The RISE Education Systems Diagnostic Toolkit

PART 3(a):

Glossary

This document contains one section of the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic Toolkit.

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The RISE Education Systems Diagnostic Toolkit

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Glossary

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).

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 Silberstein and Spivack (2023) and Section II in Pritchett (2015).

- 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 Silberstein and Spivack (2023).
- 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 als*o '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 Silberstein and Spivack (2023) 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 the section on "Emergent properties: diagnosing system (mis)alignment" in see Silberstein and Spivack (2023). 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 Silberstein and Spivack (2023) 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'.*

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