance that purpose. They argue that organisations deliver on their purpose when support functions such as human resources, procurement, IT, and finance operate in service of the core. Organisations can lose their core and become dominated by their support functions either due to conflict over the purpose or erosion of technical practices (Hwa and Pritchett, 2021).

Table 9. Map of the possible alignments of the compact, management, and voice & choice relationships

Relationship	Possible Alignments					
	Learning: Relationship is aligned around all children learning.	**Access:** Relationship is aligned around enrolment and attainment goals.	**Selection:** Relationship is aligned to filter a restricted number of students on to further levels of education.	**Socialisation:** Relationship is characterised by socialisation or ideological goal.	**Process compliance:** Relationship pursues bureaucratic compliance and is dominated by support functions (e.g., human resources, IT, or procurement)	**Patronage and/or specific interest groups:** Short-term clientelist objectives or particular interest groups dominate
Compact	x	x		x		x
Management	x	x	x		x	x
Voice & choice	x	x	x			x

An assessment of which alignment or alignments best describe a relationship can be made by reviewing each element (delegation, finance, information, support, and motivation) of the relationship and considering the alignment that best explains those elements. In the [Planning and Analysis Tools](#),[16] Tools #4, #5, and #6 lay out features that describe the sub-elements of delegation, finance, information, support, and motivation respectively in the case of different possible alignments. Tool #4 shows this for compact, Tool #5 for management, and Tool #6 for voice & choice.

A single relationship (or even a single element) may have multiple, overlapping alignments. Different elements of the system may exhibit traits of one alignment, while other elements conform to a different alignment. This is in keeping with the fact that systems can—and often legitimately should—pursue multiple educational goals. For example, alignment for socialisation is often compatible with alignment for access, as the pursuit of an ideological goal is supported by bringing more children into the school system. Similarly, an approach to teacher allocation may be aligned to increased access and system expansion, even while information about teachers in that system may be more geared towards process compliance. Process compliance is often part of multiple alignments since it is often the bureaucratic means through which systems pursue selection or access goals. Many features of a process compliance system—such as widespread isomorphic mimicry[17]—are compatible with access, selection, and even patronage-aligned systems. However,

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[16] Note: If the hyperlink to the Planning and Analysis Tools no longer works, please check https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-Misc_2023/09 and https://riseprogramme.org/tools/rise-education-systems-diagnostic for the most recent versions of the Diagnostic toolkit.

[17] Pritchett (2013) offers this description of isomorphic mimicry: 'The deception of camouflage also works for organizations. Sociologists borrowed the idea of animal isomorphic mimicry and have applied it to organizational ecosystems to describe how many organizations behave (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). Organizations, particularly in fields in which the desired outcomes are complex to produce and hard to assess, can enhance their organizational survival by adopting "best practice" where it doesn't really matter. Such reforms can make them look like functional organizations. Adopting the forms of best practice without any of the underlying functionality that actually characterizes the best practice can produce quick and easy gains in perception. Such organizations can look like successful organizations while lacking any real success' (p. 96). An example of isomorphic mimicry in an education system might be a school inspection system that only collects information on inputs (e.g., how many teachers have filled in their lesson plan record books) and

the diagnostic approach maintains process compliance as a separate alignment since bureaucratic process can also calcify, in many instances, into its own self-fulfilling purpose. Distinguishing between primary and secondary alignments may be a nuanced judgment that the descriptions in the Planning and Analysis Tools can facilitate.

Alignment between parts of the system

Misalignment between different parts of the system can hinder progress towards learning objectives. There are two main types of misalignment visible within the 5x4 matrix: within a relationship and across relationships.

Within a relationship

Misalignment within a relationship occurs when the different elements within a particular relationship of accountability are pulling in different directions.

For example, within a compact relationship, executive and fiduciary authorities (e.g., the Ministry of Finance) may delegate the objective of improving learning levels but only ask education authorities (e.g., Ministry of Education) for information on enrolment rates. This means that there is misalignment between the delegated priorities and the information used to evaluate the ministry's performance. This undermines the delegated objective, as ministry officials shift their focus to what is being measured, rather than what is being rhetorically delegated, thus weakening the overall relationship of accountability (see Table 10).

Systems often adopt de jure policies that appear to delegate one alignment (e.g., a claim in policy documents that learning or universal expansion are top priorities), but review of the finance, information, motivation, and support elements may indicate that they are aligned with a different purpose. Therefore, such a relationship is misaligned within the relationship (column) in the 5x4 matrix.

Table 10. Examples of misalignment within a relationship

	Politics	**Compact**	**Management**	**Voice & Choice**
Delegation		Executive and fiduciary authorities may delegate learning improvements. e.g., president's office calls for a new initiative to improve test scores.		
Finance				
Information		In regular reporting on Ministry of Education activities and in justification of resources, Ministry of Education is only asked to report on enrolment rates.		
Support				
Motivation				

that results in neither consequences nor targeted support for schools and teachers – it looks like an inspection system, and conducts activities and produces reports that look like inspections, but it serves no actual purpose.

Across relationships

Misalignment between different relationships across relationships (rows) in the 5x4 framework can also produce interactions that fail to prioritise learning.

For example, executive and fiduciary authorities may delegate a focus on access and attainment, but education authorities may try to begin delegating goals around improved learning outcomes. This misalignment in what is being delegated at different levels of the system may cause confusion. It might also result in insufficient finance and support for the learning objectives the Ministry of Education is trying to adopt.

Misalignment between relationships is a particular challenge for frontline providers (teachers and school leaders), who are the only actors in the system who are the agent of more than one principal. As a result, they are particularly vulnerable to misalignment due to inconsistencies between their two principals.

For example, education authorities may want to change the pedagogical approach in schools. They can delegate this change, finance it adequately, provide support to help teachers adopt it, and collect information about the adoption. However, if parents are opposed to the change, they can pressure teachers to stick to the old approach (see Table 11).

Table 11. Examples of misalignment across relationships

	Politics	Compact	Management	Voice & Choice
Delegation			Education authorities introduce pedagogical approach	Parents prefer old approach and express this preference to teachers
Finance			Adequate financing provided to develop and deploy new approach	
Information			Information on adoption of new approach by frontline collected	
Support			Training in new approach provided	
Motivation				Parents and community groups pressure teachers to stick to old approach

Examples of common misalignments

The concept of misalignment helps make sense of familiar problems present in many education systems. Table 12 is an illustrative, and far from exhaustive, list of commonly encountered misalignments.

Table 12. Examples of misalignment commonly encountered in education systems

Parts of system involved	Description
Within the **compact** relationship: misalignment between **delegation, finance,** and **information**	Misalignment between delegation and other elements in the compact relationship is common because the state can easily adopt rhetoric that signals one set of delegated priorities, while adopting actions that indicate another. This can occur because the state's stated priorities are purely rhetorical with no effort made to change policy. It can also occur if the state adopts a de jure policy change, but then fails to make changes to finance, support, or information that would enable implementation of that change. For example, the state may indicate a desire to improve learning outcomes by announcing a reform, but then fail to allocate sufficient finance to the reform because most expenditures are tied up in recurring teacher salaries. Alternatively, the state may indicate that education is a priority, allocate additional funds to education, but then fail to set out metrics by which educational agencies will be evaluated, creating confusion about how additional resources can be spent within the sector.
Within the **voice & choice** relationship: misalignment between **information** and **delegation, motivation, and finance**	Do parents and communities have the power to act on new information, and the means to do so? Providing new information to parents (on students learning, or on ways to get involved in school) is one of the most popular interventions aimed at voice. However, providing new information does not, on its own, lead to actions that hold schools accountable. Parents must also have the ability to propose action (delegate) to schools and the ability to take action (by pulling the levers of either finance or motivation). When there is alignment between these elements, then information provided to parents can serve as a call to action. In a misaligned relationship where parents have no clear way to delegate to, finance, or motivate schools, then new information will likely have little impact. (For some empirical examples, see Silberstein, 2020a.)
Within the **management** relationship: misalignment between **delegation** and **information**	Are the curriculum and assessment aligned? The curriculum is one of the most influential ways that the system delegates to teachers what should be taught. Assessments are a similarly powerful driver of teacher behaviour in the system, and act both to measure performance (as information) and set expectations (as a competing source of delegation). However, the curriculum and assessments are often misaligned, sometimes due to silos between competing government agencies (Atuhurra and Kaffenberger, 2020). In other cases, delegation either to complete the curriculum or to raise exam pass rates may dominate at the expense of the other. For example, the emphasis on passing exams in many systems will frequently lead teachers to depart from the curriculum to teach to the test.
Within the **management** relationship: misalignment between **delegation** and **support**	Is there adequate support to teachers to deliver the curriculum? Teachers often lack instructional materials that are aligned with the curriculum and with students' learning levels. Teachers often also lack the knowledge or experience to teach the curriculum, and they may not receive adequate or high-quality training and coaching that could help them improve over time.
Within the **management** relationship: misalignment between **delegation** and **information**	Is the information collected about teachers aligned with the teaching they are being asked to do? Or are teachers required to generate and report information to fulfil administrative requirements? Extensive administrative duties, and a lack of monitoring of classroom teaching practices, can signal a misalignment that moves interactions within the system away from quality teaching.
Between the **compact** and **management** relationships (across rows)	Reforms related to teacher careers are particularly vulnerable to misalignments between the compact and management columns. Critical aspects of teacher careers are determined through civil service rules set by the compact relationship, making it difficult to manage teachers in the management relationship. When a change is made within either the compact or management relationship that affects one aspect of teacher careers, it is often difficult to adjust other aspects. One evergreen example of this is around teacher salaries, where the rules governing finance in the compact relationship often constrain how, or in what way, the management relationship can motivate teachers. This creates ripe conditions for misalignment that challenge or even undermine the intended effects of teacher career reforms.
Between the **voice & choice** and **management** relationships (across rows)	Since education authorities and communities share a common agent in the framework—namely, schools and teachers—misalignment can result when the two principals have different goals. The most common example of this tension is in centralised systems where a centralised bureaucracy controls schools, and marginalises voice. For example, school committees are a popular "best practice" to encourage voice, but systems often give them relatively insubstantial tasks that don't significantly impact the goals, financing, or motivation of teachers, and end up delivering form over function.

Source: Authors

A real-world example of misalignment: Teacher training in a new curriculum or pedagogy

To fully convey the intuition behind the concept of misalignment, and to illustrate the kind of real-world evidence that can be used to diagnose misalignment in practice, it is helpful to discuss a specific case.

Teacher training programs are a critical activity through which education authorities support frontline school leaders and teachers, but they often fail to improve learning outcomes. These activities fall within the "Management – Support" cell of the matrix (see the green cell in Table 4). Applying the systems framework can reveal the misalignments at the root of why a seemingly well-designed programme can fall short of a goal to improve student learning outcomes.

A recent experience with a teacher training programme in Rwanda offers a real-world illustration which can be used to explore different types of misalignment. In 2016, Rwanda undertook reforms in its primary and secondary school curricula, including to a secondary school subject on entrepreneurship. The reform aimed to take a more skills-based and student-centred approach to the subject. A non-governmental organisation (NGO) identified training in the new curriculum as an implementation gap and developed a training programme to be deployed in parallel to the curriculum rollout. The programme included in-service trainings, exchange visits to other schools, and outreach and support. While the curriculum was deployed around the country, the NGO training was only deployed to a randomly selected sample of schools, allowing for a quantitative, randomised evaluation of the training's effects on teacher practices and student learning outcomes alongside a qualitative study of teacher and student perceptions of the new curriculum and training.

The quantitative evaluation found that, two years after the training programme was launched, treatment schools saw a six-fold increase (52 percentage points) in the use of skills labs—i.e., extended sessions for conducting hands-on experiential learning activities—compared to control schools. The increased use of skills labs in treatment schools went hand in hand with shifts in teacher pedagogy towards greater "student centredness." Despite the encouraging indications about the role that the training played in changing classroom practices, the study found no effect of the training on student's scores on high stakes national exams, nor on tests of financial literacy, entrepreneurship, and non-cognitive skills developed and administered by the researchers (Blimpo and Pugatch, 2020).

Interviews and focus group discussions conducted with students and teachers alongside the quantitative evaluation offer insights into why the training programme both succeeded in changing teacher practices in the way that the curriculum reform intended yet failed to deliver improvements in students' outcomes.

The curriculum reform was not accompanied by exam reform. So while the training did help teachers adopt a more skills-based and student-centred approach, in particular through scheduling and conducting more skills labs, the overall pressure remained to teach the theory and content that appeared in the old curriculum and unchanged exam. In interviews and focus groups, both teachers and students noted this dissonance. Teachers suggested to interviewers that national exams should be updated to reflect the new curriculum, and some reported that they tried to make changes to internal, school-level exams to better reflect the skills-based approach they were now meant to teach. Students in treated schools reported that skills labs and student business clubs (another feature of the new curriculum) were planned and encouraged for students in Standard 4 and Standard 5—but not for Standard 6, the year in which students take national exams, and that that time was used for exam preparations (Anand, 2020).

What misalignments may have undermined the success of the training programme in this case?

Potential misalignments within the management relationship: The teacher training might have been mismatched with the other elements of the management relationship. The new training could have been misaligned with delegation element of the relationship if it were inconsistent with the new curriculum or pedagogy, or if there were insufficient support in general. It could also have been misaligned with the finance element of the relationship, if insufficient resources were allocated towards it; with the information element of the relationship if the authorities neglected to follow up to determine how well the training worked; or with the motivation element of the relationship, if teachers and school leaders had little incentive to actively engage in the training or implement the new pedagogy.

Diagnosis based on available empirical research*:* This type of misalignment is a prominent feature of this example in at least two ways. First, the business-as-usual approach of the government offered insufficient support to teachers to prepare for the new curriculum. As a result, the teachers who did not receive the NGO training made significantly fewer changes to their teaching practices than those who received training. Second, the high stakes exams—the most important information used by the system to measure teachers and students—were not reformed alongside the curriculum, creating a misalignment within the relationship. Teachers and schools, knowing the importance of exam performance, continued to emphasise the theoretical material that was the core of the old curriculum (Anand, 2020).

Potential misalignments across relationships: The usefulness of training may have been undermined by misalignments between the relationships of accountability. If the new curriculum or pedagogy featured in the training (delegated from education authorities to schools and teachers in the management relationship) was inconsistent with executive or fiduciary leaders' priorities (delegated from these leaders to education authorities in the compact relationship), insufficient resources could have been allocated towards it. Moreover, the inconsistency in delegation could mean that some actors within the education ministry were pushing the training while others were unconcerned with it, undermining motivation.

Besides possible misalignments between management and compact, the training implemented by the management relationship might also have clashed with voice & choice relationship. For instance, the training might have been inconsistent with parents' preferences for their children. If parents are uninterested in, or opposed to, the new pedagogy, then even a successful training would struggle to be effective since teachers could face pressure from parents to forgo the new approach.

Diagnosis based on available empirical research: For misalignments between management and compact, the available analysis in this case does not discuss the role that the Ministry of Finance or executive leaders played in the reform, so it's not possible to study misalignment across these relationships in this case.

For misalignments between management and voice & choice, the analysis of this case does not include information about parents' perspectives, but it does include analysis of focus group discussions held with students. It found that students had a positive view of the new curriculum, reporting that it provided them with some skills to start small businesses despite the fact that it was only partially implemented. Notably, many students in the treatment schools specifically mentioned useful things that they learned during skills labs and from student business clubs, neither of which were implemented in many of the control schools. The generally positive view of the new curriculum from the students suggests that misalignment between the management and voice and choice relationships was not a significant cause of misalignment in this case, though without information on broader family or community perceptions of the new curriculum—and their relative power to influence teachers—it's difficult to come to a definitive conclusion (Anand, 2020).

Conclusion

The Rwanda teacher training example discussed above, like most of the other examples in this essay, shows how misalignments in the education system can hinder a programme's effectiveness. Overall education quality has been stagnant or declining in most low- and middle- income countries (Le Nestour et al., 2022), but there are a handful of successful programmes and country trajectories. Often, the roots of success in improving learning outcomes can be traced to the emergence of alignment around learning across the relationships in an education system.

Take the case of Vietnam, a system that is widely acknowledged to overperform its peers at similar levels of economic development (Dang et al., 2020). A key feature of the Vietnamese system is a prevalent, nation-wide "all for learning" attitude, demonstrated by high-level political commitment to learning from national and party leaders, individual households' financial commitments to education, and general public engagement in education issues (even in the absence of organised civil society in the education sector that is present in other developing countries). This reflects a high degree of alignment for learning in delegation and finance across multiple relationships of accountability in the Vietnamese system. This alignment around learning exists alongside other features of the Vietnamese system that could undermine performance, such as misaligned decentralisation and persistent inequalities between groups (London, 2021). The Vietnamese system is far from perfect, but it does perform much better than its peers and alignment around learning objectives is a key feature of this success.

Most education systems in low- and middle-income countries have a long way to go to deliver education of the quality that Vietnamese students enjoy. By providing a structured approach to understanding and analysing the components and interactions of an education system, the RISE framework can help diagnose the misalignments present in an education system. This diagnosis can then inform interventions that can meaningfully and sustainably realign the system to deliver learning outcomes.

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Guide to Applying the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic

The RISE Education Systems Diagnostic Toolkit

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Each section of the toolkit should be consulted during the indicated phases of the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic:

1 Inception

2 Desk review

3 Stakeholder workshops & interviews

4 Analysis

5 Prioritisation workshop

6 Final report

More details on each phase are available in the Application Guide (Part 2).

This document is a practical guide to the approach of applying the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic. Because it focuses on the practical steps, it assumes knowledge of the framework and its core concepts. Reading *Applications of the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic* and *Understanding the RISE Systems Framework* first will help readers understand the process described in this document.

Note: If the hyperlinks in this document to the Planning and Analysis Tools and the Example Materials from the Pilot Studies no longer work, please check https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-Misc_2023/09 and https://riseprogramme.org/tools/rise-education-systems-diagnostic for the most recent versions of the Diagnostic toolkit.

What is the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic?

Note: This box is a shortened excerpt from the Introduction *section.*

The RISE Education Systems Diagnostic is a set of tools for supporting local actors in selecting high-level strategic priorities to improve student learning based on the latest education systems research.

The RISE Education Systems Diagnostic has three purposes:

- **Diagnose**: Facilitate the use of systems thinking to diagnose the components of the education system that are not working together as well as they could to deliver learning.
- **Prioritise**: Facilitate high-level prioritisation of one or two key areas of the system for reform in order to create better alignment around improving learning outcomes.
- **Build consensus.** Foster a common understanding across stakeholders of both the diagnosis and the priorities.

The Diagnostic can be implemented at the national, regional, or local levels. As of 2022, the Diagnostic has been implemented in seven field-based studies across Africa, Asia, and Latin America, led by diverse teams spanning NGOs, think tanks, consultancies, academic researchers, and government counterparts.*

This Diagnostic was developed by the RISE Programme, a long-term, multi-country research endeavour studying how education systems can cultivate learning for all children. A key premise of RISE and of the Diagnostic is that the challenges facing education systems are complex. Systemic educational challenges involve interactions and feedback loops among different actors, structures, processes, and resources.

The Diagnostic is anchored in the RISE Education Systems Framework (Pritchett 2015; Silberstein and Spivack, 2023). This framework is encapsulated in a 5x4 matrix that lays out the key relationships of an education system, the elements that characterise them, and the interactions between them.** Using this framework, the Diagnostic analysis involves three components:

- Identifying the **main alignment(s)** of each accountability relationship between different actors in the education system.
- Identifying **key misalignments** within the education system.
- Identifying **priorities for intervention** to improve system outcomes.

Typically, the Diagnostic is led by a local team. This team could be based at a range of organisations, such as a think tank, government advisory organisation, civil society organisation, consultancy, or a university. It often involves a collaboration with government. However, other configurations are possible, such as a research organisation conducting the Diagnostic on its own, or an organisation conducting the Diagnostic with stakeholders other than government. Additionally, a steering committee comprising stakeholders from government and other parts of the education system should be formed to advise the research team. This steering committee will be involved in formulating recommendations based on the Diagnostic fieldwork and analysis.

The Diagnostic aims to generate a shared understanding among actors about the challenges the education system faces, and to facilitate the identification of priorities for intervention. Accordingly, the process is highly participatory. Workshops with government and other stakeholders form the core of the diagnostic data collection process, and the final recommendations of the process are generated by the steering committee, based on the analysis conducted by the research team.

*For an overview of these applications of the Diagnostic, see *Applications of the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic*.
**For more on this framework, see *Understanding the RISE Systems Framework*.

Should we implement the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic?

Prior to embarking on the Diagnostic, it is crucial for prospective diagnostic teams to assess whether the Diagnostic suits their organisational goals and resources. Questions to ask include:

- **Will the Diagnostic serve our organisational goals?**
    - As noted above, the Diagnostic aims to diagnose misalignments in the education system, to prioritise key areas for education reform, and to build consensus between stakeholders about the diagnosis and priorities.
    - Different organisations have used the Diagnostic to fulfil three broad objectives:
        - **Policy prioritisation**: Diagnosis of key misalignments between different parts of the education system, with the goal of identifying and prioritising the policies that might resolve these misalignments and improve student learning. This objective would lend itself to strategic exercises and reviews of sector priorities and education sector plans.
        - **Programme design**: Diagnosis of the alignments and misalignments between an ongoing or planned educational programme and different parts of the wider education system. This objective would be useful to organisations trying to ensure that a soon-to-be-launched programme "lands" within the wider system and achieves its intended impact.
        - **Retrospective policy analysis**: Backward-looking diagnosis of the education system and a policy in question to explain the success or failure of a reform and its impact on student learning. This objective would be useful to organisations seeking to understand success or learn from failure.
- **Can we build a suitable diagnostic team and steering committee?**
    - For more on the skillsets, knowledge, and experience that a diagnostic team should encompass, see *"Formation of the diagnostic team and familiarisation with the diagnostic process"*.
    - For more on the composition of the steering committee, see *"Formation of the steering committee"*.
- **Can we implement the Diagnostic with our resources and timeframe?**
    - For more on realistic timelines for implementing the Diagnostic, see *"Development of an implementation plan"*.
- **Would we have enough buy-in from key partners?**
    - In most cases, this means interest from government partners (whether interest in the Diagnostic specifically, or in systems thinking and identifying systemic reform challenges more generally).
    - The team may decide to proceed despite limited buy-in from partners (including government), but the Diagnostic will be most effective if there are counterparts in the education system who are invested in the outcomes and will put them to use. The direction and focus of the Diagnostic can then be tailored to serve counterparts' interests.
    - One trade-off to consider gauging buy-in from key partners: While the Diagnostic can yield valuable insights and valuable consensus around education reform priorities, it involves asking difficult and often "political" questions of many stakeholders inside and outside of government.

Overview of the phases and tools of the Diagnostic

There are six phases of the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic, as shown in Table 13.

Table 13. The six phases of the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic each serve a distinct purpose and involve various actions.

❶ **Inception**	**Desired outcome:** A well-equipped team and well-designed plan for implementing the remaining phases of the Diagnostic. **Key activities of the inception phase:** • formation of the diagnostic team and familiarisation with the diagnostic process • decision about which relationships and elements of the education system to analyse • development of an implementation plan • formation of the steering committee
❷ **Desk review**	**Desired outcome:** An informed preliminary hypothesis about the main alignments and misalignments of the education system, along with a list of information gaps that need to be filled in order to confirm or revise this hypothesis. **Key activities of the desk review:** • stakeholder mapping • document review • preliminary diagnostic analysis
❸ **Stakeholder workshops and interviews**	**Desired outcome:** A shared understanding—not only within the diagnostic team, but also among workshop and interview participants—about dominant alignments and misalignments within the education system, with particular attention to gaps between officially articulated policies and what actually happens in classrooms, schools, and government offices. **Aspects to consider when planning for the workshops and interviews include:** • targeted participants and workshop/interview focus, based on the desk review • data management and confidentiality • logistics and materials for the workshops/interviews • how to address power dynamics, biases, and inconsistencies (including inconsistencies between participants' viewpoints and team members' beliefs)
❹ **Analysis**	**Desired outcome:** A consolidation of information from the desk review and observations from the workshops/interviews, organised according to the framework in the analysis tools **Steps in the analysis include:** • summarising discussions about each sub-element, then draw on these for a summary description of each element, and for each accountability relationship overall • compiling misalignments raised in workshops and based on the team's observations, add explanations and justifications
❺ **Prioritisation workshop**	**Desired outcome:** Consensus about priority areas and recommendations for education reform based on Diagnostic findings **Activities in the prioritisation workshop with the steering committee include:** • sharing the analysis of alignments and misalignments • facilitating a discussion to decide on two or three misalignments that will be the main priorities for education reform • facilitating a discussion of recommendations for addressing these priorities
❻ **Final report and dissemination**	**Desired outcome:** A brief, digestible, and compelling summary of the priorities that emerged from Diagnostic and how they are justified by the findings of the Diagnostic. **The final report may include:** • an overview of each relationship of accountability and the alignment(s) that best describe it, with justifications from each element within the relationship • an overview of the misalignments that the steering committee chose as reform priorities, with evidence and justification • recommendations identified by the steering committee for addressing these misalignments • any high-level conclusions or analysis of the system that emerged from the Diagnostic that the team feels would be beneficial to include

Note that some of the activities may overlap chronologically across the phases (e.g., planning for the stakeholder workshops and interviews may overlap with the desk review phase).

As shown in the box at the top of this guide document, each phase of the Diagnostic draws on different sections of this Toolkit. For a detailed overview of each section of the toolkit, see "How to use this toolkit" in the *Introduction* section. Most sections of the toolkit will serve as references to be consulted throughout the process.

Key to the diagnostic process are the Planning and Analysis Tools. As shown in Table 14, this set of tools should be used during every phase of the Diagnostic.

Table 14. The seven tools for planning and analysis each have a distinct use in different phases of the Diagnostic.

Tool #1 **Steering committee list** ❶	Tool #2 **Stakeholder list** ❷ ❸	Tool #3 **Document list** ❷	Tools #4, #5, #6 **Compact analysis Management analysis Voice & Choice analysis** ❷ ❸ ❹ ❻	Tool #7 **Misalignments analysis** ❷ ❹ ❺ ❻
Use Tool #1 during the **inception** to help identify organisations /individuals that should be represented on the steering committee.	Use Tool #2 during the **desk review** to help map the various stakeholders within the education system. This list can then be used to facilitate planning the **stakeholder workshops and interviews**.	Use Tool #3 during the **desk review** as a starting point for identifying key government documents and policies to review.	Use Tool #4, #5, and #6 during: • the **desk review** to facilitate a preliminary diagnostic analysis of the elements of the Compact/ Management/ Voice & Choice relationships and their dominant alignments, and to identify gaps in information from available documents and the diagnostic team's prior knowledge; • the **stakeholder workshops and interviews** to choose the topical emphases for each workshop/interview with various stakeholders, and to inform the questions to be discussed; • the **analysis** to record the dominant alignments of each element and an overall description of the relationship; and • the **final report and dissemination** phase as a consolidation of the findings.	Use Tool #7 during the preliminary diagnostic analysis of the **desk review** and during the main **analysis** phase to facilitate the identification of significant misalignments in the education system. These misalignments will then inform the **prioritisation workshop** and the **final report**.

The rest of this application guide describes each phase of the Diagnostic in more detail.

1. Inception

Having decided to implement the Diagnostic, teams will embark on the inception phase. This phase lays the groundwork for a successful Diagnostic. By the end of the inception period, teams will be ready to proceed with their data collection and analysis.

The inception phase involves four key activities:

- formation of the diagnostic team and familiarisation with the diagnostic process;

- decision about which relationships and elements of the education system to analyse;

- development of an implementation plan; and

- formation of the steering committee.

Formation of the diagnostic team and familiarisation with the diagnostic process

At the point of **forming the diagnostic team**, make sure that team members cover an adequate range of skills, knowledge, and experiences. Vital characteristics that need to be present in the team include:

- *Deep prior knowledge of the education system as well as the structure and politics of the wider government/policy system.* Although the diagnostic process will guide the team through substantial data collection to fill information gaps, the process also expects the team to begin the process with enough knowledge of the education system to have a rough sense of where the gaps are to begin with.

- *Strong qualitative research skills.* The diagnostic team will need to conduct effective workshops and interviews; interpret, analyse, and reconcile qualitative data across multiple sources and perspectives, and construct a persuasive narrative that consolidates insights from across these data sources.

If either of these characteristics are not adequately covered in the team, consider recruiting additional members.[18] For an example of materials that could be used to recruit other partners to a diagnostic exercise, see the introductory slide deck by the Global School Leaders team from their diagnostic pilot in GSL partner countries, on pp. 23–32 of the example materials from the pilot studies.

When building the diagnostic team, other questions to consider include:

- *Across the team, do we have a sufficiently wide and influential network of contacts within the education system?* Such contacts matter both for gaining access to stakeholders for workshops and interviews, and for increasing the likelihood that the findings from the Diagnostic will be put into practice. If the team collectively has a relatively small network, this may be remedied by building an influential steering committee and/or building strong relationships with counterparts.

- *What are the advantages and disadvantages of including team members from other educational contexts?* Building an international team may offer a useful outsider perspective, which may help the local members of the team to question their assumptions. In some cases, researchers from other educational contexts may also bring complementary technical/academic expertise. However, cross-

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[18] Note that "deep prior knowledge" and "strong qualitative research skills" do *not* imply that the diagnostic team must include university-based academic researchers. People with such skillsets and backgrounds are often present in NGOs, consultancies, and other practitioner organisations—all of which have successfully implemented the Diagnostic (see *Applications of the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic*).

context teams may also face additional costs, such as translation costs or additional time at the inception phase to familiarise non-local team members with the context prior to embarking on the project.

Next, to **familiarise themselves with the diagnostic process,** all members of the team should work through the material in this toolkit, including:

- this *Guide to Applying the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic*;
- the *Training Video and Slide Decks* (including the discussion activities included in these training materials),
- the essay on *Understanding the RISE Systems Framework*, and
- the Planning and Analysis Tools.

Decision about which relationships and elements to analyse

After building familiarity with the Diagnostic, the team will need to decide which aspects of the education system to focus on. As detailed in *Understanding the RISE Systems Framework*, education systems are large, complex social systems. To facilitate the analysis and shared understanding of this complexity, the Diagnostic is based on the RISE Systems Framework. This framework involves five elements and four relationships (which is why it is also called the 5x4 framework).

The four relationships are:

- Politics;
- Compact;
- Management; and
- Voice & Choice.

The five elements across the relationships are:

- Delegation;
- Finance;
- Information;
- Motivation; and
- Support.

For more information on these relationships and elements, see the *Glossary* and *Understanding the RISE Systems Framework*.

To decide which relationships to focus on when implementing the Diagnostic, consider the priorities, expertise, and spheres of influence of the organisations and programmes that the diagnostic team is affiliated with. For example, if key members of the team are from a teacher policy think tank that is collaborating with the government to improve teacher professional development, they may choose to focus on the Management and Compact relationships. If some members of the team are part of a civil society organisation funded by an external donor, they may choose to analyse all elements of the Voice & Choice relationship and the Politics relationships alongside the Delegation and Information elements in the Compact and Management relationships (because goals/priorities and information flows throughout the system affect civil society entry points for improving education).

A few points to note:

- **The Diagnostic analysis is most powerful when looking across multiple elements and at least two relationships**. This is because the key insights from the Diagnostic result from analysing misalignments within and between relationships.

- **While the [Planning and Analysis Tools](#) have been designed to be widely applicable across most education systems, the diagnostic team may wish to adapt or add to the tools to suit their contexts**.

  - For example, Tools #4, #5, and #6, respectively, offer a framework for analysing the Compact, Management, and Voice and Choice relationships—but not the Politics relationship. An analysis of the politics relationship would require a more in-depth political economy approach, so it has not been included in the Diagnostic Toolkit thus far. To develop a worksheet for analysing the Politics relationship in a given context, consider drawing on these resources:

    - For a discussion of alignments of the politics relationship in the RISE Systems Framework, see Belafi, C. (2022). Where There's a Will There's a Way: The Role of Political Will in Creating/Producing/Shaping Education Systems for Learning. RISE Insight Series. 2022/043. https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-RI_2022/043.

    - For a discussion of the political economy of education and entry points to align politics around children's learning, see Levy, B. (2022). How Political Contexts Influence Education Systems: Patterns, Constraints, Entry Points. RISE Working Paper Series. 22/122. https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-WP_2022/122.

    - For an example of an analysis tool developed for the politics relationship in a specific context, see pp. 198–199 of the [example materials from the pilot studies](#) for the tool developed by the JPC-VERSO team for the Diagnostic pilot in Balochistan, Pakistan.

  - Additionally, the diagnostic team may wish to add in elements or sub-elements that are particularly salient in their context or to their research focus. For example, Tool #4 for analysing the Compact relationship looks at the elements of delegation, finance, and information. However, the diagnostic team may wish to add a few rows for analysing the element of motivation. This may be particularly salient in education systems where senior bureaucrats (who are agents in Compact) consistently face swift and severe repercussions for deviating from the educational priorities of the prime minister (who is one of the principals in Compact).

- **This initial decision about which education system relationships and elements to focus on may change based on findings from the desk review** (see below). For example, if a team initially decides to focus on the Compact and Management relationships but learns during the desk review phase that the Voice & Choice relationship holds tremendous influence over certain aspects of Management, they may then decide to include Voice & Choice in the Diagnostic alongside the other two relationships. Conversely, if a team had initially intended to analyse all three of these relationships but subsequently learns during the desk review that families and communities have little Voice or Choice because the school system is strongly centralised, the team may decide to focus only on Compact and Management for efficiency's sake.

Development of an implementation plan

As part of the inception phase, the team creates a plan for implementation of the activities in the remaining five phases. This plan must include a clear timeline and clear lines of responsibility for different members of the diagnostic team.

- A typical duration for a Diagnostic study would be approximately 6 months. This could be divided into:

- o   Inception (phase 1), desk review (phase 2), and planning for the stakeholder workshops and interviews (phase 3): 1–2 months
- o   Conducting stakeholder workshops and interviews (phase 3) and analysis (phase 4): 2–3 months
- o   Prioritisation workshop (phase 5) and final report and dissemination (phase 6): 1 month
- See the Inception report by the JPC- VERSO team from their diagnostic pilot in Balochistan, Pakistan, on pp. 5–22 of the example materials from the pilot studies, for an example of a timeline and Gantt chart for a Diagnostic.

- Note: if applicable, the implementation plan should account for the time needed to seek clearance for the stakeholder workshops and interviews (e.g., clearance from government authorities or ethical approval from institutional review boards).

Formation of the steering committee

Next, the team should begin forming a steering committee. The steering committee will form a critical part of the diagnostic process and will have a key role to play in determining the key education reform priorities emerging from the Diagnostic.

The steering committee members' key responsibilities will include:

a)   giving feedback on the diagnostic implementation plan,

b)   giving feedback on plans for stakeholder workshops/interviews,

c)   reviewing the outcomes of the stakeholder workshops, and

d)   identifying the key priorities for reform based on analysis of stakeholder workshop outcomes.

This will entail a minimum of two meetings: a launch meeting for (a) and (b); and a prioritisation workshop for (c) and (d). If it is only possible to convene these two meetings, each meeting should be a half-day workshop. If the steering committee members are willing to commit to more frequent meetings, then each meeting could be shorter.

The steering committee should include representatives with deep knowledge of the education system from several agencies or organisations who will make use of the Diagnostic. It is important to secure membership from individuals with the right balance of authority in their organisation as well as time and attention to devote to the process. Senior leaders may wish to designate a deputy to serve in their place on the committee.

- ***An adaptation to consider***: One of the teams that piloted the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic convened both a steering committee and a technical advisory committee. While the steering committee comprised senior leaders who offered strategic input on the policy context, the technical advisory committee gave detailed feedback on the research methodology. More informally, a diagnostic team could seek out collegial input from peer researchers (whether in the same context or elsewhere) at appropriate milestones throughout the diagnostic process.

See **Tool #1. Steering committee** (in the Planning and Analysis Tools; screenshot in Figure 4 below) for suggestions about the distribution of types of organisations that could be represented in the committee. This distribution should be adapted to meet the needs of the context.

Figure 4. Screenshot of Tool #1, Steering committee list.

	No.	Name	Title	Organisation	Type*
1	Tool #1. Steering committee list				
2					
3	No.	Name	Title	Organisation	Type*
4	1				Gov (Min of Ed)
5	2				Gov (Min of Ed)
6	3				Gov (Min of Ed)
7	4				Gov (Min of Ed)
8	5				Gov (Finance)
9	6				Gov (Finance)
10	7				Gov (Other)
11	8				Gov (Other)
12	9				Civil Society
13	10				Civil Society
14	11				Academia/research
15	12				Academia/research
16	*Note: Types reflect suggested distribution of representation among steering committee. This distribution should be modified as needed to adapt to context.*				

Members of the steering committee are initially identified and approached during the inception phase. However, members can be added during the desk review phase if the stakeholder mapping reveals additional organisations that would be beneficial to include.

Launch meeting for the steering committee

After the membership of the steering committee has been finalised, the diagnostic team will hold a launch meeting for the committee.

This launch meeting can take place during either the inception phase or the desk review phase. However, if the steering committee will be convened only for the launch meeting and for the prioritisation workshop, with no other meetings in between, then the launch meeting should be held after the team has had the time to flesh out their plans for the workshops/interviews (but before going to the field to conduct these workshops/interviews).

During the launch meeting for the steering committee, the diagnostic team should complete the following activities with them:

- Introduce them to the diagnostic framework.
  - The goal of this introduction is to equip steering committee members to give targeted feedback on plans for stakeholder workshops/interviews and to make constructive decisions during the prioritisation workshop.
  - Note: The diagnostic team should decide whether it would be most appropriate to make this a high-level briefing on the 5x4 framework and the concept of misalignments, or a more thorough opportunity to become familiar with the framework through a mix of training modules and interactive discussion, or something in between.
- Explain the diagnostic process to the steering committee, including the workshops, how they will be conducted, and who will be included.
- Explain the role and responsibility of the steering committee in the diagnostic process.
  - How they will be engaged.
  - When their feedback and input will be requested at key milestones throughout the process.
  - Their role in selecting the key priorities for reform based on the analysis of the stakeholder workshops and in determining the final outcomes and recommendations of the Diagnostic.
- Ask for and receive feedback on stakeholder workshop/interview plans.

- o   In particular, the diagnostic team should seek the steering committee's input (both advice and contacts) on key informants to approach for the workshops and interviews.

- o   The steering committee may also have valuable insight on whom to ask for missing information that could not be located during the desk review.

- o   Some diagnostic pilot teams have found it helpful to share questions/instruments for the stakeholder workshops and interviews with the steering committee for their input.

2. Desk review

Data collection and analysis for the Diagnostic begins with a desk review. The purpose of the desk review is to fill in as much of the Diagnostic analysis tools (see Tools #4, #5, and #6 in the Planning and Analysis Tools) as possible based on existing written material about the education system and the team's existing knowledge of the system. The goal is to arrive at an informed preliminary hypothesis about the dominant alignments and misalignments of the education system.

The key activities during the desk review phase are:

- stakeholder mapping;

- document review; and

- preliminary diagnostic analysis (including identification of gaps and key informants).

Stakeholder mapping

The team should begin by making a list of all the major organisations and types of organisations that play a role in the education system. This should include:

- All key government agencies or government-adjacent agencies that play a role in the education system, including those that have responsibility for: finances, curriculum, exams, hiring of teachers and other staff, payment of teachers and other staff, placement of teachers and other staff, promotion of teachers and other staff, inspection of schools, and planning.

- Key organisations with responsibility for non-state schools; for example, private schools or schools that are managed by religious authorities.

- Key organisations outside of government with a role in education, including civil society organisations, unions, donors, and private sector organisations.

The teams should be sure to include not only organisations and individuals that work directly on education (e.g., divisions within the ministry), but also organisations that are part of the system but not involved in service delivery (e.g., executives in government, legislators, and finance organisations). Which of these are relevant will vary based on the context and administrative unit (national, regional, or local) on which the Diagnostic is focused. The team should specify the role of legislative organisations (e.g., members of parliament) and executive organisations (e.g., president or prime minister, ministry of finance, ministry of education) in deciding education policy and budget, as well as the role of regional and local officials.

For each organisation, the team should include a description of where that organisation fits into the RISE Systems Framework (the 5x4), as part of the principal and/or agent of one of the relationships.[19] This process of mapping stakeholders can be recorded in **Tool #2. Stakeholder List** (in the Planning and Analysis Tools; screenshot in Figure 5 below).

Figure 5. Screenshot of Tool #2, Stakeholder list.

Function/role*	Organisation(s)	Organisational position in the RISE Framework (principal and/or agent in which relationships?)			
		Politics	Compact	Management	Voice & Choice
Example: *Exams*	*Example:* *National Examinations Board*	—	*Agent*	*Principal*	—
Exams					
Inspections					
Curriculum					
Teacher qualifications and standards					
Teacher hiring					
Teacher placement					
Finances					
School construction					
Planning					
Teacher promotion					
Ministry of Education					
Ministry of Finance					
Ministry of Local Government (*if involved in school inspection, infrastructure, funding, etc.*)					
Teacher unions					
Donors					
Regulation of private schools					
Religious authorities with responsibility for schooling					
Social protection organisations involved in education					
Civil society organisations involved in education					
Local community organisations involved in schooling					
Executive authority					
Legislative authority					
Fiduciary authority					
Headteachers					
Teachers					
Children and their families					

*Note: Functions/roles listed represent a selection of common functions/roles in an education system. This may vary between systems and should be adapted to context.

Note that the **stakeholder mapping requires the diagnostic team to exercise their judgement.** This is not a strictly mechanical exercise. For example:

- The team may have to decide whether to include district-level or other mid-tier education bureaucrats in the analysis, or whether such officials are insufficiently influential in this context or insufficiently relevant to the focus of the Diagnostic to be included. If they are included, the team will have to decide how and where to include them in the mapping and the analysis (e.g., including district officials among the principals in Management, perhaps if they have significant decision-making power; including them among the agents in Management, perhaps if they are seen as disempowered conduits between the ministry and schools; or even analysing multiple Management relationships, such as ministry–district and district–school relationships).

- The team may also have to decide whether and how to incorporate (a) teacher unions or other civil society organisations and advocacy groups and (b) donors and international organisations in the stakeholder mapping. For example, if unions are influential and exert their power primarily through partisan alliances, unions may be included in the analysis as principals in the Politics relationship (alongside other interest groups among communities, parents, and students). If unions are influential but exert their power primarily by mobilising teachers to strike in opposition to policy changes, this

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[19] Typically, organisations/actors are principals or agents in more than one relationship. For example, the ministry of education is an agent in the Compact relationship and a principal in the Management relationship. Families are principals in two relationships: Voice & Choice (in their capacity as recipients of instructional services from frontline providers) and Politics (in their capacity as citizens/members of the polity). Teachers and school leaders are agents in two relationships: Management and Voice & Choice. For more on this, see *Understanding the RISE Systems Framework*.

could be included in the analysis as a form of Motivation that agents can control in the Management relationship. If unions exist but do not exert much influence (e.g., giving statements in newspapers and advocating for individual teachers with grievances against their employers, but not meaningfully influencing policymaking or policy implementation), then the analysis may not need to include them.

Document review

The document review is one of the key activities for achieving the intended outcome of the desk review: an informed preliminary hypothesis about the main alignments and misalignments within the education system. The document review should include both government policy documents and secondary sources (grey literature, academic studies, other local sources, etc.) that describe the education system.

Accordingly, the document review should be:

- as comprehensive as necessary to fill any knowledge gaps that should be filled prior to the stakeholder workshops and interviews, so that the workshops and interviews can be as effective as possible; and

- as comprehensive as necessary to validate (or invalidate) the assumptions the diagnostic team has about the major stakeholders in the education system and the roles they play within the system, so that the workshops and interviews can encompass the optimal combination of stakeholders.

Moreover, **the team should constantly refer to Analysis Tools #4, #5, and #6 throughout the document review**. In order to ensure that the information gathered during the document review is both focused enough and comprehensive enough to form a preliminary hypothesis about the alignments/misalignments of the education system, the team should be guided by the elements, sub-elements, and guiding questions in Tools #4, #5, and #6 (see *"Preliminary diagnostic analysis (including identification of gaps and key informants)"* for more details).

To ensure that the emerging analysis efficiently and effectively informs the document review, **teams may wish to use the Tools #4, #5, and #6 to form a preliminary hypothesis about their education system, to help them to better target the document review.** This may facilitate the process of using the document review to confirm/refute anecdotal experiences, controversial judgements, or assumptions, and to fill in information gaps.

Government documents and policies

The team should begin with a document-gathering process. A suggested list of government documents and policies to gather is given in **Tool #3. Document List** (in the Planning and Analysis Tools; screenshot in Figure 6 below).

Figure 6. Screenshot of Tool #3, Document list.

	A	B	C	D
1		Tool #3. Document list		
2				
3		Document*	Located?	Included in initial desk review?
4		Education sector plan		
5		National development plan sections on education		
6		Most recent inspection handbook / guide / plan		
7		Most recent decentralisation plan / guidance / law		
8		Most recent teacher law / regulation / qualification / teacher placement guide		
9		Most recent curriculum reform(s)		
10		Most recent assessment framework or policy (school-leaving exam)		
11		Most recent assessment framework or policy (sample-based assessment / learning assessment)		
12		Most recent guidance / policy on district management of schools, teacher supervision and support		
13		Most recent guidance / policy for school construction / improvement		
14		Most recent guidance on regulation of private sector		
15		Most recent budget		
16				
17				
18				
19				
20				
21				
22		*Note: document list is suggestive based on documents that will commonly be helpful across education systems. This should be adapted to context.*		

Once documents are gathered, the team or team leaders should choose which documents should ne prioritised in the initial document review. Priority should be given to documents that will reveal new information or insights into the system. However, the team should keep the other documents on file in case it is helpful to consult them at a later time for corroboration or additional information during subsequent phases of the Diagnostic.

Secondary sources: grey literature, academic studies, and other local sources

In addition to government policy documents, which usually provide a de jure rather than de facto picture of the education system, the team should also review secondary sources. Examples of secondary sources include:

- *Grey literature*: political economy analyses, budget analysis, previous systems mappings, and project appraisal documents from national/international/multilateral organisations. It may be helpful to consult with contacts at major bilateral or multilateral donors active in the education sector to request copies of reports they have recently commissioned.

- *Academic studies*: recent journal articles or books on the focal accountability relationships and elements.

- *Other local sources*: Investigative journalism or recent election campaigns that may have identified major educational issues or cited important data points.

How extensive should the document review be?

As noted above, the team's decision about how much time to spend on the document review should be driven by what it would take to achieve the intended outcome of the desk review: a preliminary hypothesis about the main alignments and misalignments of the education system. This hypothesis will be tested and refined during the stakeholder workshops and interviews, and the subsequent analysis.

In addition to this overarching goal, teams should also consider their programmatic priorities. For example:

- If the main objective for conducting the Diagnostic is to inform programme design, and if the team have a limited timeline and limited resources for this programme design process, then the team should filter the documents that have been collected and review only a limited number that they believe will provide

- information the team does not know. Additionally, in terms of secondary sources, the team may wish to limit themselves to reports, books, and papers that were published in recent years.

- In contrast, some of the teams that piloted the Diagnostic intended to publish the results of their diagnostic analysis not only in reports and other outputs targeted at in-country stakeholders, but also in academic journals. Accordingly, they conducted much more extensive document reviews that went beyond the current policy context to look at previous policies and education systems elsewhere.

Preliminary diagnostic analysis (including identification of gaps and key informants)

At this stage, it's time for the team to begin their first attempt at systems analysis. This initial exercise is meant to be preliminary. Its purpose is to help the team identify areas of consensus and areas of disagreement or uncertainty where additional information is needed. This will help inform the workshops and ensure stakeholder time is devoted to the areas most in need of clarification, rather than on aspects of the system that are already well understood.

In this initial analysis, the team will use their prior knowledge and what they have learned from the desk review to diagnose the alignments of the elements of each accountability relationship. (For example, the finance element of the Management relationship may be aligned for maximising access to schooling, while the information element may be aligned for bureaucratic process compliance. This would indicate that two elements that are misaligned with each other, and that neither element is aligned for children's learning. For more on such misalignments, see *Understanding the RISE Systems Framework*.)

Figure 7. Screenshot of Tool #4 for analysing the Compact relationship.

To conduct this preliminary diagnostic analysis, the team should work through **Tools #4, #5,** and **#6**, for **Compact, Management,** and **Voice & Choice**, respectively, found in the Planning and Analysis Tools. If desired, teams can also develop and work through a tool for analysing the Politics relationship.[20]

As illustrated in Figure 7, Tools #4, #5, and #6 facilitate the analysis of each relationship by organising the analysis into elements and sub-elements. Each sub-element represents an important area to examine within the element in question. For example, when analysing the element of delegation within the Compact relationship, important areas to consider include the three sub-elements included in Tool #4: high-level targets, human resource goals, and the gap between articulated and actual goals.

The process of working through these analysis tools can proceed as follows:

- For each relationship that the team has decided to analyse, begin by filling in the principal organisation(s)/group(s) and the agent organisation(s)/group(s) in *rows 3* and *4* of the worksheet.

- Next, the team should work through each element and sub-element in turn.
    - o For each sub-element, in the "***Summary from desk review***" row, articulate briefly (in bullet points or a short paragraph) which alignment(s) (e.g., alignment for learning, alignment for access, or alignment for socialisation) are most relevant or most dominant to their system and the reasons why.

        - Use the guiding questions and the example indicators from each alignment in the analysis tool to guide the analysis. However, if the questions or example indicators do not seem relevant to the context, the team are free to interpret and describe the sub-element based on their judgement of what is appropriate and accurate for their context.

        - Note that many parts of the system will have primary and secondary alignments. (For example, the element of Information in the Management relationship may be primarily aligned with expanding access to schooling, but secondarily aligned with improving student learning.) Pure alignment around a single purpose may be relatively rare. This is to be expected: education has many different purposes. It cannot and should not be reduced solely to inculcating academic skills. The point of the Diagnostic is to determine dominant alignments and to highlight the parts of the education system that are overbalanced or overengineered around purposes other than learning, and therefore are preventing sufficient alignment around learning.

        - This exercise should focus on developing a description that reflects the team's understanding of the system and the reasoning and justification for why the team has chosen that description. Articulating the reasons why a particular alignment was chosen is much more important than choosing the "correct" alignment.

    - o For each element, after analysing all its sub-elements, make an informed initial determination about the alignment(s) that best describes that element of the relationship.

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[20] As noted above under "Decision about which relationships and elements to analyse", the Diagnostic Toolkit does not (yet) include a tool for analysing the Politics relationship. This is because an analysis of the politics relationship would require a more in-depth political economy approach. For a discussion of alignments of the politics relationship in the RISE Systems Framework, see Belafi (2022). For a discussion of the political economy of education and entry points to align politics around children's learning, see Levy (2022).

- ▪ Articulate this decision in bullet points or narrative format in the "***Description of element***" column. Note that this is an initial assessment and will likely change as more information is gathered and stakeholders weigh in.

- After working through the sub-elements and elements, reflect on the big picture of all elements within each relationship and between relationships.
  - o In **Tool #7. Common misalignments**, note down any misalignments that emerge at this stage—whether the team can confidently conclude based on the desk review that these misalignments are present in the system, or whether there are suggestive indications of certain misalignments that the team would like to explore further in workshops.
    - ▪ At this stage, details in the "Evidence and justification" column can be preliminary, and there is no need to fill in the "Suggested principles for intervention" column.
  - o The team may wish to consult Table 12 in *Understanding the RISE Systems Framework* to help identify common misalignments.

- Reflecting on this big-picture analysis, return to **Tools #4, #5, and #6** to identify sub-elements and elements where more information is needed.
  - o Identify whether this is a question that can be easily answered by document review or secondary sources or if this is a question that should be brought up in workshops or interviews.
  - o For those information gaps that can be easily filled by document review, update the relevant "***Summary from desk review***" row(s) and "***Description of element***" column(s) after following up on the sources in question.
  - o For those information gaps that need to be filled during workshops/interviews, identify which stakeholders should be included to discuss each sub-element. There will likely be many sub-elements where more than one stakeholder's input is needed. Note this down in the relevant "***Missing information (and whom to ask)***" rows.

Throughout this preliminary diagnostic analysis, remember to draw on the glossary to explain any unfamiliar terminology in the analysis tools.

For an example of the outcome of a desk review and preliminary diagnostic analysis, see the desk review report by the SUMMA team from their diagnostic pilot in Ecuador on pp. 22–76 of the example materials from the pilot studies.

3. Stakeholder workshops and interviews

Once the team has completed the desk review phase, they are ready to plan and conduct the workshops and interviews.

Three key functions of the stakeholder workshops and interviews are:

- To fill any information gaps that have been identified during the desk review (in the "Missing information (and whom to ask)" rows of Tools #4, #5, and #6).

- To identify gaps between what is officially stated de jure and what actually happens de facto in classrooms, schools, district officers, and so on.
  - o For example, the document review may indicate that teachers, headteachers, and district officers have an unfeasibly long official list of responsibilities (de jure), but workshops and interviews can help to identify what the norm on the ground is about which responsibilities actually get prioritised (de facto).

- To foster a shared understanding among workshop participants about the challenges facing the education system.

Planning for stakeholder workshops and interviews

Data may be collected in workshops, interviews, or in a combination of both. As one of the purposes of the Diagnostic is to build consensus in the education system about key challenges and priorities, we suggest using workshops whenever possible.

However, in some instances, it may not be practical to rely primarily on workshops, whether due to logistical, political, or other reasons. We encourage teams to assess their contexts and decide what works best in their contexts. For example, it may be more appropriate to speak with certain stakeholders in individual interviews rather than workshops (e.g., high-level policymakers, bureaucrats or civil society activists in vulnerable positions).

Additionally, the team may wish to conduct follow-up interviews to fill any information gaps, clarify any ambiguities, or resolve any inconsistencies that remain after the workshops.

Some aspects to consider in planning the overall configuration and structure of workshops and interviews would be the most appropriate are:

- **What are the power dynamics and potential biases among stakeholders?**
  - On the one hand, workshops that mix participants from different organisations and roles can be a fruitful opportunity for participants to challenge each other's assumptions and to build consensus across stakeholder groups, rather than serving as an echo chamber for similar perspectives.
  - On the other hand, if there are significant power imbalances or threats of repercussion for speaking critically (e.g., between teachers and ministry officials with influence over teacher job allocations), then it may be beneficial to have homogenous workshop groups and/or some follow-up individual interviews to verify information shared in large-group workshops.
  - For more on this point, see '*Targeted participants and workshop/interview* focus' below.
- **How formal or informal a tone would be ideal for our purposes?**
  - On the one hand, a formal, structured approach to workshops and interviews can help to convey the legitimacy of the diagnostic exercise.
  - On the other hand, some stakeholders may be more willing to share honest views in a more informal, casual setting.
  - Besides the structure and overall approach of the workshop/interview, other factors that may affect the sense of formality or informality are: (a) rapport/a sense of common identification between the facilitator/interviewer and participants; (b) a sense of trust between participants and the facilitator/interviewer, which in turn may depend on the diagnostic team's approach to data protection. For more on (b), see *'Data management and confidentiality'* below.
- **How explicitly should the workshops discuss the 5x4 framework?**
  - On the one hand, the workshops and interviews can be a valuable opportunity to spread systems thinking in the education system by teaching participants about the RISE 5x4 framework and/or the concepts of alignments and misalignments in the system. Another possible benefit is that drawing on the terminology of this widely used framework may lend some legitimacy and perceived neutrality if the team are initiating discussions about aspects of the education system that are considered politically sensitive.

- o On the other hand, the more deeply the workshops or interviews engage with the 5x4 framework, the longer these workshops and interviews will have to be. Some of the teams that piloted the education systems diagnostic found it more beneficial to leave the analytical framework out of most workshops, and to instead draw on the guiding questions in Tools #4, #5, and #6 to shape the workshop discussions, and then to retrospectively map participants' inputs to the 5x4 framework/the analysis tools as an internal team exercise subsequently.

- o For examples of workshop agendas that do and do not engage with the framework sub-elements, see *'Sample workshop agendas' below.*

Targeted participants and workshop/interview focus

To make the best use of stakeholders' time, the **team should plan to focus on some—but not all—relevant aspects of the system with each workshop group or interviewee**. This may be organised by an education system relationship from the systems framework, an element, or some combination of the two. Working through each spreadsheet of Tools #4, #5, and #6, the team should identify which stakeholders need to be included in the workshops and will use this to determine who to include in the workshops and which topics to focus on in each workshop.

In determining **whom to invite to the workshops (and interviews)**, the diagnostic team should be sure to include some representatives from all key organisations. However, the team should focus on ensuring that questions in every row of the analysis spreadsheets in Tools #4, #5, and #6 can be answered, rather than on representation from individuals in every subdivision or department within every organisation. When determining which individuals to include, the diagnostic team should try to ensure that, as far as possible, the "go-to bureaucrats" or individuals with experience and knowledge in the system are included.

Beyond the national level, the team may want to conduct workshops with local-level officials as well, to discuss their level of the system. The extent of this fieldwork with local officials may be constrained by resources, and the team need not attempt representative sampling across geography. Instead, they should use deliberative sampling focused on getting an adequate picture of that level of the system.

The ideal workshop size is approximately ten people. The workshops should have a feeling of a focus group or technical working group, with active participation from all attendees.

There are many possibilities for how to configure the workshops, and the diagnostic team should use their judgement of what will produce the most informative discussion, balancing two competing objectives:

- getting individuals who don't usually interact to speak to each other and build a shared understanding of how the system functions, and

- making sure everyone feels that they can speak freely.

For example: for the information rows the relevant stakeholders might be the inspectorate, the assessment agency, EMIS, and curriculum. Ideally the team would be able to have all of these together, but political constraints might lead them to keep one or more in a different workshop.

Data management and confidentiality

Prior to conducting any workshops or interviews in the field, the team should discuss and clarify their approach to data management and confidentiality. Defining and communicating clear principles about data management and confidentiality can be key in helping participants to trust facilitators and to speak frankly.

Points to consider include:

- **Mode of recording:** Will the workshops/interviews be audio/video recorded, or captured solely in handwritten/typed notes by the team? While audio/video recording is more precise, analysing recordings takes much more time than analysing written notes. (For individual interviews, consider the risk that the participant(s) would feel inhibited by a recording device and/or by an additional note-taker in the room, versus the challenges of having a single interviewer to both ask questions/follow-ups and take notes.)

- **Data safety:** Where and how will recordings/notes be stored? Who will have access to these data? Will the data be anonymised/pseudonymised? How will the team address any requests from education authorities to access field data?

- **Participant consent:** How will the team ensure that all workshop/interview participants actively consent to taking part? How will this consent be recorded? If a stakeholder informally shares useful information with a diagnostic team member when the team are doing fieldwork, how will the question of consent be approached (e.g., retrospectively asking for their consent if they will be quoted or cited directly, or using this information as a general tip-off and triangulating it with other written/human sources that can be cited, etc.)?

- **Institutional requirements:** Do any of the collaborating organisations or funders have specific requirements around data protection and participant consent? How will meeting these institutional requirements affect timelines for the diagnostic exercise?

- **Confidentiality among workshop participants:** Will the diagnostic team be setting any expectations among workshop participants about whether they can share information from the workshops themselves? Two good options here are either asking participants to keep workshop contents confidential, or asking participants to observe the [Chatham House Rule](#) 'participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed').

Materials for the workshops and interviews

Once the team has determined the composition and focus of the workshops and interviews, they can begin developing the instruments and materials for each.

A good starting point for these may be Tools #4, #5, and #6 in the Planning and Analysis Tools. The diagnostic team may wish to either select, adapt, and simplify parts of these analysis tools to serve as worksheets for the workshops, or simply to extract and modify relevant guiding questions from the analysis tools to serve as workshop/interview instruments so that the diagnostic team can make sure that they cover all targeted areas in the workshop/interview in question. In all cases, the diagnostic team should adapt these to suit their context, changing the structure, language, word choice and flow to focus the discussion in the way they feel will be most beneficial.

- *An adaptation to consider*: In addition to workshop worksheets and interview instruments, two of the teams that piloted the Diagnostic found it helpful develop questionnaires to survey the opinions of stakeholders in a more standardised way.
  - One of the teams chose to develop and administer a brief questionnaire as part of each workshop, for the sake of capturing a high-level snapshot of participants' views across the workshops (complementing the more detailed analysis of the nuanced discussions within the workshop).
  - Another team chose to develop a much more extensive questionnaire in order to survey a much larger sample of stakeholders, for the sake of extending the diagnostic analysis and including a wider set of viewpoints in the analysis. For this example, see the *Survey*

instrument and methods note by the Global School Leaders team from their diagnostic pilots in GSL partner countries in p. 163–183 of the <u>example materials from the pilot studies</u>.

For examples of workshop materials, see:

- example worksheets 1, 2, and 3 under 'Sample workshop agendas' below;

- data collection instruments by the Central Square Foundation team from their diagnostic pilot in a state in northern India, on pp. 77–147 of the <u>example materials from the pilot studies</u>;

- data collection instruments by the EPRC team from their diagnostic pilot in Uganda, on pp. 148–162 of the <u>example materials from the pilot studies</u>; and

- the workshop slide deck (in Spanish) by the SUMMA team from their diagnostic pilot in Ecuador, on pp. 184–190 of the <u>example materials from the pilot studies</u>.

Logistics

Once the team has agreed on the invitations and structure of the workshops, they can begin planning the logistics. They should ensure that adequate space is reserved and that appropriate materials are provided so that participants can be as productive as possible during the workshop.

For interviews, factors to consider in choosing a location for the interview include ensuring the convenience and comfort of each interview participant and ensuring that the venue is quiet enough to have a meaningful conversation.

Workshops

Suggested diagnostic team for each workshop

At each workshop the diagnostic team can consist of (at a minimum):

- **Facilitator(s).** One facilitator per ten participants is recommended. The team may wish to adopt a co-facilitation model where one facilitator is a member of the research team, and another is a professional workshop and communications facilitator. The team may wish to use different facilitators at different workshops to ensure facilitation by an individual adequately familiar with the aspect of the system that is the main focus of the workshop. Additionally, consider which facilitators may best placed to establish rapport with the workshop group in question.

- **Note-taker**. The note-taker should be a member of the research team to ensure that most important insights from the workshop are captured. Some insights may be subtle and contextual, so a sufficiently experienced and knowledgeable researcher should take this role.

- **Administrative and logistics coordinator**. Having a dedicated coordinator will ensure that the facilitator and note taker can focus on the content of the workshop

Sample workshop agendas

Two different possible approaches to the diagnostic workshops are described below. In both instances, organisers should consider limiting the number of topics covered in a workshop to allow for more in-depth discussions. Of course, both of these should be adapted to suit the context as needed.

- Sample workshop agenda A takes a more tailored approach, adapting the questions from the framework to facilitate a tailored discussion among participants.

- Sample workshop agenda B is more expansive, involving explaining the full framework to participants before starting the discussion.

Organisers should consider which approach, with adaptations, is better suited to their context.

In both samples A and B, organisers should consider setting reasonable expectations for the scope of each workshop. Setting a more limited scope for an individual workshop can allow for richer discussion. One possible approach is to start with a single comprehensive workshop with one group of stakeholders and use that initial workshop to identify what will be the most fruitful topics for further discussion.

In discussions with stakeholders, it may be helpful to identify the difference between de jure (lawful or intended) alignment and de facto (in practice) alignment, and to be explicit that we are hoping to discuss de facto alignments in this exercise.

Sample workshop agenda A

- ***Part 1*: Introduction**
  - Explain to participants the objectives of the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic, the overall diagnostic process, where this workshop fits into the process, what the day's activity will be, the desired outcome of the workshop, and the overall outcome of the Diagnostic.
  - Clarify which aspects of the system will be the focus of the discussion for that day.

- ***Part 2*: Facilitated discussion of curated questions**
  - Facilitate a discussion around a subset of relevant questions drawn from the desk review analysis (Tools #4, #5, and #6) to gather the additional information needed to proceed with analysis.

- ***Part 3*: Identifying alignments and misalignments**
  - Based on the topics covered at this workshop, the diagnostic team should then direct the discussion toward any relevant misalignments that emerged from the first part of the discussion.

- ***Part 4*: Conclusion**
  - Conclude the workshop, express thanks, share the timeline for analysis and when the report will be shared back with participants.

- ***Part 5*: Team debrief to review findings from the workshop**
  - Discuss and note down how the outcomes of the day's discussion feed into the overall analysis, and any adjustments that should be made to the key questions and/or subsequent workshops in light of what was learned during the day's discussion. A priority here is capturing team members' observations when they are fresh, to facilitate subsequent analysis.

Sample workshop agenda B

- ***Part 1*: Introduction to the RISE 5x4 framework**
  - To introduce the 5x4 framework, the diagnostic team may wish to draw on *the Training Video and Slide Decks* and the [example materials] provided in this toolkit, but they should feel free to adapt the materials to their context. Be sure to spend adequate time on this framing if you will be relying on it in your workshops.
  - Key points to emphasise during this introduction include:

- ▪ Education systems are composed of multiple actors and the relationships between them and system elements that cut across them. The system elements and feedback loops between relationships determine the outcomes of the system.

- ▪ Education system relationships, system elements, and the system overall, can be aligned to different purposes. There can be gaps between the de jure and de facto alignments of the system

- *Part 2*: **Introduction to the diagnostic process**
  - o Explain to participants the objectives of the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic, the overall diagnostic process, where this workshop fits into the process, what the day's activity will be, the desired outcome of the workshop, and the overall outcome of the Diagnostic.
  - o Clarify which aspects of the system will be the focus of the discussion for that day, and why those elements were selected (e.g., because those are elements that the participants are most knowledgeable about).

- *Part 3*: **Fill in sub-elements of the framework.**
  - o Introduces a sub-element row and example indicators for what it may look like under different alignments.
  - o Provide each participant with a worksheet with the details of that sub-element.
    - ▪ See below for *Figure 8. Example of a Diagnostic workshop worksheet on identifying the alignment(s) of a sub-element.*
    - ▪ Give the group a designated time (e.g., 5 minutes) to consider the sub-element on their own, circle the alignments and indicators of each sub-element they feel best describe their system, note why they have selected these alignments and indicators, and note anything they think is missing from the description of that sub-element in their system.
    - ▪ Note that the diagnostic team may wish to edit the language of the worksheets to be adapted to the local context and be more relevant to workshop participants. They may also wish to modify the format of the sheets. Diagnostic teams should make whatever adaptations are necessary to adapt the materials to their context, with the focus on preserving the main purpose of the activity and the core information it seeks to gather.
  - o The group comes back together for a discussion of the sub-element, with a goal of building consensus on a brief description of this sub-element in their context. They should aim to keep this discussion brief (e.g., 15 minutes).
    - ▪ The diagnostic team should have their description of this sub-element from the desk review on hand to help facilitate the discussion and ensure that their key questions are answered.
    - ▪ The facilitator may rely on the description from the desk review to prompt discussion if conversation lags, or probe if there are contradictions that emerge. However, they should refrain from leading with their analysis if possible, allowing the participants to come to their own description first.
  - o This process can then be repeated for additional sub-elements.
    - ▪ Before moving on to a new element or relationship, the facilitator should ask the group which type of alignment they think best describes the element or relationship they have discussed.
    - ▪ The team should set a realistic goal for the number of sub-elements that can be completed in a session before taking a break (likely three or so), and the number of sessions that can be completed in a day (likely two or three).

- **Part 4: Identifying misalignments**
  - Prior to the workshop, based on the topics that will be covered at this workshop, the diagnostic team should select a segment of the framework (i.e., two or three rows and columns of the 5x4) and prepare handouts showing the selected segments of the framework to share with the participants.
    - See below for *Figure 9. Example of Diagnostic workshop worksheet on misalignments between two accountability relationships* and *Figure 10. Example of a Diagnostic workshop worksheet on misalignments within an accountability relationship*.
  - The facilitator should ask the participants to identify any misalignments within and between these segments, either that emerged from the earlier discussion or that they feel are important to highlight.
  - After giving the participants time to consider misalignments on their own, the facilitators can lead a discussion with the goal of arriving at a consensus on several misalignments that the group would like to highlight. This discussion can also draw on the misalignments identified by the facilitators in the literature review.

- *Part 5*: **Conclusion**
  - Conclude the workshop, express thanks, share the timeline for analysis and report writing and when the report will be shared back with participants.

- *Part 6*: **Team debrief to review findings from the workshop**
  - Discuss and note down how the outcomes of the day's discussion feed into the overall analysis, and any adjustments that should be made to the key questions and/or subsequent workshops in light of what was learned during the day's discussion. One priority here should be capturing team members' observations when they are fresh, to facilitate subsequent analysis.

What to do if differences emerge between the diagnostic teams' understanding of the education system and workshop participants' understanding thereof: Given how complex and internally diverse an education system can be, it is entirely possible that the workshop participants may offer one or more entirely different perspectives on the relationships/elements in question. Whenever possible, the diagnostic team should use the time during or immediately after the workshops itself to reconcile differences between their analysis and the understanding arrived at during the desk review. Following up on these queries immediately with probing questions or side conversations can reduce the need for follow-up interviews and speed up the diagnostic process.

- During these probing questions and side conversations, the goal is <u>not</u> to nudge participants to agree with the observations from the desk review, but rather for the diagnostic team to better understand the basis of these divergent perspectives.

- For example, do these different understandings result from varied experiences across subgroups of stakeholders? Are these different understandings rooted in different data sources or different organisational/social norms? How should these differences affect or modify the team's application of the diagnostic approach and/or their interpretation of the 5x4 framework for the context in question?

Figure 8. Example of a Diagnostic workshop worksheet on identifying the alignment(s) of a sub-element

Example worksheet 1: Focus on a sub-element within the Delegation element of the Compact relationship

Workshop ID:	999
Relationship:	Compact
Element:	Delegation
Sub-element:	High-level target: what does the executive set as the goal for the system?

Alignment of relationship	Description of alignment *Circle items in this column that describe your understanding of your system*	Example indicators *Circle items in this column that describe your understanding of your system*	In your own words *Write your own description of this sub-element for your system.*
Coherent for learning	Relationship is aligned around the goal of all children learning. Clear goals for learning are articulated, financed, and supported.	• Executive authorities set clear, measurable, achievable goals for progress on cohort learning at early, middle, and late stages. • Executives consider learning equity and equality of opportunity issues in setting learning objectives	*Which alignment(s) seem to represent your system best in this sub-element? What else would you note about this sub-element in your system?*
Aligned for access	Relationship is aligned around enrolment and attainment goals. System is focused on expanding access and grade attainment. Systems can talk about quality but usually in relation to thin inputs set as the standard of what a minimum "quality" school is.	• Executives set and manage towards goals to expand to universal enrolment and completion of a given level of schooling (basic, primary, or secondary). • Equity, equality of opportunity, and inclusivity are all components and are considered in terms of access and attainment.	
Aligned for socialisation	Relationship is characterised by socialisation or ideological goal. These types prioritise socialising children into a set of values. Can be co-aligned with an access agenda.	• Executives set goal to promote patriotic allegiance to the state, common national language, or transmission of religious values to next generation	
Aligned for patronage	Relationship is dominated by short-term clientelist objectives. These systems no longer have a core educational purpose (i.e., learning, selection, or access), although they may articulate such a purpose on paper. Instead, those in power use the system as a patronage mill (e.g., to hire teachers from, or to build schools for, certain constituencies).	• Executives' goals in education are primarily aligned around maintaining power for the regime. • Decisions in education are dominated by political cycles. Policy objectives are weak but political objectives are strong.	
Aligned for special interests	Relationship is dominated by special interest groups (e.g., teacher unions). The dominant priority in these systems is ensuring that the needs of these groups are met.	• Executives focus on satisfying interest groups' needs.	

Figure 9. Example of Diagnostic workshop worksheet on misalignments between two accountability relationships

Example worksheet 2: Misalignments between Compact and Management:
In what ways are delegation, finance and information aligned and misaligned between the Compact relationship and the Management relationship? Write descriptions in each cell that is relevant.

	Compact: Highest authority of the State to education authorities	**Management**: Education authorities to schools, school leaders, and teachers
Delegation: what the principal wants the agent to do		
Finance: resources the principal allocates to the agent to achieve tasks		
Information: how the principal assesses the agent's performance		

Figure 10. Example of a Diagnostic workshop worksheet on misalignments within an accountability relationship

Example worksheet 3: Misalignments within Management:
In what ways are delegation, finance, information, support, and motivation aligned or misaligned within the management relationship? Write descriptions in each cell that is relevant.

	Management: Education authorities to schools, school leaders, and teachers
Delegation: what the principal wants the agent to do	
Finance: resources the principal allocates to the agent to achieve tasks	
Information: how the principal assesses the agent's performance	
Support: preparation and assistance that the principal provides to the agent to complete the task	
Motivation: how the agents' wellbeing is affected by doing (or not doing) the task that the principal wants them to do	

Follow-up interviews

As noted above, the team may wish to conduct some follow-up interviews after the main round of workshops and interviews. In the interest of maintaining an efficient timeline for the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic, follow-up interviews should only be conducted when further clarification is needed from stakeholders, as determined by the diagnostic team.

Reasons to conduct follow-up interviews include:

- To further explore strongly held differences of views between stakeholders who attend different workshops.

- To remedy situations where the diagnostic team feels they were not able to gather a full account of a stakeholder's perspective because of the group setting and dynamics. For example, power dynamics surfacing during the workshop may mean that particular stakeholder(s) were not able to openly communicate their views.

- To further investigate de jure vs de facto distinctions. For example, if the diagnostic team suspects that participants were basing their accounts on de jure policy or how the system is 'supposed' to work on paper, and not on the way the system actually functions in reality, then they may feel that a follow-up conversation could help to generate insights on the de facto functioning of the system.

4. Analysis

The analysis stage may begin while the workshops are underway. Besides systematically going through the data collected in workshops/interviews, this analysis phase will require the team to exercise their judgement and work toward consensus within the team. For example, the team may have to make judgement calls in weighing different types of information from a wide range of perspectives in order to decide which alignment is dominant or most influential in a particular relationship.

The analysis should include the following:

- **Sub-elements:**
    - For each sub-element of each relationship, compose a narrative description of the type(s) that explain that sub-element, drawing on notes from each workshop and interview, highlight sources of consensus and dissent (i.e., which stakeholders agree with each other, which disagree, about what).
    - This could be recorded in the "***Summary from workshops/ interviews***" rows of **Tools #4, #5, and #6** of the Planning and Analysis Tools.
- **Elements and relationships:**
    - Once the team has completed the write-ups for each sub-element, they can write an overview of (a) each element of the relationship and (b) the relationship overall.
    - The overall description of each element should be a short bullet-point or narrative description of the dominant alignment(s) of the relationship.
    - Similarly, the overall description of each relationship should focus on dominant alignments. The team may also wish to note down other important aspects of the power dynamics between principal(s) and agent(s) in the relationship, or major misalignments between elements in the relationship. (However, misalignments should also be analysed and described in the next part of the analysis.)
    - These could be recorded in (a) the "***Description of element"*** column and (b) the "***Overall description of the relationship***" rows of **Tools #4, #5, and #6**.

- o For an example of a completed analysis of elements and relationships (based on an earlier version of Tools #4, #5, and #6, see the analysis tools by the JPC– VERSO team from their diagnostic pilot in Balochistan, Pakistan, on pp. 191–199 of the example materials from the pilot studies.

- **Misalignments:**

  - o See **Tool #7. Misalignments analysis** in the Planning and Analysis Tools (screenshot in Figure 11 below) for a modifiable template for analysing and recording misalignments.

  - o Compile all misalignments raised in the various workshops/interviews, alongside the team's analysis from the desk review and other observations and analysis throughout the process. Also, check against the list of common misalignments in Table 12 of *Understanding the RISE Systems Framework* to determine if any are missing to see if there are any to add.

  - o Add justifications and evidence to the list of misalignments. Determine if any misalignments should be eliminated (e.g., because they are duplicates of other misalignments, because they are relatively unimportant or only affect a small subset of the education system, because there is limited evidence for them).

  - o For each misalignment on the final list, identify one or two principles or suggestions for intervention that could help resolve the misalignment. Write a short paragraph evidencing and justifying each.

Figure 11. Screenshot of Tool #7 for analysing misalignments within the education system.

5. Prioritisation workshop

To finalise the outcomes of the Diagnostic, the steering committee should meet again. At this workshop the researchers should share:

- the main alignment(s) of each relationship (from the "Description of element" cells from Tools #4, #5, and #6); and

- the misalignments that emerged from the analysis (from the completed Tool #7).

The diagnostic team should determine the best way to share this analysis with the steering committee (e.g., in writing in advance, in a single presentation, or in multiple presentations).

After sharing the analysis with the steering committee, a facilitator from the diagnostic team should lead them in a process of deciding on two or three (**no more than three**) misalignments that will be identified as the main priorities for intervention emerging from the Diagnostic.

The steering committee should also make recommendations about principles for intervention to address these misalignments. These may be based on stakeholders' suggestions from the workshops/interviews, the diagnostic team's reflections, the steering committee's own recommendations, or a combination of these.

The diagnostic team should decide on the mode of facilitation that will work best to engage the steering committee on these questions based on their knowledge of the committee and the diagnostic objectives.

6. Final report and dissemination

Following the steering committee's prioritisation workshop, the diagnostic team should compose their final report.

The final report should provide a high-level but informative summary of the knowledge and insights gleaned from the diagnostic exercise. It should include:

- an overview of each accountability relationship that has been analysed in the Diagnostic, including the alignment(s) that best describe it and justifications of these alignments based on information about each of the analysed elements (i.e., drawing from the analysis described in Tool #7 of the Planning and Analysis Tools);

- an overview of the misalignments that the steering committee chooses to prioritise, the evidence for these, and a justification for why they were chosen;

- recommendations identified by the steering committee for addressing these misalignments; and

- any high-level conclusions or analysis of the system that emerged from the Diagnostic that the team feels would be beneficial to include.

The diagnostic team may augment this outline as they see fit. However, they should strive to cover these points and keep the report brief (e.g., approximately ten pages) and digestible for the key audiences.

In an appendix, the diagnostic team may wish to include:

- a description of the organisations that make up principal and agent of each relationship;

- a summary analysis of each relationship (i.e., the "Description of element" cells from Tools #4, #5, and #6 of the Planning and Analysis Tools, or their equivalent);

- the comprehensive list of misalignments (i.e., the completed Tool #7 of the Planning and Analysis Tools) from which the steering committee selected their priorities.

The team can decide to include or forgo these appendices depending on the audience for the report and how they think it will be best received.

For examples of final reports, see:

- the final report by the University of the Witwatersrand team from their diagnostic pilot in Gauteng, South Africa on pp. 200–260 of the [example materials from the pilot studies](#);

- the final report by the EPRC team from their diagnostic pilot in Uganda on pp. 261–308 of the [example materials from the pilot studies](#);

- the final report by the JPC– VERSO team from their diagnostic pilot in Balochistan, Pakistan, on pp. 309–331 of the [example materials from the pilot studies](#);

- the final report by the SUMMA team from their diagnostic pilot in Ecuador on pp. 332–367 (Spanish version) and pp. 368–39 (English version) of the [example materials from the pilot studies](#).

Alongside the final report, the diagnostic team may wish to consider further possibilities for disseminating their analysis, including:

- policy briefs

- publication in a newspaper op-d or an article in a magazine or journal

- blogs

- podcasts

- videos

- social media posts

- collaborations with teams conducting the Diagnostic in other contexts.

Planning and Analysis Tools

The RISE Education Systems Diagnostic Toolkit

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Each section of the toolkit should be consulted during the indicated phases of the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic:

❶ Inception
❷ Desk review
❸ Stakeholder workshops & interviews
④ Analysis
❺ Prioritisation workshop
⑥ Final report

More details on each phase are available in the Application Guide (Part 2).

The Planning and Analysis Tools enable users to analyse the key alignments and misalignments within their education systems.

These tools take the form of a Microsoft Excel workbook. Specifically, a macro-enabled Microsoft Excel workbook—with the file extension .xlsm rather than .xlsx—to take advantage of a macro that allows guidance notes in the spreadsheets to be shown or hidden as needed.

These tools can be downloaded here:

https://riseprogramme.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/RISE%20Education%20Systems%20Diagnostic%20Toolkit_Planning%20and%20Analysis%20Tools_20230127.xlsm

Note: If the hyperlink in this document to the Planning and Analysis Tools no longer works, please check https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-Misc_2023/09 and https://riseprogramme.org/tools/rise-education-systems-diagnostic for the most recent versions of the Diagnostic toolkit.

Table 15 gives an overview of the seven tools and their uses.

Table 15. An overview of the seven Planning and Analysis Tools

Tool #1 **Steering committee list** 1	Tool #2 **Stakeholder list** 2 3	Tool #3 **Document list** 2	Tools #4, #5, #6 **Compact analysis** **Management analysis** **Voice & Choice analysis** 2 3 4 6	Tool #7 **Misalignments analysis** 2 4 5 6
Use Tool #1 during the **inception** to help identify organisations /individuals that should be represented on the steering committee.	Use Tool #2 during the **desk review** to help map the various stakeholders within the education system. This list can then be used to facilitate planning the **stakeholder workshops and interviews**.	Use Tool #3 during the **desk review** as a starting point for identifying key government documents and policies to review.	Use Tools #4, #5, and #6 during: • the **desk review** to facilitate a preliminary diagnostic analysis of the elements of the Compact/ Management/ Voice & Choice relationships and their dominant alignments, and to identify gaps in information from available documents and the diagnostic team's prior knowledge; • the **stakeholder workshops and interviews** to choose the topical emphases for each workshop/interview with various stakeholders, and to inform the questions to be discussed; • the **analysis** to record the dominant alignments of each element and an overall description of the relationship; and • the **final report and dissemination** phase as a consolidation of the findings.	Use Tool #7 during the preliminary diagnostic analysis of the **desk review** and during the main **analysis** phase to facilitate the identification of significant misalignments in the education system. These misalignments will then inform the **prioritisation workshop** and the **final report**.

Illustrative screenshots of some of the tools are available above in the Guide to Applying the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic. See:

- Figure 4 for a screenshot of **Tool #1, Steering committee list**;

- Figure 5 for a screenshot of **Tool #2, Stakeholder list**;

- Figure 6 for a screenshot of **Tool #3, Document list**;

- Figure 7 for a screenshot of **Tool #4, Compact analysis** (note: Tool #5, Management analysis, and Tool #6, Voice & Choice analysis, follow the same format as Tool #4); and

- **Error! Reference source not found.** for a screenshot of **Tool #7, Misalignments analysis**.

Part 3. **RESOURCES**

➔ Glossary

➔ Training Video and Slide Decks

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Each section of the toolkit should be consulted during the indicated phases of the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic:

❶ Inception

❷ Desk review

❸ Stakeholder workshops & interviews

④ Analysis

❺ Prioritisation workshop

⑥ Final report

More details on each phase are available in the Application Guide (Part 2).

List of terms in the glossary

Definitions

5x4 framework

The 5x4 framework (also known as the RISE systems framework, RISE accountability framework, or education systems framework), is a conceptual tool for considering the key relationships of an education system (with a focus on 4 relationships of accountability between principals and agents), the elements that make up those relationships (with a focus on 5 elements), and the ways in which these relationships lead to different systemwide outcomes.

- For more information, see *Understanding the RISE Systems Framework* and Section II in Pritchett, L. (2015). Creating Education Systems Coherent for Learning Outcomes. RISE Working Paper Series.15/005. https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-WP_2015/005.

- See also *'element'*, *'relationship of accountability'*, and *'alignment(s) of an accountability relationship'*.

access, alignment for

An accountability relationship (or education system) is aligned for access when the key objective of the relationship (or system)—as manifested in the different elements of the relationship(s)—is on expansion (getting all children in school). There is an emphasis on enrolment and grade attainment/level completion. While these systems may talk about "quality", it is usually not defined in relationship to learning outcomes, and is instead connected to a laundry list of "thin" inputs (e.g., things measured by EMIS) as opposed to teaching and learning practices in the classroom.

- See also '*alignment(s) of an accountability relationship'*.

account-based accountability vs. accounting-based accountability

Account-based accountability emphasises information in the form of detailed, context-specific, non-standardised, 'thick' descriptions of what an agent did and why they chose to do so. In contrast, accounting-based accountability emphasises information in the form of quantifiable, standardised, 'thin' measurements, often of inputs rather than outcomes.

For example, account-based accountability in the management relationship might involve detailed classroom lesson observations and follow-up discussions between inspectors/district officials (principals) and teachers (agents). Accounting-based accountability in the management relationship might involve standardised checklists that teachers are required to submit via the EMIS system about whether they completed certain curricular topics and lesson activities in a given semester.

- For more information, see Honig, D. & Pritchett, L. (2019). The Limits of Accounting-Based Accountability in Education (and Far Beyond): Why More Accounting Will Rarely Solve Accountability Problems. RISE Working Paper Series. 19/030. https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-WP_2019/030.
- See also *'inputs (vs. outcomes)'*.

alignment(s) of an accountability relationship

The alignment of an accountability relationship is the primary outcome that the relationship produces. This alignment is an emergent property of the interaction between the actors in the relationship, and the RISE Framework helps to identify it. Systems deliver learning when the elements of the key relationships in the system are aligned for learning, but in many systems relationships are aligned for another purpose(s). The RISE Framework specifies some of these common purposes and how they can be identified in a system.

- For more information, see *Understanding the RISE Systems Framework*.
- For illustrative examples of what these different alignments might look like for different elements of each accountability relationship, see Tools #4, #5, and #6 in the Planning and Analysis Tools.
- See also the common alignments included in the education systems diagnostic:
  - '*learning, alignment for'*
  - '*access, alignment for'*
  - '*selection, alignment for'*
  - '*process compliance, alignment for'*
  - '*socialisation, alignment for'*

      o   *'patronage and/or particular interest groups,* alignment for*'.*

- See also '*misalignment, within or between accountability relationship(s)'.*

- Note: in earlier iterations of the RISE Diagnostic, 'alignment' was sometimes called 'coherence'.

authority (executive, fiduciary, or legislative)

The highest executive authorities are usually the head of government, such as the president's/prime minister's office at the national level, or the chief minister's office at the regional level in a federal state. Fiduciary authorities are those who make budgetary decisions, typically the ministry of finance. Legislative authorities are law-making bodies, typically the parliament. These authorities are typically the agent in the Politics relationship and the principal in the Compact relationship, holding ultimate formal authority over education policy and budgets.

coherence

See *'alignment(s) of an accountability relationship'.*

compact (relationship)

In the 5x4 framework, compact is the relationship between the highest executive, legislative and fiduciary authorities of the state–the principal–and education authorities and organisations–the agent.

- See also '*relationship of accountability'.*

de jure vs. de facto

The literal meaning of 'de jure' is 'of law', and the literal meaning of 'de facto' is 'of fact'. In relation to policymaking and policy implementation, 'de jure' refers to what is officially written on paper or officially legislated, whereas 'de facto' refers to what actually happens in practice.

- See also '*isomorphic mimicry'* and '*technical core (and support functions)'.*

delegation (element)

In an accountability relationship, delegation is the goals the principal gives to an agent. For example, in the management relationship, the Ministry of Education typically uses the curriculum as an instrument for delegating (to teachers and schools) certain priorities for what should be taught to students.

- See also '*element'.*

education authorities and organisations

Individuals and organisations that are subordinate to the highest state executive, fiduciary, and legislative authorities, but superordinate to school leaders and teachers on the frontline. Depending on the context, education authorities and organisations can include not only ministries of education, but also independent examination and curriculum authorities, the headquarters of large private school chains, religious bodies that oversee publicly funded schools etc.

element

Also referred to as design elements of the relationship of accountability. These correspond to the rows of the 5x4 framework. There are five elements (Delegation, Finance, Information, Support and Management). The RISE Diagnostic approach does not cover all elements in all relationships.

- For more information, see *Understanding the RISE Systems Framework* and Section II in Pritchett, L. (2015). Creating Education Systems Coherent for Learning Outcomes. RISE Working Paper Series.15/005. https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-WP_2015/005.

- See also the elements included in the education systems diagnostic:
  - *'delegation (element)'*
  - *'finance (element)'*
  - *'information (element)'*
  - *'support (element)'*
  - *'motivation (element)'.*

- See also '*relationship of accountability'.*

EMIS

Education Management Information System.

examinations

In this Diagnostic toolkit, "examinations" or "exams" refer to assessments that have high-stakes consequences for the student (usually at the end of primary or end of secondary school). "Assessments" refers to all other measures of student learning.

finance (element)

In an accountability relationship, finance refers to the resources the principal has allocated to the agent to achieve their delegated task(s). For example, in the compact relationship, the Ministry of Finance allocates budget to the education authorities to carry out educational activities.

- See also *'element'.*

frontline (vs. centre)

Teachers and school leaders who interact directly with students in the provision of educational services. In analysis, the schools and classrooms at the frontline (agents in the management and voice & choice relationships) are often contrasted with the education authorities and organisations (principals in the management relationship).

- See also '*spider (vs. starfish)'*.

incoherence

See '*misalignment*'.

information (element)

In an accountability relationship, information refers to how the principal assess the agent's performance in their delegated task(s). For example, in the voice and choice relationship, parents can gather information about their children's school experience by asking their children how they feel about school or by reviewing their children's test scores.

- See also *'element'*.

inputs (vs. outcomes)

From Pritchett (2018):

'The way large bureaucracies prefer to work is to specify process compliance and inputs and then measure those as a means of driving performance. … So in education one would specify easily-observable inputs like textbook availability, class size, school infrastructure. Even if one were talking about "quality" of schooling, a large bureaucracy would want this too reduced to "thin" indicators, like the fraction of teachers with a given type of formal degree, or process compliance measures, like whether teachers were hired based on some formal assessment. …

'Providing information on inputs that don't have a clear causal connection to outputs and outcomes does not help—and can hurt through distracting efforts. The old saw is that if you have more than three priorities, you have no priorities. What if your "report card" has 977 items? If improving any one of these (e.g. students receiving incentives, pupil-teacher ratio, percent of schools with playground facilities, transition ratio, educational qualifications of teachers) can be regarded as a program goal, then one can, as they say, happily rearrange deckchairs arranged on the Titanic. For instance, included under the label of "performance indicator" is "pupil-teacher ratio", presumably with the notion that lower is better. But in a number of Indian states, the pupil-teacher ratio in government schools was falling because the number of students was falling while the teacher force stayed more constant. So this was actually an indicator of a stall in school quality, not an indicator of "performance"' (pp. 3–5).

- For more information, see Pritchett, L. (2018). The Risks of Dangerous Dashboards in Basic Education. RISE Insight. https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-RI_2018/006.
- See also *'process compliance, alignment for', 'account-based accountability vs. accounting-based accountability',* and *'isomorphic mimicry'.*

isomorphic mimicry

From Pritchett (2013):

'*Camouflage that enhances an animal's survival value by mimicking another species is called isomorphic mimicry. The eastern coral snake is highly poisonous and brightly colored, with black, red, and yellow stripes. The scarlet king snake is not poisonous; it is really just a harmless creature, but it too is brightly colored, with black, red, and yellow stripes. The scarlet king snake enjoys the evolutionary advantages of signaling that it is dangerous without the bother of actually being dangerous. Some species of flies have evolved to look like bees, and even to make a bee-sounding buzz as they fly. The survival pressure of natural selection at times produces mimics, species that derive a survival value from imitating other species' forms or appearances without any real function attached to that appearance.*

'*The deception of camouflage also works for organizations. Sociologists borrowed the idea of animal isomorphic mimicry and have applied it to organizational ecosystems to describe how many organizations behave (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Organizations, particularly in fields in which the desired outcomes are complex to produce and hard to assess, can enhance their organizational survival by adopting "best practice" where it doesn't really matter. Such reforms can make them look like functional organizations. Adopting the forms of best practice without any of the underlying functionality that actually characterizes the best practice can produce quick and easy gains in perception. Such organizations can look like successful organizations while lacking any real success*' (p. 96).

Examples of isomorphic mimicry in education systems include teacher compensation policies that award higher pay to teachers with an additional certification, even though the certification is poorly designed and does not improve teachers' pedagogical competencies; or maintaining a school inspection system that only collects information on thin inputs (e.g., how many teachers have filled in their lesson plan record books) and that results in neither consequences nor targeted support for schools and teachers).

- For more information, see Pritchett, L. (2014). The risks to education systems from design mismatch and global isomorphism: Concepts, with examples from India (WIDER Working Paper). UNU-WIDER. https://doi.org/10.35188/UNU-WIDER/2014/760-8. See also DiMaggio, P. J., & Powell, W. W. (1983). The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields. *American Sociological Review*, *48*(2), 147–160. JSTOR. https://doi.org/10.2307/2095101; and Pritchett, L. (2013). *The rebirth of education: Schooling ain't learning*. Center for Global Development. Chapter 1 available at: https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/rebirth-education-introduction_0.pdf
- See also *'process compliance, alignment for'* and *'de jure vs. de facto'.*

learning, alignment for

An accountability relationship (or education system) is aligned for access when the key objective of the relationship (or system)—as manifested in the different elements of the relationship(s)—is cultivating students' learning. In such relationships and systems, clear goals for learning are articulated, financed, and supported.

- See also *'alignment(s) of an accountability relationship'*.

management (relationship)

In the 5x4 framework, management is the relationship between education authorities and organisations (the principal) and school leaders and teachers on the frontline (the agents).

Typically, the management relationship involves multiple principals and multiple agents. For example, principals in this relationship may include the Ministry of Education, as well as other public-sector authorities such the examinations board, as well as private-sector organisations such as the headquarters of large private school chains and religious bodies that administer schools.

Also, education service delivery involves multiple levels of administration: not only the centre and the frontline, but also regions, districts, and other levels. Depending on the topical and organisational focus of a diagnostic study, a district education office could be either a principal or an agent in the management relationship.

- See also *'relationship of accountability', 'frontline (vs. centre)',* and *'education authorities and organisations'*.

misalignment, within or between accountability relationship(s)

Misalignment within or between accountability relationships in an education system can hinder progress toward learning objectives (or other systemwide goals). Within the 5x4 framework, there are three main types of misalignments:

(a) Misalignment *within a relationship (column)*, where different elements of the relationship are oriented toward different goals. For example, in the compact relationship, the president's office (principal) might set a goal of improving foundational literacy and numeracy (delegation, aligned for learning), while determining budget allocations solely in terms of the infrastructural needed to provide classrooms for projected numbers of students (finance, aligned for access) rather than in terms of the resources necessary for equipping teachers and schools to cultivate children's learning.

(b) Misalignment *within an element (row),* where the same element is oriented toward different goals in different relationships. For example, for the element of information, parents (principals in the voice and choice relationship) might prioritise test scores that are aligned toward student learning, but the prime minister's office (principal in the compact relationship) might prioritise data on student enrolment and attendance rates that are aligned toward access.

(c) Misalignment *between two relationships (columns) that are each internally aligned*. For example, in a given education system, all elements of the management relationship might be aligned for process compliance because this is what the Ministry of Education (principal in management) prioritises, whereas all elements of the voice and choice relationship might be aligned for socialising children

into a set of socioreligious values that parents and the local community (principals in voice and choice) prioritise. This creates tensions for school leaders and teachers (agents in both relationships), who face two different sets of competing goals.

Identifying and addressing such misalignments is key to the education systems diagnostic approach.

- For more information, see "Emergent properties: Diagnosing system (mis)alignment" in *Understanding the RISE Systems Framework*. See also Section III in Pritchett, L. (2015). Creating Education Systems Coherent for Learning Outcomes. RISE Working Paper Series.15/005. https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-WP_2015/005.

- See also '*alignment(s) of an accountability relationship*'.

- Note: in earlier iterations of the RISE Diagnostic, 'misalignment' was sometimes called 'incoherence'.

motivation (element)

In an accountability relationship, motivation refers to how the agent's wellbeing is affected by how well they perform their delegated task(s). Motivation can be extrinsic (mediated by principal, usually related to finances, material circumstances, or social validation, etc.) or intrinsic (mediated by agent, usually related to personal satisfaction, a sense of mission or vocation, etc.). For example, in the voice & choice relationship, parents or community groups may directly pressure teachers to improve their attendance at school by calling them out in community meetings for failing to do so (extrinsic, social/reputational motivation).

- See also *'element'.*

patronage and/or particular interest groups, alignment for

An accountability relationship (or education system) is aligned for patronage and/or for a particular interest group when the key objective of the relationship (or system)—as manifested in the different elements of the relationship(s)—is aligned for a purpose other than education. In patronage systems, politicians and those in power use the system as a patronage mill (e.g., to hire teachers, or to build schools for certain constituencies). Often, those who have enough resources will opt out of the public system (resulting in a large low-cost private school sector).

In systems aligned for specific interest groups, the dominant priority is fulfilling narrow elements of particular interest groups (e.g., profits of textbook producers, or the employment/wage concerns of teacher's unions as distinct from their legitimate role as professional organizations in promoting good education). These systems may pretend to be another type on paper, but de facto they do not deliver schooling or learning for all.

- See also *'alignment(s) of an accountability relationship'* and *'isomorphic mimicry'.*

politics (relationship)

In the 5x4 framework, politics is the accountability relationship between citizens–the principal–and the highest executive, legislative and fiduciary authorities of the state–the agent.

- See also '*relationship of accountability'.*

process compliance, alignment for

An accountability relationship (or education system) is aligned for process compliance when the key objective of the relationship (or system)—as manifested in the different elements of the relationship(s)—is on correct completion of logistical tasks like keeping to scheduled activities and meeting reporting targets. While these may have originally served a purpose, they are now bureaucratic compliance for the sake of compliance.

- For more on alignment, see *'alignment(s) of an accountability relationship'*.

- For concepts related to process compliance, see *'isomorphic mimicry'* and *'technical core (and support functions)'.*

relationship of accountability

Also referred to as a principal-agent relationship. In every accountability relationship, there is one actor (the principal) wants a task accomplished, so they engage another actor (the agent) to complete the task. For example, there is a relationship of accountability between the Ministry of Education (principal) and teachers (agents) whom the Ministry employs to deliver educational service to children.

In the 5x4 framework, these relationships correspond to the columns of the 5x4. There are four relationships of accountability in the framework (Politics, Compact, Management, Voice and Choice). Each relationship has a principal, and an agent; although multiple organisations or individuals can compose the principal or agent for each relationship (e.g., multiple schools and multiple teachers compose the agent in the Management relationship). The RISE Diagnostic Toolkit covers three out of the four relationships (Compact, Management, Voice and Choice).

- For more information, see *Understanding the RISE Systems Framework* and Section II in Pritchett, L. (2015). Creating Education Systems Coherent for Learning Outcomes. RISE Working Paper Series.15/005. https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-WP_2015/005.

- See also the relationships included in the 5x4 framework:
    - *'politics (relationship)'*
    - *'compact (relationship)'*
    - *'management (relationship)'*
    - *'voice & choice (relationship)'.*

- See also *'element'.*

selection, alignment for

An accountability relationship (or education system) is aligned for selection when the key objective of the relationship (or system)—as manifested in the different elements of the relationship(s)— is using exam scores and signalling to select a minority of top-performing children who will graduate and win a place in higher levels of education or in the labour market. These are primarily "filtration" not "education" systems.

- See also '*alignment(s) of an accountability relationship'.*

socialisation, alignment for

An accountability relationship (or education system) is aligned for socialisation when the key objective of the relationship (or system)—as manifested in the different elements of the relationship(s)—is spreading or maintaining a socialisation or ideological goal for society through the education system. This often takes the form of socialising children into a particular set of values (e.g., religious or moral) or an particular identity (e.g., a particular type of citizenship.

- See also '*alignment(s) of an accountability relationship*'.

spider (vs. starfish)

From Pritchett (2013):

'*Ori Brafman and Rod Beckstrom in their 2006 work,* The Starfish and the Spider: The Unstoppable Power of Leaderless Organizations*, contrast "spider" organizations, which are centralized, with "starfish" organizations, which are decentralized. They propose nine criteria to distinguish centralized from decentralized modes of organization:*

> *Is there someone in charge?*
> *Is there a headquarters?*
> *If you thump it on the head, does it die?*
> *Is there a clear division of roles?*
> *If you take out a unit, is the whole harmed?*
> *Are knowledge and power concentrated?*
> *Is the organization rigid?*
> *Are units funded by the organization?*
> *Can you count the participants?*
> *Do groups communicate through intermediaries?*

'*They adopt the metaphor of a spider because a spider uses its web to expand its reach, but all information created by the vibrations of the web must be processed, decisions made, and actions taken by one spider brain at the center of the web.*

'*The starfish, in contrast, is a very different kind of organism. Many species of starfish actually have no brain. The starfish is a radically decentralized organism with only a loosely connected nervous system. The starfish moves not because the brain processes information and decides to move but because the local actions of its loosely connected parts add up to movement.*

'*In many countries, the legacy system of schooling is a large government-owned spider. These systems are top-down bureaucracies that attempt to control the entire system from a central location at the national or state/provincial level, deciding which schools get built to which teacher gets assigned to what school to what subjects are taught. When spider systems work, they are terrific at logistical tasks. The expansion of schooling is amenable to spiders. If you want to build 100,000 primary schools quickly and at low cost, a top-down program that cranks out standardized schools following a five-year plan is a great way to do it.*

'*There is, however, increasing recognition that lots of problems, perhaps especially those having to do with educating children, are not just exercises in logistics. Spider systems that attempt to force round-peg tasks that*

*require local judgment and control, such as teaching a child, into square-hole bureaucratic organizations can
fail, and when they fail, their lack of robustness means they fail completely' (pp. 5–6).*

- For more information, see Pritchett, L. (2013). *The rebirth of education: Schooling ain't learning*.
  Center for Global Development. Chapter 1 available at:
  https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/rebirth-education-introduction_0.pdf.

- See also *'frontline (vs. centre)'*.

sub-element

These refer to descriptions of each element in the 5x4 (see Tools #4, #5, and #6 in the Planning and Analysis
Tools). There are multiple sub-elements of each element that contribute to determining the overall alignment
of that element of the relationship. For example, in the management relationship, the sub-elements of
motivation are intrinsic factors and extrinsic factors, and the sub-elements of support are instructional
materials, pre-service training, and in-service training.

- See also *'element'*.

support (element)

In an accountability relationship, support refers to the preparation and assistance that the principal provides
to the agent to complete the delegated task(s). For example, in the management relationship, the Ministry of
Education may prepare teachers for their job by providing pre- and in-service teacher training.

- See also '*element'*.

technical core (and support functions)

From Kaffenberger (2022):

*'The literature on organizational management has long held that organizations, whether public or private, are
composed of a combination of a technical core and support functions … The technical core is made up of the
organization's purpose and the technical practices needed to achieve that purpose.*

*'The same can be said for systems: at their core lies the purpose for which they exist and which they are aiming
to achieve, and their technical practices for achieving this purpose. … An organization's or system's purpose can
be defined as the strongly held set of beliefs by those within the organization or system about why the
organization or system exists and what it is supposed to achieve. Sometimes the purpose is explicit and clearly
stated in documents like a mission statement or other formal articulations. Often though the true purpose of an
organization or system is implicit. Organization leaders may claim one purpose nominally while the true
underlying purpose differs substantially or perhaps is even at odds with the stated purpose …*

*'Technical practices then support the achievement of the purpose. These are the technical skills and know-how
necessary for achieving the purpose. Sometimes the technical skills within an organization can reveal the true
purpose the organization is working towards. Often hiring and retention will align more with the implicit purpose
than the stated/nominal purpose when these two differ.*

'Organizations and systems also have support functions, which create and maintain the infrastructure and operating conditions that enable the technical core to carry out activities. These support functions include roles like human resources, procurement, legal support, accounting, and IT" (pp. 5–6).

- For more information, see Kaffenberger, M. (2022). The Role of Purpose in Education System Outcomes: A Conceptual Framework and Empirical Examples. RISE Working Paper Series. 22/118. https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISEWP_2022/118.

- See also '*de jure vs. de facto'* and '*isomorphic mimicry'*.

thin information vs. thick information

See *'account-based accountability vs. accounting-based accountability'.*

voice & choice (relationship)

In the 5x4 framework, voice & choice is the relationship between recipients of services (i.e., parents, children, and communities—the principal) and frontline providers of services (i.e., school leaders and teachers—the agent).

Students, parents, and communities can hold schools and teachers accountable for education primarily in two ways: through exercising their *voice* to exert pressure on a school or teacher to change, or by exercising *choice* to leave a school or teacher they are unhappy with and select a different one.

- See also '*relationship of accountability'.*

Training Video and Slide Decks

The RISE Education Systems Diagnostic Toolkit

Part 1 OVERVIEW

Introduction
1

Applications of the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic
1

Part 2 IMPLEMENTATION

Understanding the RISE Systems Framework
1 **2** **4** **6**

Guide to Applying the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic
1 **2** **3** **4** **5** **6**

Planning and Analysis Tools
1 **2** **3** **4** **5** **6**

Part 3 RESOURCES

Glossary
1 **2** **3** **4** **5** **6**

Training Video and Slide Decks
1 **2** **3**

Example Materials from the Pilot Studies
1 **3** **6**

Each section of the toolkit should be consulted during the indicated phases of the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic:

1 Inception

2 Desk review

3 Stakeholder workshops & interviews

4 Analysis

5 Prioritisation workshop

6 Final report

More details on each phase are available in the Application Guide (Part 2).

This section of the toolkit offers some resources that can help users to **equip** themselves (during the inception phase) for implementing the Diagnostic.

The video recording and slide decks are from a Diagnostic training workshop conducted in March 2022 for some teams that were piloting the Diagnostic. The slide decks may also be adapted for informing local stakeholders about the diagnostic.

Training video

A recording of a Diagnostic training session in March 2022 can be accessed here: https://youtu.be/th4FozxNWb8

This training session covers the slide decks "Training workshop day 1, part 1: Understanding the RISE Systems Framework" and "Training workshop day 1, part 2: Applying the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic", included below.

Training slide decks

Training workshop day 1, part 1: Understanding the RISE Systems Framework

RISE is an international research programme investigating how education systems can overcome the learning crisis and deliver learning for all

1. Conduct original academic research on education systems, reform efforts, and how to improve learning outcomes, rooted in a systems framework
2. Synthesize findings emerging from original research into a set of messages on how systems can be improved, and develop products and tools that can be of use to the sector
3. Build a community of research practice around education systems thinking
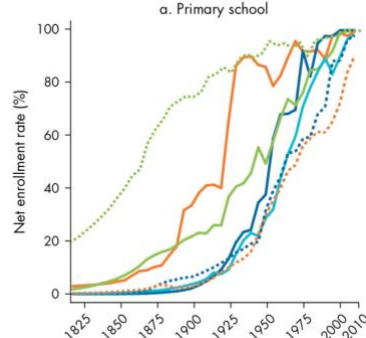
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SYSTEMS OF EDUCATION

3

The world has seen schooling success, but a persistent learning crisis

Nearly all children today enroll in school	Yet fail to master basic skills

a. Primary school
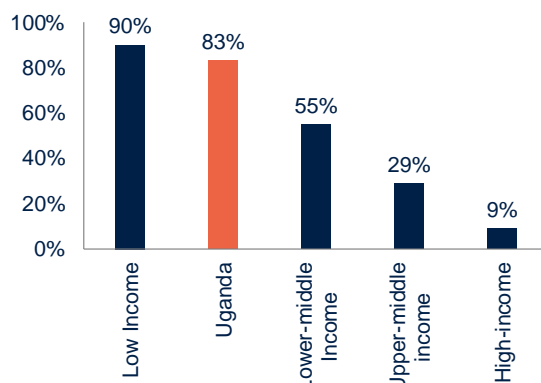
Proportion of children unable to read a simple text by age 10

- East Asia and Pacific
- Europe and Central Asia
- South Asia
- Latin America and the Caribbean
- Middle East and North Africa
- High-income countries
- Sub-Saharan Africa

Low Income	Uganda	Lower-middle Income	Upper-middle income	High-income
90%	83%	55%	29%	9%

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Sources: WDR 2018, World Bank Learning Poverty

4

To reach their full potential children must persist in school on a steep learning trajectory
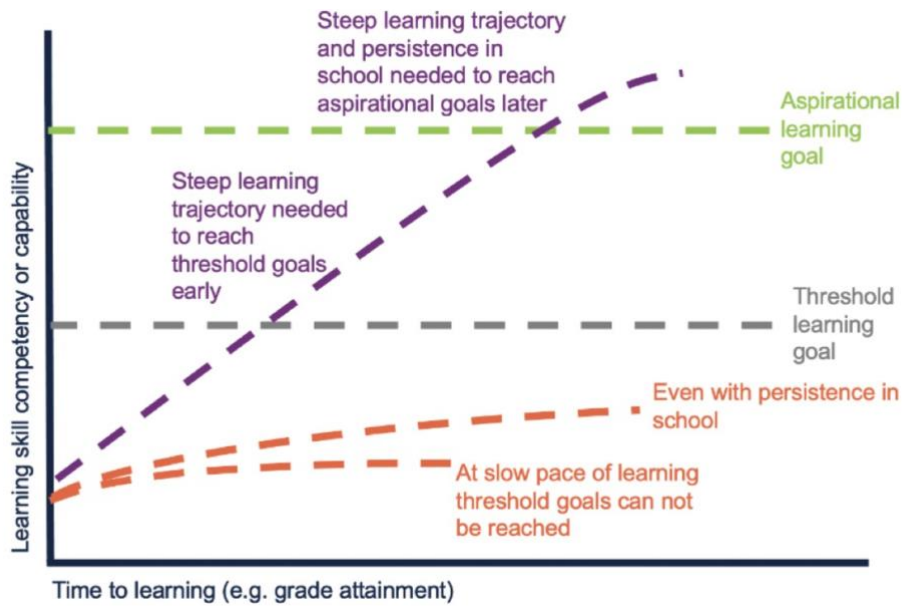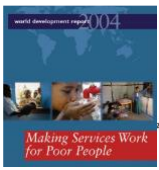
Learning trajectories are flat, differences emerge early and get bigger over time

Sources: Silberstein 2021 with MICS data
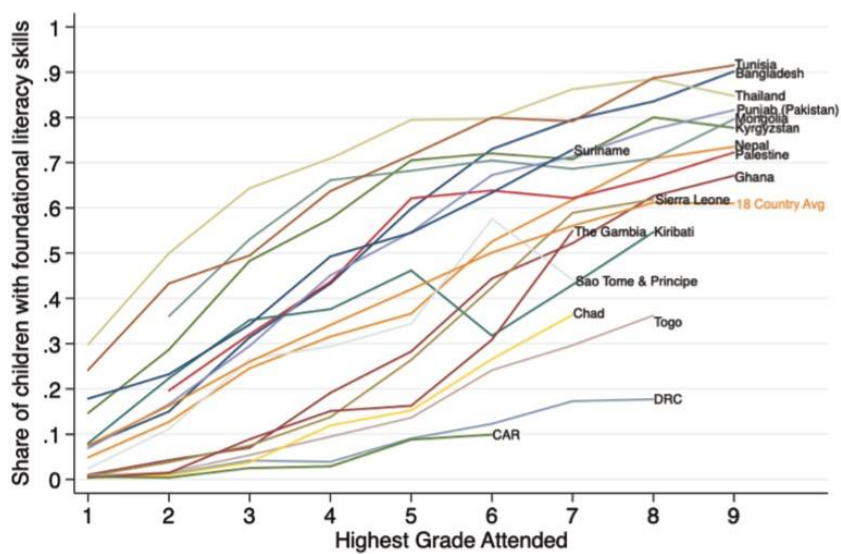
RISE Education Systems Diagnostic, background
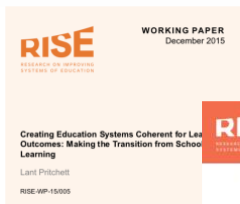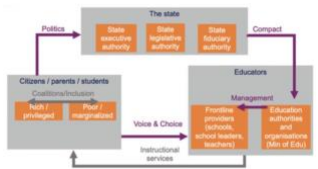
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7

"Problems cannot be solved by the same level of thinking that created them"- Einstein

Learning is an interaction between individual teachers and students.

Goal is improved interactions between teachers and students that produce learning. To achieve this, recognize that teachers and students are embedded in systems.

To make meaningful, lasting improvements in teacher-student interactions you need to understand why they are poor to begin with. Need an analysis of the system that explains why actors behave the way they do. Then you can think about how to improve things.

Image source: Noun project created by Adrien Coquet

8

When someone is sick, it is tempting to treat the immediate symptoms

But this would miss a diagnosis of underlying disease. Knowing the diagnosis allows for formulation of a coherent treatment plan

Symptoms	Missing diagnosis of the condition.	Symptom treatment plans
Fever		Ice Bath
Aches	Diagnosis tells us why the symptoms are happening.	Stretching
Weakness		Eat a good meal
Chills	Once we know why, we can treat to cure the underlying condition.	Warm clothes
Sweating		Warm clothes

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9

Policy and programs designed to treat symptoms of learning crisis fail when they are incoherent with the system

Free textbooks had no affect on pedagogy or average test scores in Kenyan Schools.
(Glewwe, Kremer, Moulin, 2009)
Books were in English,

Curriculum was too far ahead of most students,

These reflect the elite orientation of the system

Symptoms of the learning crisis	Symptom treatment plans
No text books	Buy books
Teacher absenteeism	Cameras classroom
Weak teaching	Teacher training
Student drop out	Scholarships
Weak teaching	Teacher training
Weak management	Management training

In Madhya Pradesh state-of-the-art school governance program did not affect teacher attendance or effort, or student test scores.
(Muralidharan and Singh, 2021)

Program focused on box-ticking rather than changing the deeper goals and incentives facing schools.

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10

The diagnostic framework defines key relationships in the system

Principal	Citizens	Highest executive, legislative and fiduciary authorities of the State	Education authorities and organisations (Min of Edu)	Service recipients (children, parents, communities)
Relationship	Politics	Compact	Management	Voice & Choice
Agent	Highest executive, legislative and fiduciary authorities of the State	Education authorities and organisations (Min of Edu)	Frontline providers (schools, school leaders, teachers)	Frontline providers (schools, school leaders, teachers)

Choose one education system. Discuss who the principles and agents are for the compact and management relationships in that system.

The framework then describes each relationship through 5 design elements

Five design elements of an accountability relationship, actors choose what to do based on design elements

Delegation	What the principal asks the agent to do.
Finance	Resources principal provides to the agent to carry out the tasks
Support	Assistance and training principal provides to the agent to do their job. In education refers exclusively to teacher training, pre and in service.
Information	Information that principal uses to evaluate agents performance.
Motivation	Ways in which agent's welfare is contingent on their performance against objectives. Can be extrinsic (mediated by principal) or intrinsic (mediated by agent).
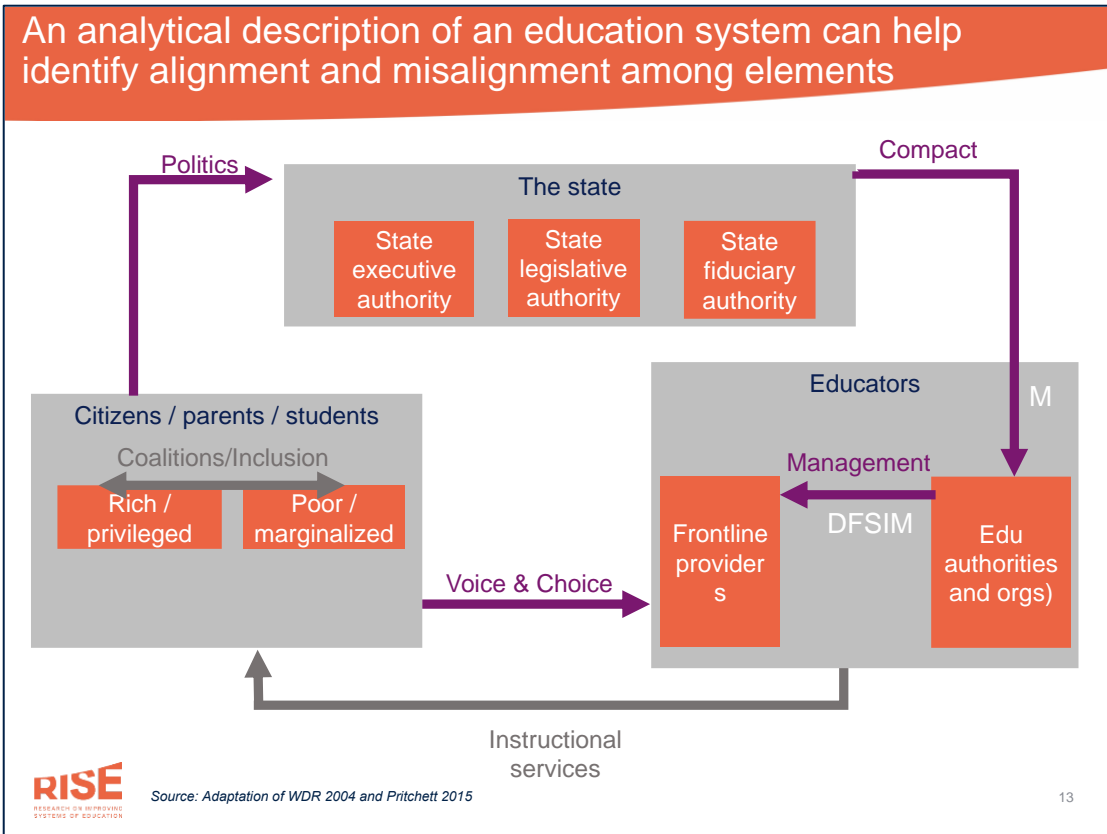
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12

An analytical description of an education system can help identify alignment and misalignment among elements

Source: Adaptation of WDR 2004 and Pritchett 2015

Systems delivers learning when enough relationships, and enough elements within relationships, are aligned around learning

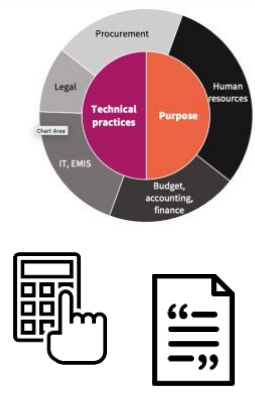| Five design elements of each relationship of accountability (Principal (P) to Agent (A))	Principal - Agent Relationships			
	Politics: Citizens and the highest authorities of the state	**Compact**: Highest authority of the State to Education authority	**Management**: Education authorities and schools, school leaders, and teachers	**Voice & Choice**: parents/children and schools/school leaders/ teachers
Delegation: what principal wants agent to do.				
Finance: resources principal allocates to agent.				
Support: preparation and assistance that principal provides to agent.				
Information: how principal asses agent's performance				
Motivation: How principal motivates agent.				
Performance of the system is the result of the feedback loops and relationships between the actors				

Three important concepts for understanding the diagnostic types

Technical Core	Effective organisations are effective from the inside out—from their core purpose + technical practices advancing the purpose (Hwa and Pritchett 2019)	
Accounts vs Accounting	Accounting, reduces accountability to thin indicators. Accounts, allows for thick narratives to justify actions and explain their outcomes (Honig and Pritchett 2019).	
Isomorphic mimicry	Organizations go through the performance of efforts at reform and may imitate the external forms of more capable organizations without actually developing the associated capability (Andrews et al 2017).	

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15

Possible "types" or "orientations of the system

Orientation	Characterization
Oriented for learning	Relationships are aligned around all children learning. Clear goals for learning are articulated, financed, and supported.
Oriented for selection	Relationships of accountability are aligned around selecting the deserving few who will get a credential, and a place at an elite university/job.
Oriented for access	Relationships are aligned around expanding access and attainment. Quality is usually defined as meeting minimum input standards.
Oriented for socialization	Relationships are aligned around socialization or ideological goals. These types prioritize socializing children into a set of values.
Oriented for patronage or special interests	Relationship is aligned for a purpose other than education. Short term clientelist objectives may dominant OR relationship may be dominated by special interest groups (often teachers unions).
Oriented for process compliance	Relationship is dominated by focus on completing logistical tasks like keeping to scheduled activities, meeting reporting targets and are dominated by support functions (e.g. human resources, information technology, or procurement).

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16

The framework characterizes what we would expect each element to look like in each possible orientation

		Management oriented for learning		Management oriented for access
Delegation		Ministry expects teachers to deliver curriculum that prioritizes foundational literacy for all		More kids in school longer
Finance		Beside teacher wages, there is flexible financing with local discretion		Financing is tied to specific inputs with little meaningful discretion
Support		Coaching to help teachers implement the curriculum		A few days per year of one-size-fits-all training
Information		Exams aligned with the curriculum measure learning starting in the early grades, and are used to target support		EMIS data on enrollment and number of inputs
Motivation		Teacher churn designed to attract, retain and recognize good teaching		Teachers are tenured civil servants, with few rewards or sanctions.

Possible "orientations" of the system

Oriented	Characterization
Oriented for learning	Relationships are aligned around all children learning. Clear goals for learning are articulated, financed, and supported.
Oriented for selection	Relationships of accountability are aligned around selecting the deserving few who will get a credential, and a place at an elite university/job.
Oriented for access	Relationships are aligned around expanding access and attainment. Quality is usually defined as meeting minimum input standards.
Oriented for socialization	Relationships are aligned around socialization or ideological goals. These types prioritize socializing children into a set of values.
Oriented for patronage or special interests	Relationship is aligned for a purpose other than education. Short term clientelist objectives may dominant OR relationship may be dominated by special interest groups (often teachers unions).
Oriented for process compliance	Relationship is dominated by focus on completing logistical tasks like keeping to scheduled activities, meeting reporting targets and are dominated by support functions (e.g. human resources, information technology, or procurement).

Discuss how assessments would look different across the types?

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The framework is used to identify which parts of the system - within or across relationships - are incoherent with learning

Incoherence within a column				
☼ = aligned for learning			☼ = aligned for another purpose	
	Politics: Citizens and the highest authorities of the state	**Compact:** Highest authority of the State to Education authority	**Management:** Education authorities and schools, school leaders, and teachers	**Voice & Choice:** parents/children and schools/school leaders/ teachers
Delegation: what principal wants agent to do.			☼ Ministry expects teachers to deliver curriculum that prioritizes foundational literacy for all	
Finance: resources principal allocates to agent.				
Support: preparation and assistance that principal provides to agent.			☼ Coaching to help teachers implement the curriculum	
Information: how principal asses agent's performance			☼ Exams at end of secondary school, mainly used to select the best students, not aligned with the curriculum	
Motivation: How principal motivates agent.				

Systems delivers learning when enough relationships, and enough elements within relationships, are aligned around learning

Discuss an incoherence you have encountered in your work. Describe it in terms of the RISE framework.

Common incoherences

Within compact: incoherence between delegation, finance, and information	The state can easily adopt rhetoric that signals one set of delegated priorities, while adopting actions that indicate another.
Within voice and choice: incoherence between information and delegation, motivation, and finance	Do parents and communities have the power to act on new information, and the means to do so? Parents must also possess the ability to propose action (delegate) to schools, and have the ability to take action (by pulling the levers of either finance or motivation). In an incoherent relationship where parents have no clear way to delegate to, finance, or motivate schools, then new information will likely have little impact.
Within management: incoherence between delegation and information	Are the curriculum, assessment, and student's learning levels aligned? The curriculum is one of the most influential ways that the system delegates to teachers what should be taught. Assessments are a similarly powerful driver of teacher behavior in the system, and act both to measure performance (in the information row) and set expectations (as a competing source of delegation).
Within management: incoherence between delegation and support	Is there adequate support to teachers to deliver the curriculum? Teachers often lack the knowledge or experience to teach the curriculum, and receive inadequate or low quality training/coaching/structure that could facilitate adult learning and help them improve over time.
Within management: incoherence between delegation and information	Is the information collected about schools/teachers coherent with the teaching they are being asked to do? Or are teachers required to generate and report information to fulfill administrative requirements? Extensive administrative duties can signal an incoherence where information overwhelms or crowds-out delegation.
Between compact and management	Critical aspects of teacher careers are determined through civil service rules set by the compact relationship, making it difficult to manage teachers in the management relationship. When a change is made within either the compact or management relationship that affects one aspect of teacher careers, it is often difficult to adjust other aspects.
Between voice and management	Since education authorities and communities share a common agent in the framework - namely schools and teachers - incoherence can result when the two principals have different goals. The most common example of this tension is in centralized systems where a centralized bureaucracy controls schools, and marginalizes voice such that it only has a role in school "management" rather than school "governance".

Training workshop day 1, part 2: Applying the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic

Purpose of the diagnostic pilots

Diagnose	Prioritize
• Facilitate government use of systems thinking to diagnose the components of the education system that are not working together as well as they could to deliver learning • Diagnose which parts of the education system are not working together to deliver learning • Establish a common understanding of the diagnosis across stakeholders	• Facilitate government prioritization of one or two key areas of the system for reform, to create better alignment around improving learning outcomes. • Identify 2-3 strategic priorities that can bring the education system into greater alignment around improving learning outcomes

Three components of diagnostic analysis	• Identifying the main alignment(s) or orientations of each relationship. • Identifying key incoherences between or within relationships. • Identifying priorities for intervention to improve system outcomes.
Three things the diagnostic is not	• NOT: an internal exercise for donors. • NOT: an effort to generate new / more / better data • NOT: easy, involves asking difficult and often "political" questions of many inside and outside of government.

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Overview of steps of the diagnostic

- Inception
- Desk review
- Consultative workshops
- Follow up interviews
- Analysis and write up
- Sharing and prioritizing workshops

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Inception

Purpose	Determine if project can proceed, identify audience, plan
Activities	• Evaluate feasibility of project • Identify potential members of the **steering committee** • Focal point of partners (with government, outside of government, or a joint group of both) who will participate in the diagnostic process. Should include representatives with deep knowledge of the education system from several agencies or organizations who will make use of the diagnostic • Develop implementation plan

Discussion question: who might you want to include on the steering committee?

Annex 1. Steering Committee
Annex 2. Stakeholder List

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Note: In this iteration of the Diagnostic training, the Planning and Analysis Tools were called "Annexes".

Desk review

Purpose	Arrive at an informed preliminary hypothesis about the education system's orientation and main incoherences. Identify workshop attendees and configuration

Activities	• Stakeholder map
	   • Identify key orgs and individuals, map them to the 5x4 framework
	• Form and launch **steering committee**
	• Document review
	   • Government documents
	   • Grey literature
	• Preliminary diagnostic analysis
	• Plan Stakeholder workshops

Annex 3. Document review
Annex 4. Compact table
Annex 5. Management table
Annex 6. Voice & Choice table
Annex 7. Common Incoherences table

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Workshops

Purpose	Learn about the education system's orientation and main incoherences, facilitate shared understanding among stakeholders about these.
Suggested workshop agenda and deliverables	• Explain the framework and main insights of framework • Explain diagnostic process, where this workshop fits in • Fill in sub-elements of the framework. • Identifying coherence / incoherence • Conclude the workshop
Suggested workshop deliverables	• Compilation of discussion of sub-elements • Compilation of discussion of incoherences

Discussion questions:
• What are some potential challenges you see in these workshops? How would you mitigate these in planning?
• What are some examples of de jure vs de facto distinctions that might arise during the workshops?

Annex 8. Workshop planning
Annex 9. Sub-elements worksheet
Annex 10. Incoherences worksheet
Annex11. Example workshop deliverable

7

Follow up interviews

Purpose	Clarify points of missing information following workshops
Reasons why follow up interviews might be needed	• Strongly held differences of views between stakeholders • The team was not able to gather a full account of a stakeholder's perspective because of the group setting and dynamics. • Further investigate de jure vs de facto distinctions.

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Analysis

Purpose	Compile findings from workshops
Steps of analysis	• Summarize discussions about each sub-element, then draw on these for a summary of each element, and for the relationship overall. • Compile incoherences raised in workshops, add explanations and justification, add any based on team's observations

Annex 12. Example compact analysis
Annex 13. Example incoherence analysis

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Prioritization workshop

Purpose	Identify priority areas for intervention based on diagnostic findings
Activities	• Hold a meeting with the steering committee, share analysis of alignments from workshops and incoherences • Facilitate a discussion to decide on **two or three** incoherence's that will be the main priorities • Facilitate a discussion of recommendations for addressing these priorities

Discussion question: what challenges do you foresee in facilitating this workshop with the steering committee?

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Final report

Purpose	Brief and digestible summary of priorities that emerged from diagnostic and how they are justified by the findings
Main components of the final report	• Overview of each relationship of accountability and the alignment or alignments that best describe it, with justifications from each element • Overview of the incoherences that the steering committee choose, evidence and justification • Recommendations identified by the steering committee for addressing these incoherences • Any high-level conclusions or analysis of the system that emerged from the Diagnostic, which the team feels would be beneficial to include.

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Training workshop day 2: Discussing Tools #4, #5, and #6

RISE System Diagnostic Pilots

Training Workshop Part III
March 9 2022

Agenda

Day 1
- Small group introductions
- Background and motivation for RISE Framework
- In depth review of framework
- 10 Minute Break
- **In depth review of diagnostic process**

Day 2
- In depth review of compact table
- In depth review of management table
- 10 min break
- In depth review voice and choice of table
- Wrap up

2

Compact Discussion – Annex 4

- Decide which system you will focus on
- Identify the principal(s) and agent(s) for the compact relationship in your system.
- Go through your assigned element, starting with the first sub element and determine which type best describes your sub element.
- Try to get through all sub elements, but if your discussion runs long try to use last 5 minutes to discuss overall alignment of your element
- Designate a note taker to take notes in your spreadsheet.
- You have 30 minutes for discussion and then we will return to plenary
-
- Odd groups: Delegation element
- Even groups: Information element

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Note: In this iteration of the Diagnostic training, the [Planning and Analysis Tools](#) were called "Annexes".

Management Discussion – Annex 5

- Decide which system you will focus on (ideally you will alternate)
- Identify the principal(s) and agent(s) for the management relationship in your system.
- Go through your assigned element, starting with the first sub element and determine which type best describes your sub element.
- Try to get through all sub elements, but if your discussion runs long try to use last 5 minutes to discuss overall alignment of your element.
- Designate a note taker to take notes in your spreadsheet.
- You have 30 minutes for discussion and then we will return to plenary

- Odd groups: Finance element
- Even groups: Support element

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Voice and Choice Discussion – Annex 6

- Decide which system you will focus on (ideally you will alternate)
- Go through your assigned element, starting with the first sub element and determine which type best describes your sub element.
- Try to get through all sub elements, but if your discussion runs long try to use last 5 minutes to discuss overall alignment of your element
- Designate a note taker to take notes in your spreadsheet.
- You have 30 minutes for discussion and then we will return to plenary
-
- Odd groups: Information element
- Even groups: Delegation element

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Example Materials from the Pilot Studies

The RISE Education Systems Diagnostic Toolkit

Part 1 OVERVIEW

Introduction
1

Applications of the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic
1

Part 2 IMPLEMENTATION

Understanding the RISE Systems Framework
1 **2** **4** **6**

Guide to Applying the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic
1 **2** **3** **4** **5** **6**

Planning and Analysis Tools
1 **2** **3** **4** **5** **6**

Part 3 RESOURCES

Glossary
1 **2** **3** **4** **5** **6**

Training Video and Slide Decks
1 **2** **3**

Example Materials from the Pilot Studies
1 **3** **6**

Each section of the toolkit should be consulted during the indicated phases of the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic:

1 Inception

2 Desk review

3 Stakeholder workshops & interviews

4 Analysis

5 Prioritisation workshop

6 Final report

More details on each phase are available in the Application Guide (Part 2).

This section showcases a selection of materials from the diagnostic pilot studies conducted in 2022. It includes examples of data collection tools and workshop slide decks that have been used in the field, together with examples of inception reports, desk reviews, and final reports. The hope is that this section will **inspire** users as they design and implement their own diagnostic studies.

Due to the length of these materials, the full set of compiled example materials can be downloaded separately as a PDF here:

https://riseprogramme.org/sites/default/files/2023-01/RISE%20Education%20Systems%20Diagnostic%20Toolkit_Example%20Materials%20from%20the%20Pilot%20Studies_20230127.pdf

Note: If the hyperlink in this document to the Example Materials from the Pilot Studies no longer work, please check https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-Misc_2023/09 and https://riseprogramme.org/tools/rise-education-systems-diagnostic for the most recent versions of the Diagnostic toolkit.

Table 16. List of example materials from diagnostic pilots available in this toolkit.

Type of material	Lead organisation	Geographic focus
❶ Inception		
• Inception report	JPC-VERSO	Balochistan, Pakistan
• Introductory slide deck	Global School Leaders	GSL partner countries
❷ Desk review		
• Desk review report	SUMMA	Ecuador
❸ Stakeholder workshops and interviews		
• Data collection instruments	Central Square Foundation	A state in northern India
• Data collection instruments	EPRC	Uganda
• Survey instrument and methods note	Global School Leaders	GSL partner countries
• Workshop slide deck (Spanish)	SUMMA	Ecuador
❹ Analysis		
• Analysis tools	JPC-VERSO	Balochistan, Pakistan
❻ Final report and dissemination		
• Final report	University of the Witwatersrand	Gauteng, South Africa
• Final report	EPRC	Uganda
• Final report	JPC-VERSO	Balochistan, Pakistan
• Final report (Spanish & English)	SUMMA	Ecuador

Note: There are no example materials available for the fifth phase (prioritisation workshop).

More background information on the context, approach, and findings of each diagnostic pilot are available in the Part 1 section on *Applications of the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic*.

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The RISE Education Systems Diagnostic Toolkit

Each section of the toolkit should be consulted during the indicated phases of the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic.

1 Inception
2 Desk review
3 Stakeholder workshops and interviews
4 Analysis
5 Prioritisation workshop
6 Final report

Part 1 | **OVERVIEW**

Preview | Introduction
1

Explore | Applications of the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic
1

Part 2 | **IMPLEMENTATION**

Understand | Understanding the RISE Systems Framework
1 **2** **4** **6**

Apply | Guide to Applying the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic
1 **2** **3** **4** **5** **6**

Analyse | Planning and Analysis Tools
1 **2** **3** **4** **5** **6**

Part 3 | **RESOURCES**

Refer | Glossary
1 **2** **3** **4** **5** **6**

Equip | Training Video and Slide Decks
1 **2** **3**

Inspire | Example Materials from the Pilot Studies
1 **3** **6**

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