The RISE Education Systems Diagnostic Toolkit

PART 2(b):

Guide to Applying the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic

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

Download the full toolkit at: https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-Misc_2023/09.

Marla Spivack, Jason Silberstein, and Yue-Yi Hwa
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The RISE Education Systems Diagnostic Toolkit

Marla Spivack
RISE Directorate

Jason Silberstein
RISE Directorate

Yue-Yi Hwa
RISE Directorate

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RISE—the large-scale education systems research programme—is supported by funding from the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The Programme is managed and implemented through a partnership between Oxford Policy Management and the Blavatnik School of Government at the University of Oxford.

For more information, visit: riseprogramme.org

Guide to Applying the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic

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 the sections in the Toolkit on *Applications of the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic* and *Understanding the RISE Education Systems Diagnostic* 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 Introduction *to [The RISE Education Systems Diagnostic Toolkit](). *

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.

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.

1 **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
2 **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
3 **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)
4 **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
5 **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
6 **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 of the Toolkit. 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** 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 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-

[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 the Toolkit section on *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) in the Toolkit,
- the essay on *Understanding the RISE Systems Framework* in the Toolkit (also available as a separate publication), 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 Silberstein and Spivack (2023), 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* sections of the Toolkit.

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:

  - Inception (phase 1), desk review (phase 2), and planning for the stakeholder workshops and interviews (phase 3): 1–2 months
  - Conducting stakeholder workshops and interviews (phase 3) and analysis (phase 4): 2–3 months
  - 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.

Tool #1. Steering committee list

No.	Name	Title	Organisation	Type*
1				Gov (Min of Ed)
2				Gov (Min of Ed)
3				Gov (Min of Ed)
4				Gov (Min of Ed)
5				Gov (Finance)
6				Gov (Finance)
7				Gov (Other)
8				Gov (Other)
9				Civil Society
10				Civil Society
11				Academia/research
12				Academia/research

**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.

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

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

[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 [Silberstein and Spivack (2023)]().

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 Silberstein and Spivack, 2023.)

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

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1	**Tool #4. Compact analysis**							
2								
3	**Principal organisation(s)**							**Show** notes & illustrativeindicators
4	**Agent organisation(s)**							**Hide** notes & illustrative indicators
5	**Element**	**Sub-element**		**Aligned for learning**	**Aligned for access**	**Aligned for socialisation**	**Aligned for patronage or special interests**	**Description of element**
7		*Compact-Delegation (i)* **High-level target: What goals does the executive authority for the education system?**	*Guiding questions*	What are the priorities of the the state executive authority for the education system? What would success look like for the ministry of education?				
9			*Summary from desk review*					
10			*Missing information (and whom to ask)*					
11			*Summary from workshops/ interviews*					
12		*Compact-Delegation (ii)* **Human resources: How does the executive set human resource goals?**	*Guiding questions*	What are the executive authorities' priorities for the teaching profession? What does the executive authority want or expect the ministry to do with or for teachers?				
14			*Summary from desk review*					
15	**Delegation**		*Missing information (and whom to ask)*					
16			*Summary from workshops/ interviews*					
		Compact-Delegation (iii)	*Guiding questions*	According to education authorities (e.g., high-level education ministry officials), what do the state executive and fiduciary authorities want them to prioritise and achieve? What are the expectations and targets that, if unmet by the education ministry, are likely to trigger action, meetings, or repercussions from the executive and fiduciary authorities? What are the executive authorities' expectations and priorities for the budget allocation process? How similar are these de facto priorities, expectations, and targets as compared to the state executive's publicly articulated				

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.
    - 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.
    - 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.
    - 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.
    - The team may wish to consult Table 8 in Silberstein and Spivack (2023) 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.
    - 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.
    - 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.
    - 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.
    - 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.

- 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.
- 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 example materials from the pilot studies.

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 example materials from the pilot studies;
- data collection instruments by the EPRC team from their diagnostic pilot in Uganda, on pp. 148–162 of the example materials from the pilot studies; and
- the workshop slide deck (in Spanish) by the SUMMA team from their diagnostic pilot in Ecuador, on pp. 184–190 of the example materials from the pilot studies.

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**
    - 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, 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.**
    - Introduces a sub-element row and example indicators for what it may look like under different alignments.
    - 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.
    - 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.
    - 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**.

  - 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:**
  - 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.
  - 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 8 in Silberstein and Spivack (2023) to determine if any are missing to see if there are any to add.
  - 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).
  - 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.

Tool #7. Misalignments analysis

Misalignment between relationships or within a relationship?	Relationship(s) involved				Element(s) involved					Evidence and justification	Suggested principles for intervention
	Politics	Compact	Manage-ment	Voice & Choice	Delegation	Finance	Information	Motivation	Support		
Example: *Within.*			X		X		X		X	*Example:* *Teachers are expected to deliver the national curriculum (see Primary School Curriculum Standards Document XYZ; delegation), but primary school leaving exam is not aligned with the curriculum (see analysis of curriculum-assessmment alignment by ABC & DEF, 2021; information). Also, teacher training only focuses on general pedagogical principles rather than on content knowledge or pedagogical content knowledge (workshops with teachers on DATE 1 and DATE 2; support).*	*Example:* *Establish structures for coordination between the curriculum authority, the examinations authority, and pre-service teacher education providers.*

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.

RISE

RESEARCH ON IMPROVING SYSTEMS OF EDUCATION

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

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