Strengthening holistic learning outcome measurement systems in emergencies and protracted crises: Colombia and Peru

Diagnostic Report for Colombia
March 2024

Acknowledgements, disclaimer, and citation

Disclaimer

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Suggested citation

We follow the Contributor Roles Taxonomy (CRediT) model[2] in order to better acknowledge individual author contributions and facilitate collaboration.

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Contents

Acronyms

DBA — Basic Learning Rights

ECW — Education Cannot Wait

EiEPC — Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crisis

HOLAS — Holistic Learning Assessment Systems

ICBF — Colombian Institute of Family Welfare

ICFES — Colombian Institute for the Evaluation of Education

INEE — Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies

(I)NGO — (International) Non-governmental organization

MEN — Ministry of Education

M&E — Monitoring and evaluation

NYU-TIES — NYU Global TIES for Children

RISE — Research on Improving Systems of Education

SABER* — Systems Approach for Better Education Results

SEL — Social and emotional learning

TIES — NYU Global TIES for Children

Uniandes — Universidad de los Andes

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*It is important to distinguish between the SABER framework and the national assessment conducted in Colombia, known as the SABER test.

A note of introduction and reflection

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and as human-induced climate events increase in severity and frequency, education leaders from school to global settings are advocating for more resilient education systems.[3] [4] These systems need to be able to rapidly adapt to the complexities of cascading conflicts, displacement, and migration, which disproportionately affect children from contexts of marginalization and further entrench existing inequities. And in the context of such nested crises, the systems are also called upon to foster holistic learning - both academic knowledge and social and emotional skills and well-being - that can support children to navigate uncertain futures.[5] [6]

More, and better, data and evidence on holistic learning outcomes are central to many notions of resilient education systems.[7] As researchers at New York University's Global TIES for Children (NYU-TIES) and the Universidad de los Andes (Uniandes), we do believe in the power of data and evidence to illuminate the educational landscape. Like a painting or a photograph, data and evidence are a reflection and interpretation of our world, with the potential to provide insight and catalyze curiosity and learning. They implicitly and explicitly convey our needs, our biases, and our values, and provide a powerful jumping off point for interrogating those worldviews and taking informed action. However, the ability to generate, disseminate, and utilize data and evidence within an education system often depends on privilege structures and power dynamics deeply entrenched in social, cultural, linguistic, and historical contexts. While data and evidence can promote individual, community, and national freedoms to pursue valued "beings and doings,"[8] monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems too often stand as a barrier to active and equitable participation in learning and decision-making. Without understanding and acknowledging how data and evidence flows through and are used within the system, by whom, and for what, data will not in and of itself promote resilience - or at least not equitably so. It will serve to maintain a status quo in which certain narratives and experiences are heard, privileged, and funded over others.

As we have worked to acknowledge our complicity in and contributions to this status quo from a variety of intersecting positions (see section below, Background, organization, and scope), we attempted in this project in Colombia and Peru to reconsider our ways of working, including through:

Spotlighting the complex systems in which data and evidence are generated, shared, and used. Effective, timely, and equitable decision-making in education requires more than just quality (reliable, valid and fair) data. It also requires robust communications and collaboration mechanisms across all levels of the sector that promote alignment of and feedback on assessments, data and evidence (information), curricula and standards (goals), and resources (supports). Our Holistic Learning Assessment Systems (HOLAS) framework (see section below, The HOLAS framework) offers a structure and a set of mixed-method diagnostic tools that can be flexibly applied to identify strengths and gaps in such M&E processes, starting in contexts with strong government education systems supporting diverse populations. These tools can be used to enhance the understanding of and communicate about how M&E systems can support more equitable holistic learning, including among children from contexts of marginalization. Importantly, the framework allows analyses to be tailored to critical audiences within different contexts. While our Peru report emphasizes findings by theme (i.e., contexts of marginalization, social and emotional learning, and equitable data

use), our Colombia report shares findings by framework element (i.e., information, goals, and support). This organization of results was selected to best reach priority audiences in each context.

Highlighting existing strengths and the contexts in which they have been carried out. Efforts to map education data and evidence - and particularly in contexts marked by conflict and protracted crisis - tend to emphasize as a starting point that existing data is weak and fragmented. In our own experience, this message up front can signal disregard for the many efforts that have been made to generate and use data and evidence. This lack of acknowledgement can sharpen divides between stakeholders, re-ify power dynamics, and ultimately reduce engagement in data and evidence by minimizing and duplicating efforts. To address this, we foreground in our introduction the many strengths in the Peruvian and Colombian M&E systems we identified through our analysis (see section below, Background, organization, and scope). We have also compiled these many efforts into the interactive HOLAS Assessment Bank, which will be released in April 2024.

Nuancing considerations of what data is needed for what purpose, for whose benefit, and at what and whose cost. In the push for more and better data little mention is given to unintended consequences - which often impact those with the least power and visibility. The teacher who must buy at her own cost the paper to print the required assessment; the shame communities face from media outlets naming "good" schools and "bad" schools based on categorizing publicly available test score data. One of the benefits of systems analysis is that it allows you to better anticipate these "butterfly effects" among stakeholders at different levels. Given the scope of our framework (see section below, The HOLAS framework), we undoubtedly were not able to identify all such potential ripples. However, we did try to take into account such consequences in developing our integrated findings and recommendations (see section below, Integrated results and recommendations from the systems' diagnostic report).

Our efforts to do so are a starting point, and they are an imperfect work in progress. Throughout the report we acknowledge places for future revision, and we hope others can continue this work in the same spirit of equitable systemic resilience.

The NYU-TIES and Uniandes teams

Executive summary

Who are we?

NYU Global TIES for Children (NYU-TIES) is an international research center embedded within New York University. Our mission since 2015 is to contribute to a robust and culturally-grounded science for program and policy action that promotes children's holistic learning and development in low- and middle-income countries and crisis-affected contexts.

Universidad de los Andes (Uniandes) is an autonomous, independent, and innovative Colombian institution. The School of Education aims to contribute to the development of educational systems within the university and across Colombia by fostering research, training, evaluation, policy development and communication across diverse local and international stakeholders.

What did we aim to do?

Supported by Education Cannot Wait (ECW), between September 2022 and December 2023 NYU-TIES and Uniandes sought to identify strengths, challenges, and gaps within Colombian monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system for educational outcomes.

These educational outcomes encompass not just common structural (e.g., attendance, enrollment) and academic outcomes (e.g., literacy and numeracy) but also the social and emotional outcomes that strengthen children's capacities to pursue valued academic, employment, and health goals. In addition, they include factors in school, community, and home settings that critically shape children's holistic learning and development.

The emphasis on M&E stems from the recognition that robust M&E systems capable of generating valid, reliable, and fair data are essential for informed decision-making. These systems play a crucial role in identifying where, how, and with whom to focus education programming, in tailoring instruction accordingly, and in evaluating whether these efforts were successful. By providing such vital information, M&E sheds light on the diverse needs within a complex education system and serves as a starting point for effective intervention. Transforming data into actionable evidence has the power to drive positive changes at both the national level - guiding policies and programs - and within schools and classrooms, influencing daily practices that directly impact children's educational experiences. And ensuring that evidence is aligned with various goals, resources, and needs enables the system to function like a well-geared machine, with each element complementing the other.

In order to deepen our understanding of the Colombian M&E system, we embarked on an iterative three-step process in collaboration with key stakeholders and a national Steering Committee. To start, we adapted two well-known frameworks for education systems analysis - the Research on Improving Systems of Education (RISE) diagnostic framework

and the Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) tool – with three main goals. First, we aimed to extend the scope of existing frameworks from a focus on academic learning outcomes only to include holistic learning outcomes. Second, we aimed to explicitly emphasize the need for fairness and equity in educational M&E systems among children from contexts of marginalization, including refugee children and students with disabilities. Third, we aimed to improve the reproducibility and utility of systems frameworks and the corresponding analyses and results. **This effort resulted in the development of the Holistic Learning Assessments Systems (HOLAS) framework.**

> The HOLAS framework focuses on assessing the alignment within and between diverse stakeholders in national education systems around three main areas:
>
> - **Information:** How does the system promote clarity and alignment in the purpose and content of assessments, ensure data quality, and facilitate equitable access to and use of evidence?
>
> - **Goals:** How does the system define holistic learning objectives – and with what degree of clarity and for whom? To what extent are such decisions being made based on evidence, and what norms are present in the system around the agency of frontline providers and sub-national staff for effective M&E processes?
>
> - **Support:** What support mechanisms are in place to ensure comprehensive, evidence-informed holistic learning at different levels of the education system, including the availability and quality of resources, professional development opportunities, and organizational structures?

Based on this framework, we conducted a mixed-method systems analysis to assess the extent to which assessments, data, and evidence (information) are aligned with foundational curricular and standards (goals) and key resources (supports) within and across stakeholders at different levels of the education system. We interviewed 37 participants, current and former educational authorities from the national and sub-national level, staff from non-governmental organizations and multilateral institutions, researchers and teachers.

What were our key findings?

By examining the various levels and stakeholders involved, we gained a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities within Colombia's M&E system. Colombia has made significant strides in establishing a framework to facilitate academic, social, and emotional learning from early childhood through high school (11th grade) for both native and migrant children and adolescents. However, some of this progress has not been effectively communicated and shared with key stakeholders within the system. Thus, our participants report the existence of 38 different instruments used to assess social and emotional learning. However, these instruments are not directly related to the standards defined by the Ministerio de Educación Nacional (Ministry of Education - MEN) or to the national instruments developed by the Instituto Colombiano para la Evaluación de la Educación (Colombian Institute for the Evaluation of Education - ICFES). Our participants report that these instruments are primarily created by researchers and NGOs and are restricted to particular research inquiries and environments. One hypothesis for this behavior is the variability of terms and definitions used over the last 20 years across the country to refer to the central goals of the educational process. These terms include competencies, skills, learning goals, measurement goals, and

holistic learning, all of which are present in the discourse of our participants. These terms constitute different 'brands' of educational outcomes promoted by the system, including the MEN, Secretarías de Educación (Education Secretariats), NGOs, and ICFES. According to the network analysis, many individuals involved in our project hold positions in various public and private institutions within the country. However, there may be some misalignment due to the pressure to use the prevalent vocabulary in their current position and differentiate it from similar 'brands'. Different positions promoting similar goals may generate miscommunication among stakeholders by trying to differentiate their theories from others within the system.

The system is highly centralized, and there are significant differences in the availability of financial resources and personnel across regions, as well as differences in their capacity to design evaluations, analyze data, and use it effectively. MEN and ICFES are recognized as the two leading educational authorities at the national level, providing information and analysis on the current situation of the system and the needs of native and migrant children. However, participants recognize that due to the autonomy granted to local authorities and schools, there is significant variability in resources and capabilities among municipal and departmental Secretariats and Schools. While wealthier municipalities have developed stronger monitoring and evaluation systems, municipalities with a lower cost of living lack support to understand the realities of their education system. Not surprisingly, these economically disadvantaged municipalities receive more attention from local and international researchers, foundations, and NGOs. However, several participants note that the specialized language and assessments used in this work may not align with the mandates of the MEN and Education Secretariats. Communication breakdowns among stakeholders often lead to an overabundance of new terms, definitions, and goals, which can make it difficult for teachers to promote student learning while being accountable to various stakeholders who use different terminology.

One of the major challenges of M&E systems is ensuring their permanence and continuity. From the perspective of multiple stakeholders, the high turnover of personnel and officials at central government institutions may compromise the continuity of many M&E systems at both the national and sub-national levels. Although MEN and ICFES have highly qualified professionals on staff, many positions are filled by contractors. These cases can be removed with each change of administration. Our participants believe that this situation is further complicated by the limited opportunities for training at the national and sub-national level in terms of standards, assessment tools, and alignment with instructional practices.

Frontline service providers need more and better support. It is crucial to create opportunities to enhance the social and emotional skills of frontline providers. It is also important to ensure that information is effectively communicated to them so that they can implement positive changes in the classroom. Regarding information on children's learning and development at different levels of the education system, participants emphasize the importance of recognizing the needs and characteristics of teachers, as well as their agency in the process. One-way, pre-established training and socialization strategies that are based on a 'deficit model' are not conducive to using information effectively. Although national authorities have made efforts, such as implementing the strategy of dialogic circles, more work is still needed in this area.

Given the breadth, depth, and quality of educational assessments available, we recommend as a starting point that diverse stakeholders seeking to collect information on educational outcomes review what is available before introducing new assessments into the system. To support stakeholders' ability to do so, we have developed a corresponding HOLAS Assessment Bank that provides an overview of many of the assessments and data collection tools identified through our systems mapping, as well as information and links on how to access them. We anticipate releasing the HOLAS Assessment Bank in April 2024.

What are our main recommendations?

Based on the results of the systems analysis, valuable inputs from our Steering Committee and interviewees, and our own knowledge of the systems, we formulated recommendations to strengthen the coherence of Colombian educational M&E systems for holistic learning outcomes. The recommendations fall under four overarching areas shown in Figure 1.

1
Move from Brands to Principal Ingredients

2
Strengthen Communications and Dissemination Strategies:

3
Addressing the central institutional gaps in the labor stability of their staff and central workers, and strengthen parnertship in the subnational level

4
Raise the importance of in-service training for teachers, subnational and national administrative personnel.

Figure 1 — Recommendations to strengthen the coherence of Colombian educational M&E systems for holistic learning outcomes

Each recommendation is related to one of the main findings. The central actions include improving communication by reducing the number of terms referring to the same phenomenon, broadening the dissemination of achievements, strengthening partnerships at the sub-national level, and raising the importance of in-service training for frontline providers.

Background, organization, and scope

Improvement in the extent to which information and measurement approaches are aligned or coherent within and across stakeholders' goals, supports, resources, and motivations to support holistic learning outcomes.

Strengthening holistic learning outcome measurement systems in emergencies and protracted crises: Colombia and Peru

Children's academic and social and emotional skills and well-being -- and the home, school, and community factors that support such skills

Series of feedback loops between stakeholders within national education system

Figure 2 — How are we defining "strengthen," "holistic learning," and "systems"?

Supported by Education Cannot Wait (ECW), between September 2022 and March 2024 NYU Global TIES for Children (NYU-TIES) and the Universidad de los Andes (Uniandes) partnered to strengthen holistic learning outcome measurement systems in two countries - Colombia and Peru - hosting the majority of Venezuelan refugee and migrant families.[9] The overarching objective of the initiative was to co-design and implement with key educational stakeholders in each country strategies to strengthen alignment in and mutual capacities for monitoring and evaluating holistic learning outcomes among children from contexts of marginalization (for more details on the goals of and timeline for the initiative, see here).

Our focus on childhoods from contexts of marginalization

We define childhoods from contexts of marginalization as groups of children and their caregivers that face or are at the risk of facing discrimination, exclusion, and/or barriers in their access to resources, opportunities, and power. This is due to persistent disadvantages rooted in adverse structural conditions, unequal power dynamics, and systemic inequities.[10, 11, 12] We recognize individuals' ability to act and produce their desired results even when faced with challenging structural conditions that can limit their field of action.

In this report, we use the term childhoods in contexts of marginalization or vulnerability primarily to refer to three groups that are of special interest to this initiative in Peru and Colombia: refugee and migrant children from Venezuela, children with disabilities, and children from indigenous or native groups.

The ongoing political and economic crisis in Venezuela [13] has resulted in the exodus of over 7.7 million Venezuelans globally, including 6.5 million refugees and migrants residing in Latin America and the Caribbean as of November 2023[14]. Since 2015, Venezuelan refugees and migrants have mainly settled in Colombia and Peru.[15] This situation, often referred to as an "unprecedented migration crisis,[16]" has generated significant barriers to the equitable provision of education for all children[17]. This was further heightened during the COVID-19 pandemic, which also disproportionately impacted children with disabilities and indigenous and native children[18]. While the Colombian and Peruvian governments have made progress toward guaranteeing the right to education for all children, obstacles remain to guaranteeing their access to equitable, quality, and holistic education, which are recognized under both countries' Constitutions and General Education Laws, published in the 1990s and 2000s[19].

The term childhoods from contexts of marginalization can also be used to refer to other groups of children in contexts of vulnerability, such as out-of-school children and children in rural or hard-to-reach areas. In referring to childhoods in contexts of marginalization, we also include the various actors that actively partake in the education process of children in contexts of marginalization, such as their teachers and principals.

We recognized from the outset that we could not meaningfully meet our objective without a comprehensive understanding of existing efforts to improve holistic learning outcome measurement systems in both countries, as well as of barriers and enablers to the success of such efforts. Education systems in both countries have made significant strides to prioritize the achievement and assessment of holistic learning outcomes, including both academic and social and emotional skills.[20] [21] Such efforts have been made and are currently underway across children's developmental stages - including early childhood, primary-, and secondary-school levels - as well as with particular attention to children from contexts of marginalization. However, these efforts are at times uncoordinated between different stakeholders and different levels of the education system. And due to a complexity of factors - including limited resources and institutional mandates - such efforts do not sufficiently emphasize equity in assessment practices and information use.

We thus embarked on an iterative process in collaboration with two national Steering Committees to systematically map Colombian and Peruvian educational monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems, with a specific focus on holistic learning and equity. This report details the multi-step mixed-methods process we undertook to do so, as well as the results of this mapping, and it is organized as follows.

The HOLAS Framework: First, we review the process for developing the Holistic Learning Assessment Systems (HOLAS) framework that undergirded our systems mapping efforts. Between September 2022 and May 2023, we adapted two well-known frameworks for education systems analysis - the Research on Improving Systems of Education (RISE) diagnostic framework[22] and the Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) tool[23] – with three main goals. First, we aimed to extend the scope of existing frameworks from a focus on academic learning outcomes only to include holistic learning outcomes. Second, we aimed to explicitly emphasize the need for fairness and equity in educational

M&E systems among children from contexts of marginalization, including refugee children and students with disabilities. Third, we aimed to improve the reproducibility and utility of systems frameworks and the corresponding analyses and results. This iterative effort resulted in the development of the HOLAS framework, which focuses on assessing the alignment within and between diverse stakeholders within the education systems around three main elements:

- **Information:** How does the system promote clarity and alignment in the purpose and content of assessments, ensure data quality, and facilitate equitable access to and use of evidence?

- **Goals:** How does the system define holistic learning objectives – and with what degree of clarity and for whom? To what extent are such decisions being made based on evidence, and what norms are present in the system around the agency of frontline providers and sub-national staff for effective M&E processes?

- **Support:** What support mechanisms are in place to ensure comprehensive, evidence-informed holistic learning at different levels of the education system, including the availability and quality of resources, professional development opportunities, and organizational structures?

Figure 3 — The HOLAS framework

The three rows correspond to the three elements of the framework - information, goals, and support - each of which is defined by four sub-elements.

Each of these three elements contains four sub-elements, or dimensions, for a total of 12 sub-elements within the HOLAS framework. Each of the 12 sub-elements is then measured by a set of qualitative indicators that provides an imperative as to what M&E systems aligned for equitable holistic learning might look like. We detail our process for framework adaptation, integration, and extension (see section below, The HOLAS Framework). We specifically highlight and provide the rationale for decisions made throughout the process that impacted

the scope of the framework and the utility for cross-context systems analysis.

Mixed-methods systems analysis methodology: Next, we describe the methodology used to map the Colombian and Peruvian educational M&E systems based on the HOLAS framework. Between December 2022 and December 2023 we conducted a mixed-methods study to assess the extent to which assessments, data, and evidence (information) are aligned with foundational curricular and standards (goals) and key resources (supports) within and across stakeholders at different levels of the Colombian and Peruvian education systems. To do so we designed quantitative survey and qualitative interview protocols for use with a diversity of stakeholders within Colombian (n_{survey} = 37, $ni_{nterview}$ = 36) and Peruvian (n_{survey} = 41, $n_{interview}$ = 27) education systems, such as:

- At the national level, current and former staff from data-producing and data-using offices within Ministries of Education (Colombia: MEN; Peru: MINEDU)

- At the sub-national level, data-producing and data-using staff within regions serving a significant number of Venezuelan refugee and migrant students (Colombia: Secretarias in Cucuta and Bogota; Peru: the Dirección Regional de Educación de Lima Metropolitana (Regional Education Directorate of Metropolitan Lima or DRELM)

- At the school level, frontline providers from schools with a high enrollment of Venezuelan refugee and migrant students (Colombia: teachers; Peru: principals and teachers)

- Staff from educational organizations such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and multilateral organizations that offer services to Venezuelan refugee children

- Researchers at universities and think tanks who study and collaborate with educational systems (Colombia only)

We also undertook a targeted desk review of foundational documents within the Colombian and Peruvian education systems. Through sequential quantitative and qualitative analysis and integration within and across various types and levels of stakeholders and framework elements, we gained comprehensive insights into the challenges and opportunities present in Colombian and Peruvian M&E systems for holistic learning outcomes.

Overview of the education system: In this section, we provide critical background on holistic M&E processes and structures within Colombia or Peru (depending on the report version), including among childhoods in contexts of marginalization. The overview is intended to support interpretation of the results, and particularly among readers less familiar with the Colombian and Peruvian education systems. It was developed based on the desk review, and it also includes a brief description of the assessments most frequently mentioned in the reports to facilitate recognition when reading the results.[*]

Q and A: How can you approach our results and recommendations? In this section, we share different ways in which the reader can approach, access, and interpret the results of our systems mapping: The results of our analyses are available at different levels, and can be used flexibly depending on the reader's purpose and context. First, results in each country for

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* For readers of the Colombian report, more information on the assessments, tools, and M&E systems common in the Colombian educational M&E system can be found in Appendix B. For readers of the Peruvian report, we will release additional information on the assessments, tools, and M&E systems that we have gathered through the desk review in a future version of this report

each of the 12 sub-elements within the HOLAS framework are available online. For example, if you as a reader are particularly interested in barriers and enablers to information quality in Colombian or Peruvian educational M&E systems, you can scan the QR code or the link provided in the Results by sub-element from the systems' diagnostic report section to read a summary of findings particularly related to the sub-element "Ensure information quality."

Second, the Integrated results and recommendations from the systems' diagnostic report section of this report includes integrated results that highlight key themes, patterns, and (mis) alignments across the various HOLAS sub-elements. These results are particularly relevant to the objectives and target audiences of this initiative.

> **We emphasize that these results are not exhaustive. Indeed, by looking across the sub-element reports, additional areas of alignment and misalignment across sub-elements can likely be identified and additional recommendations developed - and we encourage readers to do so!**

Results by sub-element: In this section, we provide the links and QR code for readers to navigate to the results by key sub-element or dimension of the HOLAS framework: information, goals, and support. We also include findings from emerging aspects not originally contemplated in the HOLAS framework. Furthermore, original reports organized by data source (quantitative descriptive, quantitative social network, and qualitative) are available upon request. Contact information details are available in this section.

Integrated results and recommendations: Finally, we report the integrated results of our educational M&E systems mapping efforts in Colombia or Peru (depending on the report) as well as recommendations to address misalignments identified through the systems mapping process. Between May 2023 and March 2024 we used the results of the systems analysis, valuable inputs from our Steering Committee and interviewees, and our own knowledge of the systems to: (a) identify (mis)alignments across the sub-elements in the HOLAS framework; and (b) develop recommendations on how to improve alignments within and across stakeholders and elements to support equitable holistic learning M&E systems. Our lenses in doing so were shaped by both the goals and constraints of our particular initiative as well as the primary audiences for this report (in Colombia: research-practice-policy partnerships across the development-humanitarian nexus and interested local and national level public servants and researchers; in Peru: national and sub-national staff within the MINEDU as well as humanitarian actors such as the country multi-year resilience programs (MYRP) supported by ECW). Given different foci, audiences, and findings, the integrated results and recommendations are presented differently for each country, and we do not attempt to make cross-context recommendations - with one important exception.

> **Across Colombia and Peru we overarching found that ...**
>
> **Key finding A.** Significant efforts have been made in both Colombia and Peru to design and implement measurement tools that provide valid and reliable information on students' holistic learning outcomes and on the school and teacher factors that support the attainment of those outcomes. Survey respondents in Colombia (n = 37) and Peru (n = 41) reported on 42 (in Colombia) and 50 (in Peru) unique education assessments, evaluations, and/or M&E systems at various levels of the education system.

Recommendation A. Given the breadth, depth, and quality of educational assessments available within Colombia's and Peru's education system, we recommend as a starting point that diverse stakeholders seeking to collect information on educational outcomes review what is currently available before introducing new assessments into the system. To support stakeholders' ability to do so, we have developed a corresponding HOLAS Assessment Bank that provides an overview of many of the assessments and data collection tools identified through our systems mapping, as well as information and links on how to access them. We anticipate releasing the HOLAS Assessment Bank in April 2024.

Scope and key considerations

Before delving into the contents of the report, we offer three reflections that must be considered in reading about and using the tools and evidence included in this report. First, the HOLAS framework and associated mixed-methods diagnostic tools were developed specifically for use in Colombia and Peru. Both countries have strong national educational M&E systems, and both countries have provided access to those national systems for refugee children; these considerations influenced how we formulated the framework and tools. Adaptations are needed before use in other social, political, and economic contexts. However, we hope that the HOLAS tools and process provide a useful starting point for doing so.

Second, as in any research process, it is important to reflect on how our own experiences and positions as a team can impact our interpretations of the data. The two principal investigators of the initiative are based in New York, United States, and Bogotá, Colombia, and hold Doctor of Philosophy degrees (PhDs) in Applied Psychology and Psychology and Education, respectively. Both have extensive experience working in collaboration with governments and NGOs on issues related to the measurement of holistic learning outcomes: one on the socioemotional skills of primary school-aged children in Peru, Lebanon, and elsewhere and the other on early childhood development and early education in Colombia, Jordan, and elsewhere. The U.S.-based researcher identifies herself as white and is a native English speaker, and does not speak Spanish. The team that developed the framework, conducted the mixed-methods study, analyzed and summarized evidences, and implemented the strategies is composed of early to mid-career researchers based in:

- Colombia (3): All the researchers in Colombia are Colombian by birth. Two of them hold PhDs in Psychology. A third researcher has a Master's degree in Sociology and works with the Colombian agency responsible for educational evaluation. All of them have extensive experience in the design, data collection, and analysis of data in the context of program evaluation in the Colombian education sector throughout the country. They have interacted with national, regional, and local authorities, as well as with NGOs, teachers, students, and families in different contexts.

- United States (3): All of the researchers in the United States are South American by birth and have Masters degrees. Two of the researchers are Colombian by birth and are pursuing their PhDs. One of these has an Master's degree in Applied Psychology, and previously worked in the Colombian government agency responsible for educational evaluation, as well as collaborating with the Peruvian government in the evaluation of social and emotional skills. The other has a Master's degree in Psychology. A third researcher is Argentinean and has a Master's degree in Global

Affairs. She has previously worked with the MINEDU.

- Peru (2): All of the researchers in Peru are Peruvian by birth and previously worked in various offices of the MINEDU on the measurement of early childhood development and socioemotional skills, among other topics. One researcher has a Master's degree in Applied Psychology. The other has a Bachelor's degree in Social Psychology.

For the duration of the project, team members met at least once a week to ensure that the initiative was guided by their collective knowledge and experience in multiple fields.

Lastly, it is relevant to note that many of the terms used throughout the project and in drafting this report–such as social and emotional learning (SEL), holistic learning, and childhoods in contexts of marginalization–are subject to debate and not the product of universally accepted definitions. While the bulk of our work has not focused on communications, language is crucial to the effort of increasing coherence across education systems. We outline how we have understood some contentious and technical language (see section below, Appendix 1: Glossary of terms), recognizing that these terms have diverse and contradicting definitions in the global sphere and each country' s national standards. Oftentimes, the terms outlined were also understood differently by those who participated in our research. Furthermore, changes in the political climate of Colombia and Peru throughout the last two years has also created dynamism that has impacted our work, including the language we have used herein.

The HOLAS framework

In this section, we introduce the framework that guided our systems analysis: the Holistic Learning Assessment Systems (HOLAS) framework. Specifically, we:

- Identify the purposes that motivated the development of the HOLAS framework
- Review two well-known frameworks for education systems analysis that deeply informed the development of the HOLAS framework: Research on Improving Systems of Education (RISE) and Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER)
- Describe our process for integration, adaptation, and extension of existing frameworks
- Provide an overview of the elements of the HOLAS framework

In doing so, we acknowledge decisions we made based on project objectives, context, and resource constraints that informed the scope and design of the HOLAS framework. As it currently stands, the HOLAS framework is best suited for use in contexts with strong national educational monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems that provide access to formal education opportunities among children from contexts of marginalization. We describe in depth the methodology used to create the framework here in the hopes that it can be further extended and adapted for use in different social, economic, and political contexts.

HOLAS purposes

In order to strengthen coherence and equity in the Colombian and Peruvian holistic learning outcome measurement systems, we first needed a framework that would allow us to bound, map, and communicate about such systems. The HOLAS framework was developed for three interconnected purposes:

1. To facilitate a clear and inclusive communication about the elements of holistic learning M&E systems: We sought to clearly identify and describe elements of holistic learning M&E systems using user-friendly language and incorporating multiple stakeholder voices.

2. To build consensus on areas of (mis)alignment within holistic learning M&E systems: We piloted a methodology for education systems analysis which facilitates replication and transparency through the use of open-source quantitative and qualitative tools.

3. To prioritize strategies for strengthening alignment to support equitable holistic learning: We designed the framework to provide detailed information that enables the development and prioritization of concrete strategies for strengthening alignment in holistic M&E systems.

We then piloted the framework in the current initiative in Colombia and Peru. In doing so, we aimed to provide a proof of concept of the utility of such an approach for strengthening holistic M&E systems in contexts of emergency and protracted crisis, beginning in two countries with strong governmental educational M&E systems.

As a starting point, we identified two existing approaches to education systems analysis that include a focus on assessments, data, and information: the RISE diagnostic framework[24] and the SABER tool[25]. However, we recognized that each framework had complementary strengths and shortcomings for our specified purposes, leading to our decision to adapt, integrate, and extend them to create the HOLAS framework.

Table 1. Overview of RISE, SABER Student Assessment, and the HOLAS framework

	RISE	SABER Student Assessment	HOLAS Framework
Main purpose(s)	Within-country: • Diagnosis of (mis)alignments in education systems for academic learning • Prioritization and consensus building around strategies that facilitate systems' alignment for academic learning	The overarching SABER approach is intended for: • Cross-country comparative policy analysis • Within-country systems strengthening of high-leverage education policy areas that support academic learning	Within-country: • Diagnosis of (mis)alignments in education M&E systems for holistic learning • Prioritization and consensus building around strategies that facilitate M&E systems' alignment for equitable holistic learning
Scope	Identifies core elements and relationships that define education systems across specific policy domains.	The overarching SABER approach identifies 13 key policy domains, each of which have their own guiding framework. SABER Student Assessment is one such domain.	Builds on the RISE framework to specify how core elements and relationships specifically interact within education M&E systems.
Framework design	A 5x4 matrix, in which the five core elements of education systems - goals, information, finance, support, and motivation - define four key stakeholder relationships.	A 3x3 matrix, in which three drivers of assessment quality - enabling context, systems alignment, and assessment quality - define the effectiveness of three types of assessments. Notably, some elements of RISE's goals, finance, support and motivation are included within the SABER enabling context.	Currently three core elements (goals, information, and support), each with four corresponding sub-elements, define horizontal, vertical, and diagonal feedback loops between five stakeholder groups.
Stakeholders considered	The state Education authorities and organizations Frontline service providers Caregivers Students	Not explicitly stated.	Education authorities at national and sub-national levels, Education organizations, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), Frontline service providers, Researcher
Types of assessment considered	Primarily examinations.	Classroom assessments, Examinations, Large-scale national and international monitoring assessments	Formative, summative, and monitoring assessments at classroom, sub-national, national, and international levels.
Role of holistic learning	Not explicit.	Not explicit.	Explicit.
Role of equity	Not explicit.	Considered in a separate policy domain.	Explicit.

The RISE framework: In brief

Published in 2015, RISE provides an analytical framework to help education stakeholders identify the extent to which education systems are aligned towards supporting academic learning - or other purposes, such as access to education - and undertake systemic reform to increase alignment.[26] The ability to assess the alignment of educational systems is critical given emerging research that the effectiveness and sustainability of any given intervention aimed at improving academic learning outcomes are uncertain if implemented within a system that is not aligned towards improving academic learning outcomes. To assess alignment, the RISE framework specifies key elements within education systems that can be (mis) aligned within, between, and across key stakeholder groups.

RISE elements

RISE identifies five main elements of an education system: delegation (or goals, such as those enshrined in curricula, frameworks, and standards); information (such as data and measures); supports (such as in-service and pre-service teacher training); motivation; and financing. Each of these elements contains a number of sub-elements. For example, within the information element, RISE specifically considers "information use" and "assessment purpose."

RISE relationships

RISE identifies four key stakeholder groups: the state (including executive, legislative, and fiduciary authorities); education authorities and organizations (including Ministries of Education); frontline providers (including school leaders and teachers); and citizens (including parents and students). Various relationships can exist among these stakeholder groups, which are defined by exchange and feedback around the five RISE elements.[27] For example, in what RISE terms the management relationship, an educational authority such as the Ministry of Education holds frontline service providers accountable for completing a goal, such as improving academic learning outcomes. The Ministry of Education provides support - including in-service professional development opportunities - and financing - such as teacher compensation packages - to frontline service providers to achieve this goal, while the frontline service providers have intrinsic and extrinsic motivators - like career advancement opportunities - to support progress to the goal. Progress against the goal is assessed by information, such as data collected through national monitoring assessments.

RISE analysis

A 5x4 matrix results from combining the above-specified elements and the relationships, forming the basis for the RISE framework and analysis.[28] RISE analysis can be undertaken in several ways at different levels, of which we highlight two here. First, one can assess the extent to which goals, information, support, motivation, and financing are aligned (or not) towards the purpose of improving academic learning within, between, and across stakeholder relationships. Second, one can evaluate whether the elements and relationships within the system interact to support goals beyond or in addition to improving academic learning outcomes, such as enhancing access to education or meeting bureaucratic requirements.

RISE process and materials

RISE has teams from different organizations, sectors, and regions, including teams generating original scholarship on education system in Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Tanzania, and Vietnam.[29] The application of the RISE framework is facilitated by RISE's Diagnostic Toolkit, which provides guidance on the methodology for implementing the RISE through six phases: the inception, desk review, workshops, stakeholder workshop and interviews, analysis prioritization workshop, and final report.[30]

The SABER framework: In brief

Published in 2011 by the World Bank, SABER was launched with the objective of producing comparative data on educational policies and institutions to help countries systematically strengthen their educational systems and promote academic learning.[31] Like RISE, the SABER tool recognizes the importance of aligning education systems' policies and institutions of governance, information, accountability, financial rules, and school management with learning for all[32]. But while the RISE framework identifies common elements and relationships across an education system, the SABER approach is organized according to 13 specific education policymaking topics or domains areas, each of which has its own guiding framework.[*] & [33] - Of particular relevance to this initiative is the Student Assessment domain which identifies a set of assessment types as well as drivers of assessment systems' quality.[**]

SABER Student Assessment types

The SABER Student Assessment domain identifies three assessment types or purposes: (1) classroom assessments (that provide information to support teaching and learning within classrooms); (2) examinations (that provide information to make decisions about individual students' certification and grade progression); and (3) large-scale systems assessments - including national and international learning assessments - that monitor quality and performance of the system.[34]

SABER Student Assessment drivers of quality

The SABER Student Assessment domain identifies three main quantifiable and actionable drivers of quality and sustainability within educational M&E systems. First, M&E systems have an enabling context, including policies for assessment activities, leadership and institutional structures, availability of sufficient funding, and presence of trained staff[35]. Second, assessment systems must be aligned with systems' goals, standards, and pre-service and in-service training opportunities. Third, assessment activities must be sound and lead to high-quality - defined here as reliable and valid - data at all stages of the assessment process.

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* These domains are: Early Childhood Development, Education Management Information Systems, Education Resilience, Engaging the Private Sector, Equity and Inclusion, Information and Communication Technologies, School Autonomy and Accountability, School Finance, School Health and School Feeding, Student Assessment, Teachers, Tertiary Education, and Workforce Development.

** We also reviewed relevant materials from the SABER Education Management Information System framework. However, given the ultimate focus of this initiative on holistic learning outcomes, we ultimately focused on the SABER Student Assessment domain. Integrating relevant aspects of the SABER EMIS framework into the HOLAS framework is a potential area for future development.

SABER Student Assessment analysis

A 3x3 matrix results from crossing the assessment types and drivers of quality. Users can then identify areas for improvement within a specific assessment type - for example, strengthening classroom assessments by focusing on the enabling context and quality - or within the various drivers of quality across assessment types - for instance, leadership and institutional structures that support different types of assessment. Importantly, the SABER questionnaires and rubrics are designed to evaluate the "level of development" of existing classroom, examination, and large-scale assessment activities against "best or recommended practices."[36] Thus within the matrix, four benchmark levels and corresponding indicators have been established: latent (no assessment activities) through emerging and established to advanced (stable and sustainable high-quality assessment for learning).

SABER Student Assessment process and materials

The SABER Student Assessment process is guided by a set of instruments - a framework paper, and rubrics and questionnaires for each assessment type - to obtain a high-level snapshot of student assessment systems.[37 & 38] The process is designed to be relatively quick and cost-effective, as it assesses policy and institutional conditions as opposed to school-level factors. SABER data broadly has been collected in-country by experts for 10 of the 13 policy domains and validated through engagement with policymakers[39]. SABER tools have been applied in over 100 countries.[40]

RISE and SABER: The need for integration and extension

The RISE and SABER frameworks have complementary strengths and challenges in the context of the objectives of the current initiative. The RISE framework focuses on assessing feedback loops within and across different stakeholder relationships - including at the community and school level - which SABER does not. Meanwhile, the SABER instruments identify specific, quantifiable drivers of assessment systems' quality throughout the processes of collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and sharing information about academic learning outcomes. By integrating both frameworks, we sought to combine the focus on dynamic, multi-level feedback loops while increasing the specificity around assessment and information systems. In doing so, we aimed to create a roadmap for identifying and acting on the drivers of quality of assessments, while understanding how diverse stakeholders interact with and shape them.

> The need went beyond that of integration, however: We noted three, interrelated limitations that required the extension of the RISE and SABER frameworks

The need for a systemic focus on the development–humanitarian nexus.

First, neither RISE nor SABER specifically focus on education systems within contexts of emergency and protracted crisis. Yet, as climate change, conflict, and human rights violations have displaced over 100 million people - one out of every 74 people on earth[41] - there is a need for greater coordination and collaboration between actors working towards national and sub-national education development goals (such as Ministries of Education and school staff in formal school settings) and actors working to support education as part of humanitarian response to crisis (such as NGOs and school staff in non-formal education, who are not

explicitly included within the RISE and SABER frameworks)[42]. Coherent education data across what is termed the "development-humanitarian nexus" is conceptualized as critical to such response efforts, allowing for joint planning, risk mitigation and resource mobilization to prevent, respond to, and promote recovery from crisis[43]. Yet, as it currently stands, a diversity of national, sub-national, and humanitarian actors often operate parallel education M&E systems with limited linkages and interoperability.[44 & 45] This creates more opportunities for misalignment than anticipated by the RISE and SABER frameworks[46].

The need for a systemic focus on holistic learning outcomes.

Second, both RISE and SABER focus only on the assessment of academic learning outcomes. However, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and climate crises, education systems globally are being called upon to foster holistic learning - both academic knowledge and social and emotional skills and well-being - that can support children to navigate uncertain futures[47] [&48]. As such, there is an increasing focus at the school, sub-national, national, and global levels on assessing social, emotional, and related skills, like citizenship skills[49,50,51]. However, variations in how social and emotional skills are defined, prioritized, and named within and across contexts, by whom, and with what agency[52,53,54] - as well as limited agreement on SEL measurement approaches and purposes - increases the potential for misalignments within educational assessment systems.

The need for a systemic focus on equity.

Third, and also relatedly, neither RISE nor SABER explicitly attend to power dynamics and equity among childhoods in contexts of marginalization, including migrants and refugees; children with disabilities; Black, indigenous, and ethnic minority populations; and gender groups. For example, while the RISE framework considers that some education systems might be geared towards the priorities of a "favored group," it does not acknowledge the histories and systems of racism and colonialism that have enabled such power structures and domination - nor how such dynamics will shape systems alignment efforts.[55] The SABER Student Assessment framework, meanwhile, defines assessment quality in terms of reliability and validity without explicit reference to fairness, a key part of the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing[56]. Systems frameworks can provide a powerful tool for interrogating power and relational dynamics. But as currently framed, these tools allow users to elide how systems - in both the Minority and Majority world - maintain unequal power structures that favor those from Western, Educated, Industrial, Rich, and Democratic (WEIRD) contexts[57]. Attempts to address (mis)alignments without such acknowledgements will only serve to re-ify existing inequities.

The process of bounding, integration, extension, and application: The HOLAS framework

We began the process of developing the HOLAS framework by first reviewing in depth the RISE and SABER Student Assessment frameworks. We recognized at this point that the resources and timeline available for this project did not permit us to fully adapt and extend the frameworks for all elements and relationships within the RISE framework, nor for all assessment types in the SABER Student Assessment. In making the decision on how to focus our time and efforts, we considered the purpose for which we were adapting the framework: To guide the design of strategies to support M&E systems' coherence for equitable holistic

learning assessments. Given our team's expertise, assets, and relationships - and considering the project timeline and resources - we felt we could best support:

- Educational authorities, organizations, and frontline service providers around

- Aligning information, support, and goals; and particularly for

- National and sub-national M&E assessments and classroom assessments

Thus, our framework integration, adaptation, and extension centers specifically on the relationship between educational authorities and organizations and frontline service providers, and on the information, support, and goals elements that define interactions within this relationship.

With this bounding, we mapped indicators from the SABER Student Assessment national large-scale and classroom assessment instruments to the different elements and sub-elements within RISE, creating the first version of the HOLAS framework. In doing so, we added new sub-elements or dimensions to the RISE framework to highlight key M&E processes - such

Figure 4 — The design of the HOLAS framework

The graphic above visualizes some of the key processes and considerations that went into the integration, extension, and adaptation of the HOLAS framework.

as information quality and assessment organizational structures - included in the SABER Student Assessment but less explicit in RISE. We also revised the RISE elements to more systematically consider the role of different types of assessments, including formative assessments, national monitoring assessments, national evaluation assessments, and exams. Thus, our framework integration, adaptation and extension centers specifically on the relationship between educational authorities and organizations and frontline service

providers, and on the information, support, and goals elements that define interactions within this relationship.

With this bounding, we mapped indicators from the SABER Student Assessment national large-scale and classroom assessment instruments to the different elements and sub-elements within RISE, creating the first version of the HOLAS framework. In doing so, we added new sub-elements or dimensions to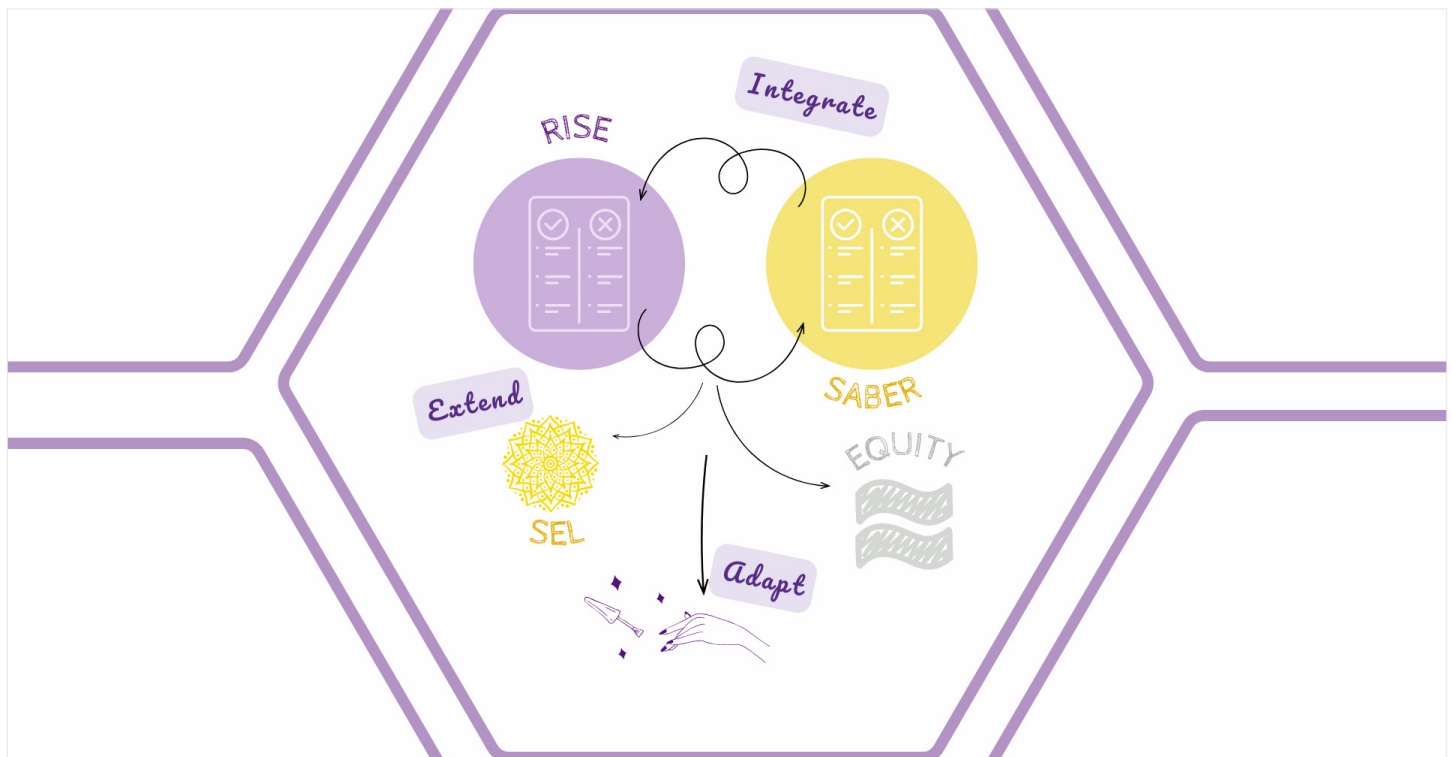 the RISE framework to highlight key M&E processes - such as information quality and assessment organizational structures - included in the SABER Student Assessment but less explicit in RISE. We also revised the RISE elements to more systematically consider the role of different types of assessments, including formative assessments, national monitoring assessments, national evaluation assessments, and exams.

Then, we revised version 1.0 of the HOLAS framework with an eye towards three criteria: extension, usability, and replicability. First, we considered extension. We developed initial criteria for what a system that is "coherent for holistic learning" would look like based on both a targeted literature review as well as our own extensive experiences working at various levels of education systems on holistic and SEL. We also reviewed all elements and sub-elements with an eye towards emphasizing diversity, equity, and inclusion. Second, we adjusted the HOLAS framework to maximize usability at two stages of the initiative: (1) when collecting data to map Colombian and Peruvian education M&E systems against the HOLAS framework (see section below, systems analysis methodology); and (2) when co-designing strategies to strengthen alignments within the Colombian and Peruvian M&E systems. Specifically, we noticed that some of the definitions included in the RISE and SABER framework cells created confusion among team members and did not permit the development of a structured coding system for the systems mapping data collected through qualitative interviews. As such, we reviewed and revised each cell within the HOLAS framework to have a common format, which includes a brief definition as well as an explanation of the criteria along which we are assessing each dimension. Third, we considered replicability. As we began applying the coding system, we noticed that there was significant overlap between dimensions in the HOLAS framework which created difficulties establishing inter-rater reliability. Thus, we tried to better distinguish HOLAS elements and sub-elements or dimensions from each other and create definitions that were more orthogonal to each other. This resulted in version 2.0 of the HOLAS framework.

We then conducted a mixed-methods study - including surveys, interviews, and desk review processes - with a wide range of stakeholders in Colombia and Peru to triangulate information about the elements and sub-elements within the HOLAS framework, with the ultimate aim of identifying (mis)alignments within and across elements and stakeholders (see section below, systems analysis methodology). After collecting a first tranche of data with policymakers and researchers, we held a workshop with our Steering Committees to review preliminary results and provide evidence on the validity of the HOLAS framework 2.0. At the workshop, Steering Committee members were asked to map definitions of the sub-elements of the HOLAS framework to their "parent" element, and to map quotes from the qualitative interviews to their respective sub-element (which served as "child" nodes in the qualitative coding system). Based on the results of these validation activities, it was clear that participants generally understood the information and support elements of the HOLAS framework. However, additional revisions were needed to clarify the goals element and sub-elements. In addition, across all elements there needed to be an even greater focus on inclusion and equity of childhoods from contexts of marginalization. To address this feedback, we then revised the HOLAS framework again with a focus on:

1. **Improving the naming conventions of the sub-elements within the HOLAS framework:** Particularly within the goals element, the original names of some of the sub-elements were at best not intuitive to users and at worst misleading. To address this feedback, we revised all sub-element names to form an imperative of what an M&E system aligned for equitable holistic learning would look like. For example, we changed the original RISE goals sub-element, "Spider vs. starfish: local discretion granted to schools/ teachers" to "Promote agency among frontline providers and authorities in monitoring and evaluation activities."

2. **Clearly identifying the actors and levels of the education system analyzed within each sub-element:** To make the framework more actionable, Steering Committee members suggested that sub-element definitions should explicitly identify which stakeholders, at which levels of the education system, should be involved in the specified activities. As we did so, we recognized that this revision helped surface the critical role of sub-national educational authorities in M&E processes.

3. **Strengthen the focus within sub-elements on inclusion:** Steering Committee members provided recommendations throughout the elements on how to strengthen our focus on childhoods from contexts of marginalizations. For example, in the "Goals: Establish clear goals for holistic learning" sub-element, we added a specific indicator about the clarity of objectives to support holistic learning for marginalized groups and refugees.
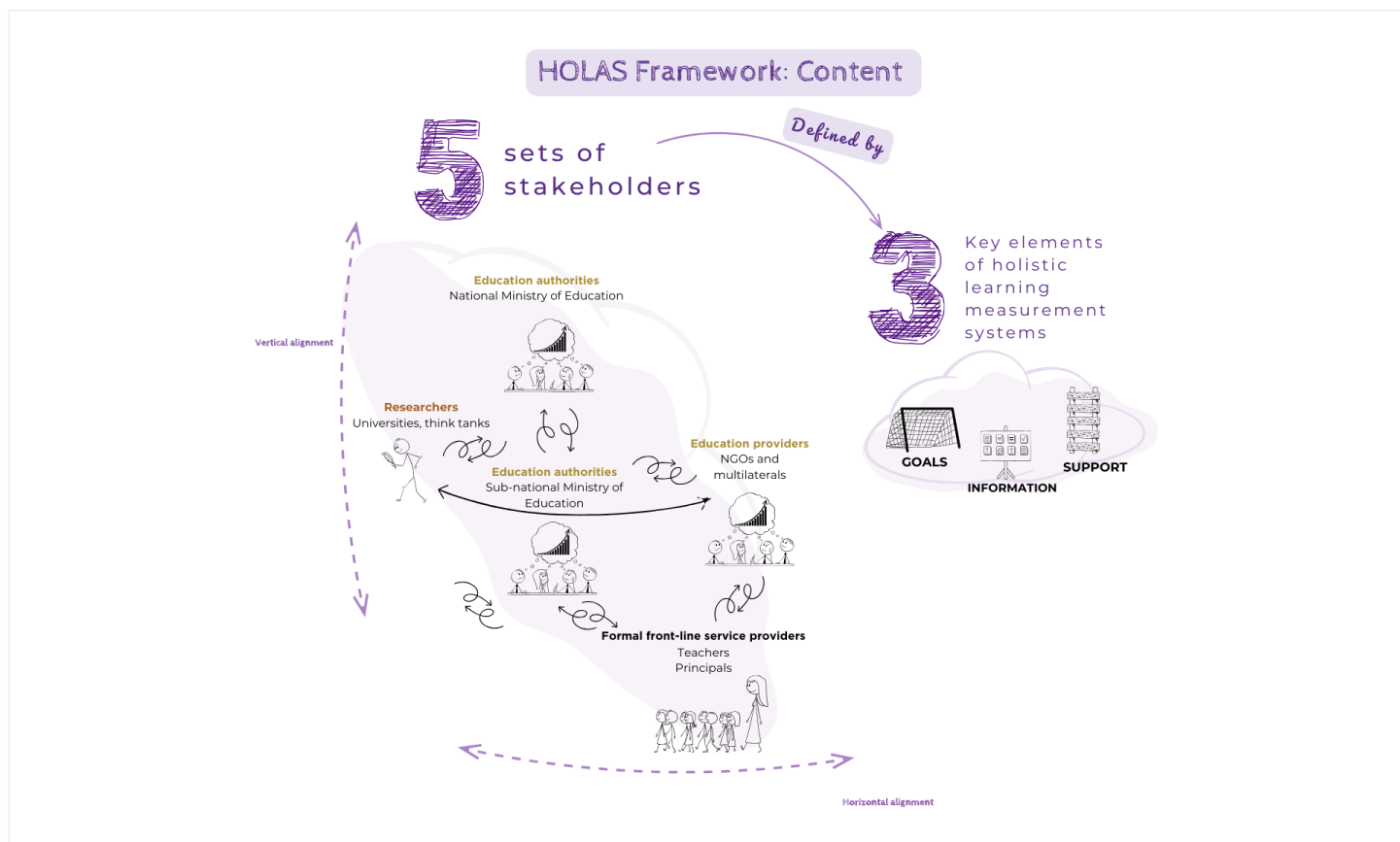

Figure 5 — Overview of the HOLAS framework

HOLAS considers how the interactions and alignment between five sets of stakeholders are defined by three elements of holistic learning measurement education systems.

Figure 6 — Overview of the HOLAS framework

HOLAS considers how the interactions and alignment between five sets of stakeholders are defined by three elements of holistic learning measurement education systems.

The outcome: The HOLAS framework

The HOLAS framework identifies key elements of holistic learning outcome measurement systems - goals, information, and support - that define the interactions between five sets of stakeholders: education authorities at the national and sub-national level, non-governmental education providers, frontline service providers in formal education settings, and researchers.

HOLAS elements and sub-elements

The HOLAS framework currently identifies three main elements of education M&E systems:

- Information: The information element focuses on how and with what quality information produced by education M&E systems (see section below, Appendix 1: Glossary of terms) is generated, accessed, used, and shared by education authorities, organizations, frontline providers, and researchers for a variety of purposes.

- Goals: The goals element focuses on the definition and clarity of holistic learning objectives within the system, the alignment of information from education M&E systems with these objectives and other crucial education system components, and the established norms governing the use of this information in decision-making, including the level of autonomy stakeholders have in doing so.

- Support: The support element includes the mechanisms that are in place to ensure

comprehensive, evidence-informed holistic learning at different levels of the education system, including the availability and quality of resources, professional development opportunities, and organizational structures.

Each of these three elements contains four sub-elements, or dimensions, for a total of 12 sub-elements within the HOLAS framework.

Table 2. Exemplar HOLAS sub-element

HOLAS element: Sub-element	Information: Using information to support equitable holistic learning
Sub-element definition	This dimension relates to the extent to which information from a variety of types of assessments - as well as from M&E systems - is used responsibly by stakeholders to make holistic learning-oriented decisions. We specifically consider three criteria within this dimension.
Criteria 1	**Type of decisions.** The extent to which information is used (or not) for decision making that supports holistic learning outcomes.
Criteria 2	**Eco-system information flows for decision-making.** The extent to which information informs decision-making by authorities and is also shared back with and used by schools, teachers, or community stakeholders.
Criteria 3	**Fair use.** The extent to which information is used in a way that is fair and equitable. This includes the extent to which information does not explicitly or implicitly stigmatize marginalized groups, and actively supports equity in the allocation of resources and opportunities.

As shown in Table 2, each of the 12 sub-elements contains a definition and a set of qualitative criteria that provides an imperative as to what education M&E systems aligned for equitable holistic learning might look like. The HOLAS sub-elements and their definitions are available in this report (see section below, Appendix 2: The definitions by HOLAS sub-element).

HOLAS relationship and interactions

The HOLAS framework focuses on one relationship from the RISE framework: the management relationship between education authorities, organizations, and frontline providers. It currently envisions this relationship for contexts with strong government education systems that provide access to refugee children in formal education settings. Within this relationship and context, HOLAS recognizes that interactions can occur among at least five stakeholder groups at various levels. The HOLAS framework considers three sets of government stakeholders at various levels:

- **Frontline providers - such as teachers and principals - in formal school settings** critically shape the educational experiences that most proximally support students' development of academic and social and emotional skills. In the context of national and sub-national policies, teachers and principals also play a critical role in supporting the inclusion of students from contexts of marginalization, including

refugee children, on a day-to-day basis. Frontline providers are nested within schools, which are nested within geographic governmental administrative levels. In Colombia, schools are nested within the municipal or departmental Secretarías de Educación (Secretariats of Education). In Peru, schools are nested within Unidades de Gestión Educativa Local (Local Educational Management Units or UGELs), which are nested within Direcciones Regionales de Educación (Regional Department of Education or DREs) (Peru).

- **Staff at various sub-national government administrative levels** are instrumental in the management of formal education services. Beyond administrative duties, they play crucial roles in monitoring and evaluating educational policies at regional or local levels. Their efforts are key to ensuring national educational strategies align with the specific needs and contexts of their respective regions.

- **Staff at the national government level** develop overarching policies and mandates to organize and manage educational services. They set standards, define goals, and allocate resources and support, significantly influencing instructional and inclusion practices at sub-national and school levels. Furthermore, they create and manage M&E systems to oversee, gather, and disseminate educational practice information nationwide. Their strategic decisions directly influence education delivery and assessment focus, shaping the environment for students' holistic development.

Given the nested structure of government systems, we can examine the extent to which interactions among these three stakeholder groups around information, goals, and support are vertically aligned.[58] The HOLAS framework also identifies external or non-state organizations, institutions, and networks working to support educational outcomes:

1. **Staff at NGOs and multilateral institutions** work to support development programs and initiatives - such as efforts to achieve the United Nations (U.N.) Sustainable Development Goals - or humanitarian activities, in cases in which resources or will constrains the capacity of government actors at various levels to lead education responses during or in the aftermath of a crisis[59]. While coordination mechanisms exist within development and humanitarian spheres, more needs to be done to ensure alignment across the development and humanitarian nexus, including with respect to M&E systems.[60]

2. **Researchers at universities or other institutions** working in partnership with government actors at various levels as well as with NGOs and multilateral institutions play a critical role in strengthening capacities and relationships to produce, interpret, and use evidence for decision-making in support of equitable holistic learning. [61]Although the RISE and SABER Student Assessment frameworks do not extensively consider researchers, we have incorporated them into the HOLAS framework due to their potential to sustainably enhance holistic learning M&E systems.

Given that these stakeholders partner with each other and with government entities writ large, we can examine the extent to which interactions among these three broad stakeholder groups around information, goals, and support are horizontally aligned[62]. We can also consider diagonal alignments between government actors at specific geographic levels and these external actors.

Building out HOLAS elements, relationships, and interactions: What is needed?

As discussed above, given the time and resource constraints and the goals of this specific initiative, we needed to make difficult decisions about how to bound this version of the HOLAS framework. In doing so, we recognize that key elements of and stakeholder interactions critical to equitable and holistic M&E systems are not currently included in the framework. As shown in Figure 7 below, we strongly recommend building out a financing element of the framework, given that the availability and stability of financing is critical to sustainable M&E systems. We also recommend building out additional stakeholder interactions and, most pressingly, among host-country and refugee children and caregivers. We also recommend interactions among frontline providers in non-formal education settings; the state; and bilateral and multilateral donors[63].
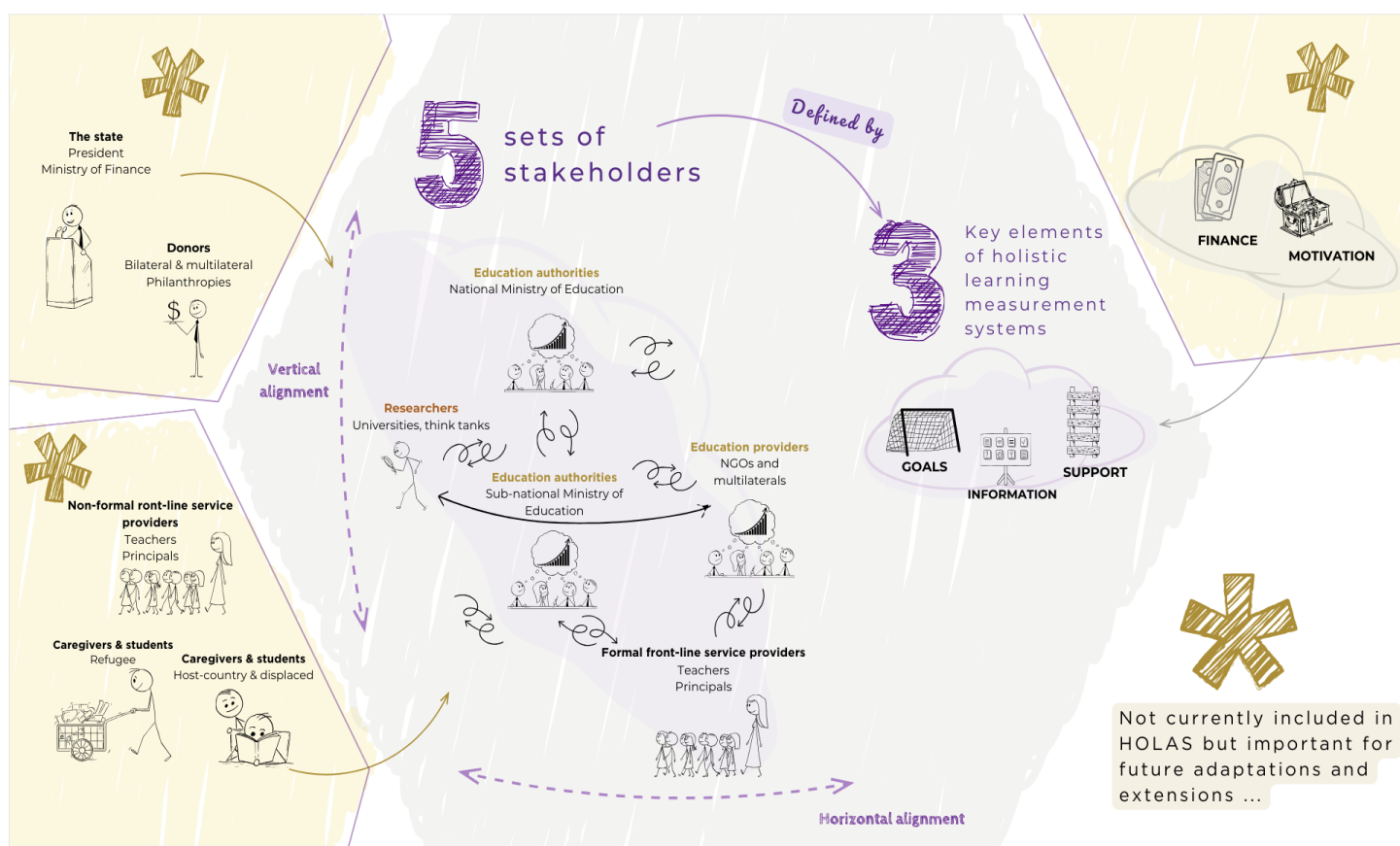
Figure 7 — Adaptations and extensions to the HOLAS framework

HOLAS analysis

As opposed to RISE or SABER Student Assessment, the HOLAS framework does not have a traditional matrix structure. Rather, the three core elements and corresponding sub-elements define a number of horizontal, vertical, and diagonal feedback loops between the five stakeholder groups. Analysis can be flexibly undertaken in several ways depending on the user's goals:

Table 3. The levels of analysis of the HOLAS framework

	Level of analysis	Goal	We recommend...	Example
A	By specific stakeholder groups	To understand the barriers and enablers to specific elements of quality holistic learning M&E systems within a stakeholder group	Reviewing results for the target stakeholder group by element and sub-element. This can also shed light on important interactions and dynamics within heterogeneous stakeholder groups.	Available upon request (see section below, Results by sub-element from the systems' diagnostic report for contact information details).
		To assess the extent to which assessments, data, and evidence (information) are aligned with foundational curricular and standards (goals) and key resources (supports) within a stakeholder group.	Reviewing results for the target stakeholder group across elements and sub-elements to identify the areas of (mis)alignment	Available upon request (see section below, Results by sub-element from the systems' diagnostic report for contact information details).
B	By each of the 12 sub-elements or dimensions of the HOLAS framework	To assess how different stakeholder groups perceive barriers and enablers to specific elements of quality holistic learning M&E systems.	Reviewing the results by element and sub-element across stakeholders. Depending on how this analysis is conducted, this can shed light on areas of vertical, horizontal, and diagonal stakeholder alignments within specific elements and sub-elements.	See section below, Results by sub-element from the systems' diagnostic report.
C	By the three elements of the HOLAS framework, across dimensions and stakeholder groups	To assess the extent to which there is alignment across dimensions of information, goals, and support across stakeholder groups.	Reviewing results across elements and sub-elements and across stakeholder groups to identify the areas of (mis)alignment. Depending on how this analysis is conducted, this can shed light on areas of vertical, horizontal, and diagonal stakeholder alignments.	See section below, Integrated results and recommendations of the Colombia report.
D	By thematic area, within and across information, goal, and support elements and across stakeholder groups	To assess the extent to which information is aligned with foundational goals and supports across stakeholder groups around a specific theme.	Reviewing results across elements and sub-elements and across stakeholder groups to identify areas of (mis)alignment for a specific theme, such as social and emotional learning or childhoods in contexts of marginalization.	See section, Integrated results and recommendations of the Peru report.

Table 3 shows how the HOLAS framework can be used to understand how information is coherent with foundational goals and supports within and across vertical, horizontal, and diagonal alignments of stakeholder groups (see column, level of analysis C).

HOLAS materials

As noted above, the HOLAS framework is currently designed for use in contexts with strong government education systems that provide access to refugee children in formal education settings. To support the types of analysis described in Table 3 above in such contexts, we currently or will soon have available open-source resources in English and Spanish including: the HOLAS framework (see section below, Appendix 2: The definitions by HOLAS sub-element), the method used to conduct the systems mapping using the HOLAS framework (see section below, systems analysis methodology), survey and interview data collection tools, quantitative and qualitative analysis codes, and the pilot results (see section, Results by sub-element from the systems' diagnostic report). Given that the current initiative served as a pilot for the HOLAS framework, we emphasize that these tools require review and adaptation before their use in a new context.
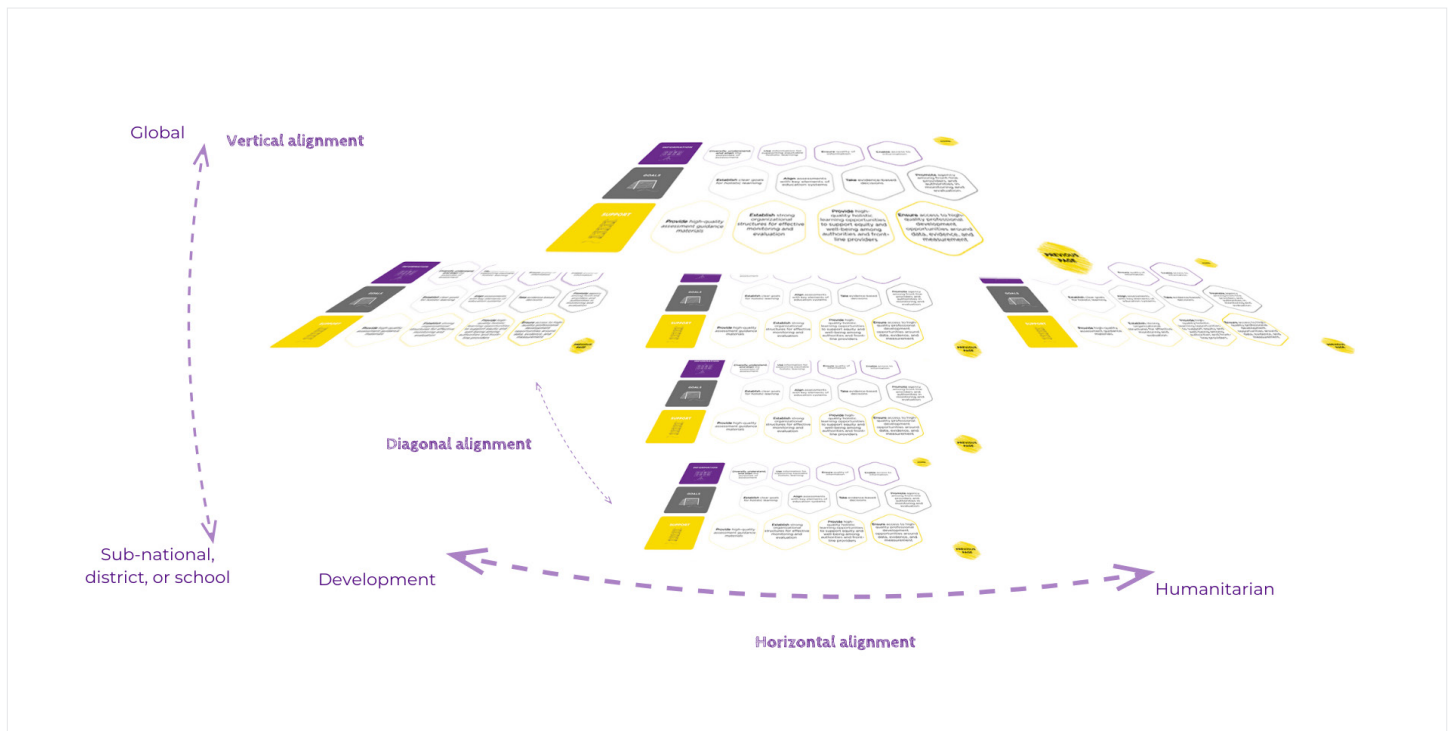

Figure 8 — Adaptations and extensions to the HOLAS framework

The HOLAS framework can be used to conduct analysis within and across information, goal, and support elements and across stakeholder groups.

Systems analysis methodology

In this section, we describe the methodology used to conduct the educational monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems mapping aligned to the Holistic Learning Assessment Systems (HOLAS) framework, including:

- Providing an overview of the broad objectives and questions that guided the mapping effort

- Describing the characteristics of the Colombian sample and the study design

- Detailing the process for design and implementation of the quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments

- Reporting on the procedure and analytic strategies

In doing so, we detail methodological decision points made at each stage that influenced the scope, generalizability, and format of the results.

Systems mapping objectives and questions

Given the complexity of the systems in which we are working - which include a diversity of actors at multiple ecological levels - and the integrated analytical framework that grounded this inquiry, researchers at New York University's Global TIES for Children (NYU-TIES) and the Universidad de los Andes (Uniandes) opted to undertake a mixed-methods approach to our systems mapping effort. Specifically, we aimed to address the following objectives and research questions through diverse quantitative and qualitative methods in both Peru and Colombia, as visualized in Table 4.

Table 4. Type of information collected and methodological component used to address the objectives and research questions.

Objectives	Research question	Type of information	Methodological component
1. To understand the types of information on holistic learning outcomes that education authorities, organizations, frontline service providers, and researchers generate, access, share, and use, how they do it, and with whom.	What types of information on holistic learning outcomes - including measures, data, and guidance materials - are diverse education authorities, organizations, frontline service providers, and researchers generating, accessing, using, and sharing?	Quantitative	Survey
	How is information on holistic learning outcomes accessed and shared within networks of educational authorities, organizations, frontline service providers, and researchers?	Quantitative	Network Analysis

	How are Peru and Colombia's various education authorities, organizations, researchers, and frontline service providers generating, accessing, using, and understanding information on holistic learning outcomes?	Qualitative	Interview
	What types of national assessments and educational information and management systems (EMIS) are used in the Peruvian and Colombian education systems, with what quality, and through which mechanisms?	Qualitative	Desk Review
2. To understand the barriers and enablers perceived by education authorities, organizations, frontline service providers, and researchers to generate, access, use, and understand information on holistic learning outcomes in Peru and Colombia.	To what extent do education authorities, organizations, frontline service providers, and researchers have access to and can exchange information on holistic learning outcomes?	Quantitative	Survey
	What key barriers and enablers do education authorities, organizations, researchers, and frontline service providers perceive to the generation, access, use, and understanding of information on holistic learning outcomes in Peru and Colombia?	Qualitative	Interview
3. To understand the extent to which education authorities, organizations, frontline service providers, and researchers perceive that information on holistic learning outcomes is aligned with prioritized holistic learning skills and competencies, and with professional development resources and support.	What holistic learning skills and competencies are prioritized in national curricula and standards?	Qualitative	Desk Review
	To what extent do education authorities, organizations, researchers, and frontline service providers perceive information on holistic learning outcomes to be aligned with national curricula and standards in Peru and Colombia?	Qualitative	Interview
	To what extent do education authorities, organizations, researchers, and frontline service providers perceive information on holistic learning outcomes to be aligned with school staff professional development opportunities and resources?	Qualitative	Interview
	What key barriers and enablers do education authorities, organizations, researchers, and frontline service providers perceive for the alignment within and between information, goals, and support?	Qualitative	Interview

Participants

We recruited participants from four stakeholders groups relevant for monitoring and evaluation in the Colombian education system. Policymakers (national and sub-national education authorities) (PM), researchers (R), staff at NGOs (NGO) and multilateral organizations (NGO) and teachers (T) (see section above, The HOLAS framework). We identified potential participants based on a desk review, the recommendations of our Steering Committee, and through our team's networks. When selecting and inviting participants, we considered the following criteria:

- Familiarity and experience in developing, accessing, and using holistic learning monitoring and evaluation systems within Colombian education systems.

- Experience working with children from contexts of marginalization, such as Venezuelan refugees and migrant children and children with disabilities.

- For policymakers, having currently or within the past five years worked as a civil servant in the Colombian educational system.

Given the project's emphasis on Venezuelan migrant children, we targeted recruitment from the three cities that receive the most significant number of migrant populations in the country: Bogota, Barranquilla, and San Jose de Cucuta.[64] However, outreach for the project's development in Barranquilla was unsuccessful, and thus, the information was collected in the remaining two cities, and at the national level (where appropriate).

With these criteria, potential participants were identified among policymakers, NGOs, and researchers using a non-probabilistic convenience sampling approach. A total of 104 people were contacted, reaching a total response rate of 34.6%, with a higher response rate among researchers (53%) and a lower rate for public policymakers (30%). In the case of teachers, they were contacted one by one until 10 (minimum number) agreed to participate. In total 37 participants agreed to participate in the study, of which 35 provided information in both the survey and the interview[65] (Table 5). Of these 35, 62.85% identify as women (N=22), and 63.89% are linked to the public sector (N = 23; includes all policymakers, teachers, and two researchers). Additional information about the participants can be found in Table 5.

Table 5. Interview and survey sample years of experience and location or level of action, by stakeholder group

Stakeholder	Surveys	Interviews	Years of experience in the education sector	Geographic area or action Level
Researchers	9	8	X=17.4 (SD=8.9)	75% (n=6) with headquarters in Bogota
Policymakers	9	10	X=16.5 (SD=14)	60% (n=6) from the national level 40% (n=4) from the regional level (Bogota or Cucuta) 70% (n=7) current staff 30% (n=3) left their positions in the last five years

Members of NGOs	8	7	X=10.5 (SD=5.7)	86% (n=6) international organizations 14% (n=1) Colombian NGO
Teachers	11	11	X=17.8 (SD=8.5)	55% (n=6) from Bogota 44% (n=5) from Cúcuta
Total	37	36		

Design

A sequential mixed QUAN -> QUAL[66] design was used, in which quantitative information was first collected through online surveys. The participants subsequently expanded on their perceptions and experiences through in-depth, qualitative interviews. Concurrently, the team carried out a desk review of relevant documents- The quantitative and qualitative data were intended to complement each other, and to offer a more comprehensive view of the system than that achievable using one or the other method alone. This comprehensive approach allowed for consideration of structural aspects (such as normativity or the structure of relationships) as well as meaning-making and explanations of participants' actions and views. Figure 9 shows the working model that was used to collect information. In this visual, the types of actors involved, the methodological components of the study, and the main categories of the Research on Improving Systems of Education (RISE) diagnostic framework and the Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) integration can be seen.
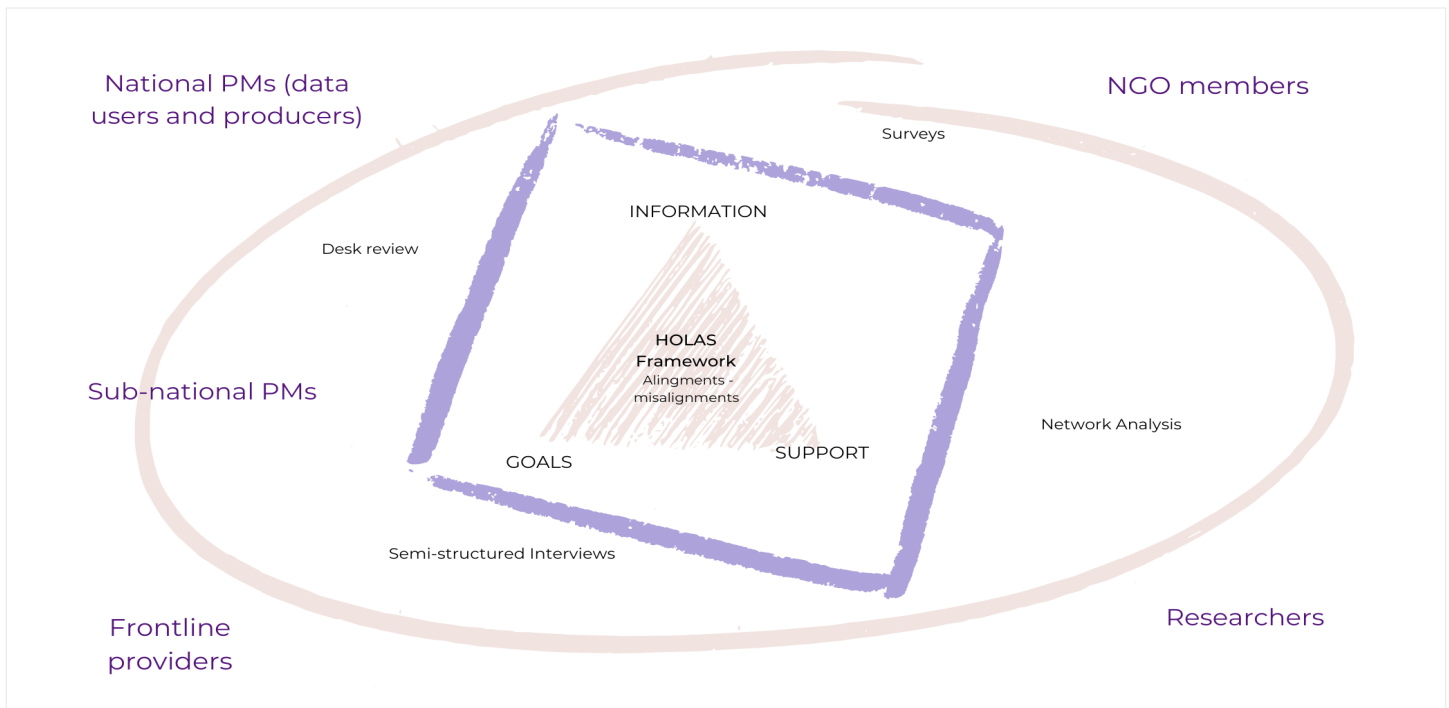
Figure 9 — Schema of the model for the collection of information

The study was guided by the three broad elements of the HOLAS framework: information, goals, and support. We used four methodological components - surveys, interviews, document review, and network analysis - to explore participants' perceptions and experiences of these elements. We collected information from four groups of key informants: Policy makers, NGOs, researchers and teachers .

Instruments

Survey

The surveys designed to collect quantitative data contained demographic questions to capture participants' work experience within educational M&E systems. Additionally, the surveys contained questions related to the elements and sub-elements within the HOLAS framework, including: 1) familiarity with national and sub-national assessments and monitoring strategies; 2) perceptions of the purposes of data collection with these national and sub-national tools; 3) ways to access a variety of types of information about holistic learning outcomes; 4) uses of information about holistic learning outcomes; and 5) communication about and sharing information about holistic learning outcomes. The specific national and sub-national assessments about which participants were asked were chosen because they are widely recognized within Colombia:

- SABER (SABER state assessment): National assessment designed and administered by the Instituto Colombiano para la Evaluación de la Educación (Colombian Institute for the Evaluation of Education - ICFES) on an annual basis.

- SER (TO BE): Evaluation designed and administered by Secretaría de Educación de Bogotá (Bogota's Education Secretariat). The last administration was in 2015

- Evaluación anual del desempeño (Annual Performance Assessment - EAD): Evaluation of teacher performance in public educational institutions

- Evaluar para avanzar (evaluate to move forward-EPA): A strategy of the Ministerio de Educación Nacional (Ministry of Education - MEN) that offers tools to teachers for support and accompaniment in learning, monitoring, and strengthening educational development

We also sought to identify other assessments and data on holistic learning – from classroom assessments to research studies, information systems, or program monitoring tools – that participants had used. Each participant could report up to five other tools they had used in the past five years - for a variety of purposes - and the same questions were asked as for the national assessments. (We refer to these assessments hereafter as "other assessments.") The final section of the survey for this set of stakeholders pertains to the HOLAS support element (see section above, The HOLAS framework), and it was only asked to those familiar with classroom assessments. We assessed stakeholders' perception of the quality and utility of various materials to support frontline providers' use of classroom assessments of academic, social, and emotional competencies.

Given differences in how stakeholders develop, use, and share information on holistic learning outcomes, the questionnaires were tailored for each stakeholder and included a different number of questions and response options. Table 6 shows the sections of the survey and an estimate of the number of questions per stakeholder. The survey was also designed to be adaptive, so that the total number of questions answered depended, in several cases, on the number of answers provided in the previous sections (conditional format). For example, participants who indicated familiarity with two national assessments (SABER and SER) were prompted to answer specific questions about each assessment (or not, if the participant was not familiar).

Table 6. Number of questions in each section of the survey, by stakeholder group

Aspect	PM	NGO	R	T
Demographics & experience	21	27	25	18
Familiarity with national assessment	1	1	1	2
Objective/purpose of national assessments	1	N/A	N/A	N/A
Accessibility and use of assessments and related materials	7	13	11	N/A
Other assessments*	5	4	4	3
Support: classroom assessment materials	46	56	52	23

*Number of questions for each other assessment reported. If no other assessment was reported, this section was not displayed.

**Corresponds to the minimum number of questions in total if the participant reported familiarity with only one assessment of the "Other Assessments" type.

The link to complete the survey was available from February 23 to August 8, 2023, and participants took between 20 and 40 minutes to complete it, depending on the number of assessments with which they reported familiarity. Researchers, policymakers, and NGO staff completed the survey independently, while in the case of teachers, survey questions were completed with the researchers at the moment of the interview.

Semi-structured interview

For this study, the team designed an in-depth interview that included the HOLAS sub-elements and themes presented in Figure 8. Each sub-element included standard questions that could be selected, modified, or supplemented according to the information provided by the participant.

In advance of the interview, the interviewers reviewed participants' responses to the online survey and used them to prepare for the subsequent qualitative phase. Specifically, the interviewer selected one of the assessments, tools, measurements, or data sets that the participant said they were most familiar with in the survey to propose as the "core measure" of the interview. In selecting the central measure, interviewers aimed to have - across all participants - a variety of:

- National vs. other assessments

- Within the other assessments, assessments that the interviewee designed versus those that they accessed but were designed or led by others

- Academic learning outcomes vs. social and emotional learning outcomes and structural and process quality outcomes

- Tools or assessments in early childhood education versus primary and secondary education
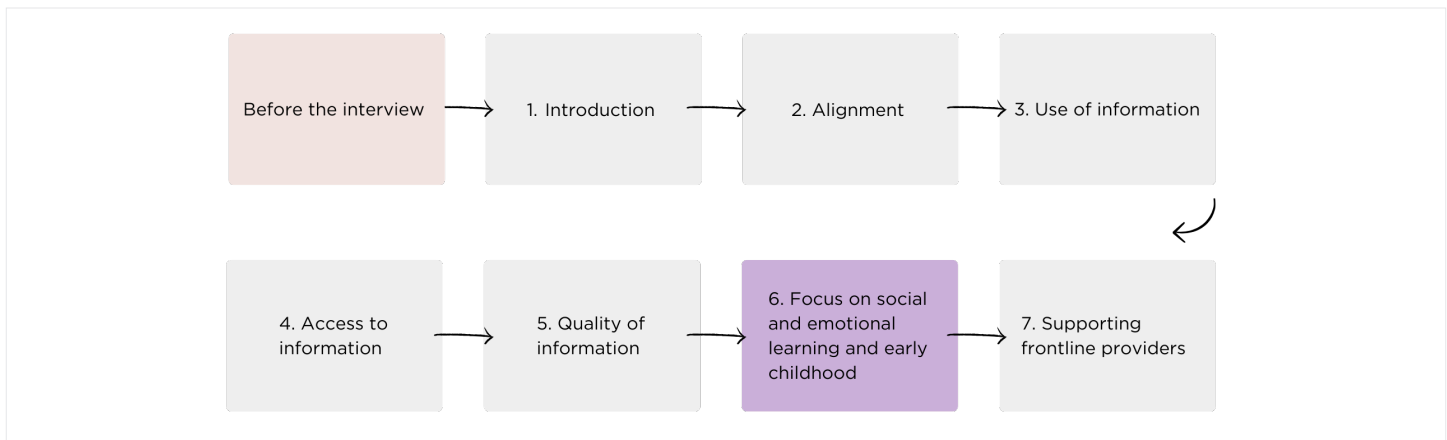
Figure 10 — Semi-structured interview sections for the various stakeholders

Thematic components discussed with PM, R, and NGOs during the interviews.

The purposes for each of the sections following the introduction are presented below:

- **Alignment:** We sought to identify perceptions of how the core assessment relates to the education sector's main objectives, as described in national standards, frameworks, or curricula. For example, if the assessment is designed to capture information about children's reading and writing skills, to what extent does the respondent believe it captures the skills of the national curriculum? It also sought to what the respondent attributed the e identified alignment or misalignment

- **Use of information:** We sought to collect information on how the respondent has used the core assessment or data, the ease or difficulty in using it, the reasons for doing so, and what supports could better facilitate use.

- **Access to information:** We sought to identify whether participants searched for educational data produced by others, how they accessed data, evaluations, or materials for analysis, and the barriers and enablers for sharing such information.

- **Quality of Information:** We sought to identify procedures to strengthen capacities for collecting, analyzing and disseminating high-quality information. We particularly focused on fair evaluation processes and equitable inclusion of children from contexts of marginalization .

- **Focus on social and emotional learning and early childhood:** This section was optional, and administered to those individuals who indicated familiarity with tools in these areas. We sought to identify the respondent's perception of how information in these areas has been used and how this use could be improved.

- **Supporting frontline providers:** We sought to identify strategies or activities that are used or recommended to strengthen the capacity of frontline providers [e.g., teachers and principals] to generate and use assessments and to communicate evidence effectively to frontline providers.

Interviews were conducted from March 16 to August 20, 2023; in all cases, the meetings were held online via Zoom, with an average duration of one hour and 15 minutes (min. 45 minutes, max. 118 minutes). They were recorded in audio and video generated on Zoom for later transcription and analysis.

Procedure

The survey and semi-structured interview protocols were developed sequentially in four sets and adapted to (a) researchers (December - January 2023); (b) policymakers, i.e., current and former officials at the national and sub-national level (January – February 2023); (c) members of NGOs and multilateral organizations (March - April 2023); and (d) teachers (April – May 2023). Each instrument was initially designed in English and translated into Spanish by one of the team members. Subsequently, two sequential revisions were carried out by two other members to ensure that the translation retained the original meaning and was adjusted to the linguistic particularities of Colombia and Peru. Both surveys and interviews were programmed in Kobo Toolbox; the Kobo online interview protocol served as a guide rather than a tool for data collection.

Four team members from Colombia, Argentina, and Peru - all of whose mother tongue is Spanish - conducted the interviews. The leader of the qualitative component of the study provided training in February 2023, and it included role-playing, targeted feedback to ensure adherence to the purposes of each interview component (Figure 10). and instructions on managing recordings for proper archiving and transcription. A semi-structured interview manual was developed to accompany the training, and it   became the main reference document. The training was designed based on the interview protocol for researchers, and it was adapted for the other stakeholder groups based on the specific situations that arose and were discussed during the team's weekly meetings.

Once the interview had taken place, the audio and video files were stored and transcribed. Transcription was conducted based on the audio, and the videos were used only to clarify ambiguous aspects. A first automatic transcript was generated using sonix.ai software[67] and reviewed by the team member who conducted that interview (in most cases). A research assistant joined the team to support this activity. Then, a denaturalized transcription was carried out. This type of transcription is not an exact reproduction of the speaker's speech; repetitions, stutters, interjections, or irrelevant expressions such as filler words were omitted. Thus, the grammatical structure is adjusted so that it is easier to understand the speaker's meaning[68]. The interviews were transcribed in their entirety, even with sections that - at first glance - seem irrelevant to the analysis phase. Researchers could annotate the transcript to highlight aspects that they considered relevant to understanding the spoken content. A dictionary was generated that included common terms - such as the abbreviations of organizations or tests and tools - which facilitated machine translation. To ensure accuracy, the transcripts were audited against the audio recordings, paying particular attention to country-specific language and accents and the use of uncommon acronyms or terms specific to the educational monitoring and evaluation field.

Once the transcripts were reviewed and approved, coding proceeded with MAXQDA 2022 software.[69] Two Colombian team members were in charge of coding two actors each. These researchers participated in the interviews, transcriptions, coding, and analysis by stakeholder and sub-element. This way of working was considered appropriate to promote familiarity with the data. To counteract potential interpretation biases, analyses were carried out iteratively. [70] In addition, the preliminary reports were translated into English and discussed with different team members who also participated in the interviews in both Peru and Colombia, as well as with the project's principal investigators. To the extent that all project members were familiar with the interviews and transcripts, points of view were offered that allowed them to consider alternative interpretations and make personal biases explicit.

In parallel to the surveys and interviews, team members conducted a desk review focused on the structure of monitoring and evaluation in the Colombian education system. During the project start-up/baseline, project team members conducted an initial mapping of organizations, stakeholders, and documents related to holistic learning in Colombia, emphasizing equity, diversity, and inclusion. Additional documents were subsequently included based on recommendations from Steering Committee members and a review of relevant documents noted by interview participants. The resulting section "An overview of the Colombian education system: Monitoring and evaluation of holistic learning outcomes and the focus on children in marginalized contexts" reviews the Colombian Constitution, laws, decrees, and resolutions. It also reviews and summarizes national standards.. The team discussed this synthesis in a working group to connect the review to the quantitative and qualitative results.

Analysis strategy

Quantitative data analysis strategy

Descriptive statistical analysis:

Initially, datasets were downloaded from the KoboToolbox platform and exported in Excel format, accompanied by an XML survey format that served as a data dictionary and provided labels for survey responses. This process was applied uniformly to each survey according to the stakeholder group. Subsequently, the datasets were imported into the R software[71] for harmonization and merging into a unified set.

During the processing phase, the tidyverse package set was used.[72] The dictionaries were applied individually to each survey before they were added. Given the descriptive nature of the analysis, summary tables of demographic data and responses to the various questions of the survey were made and organized according to the elements and sub-elements of the HOLAS framework (see section above, The HOLAS framework). In general, the tables contain relative frequencies of the response by each stakeholder group (policymakers, NGOs, researchers, and teachers).

Given the adaptive nature of the survey and differences between questions and response options for different stakeholder groups, we offer four clarifications to aid interpretation of the results. These clarifications are further detailed in the quantitative report, available upon request. (see section below, Results by sub-element from the systems' diagnostic report, for contact information details). First, the participants' access to some questions was contingent on answers to previous questions. For example, if a person said, "*I'm not familiar with this assessment*," they did not answer subsequent questions about that assessment. Therefore, the number of people who answered questions about that assessment may be less than the sample reported for each stakeholder and the total number of participants surveyed.

Second, given the variety of tools or assessments listed by the participants, we categorized the content of the assessments using the categories in Table 7.

Table 7. Categories used to analyze the content of assessments/tools mentioned by participants

Content	Definition
Holistic learning	Assessments or tools designed to assess the dynamic and interrelated nature of human development across a variety of domains, including academic, social, emotional, cognitive, physical, and others - such as spiritual and cultural.
Children's academic learning	Assessments designed to gauge children's attainment of knowledge, competencies, or skills that educational systems have traditionally explicitly emphasized as essential for children's learning. Examples include assessments of children's literacy or numeracy skills.
Children's social and emotional learning	Assessments designed to gauge children's social and emotional knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, competencies, skills, and/or well-being (see section below, Appendix 1: Glossary of Terms, Social and emotional learning definition). Examples include assessments of children's emotional awareness or self-regulation.
Quality - Process at the settings (classroom/institution) level	Assessments or tools designed to gauge the social processes (e.g., relationships, norms, participation in activities) within a setting, such as a school or classroom. Examples include assessments of school climate or community violence.
Quality – Structural at the settings (classroom/institution) level	Assessments or tools designed to measure the resources (human, physical, economic, temporal) and/or organization of resources (social, physical, economic, temporal) within a setting, such as a school or classroom. Examples include assessments of school infrastructure, student or teacher attendance, and student/teacher ratio.
Teachers' pedagogical skills and practices	Assessments designed to capture the knowledge, techniques, strategies, and approaches that teachers utilize to facilitate children's academic and/or social and emotional learning. Examples include assessments of teachers' knowledge of curricular content or teachers' instructional strategies (such as tailored teaching practices).
Teachers' social and emotional skills and well-being	Assessments or tools designed to capture teachers' social and emotional knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, competencies, skills, and well-being. Examples include assessments of teachers' emotion regulation or burnout.
Other	Assessments, tools, or M&E efforts whose content cannot be described under the previous categories. Examples include monitoring and evaluation systems that cover enrollment, the receipt of State services, or the performance or competencies of principals, amongst others.

Third, some survey questions asked participants to report on the stakeholders with whom they share information and the institutions with whom they work to develop assessments and collect data. These open-ended responses gave rise to a wide variety of answers that were categorized as follows: academia/researchers, NGOs, regional or sub-national policymakers, national policymakers, national statistical offices, education community (e.g., teachers, principals, caregivers), multilateral organizations (e.g., UNICEF), private sector, donors and non-identifiable.

Fourth and finally, in analyzing results across stakeholder groups, we collapsed some response options that had minor wording differences between stakeholder groups; this was done to harmonize the categories presentation of results. With these decisions and the corresponding data organization, the gtsummary package was used to create summary tables.[73]

<u>Network analysis:</u>

To explore the relationships and collaborative efforts between the different types of stakeholders in each country, a network analysis was carried out. The network analysis was based on the social capital framework, which assumes that relationships between different parties are mediated by access to resources - which, in this case, include items, evaluations, evaluation results and different types of reports, among others.

For this component, the same data and categorizations mentioned above were employed; analyses were performed using the tidygraph[74] and ggraph[75] packages of R.[76] We note that these analyses are purely descriptive; they do not use inferential statistics. To establish the collaborative networks, special consideration was given to the institutional affiliations reported by survey participants; responses to questions regarding access to and dissemination of information on holistic learning assessments; and the collaborative monitoring and evaluation efforts reported by the different stakeholders. Using these questions and analytic strategies, we identified: , the strength of network connections; possible central stakeholders in the flow of information in the system, and possible gaps or weaker bridges in the connection between actors in the flow of information or joint work. This report is available upon request.

Qualitative data analysis strategy

In this study, we used qualitative content analytic methods, relevant when verbal, symbolic, or communicative data are available. This analytic method can be used to establish conclusions through the interpretation of and inferences about original expressions.[77] Specifically, we conducted a conventional content analysis, taking the participants' statements as the unit of analysis and making it possible to retain the original meaning of the statements.[78] At the same time, we undertook , a variable-oriented analysis using a cross-case approach.[79] In this approach, common variables - in this case, the sub-elements of the HOLAS framework - are used to describe and explain what is happening across all cases. In the first phase of the analysis, each participant constituted a case. In the second phase, the participants were grouped according to the type of stakeholder they represented; thus, each stakeholder group (policymakers, researchers, NGOs, and teachers) was seen as a case. Subsequently, analyses were performed by variables (sub-elements) around which the presentation of the results was organized.

We deductively derived the analysis categories from the HOLAS framework, and we included the category option "Other" to identify emerging elements. We iteratively refined the coding system to more precisely reflect the content of the interviews as data was collected. We also revised the initial coding system after discussion with the Steering Committee in May 2023 to promote clarity and consistency. The coding of each statement included two components: 1) the type of assessment to which the statement refers, and 2) the theme or content of the statement made, according to the categories shown below (Table 8).

The Results by sub-element section presents the definition of each sub-element and the criteria to assign a fragment to the indicated category (see section below, Results by sub-element of the systems' diagnostic report). We used the qualitative analysis software MAXQDA 2022[80] for the entire coding process.

Table 8. Categories related to the type of assessment/tool mentioned by the participant

Category	Subcategory	Code	Examples
Type of the assessment/ Tool	Monitoring	M	SABER test
	Summative Assessment	SE	SABER 11 test
	Formative Assessment	FE	Classroom assessments
	Other	Or	SIMAT (Basic and Secondary Education Student Enrollment System.)
Level of the assessment/ tool	International	Int	Pisa, International Civic and Citizenship Education Study
	National	Nal	SABER test
	Regional or Local	Reg	SER
	Classroom Assessment	Class	
Cotent of the assessment/ tool	Holistic learning	HL	IMCEIC (Instrument for measuring the quality of early childhood education in Colombia), SABER 11
	Child's Academic Learning	To the	EGMA (Early Grade Math Assessment)
	Children's social and emotional learning	SEL	Impact evaluation of a social-emotional skills program
	Quality – Process at the settings (classroom/institution) level	PQ	Encuesta de Clima y Victimización de Bogotá (Bogotá Climate and Victimization Survey)
	Quality – Structural at the settings (classroom/institution) level	SQ	IMCEIC (Instrument for measuring the quality of early childhood education in Colombia)
	Teachers' pedagogical skills and practices	TP	
	Teachers' social and emotional skills	TSEL	
	Other	O	SIMAT (Sistema de Matrícula Estudiantil de Educación Básica y Media.)

Inter-coder reliability:

To establish inter-coder agreement, we developed a master code based on coding of an interview by one of the principal investigators of the project who was integrally involved in the development of the HOLAS framework. Subsequently, the qualitative component's leader transferred the coding to the original version in Spanish, and this served as a reference for all coders. The agreement was established using the percentage of presence of the categories as an indicator. A percentage of more than 70% agreement was considered acceptable.

The four coders involved (who also conducted the interviews) reached agreements between 79.17% and 91.30% with the master code. Even though this agreement was sufficient, the team discussed each of the disagreements to develop additional criteria to facilitate coding decisions about challenging fragments. These analyses also enriched the coding manual.

Integration of quantitative and qualitative data

The organization and integration of the quantitative and qualitative components occurred throughout the study and is depicted in Figure 11. As can be seen, quantitative and qualitative analyses were developed independently. We generated separate reports for each type of analysis, and then made meta-inferences to integrate the different types of data . We first integrated and presented the results by the HOLAS sub-elements (see section below, Results by sub-element from the systems' diagnostic report). We then reviewed the integrated results across the HOLAS sub-elements in order to identify (mis)alignments across and between sub-elements. This second stage of integration resulted in the integrated findings and recommendations, presented below.
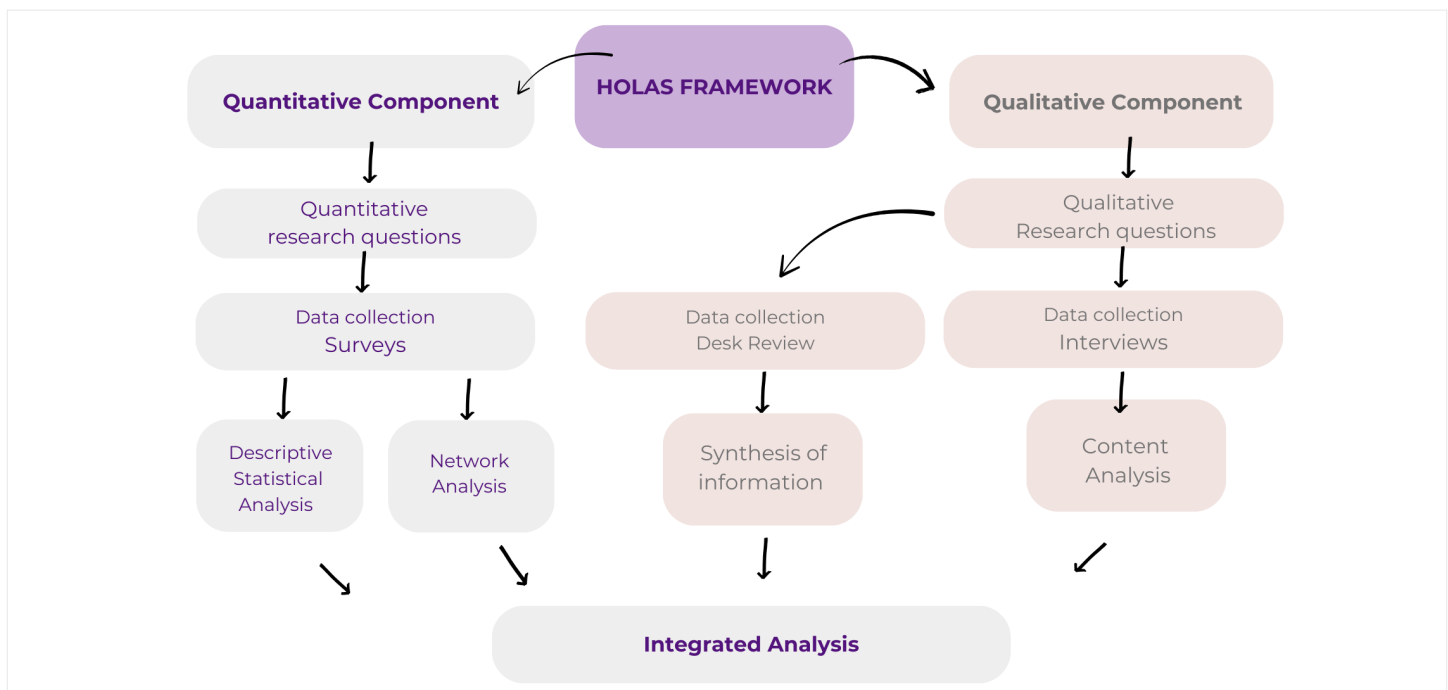

Figure 11 — Integration of the quantitative and qualitative components in this study

The study's quantitative and qualitative components addressed distinct research questions. For each component, we developed different data collection tools: surveys, desk review, and interviews. After conducting independent analyses, we integrated the information at the end of the process.

An overview of the Colombian education system:

monitoring and evaluation of holistic learning outcomes and of the focus on children in marginalized contexts

The purpose of this paper is to present an overview of holistic learning in the Colombian education system, the country's assessment ecosystem, and of the focus on Children in Marginalized Contexts in both the education and assessment systems. The document has four sections. In the first, we present the prioritization of holistic learning and the basic principles of the education system. In the second, the structures that support both the education system and the assessment ecosystem are described. In the third part, we analyze the inclusion of children in contexts of marginalization, we analyze the inclusion of migrant students, and of students with disabilities and belonging to indigenous communities. In the fourth part, an analysis of holistic learning and equity within monitoring and evaluation systems in Colombia is made. Additionally, an appendix is included with information about holistic learning in the different assessments that are part of the assessment ecosystem to expand the information given throughout the text.

The basic principles of the Colombian education system and the prioritization of holistic learning

In this first section, we present the prioritization of holistic learning and the basic principles of Colombia's education system. For the above, it is important to bear in mind that in this country, according to the Political Constitution of 1991, education is:

> A right of the individual and a public service that has a social function; It seeks access to knowledge, science, technology, and the other goods and values of culture. Education will train Colombians to respect human rights, peace, and democracy, and in the practice of work and recreation, for cultural, scientific, technological improvement and for the protection of the environment.

> The State, society and the family are responsible for education, which shall be compulsory between the ages of five and fifteen and shall include at least one year of pre-school and nine years of basic education. Education shall be free of charge in State institutions, without prejudice to the collection of academic fees from those who can afford them.

> It is the responsibility of the State to regulate and exercise the supreme inspection and supervision of education to ensure its quality, the fulfillment of its purposes and the best moral, intellectual, and physical training of the students; to guarantee the adequate coverage of the service and to ensure that minors have the necessary conditions for their access to and permanence in the educational system. The Nation and the territorial entities shall participate in the management, financing, and administration of state educational services, in the terms indicated by the Constitution and the law. [81]

According to current legislation, education is also a right that must be guaranteed to children and adolescents without discrimination based on nationality or migratory status, race or special educational needs in preschool, primary and secondary education. After the Constitution, in 1994 the General Education Law (Law 115) was issued, which conceives education as "a process of permanent, personal, cultural and social formation that is based on an integral conception of the human person, his dignity, his rights and his duties."[82] This law specifies at least 13 purposes of education in Colombia:

> (i) the full development of the personality without any limitations other than those imposed by the rights of others and the legal order, within a process of integral physical, psychic, intellectual, moral, spiritual, social, affective, ethical, civic, and other human values. (ii) Training in respect for life and other human rights, peace, democratic principles, coexistence, pluralism, justice, solidarity, and equity, as well as in the exercise of tolerance and freedom. (iii) Training to facilitate the participation of all in the decisions that affect them in the economic, political, administrative, and cultural life of the Nation [...] (v) The acquisition and generation of the most advanced scientific and technical knowledge, humanistic, historical, social, geographical, and aesthetic, through the appropriation of intellectual habits suitable for the development of knowledge. (vi) The study and critical understanding of the national culture and the ethnic and cultural diversity of the country, as the foundation of national unity and identity. (vii) Access to knowledge, science, technology and other cultural goods and values, the promotion of research and the encouragement of artistic creation in its different manifestations [...] (ix) The development of critical, reflective and analytical capacity to strengthen national scientific and technological progress, with priority given to the improvement of culture and the quality of life of the population, to participation in the search for alternative solutions to problems and to the social and economic progress of the country. (x) The acquisition of an awareness for the conservation, protection and improvement of the environment, the quality of life, the rational use of natural resources, the prevention of disasters, within an ecological culture and the risk and defense of the cultural heritage of the Nation [...] (xiii) The promotion in the individual and in society of the capacity to create, research, and adopt the technology that is required in the country's development processes and allows the student to enter the productive sector. [83]

This legal framework shows that in Colombia the term holistic learning is not mentioned, however, there is reference to learning that transcends basic academic competencies. For example, the General Education Act includes the appropriation of intellectual habits suitable for the development of knowledge as one of the aims of education, but it goes further as its objective is "the integral development of learners"[84] through actions aimed to:

> (a) Develop the personality and capacity to assume their rights and duties responsibly and autonomously; (b) provide a sound ethical and moral education and to promote the practice of respect for human rights; (c) promote democratic practices in the educational institution for the learning of the principles and values of citizen participation and organization and to stimulate autonomy and responsibility; (d) Develop a healthy sexuality that promotes self-knowledge and self-esteem, the construction of sexual identity with respect for gender equality, affectivity, mutual respect and preparation for a harmonious and responsible family life; (e) Create and foster an awareness of international solidarity; (f) Develop school, vocational and occupational guidance activities; (g) Form an educational conscience for effort and work; (h) To promote interest in and respect for the cultural identity of ethnic groups.[85]

As can be seen in the following quote, the objectives of basic primary education - 1st to 5th grade - show the interest in transcending academic training towards holistic learning:

> The knowledge and exercise of one's own body, through the practice of physical education, recreation, and sports appropriate to their age and conducive to a physical and harmonious

development [...] The development of civil, ethical, and moral values, social organization, and human coexistence; [...] The artistic training through body expression, representation, music, plastic arts, and literature [...] The acquisition of skills to function autonomously in society.

In comparison, basic secondary education - 6th to 9th grade - aims to develop the ability to understand texts, logical reasoning, mastery of number, geometric, metric, and logical systems, progress in scientific knowledge of physical, chemical, and biological phenomena, relationship between theory and practice, modern technology, national and world history, among others.[86] In this way, the emphasis on holistic development at this educational level vanishes[*] and ethical and moral formation in secondary education appears, in a transversal way, "through the curriculum, the pertinent academic contents, the environment, the honest behavior of directors, educators, and administrative staff, the correct and fair application of the rules of the institution, and other mechanisms contemplated by the Institutional Educational Project."[87]

Within the framework of the National Development Plan (NDP) issued in 2023, 19 years after the issuance of the General Education Law, there is an explicit reference to holistic learning through the emphasis on being, that is, beyond the knowledge that was seen in the 1994 regulations. The bases of the NDP "Colombia World Power of Life" propose a commitment to quality education that includes "humanistic, inclusive, anti-racist and intercultural education."[88] In addition, it included a new meaning of the school day in order to increase students' learning opportunities through the strategy of "comprehensive education that incorporates culture, sports, recreation, physical activity, the arts, science and the CRESE Education strategy - citizenship, reconciliation, anti-racist, socio-emotional and climate change- in pedagogical practices relevant to the context."[89]

Formal education, in addition to being a right, is also a service that must be provided in the national territory. This type of education is "that which is provided in approved educational establishments, in a regular sequence of school cycles, subject to progressive curricular guidelines, and leading to degrees and titles."[90] The provision of this service at the national level is carried out in a decentralized manner through the Education Secretariats, which exercise the administration and direction of educational services, in autonomy to respond to the educational needs of the communities they serve.[91]

Structures to support the monitoring and evaluation of educational quality

In this section, an account is made of the national bodies, offices and territorial structures that make up the assessment ecosystem, such as the Ministerio de Educación (Ministry of Education -MEN) and the Instituto Colombiano para la Evaluación de la Educación (Colombian Institute for the Evaluation of Education-ICFES). In addition, it includes the international organizations in charge of executing or accompanying the monitoring of the quality of education and which, on occasion, become key actors in education in emergencies. Other mechanisms for evaluating the quality of education are also presented, such as classroom assessments, which represent the micro and daily level of educational institutions and include the national assessment of the quality of early education, which is an additional educational

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[*] According to Law 115 (1994), Article 23, the compulsory courses are: 1. Natural sciences and environmental education. 2. Social Sciences, History, Geography, Political Constitution and Democracy. 3. Art education. 4. Ethics and human values education. 5. Physical education, recreation and sports. 6. 6. Religious education. 7. Humanities, Spanish and foreign languages. 8. Mathematics. 9. Technology and computing.

level to the measurements developed by ICFES that begin in 3rd grade. Throughout this section, it is proposed that the relationship between the assessment ecosystem, the micro level of classroom assessments, and early childhood measurements could be a source of misalignment in the system. In addition, it is argued that another potential source of misalignment is the difference in financial and technical resources between the Education Secretariats throughout the country, which affects their ability to support monitoring and take actions aimed at improving the quality of education.

National Ministry of Education

The mission of the MEN is to:

> Lead the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of public education policies, to close the gaps that exist in the guarantee of the right to education, and in the provision of a quality educational service, this within the framework of comprehensive care that recognizes and integrates difference, territories, and their contexts, to allow complete educational trajectories that promote the integral development of individuals and society.[92]

By 2026, its vision is to guarantee "the fundamental right to an education that dignifies and transforms life, through inclusive educational policies and projects, to overcome social inequalities, empower territories, and contribute to the construction of peace."[93]
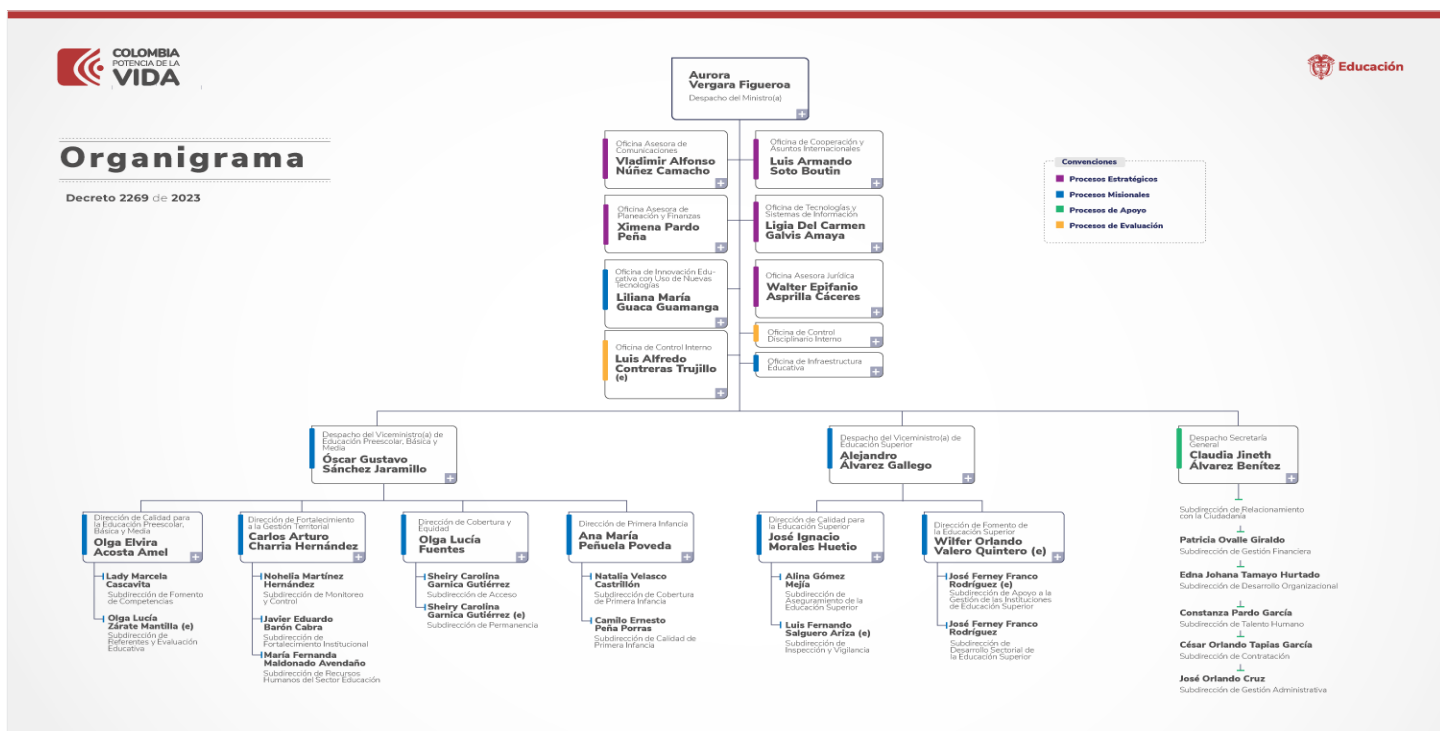
Figure 12 — Organizational chart of the MEN of Colombia

MEN is divided into two main vice-ministries. One is responsible for preschool, primary, and secondary education, while the other is responsible for higher education. The directorates of each vice ministry cover different educational levels, quality processes, and educational management. The chart above includes the names of the policymakers and their positions in February 2024.

Source: National Ministry of Education

As shown in Figure 12, the MEN is the head of the education sector and has two vice-ministries, nine offices and a general secretariat. It also has several affiliated entities such as: the Instituto Nacional para Ciegos (National Institute for the Blind - INCI) and the Instituto Nacional para Sordos (National Institute for the Deaf-INSOR); related entities such as: the Instituto Colombiano de Crédito Educativo y Estudios Técnicos en el Exterior (Colombian Institute of Educational Credit and Technical Studies Abroad- ICETEX), the ICFES, the Fondo para la Promoción de la Educación Superior (Fund for the Promotion of Higher Education) and sectoral advisory and coordination bodies such as: the Consejo Nacional de Educación Superior (National Council of Higher Education-CESU), Consejo Nacional de Acreditación (National Accreditation Council), Comisión Nacional Pedagógica para las comunidades Negras (National Pedagogical Commission for Black Communities), among others.[94]

According to official documents and regulations, the MEN has 10 objectives. For the purposes of this document, we include the first three related to improving the quality of education through assessment: the first is to establish policies to provide equitable, continuous and permanent access to quality education. The second is to design standards that define educational quality, ensuring training in peaceful coexistence, democratic participation, and appreciation of differences for a culture of human rights. The third is to ensure sustainable access to a quality public education system at all levels, from early childhood to higher education, promoting inclusion and continuity, among others.[95]

The functions of the MEN include formulating national education policy, regulating and establishing qualitative technical criteria and parameters that contribute to improving access, quality, and equity in education for comprehensive early childhood care at all levels and modalities. In addition, it dictates the standards for the organization, pedagogical criteria, and technical guidelines for comprehensive care in early childhood and the various forms of educational service delivery.[96] Their two vice-ministries are described below, with their respective directorates.

Vice-Ministry of Preschool, Basic and Secondary Education

One of the functions of the Viceministerio de Educación Preescolar, Básica y Media (Vice-Ministry of Preschool, Basic and Secondary Education) is to formulate, regulate and support the adoption of policies, plans, programs and projects for preschool, primary, secondary, and technical education at the official, private and minority levels. Direct, coordinate and promote, within the framework of the NDP, the consolidation, development, and implementation of the components of the education system in terms of coverage, quality, relevance, and efficiency. Consolidate a differential educational policy in accordance with the developmental stages of children from zero to six years of age, incorporating significant learning, timely and relevant educational processes to facilitate the articulation between existing care modalities, the transition to grade zero or transition and primary education. Coordinate and collaborate with other government entities to ensure comprehensive and educational development in early childhood.[97] This vice-ministry has four directorates, which are described below.

a. Directorate of Quality for Preschool, Basic and Secondary Education

The first Directorate is the Dirección de Calidad para la Educación Preescolar, Básica y Media (Quality Directorate for Preschool, Basic and Secondary Education), whose objectives, among others, are to guide and approve quality benchmarks for students, teachers, and

educational institutions. Present projects to improve the quality of education, establish a national evaluation system that responds to the needs of the model to improve the quality of preschool, primary and secondary education. Provide guidance in the design and formulation of assessment criteria and implementation of programs and projects for educational quality in preschool, primary, and secondary education. Define technical assistance strategies to strengthen the institutional capacity of the Education Secretariats in the implementation of the educational quality policy. This directorate has two sub-directorates that are fundamental to understand how the improvement of the quality of education works and its relationship with assessment.

i. Sub-Directorate of Educational Quality Assessment Referents

One of the functions of the first Sub-dirección de Referentes de evaluación de la Calidad Educativa (Sub-Directorate of Educational Quality Assessment Referents) is to formulate, disseminate, evaluate, and periodically update curricular standards and guidelines that promote the improvement of educational quality and the acquisition of basic skills. Provide technical assistance to territorial entities to understand and integrate quality standards and their curricular guidelines for preschool, primary and secondary education within the educational community. Support the design, development, and harmonization of evaluation policies for students, teachers, and institutions to strengthen the functioning of the National System for the Assessment of Educational Quality. Coordinate with ICFES the formulation and execution of evaluation policies for students, administrators, teachers, and educational establishments. Coordinate with external entities for the development, application and processing of assessments for students, professors and institutions, and with Territorial Entities for the analysis, understanding and use of these results.[98] In fact, this sub-directorate is responsible for supervising and coordinating the implementation of 'Evaluar para Avanzar' and Saber 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 9th, two important educational assessments projects implemented by ICFES (see appendix 3).

ii. Sub-Directorate for the Promotion of Skills

One of the functions of the second Sub-dirección para el Fomento de Competencias (Sub-Directorate for the Promotion of Competencies) is to develop tools that promote educational quality. Support and promote the use of media - radio, television, social networks, among others - to improve the quality of education. Support and promote strategies and programs for the education and training of teachers and educational managers within the service of the Education Secretariats. Establish criteria for the adoption of programs and tools for in-service teacher training aligned with sectoral requirements.[99]

b. Directorate for the Strengthening of Territorial Management

The second direction of the Vice-Ministry of Preschool, Basic and Secondary Education is that of Fortalecimiento de la Gestión Territorial (Strengthening Territorial Management), which aims to strengthen the management of Education Secretariats through the design and implementation of policies that allow them to provide educational services effectively. It also supports territorial entities in the management of human resources within the sector, aligning with national policies to expand coverage, improve quality, efficiency, and relevance. In addition, it includes supervising the construction of school infrastructure.[100]

c. Coverage and Quality Management

The third directorate is the Cobertura y Gestión de la Claridad (Coverage and Quality) and is responsible for designing, formulating, and disseminating national education policies aimed at vulnerable populations with the aim of expanding coverage, improving quality, and increasing the efficiency of educational services. In accordance with the objectives set out in the Education Sector Plan, the policies of this Directorate recognize the diversity of ethnic, cultural, social, and personal conditions of the population. In addition, it is aimed at: strengthening the capacity of the Ministries of Education to monitor students at risk of dropping out of school; identify causes and propose collaborative responses with other sectors to prevent early school leaving according to different contexts; and support the definition of strategies that ensure the permanence and retention of students in the educational system, among other responsibilities.[101]

d. Directorate of Early Childhood

Finally, one of the functions of the Dirección de Primera Infancia (Directorate of Early Childhood) is to guide the implementation of early childhood education policies and to promote their correct implementation. It is also in charge of designing strategies, together with other entities, that allow children under 5 years of age to access comprehensive quality care. In addition, it must coordinate with the respective sectors to guarantee access to comprehensive nutrition, health, care, protection, and early education for all children under five years of age at the national level.[102]

Vice-Ministry of Higher Education

The second vice-ministry is the Viceministerio de Educación Superior (Vice-Ministry of Higher Education), which, as its name indicates, has the functions of formulating, regulating, and adopting policies, plans, programs and projects related to higher education. In addition, promote strategies that allow the development of adequate conditions for the entry of students into higher education and their transition to professional life, striving for access and relevance throughout the educational cycle.[103]

Colombian Institute for the Evaluation of Education-ICFES

The second fundamental entity in the monitoring and evaluation of the quality of education is ICFES, an entity associated with the MEN, established by Decree Law 3156 of 1968. From its establishment until 2009, its purpose was to serve as its auxiliary body regarding the inspection and supervision of higher education, providing technical, financial, and administrative assistance to universities while respecting their legal autonomy. It offered services for the quantitative and qualitative development of higher education, in line with the requirements of the nation's harmonious progress.[104] In 1968, the Institute initiated a test known as the "ICFES Assessment" - currently Saber 11° - at the request of a group of universities that needed an assessment to select students for their undergraduate programs. State examinations for admission to higher education were regulated in 1980[105] and in 1992 became compulsory. The purpose of this exam was to verify minimum levels of aptitude and knowledge for prospective college students.

Between 1990 and 1998, the Institute applied for the first time the Saber Tests for students in 3rd, 5th, and 9th grades, with which the assessment of competencies was introduced in the country. In 2009, through Law 1324, ICFES was transformed into a State social and industrial enterprise within the National Education sector, a decentralized national public entity of a special nature, with legal personality, administrative autonomy, and its own assets, associated with the MEN.[106] As shown in Figure 11, ICFES provides educational assessment services at all levels (from 3rd grade to higher education) and conducts research on the factors that affect educational quality, providing information to improve the education sector.[107]

According to Law 1324, ICFES has the task of:

(I) Establish methodologies to guide the assessment of the quality of education. II) Develop the theoretical basis, design, create and apply assessment tools for the quality of education aimed at students at the basic, secondary, and higher education levels, following the guidelines defined by the MEN for this purpose. III) Design, implement, manage, and maintain updated databases with test results and associated factors, following internationally accepted practices. IV) Organize and manage the test and question bank, categorized by educational levels and programs, which will be confidential in nature. V) Design, implement and supervise the processing of information, the production and dissemination of the results of assessments, based on the needs identified at each educational level. VI) To provide technical assistance to the MEN and the Education Secretariats in matters related to the assessment of the quality of education within its jurisdiction. VII) To carry out quantitative and qualitative research in the field of educational quality assessment. VIII) Promote and strengthen the culture of assessment by disseminating the results of analyses and carrying out training activities in areas of its competence at the local, regional, and national levels. IX) Develop the theoretical basis, design, create and apply complementary assessment tools as requested by official or private entities. (X) To encourage the country's participation in international programs and projects related to assessment and to establish cooperative relations with counterpart organizations located in other countries or regions. XI) Define and collect fees corresponding to the costs of the services provided in relation to the functions outlined for ICFES. XII) Participate in the design, implementation, and guidance of the system for evaluating the quality of education at various levels.[108]

Over the last few decades, ICFES has created an assessment ecosystem that integrates national and international tests from the third grade - primary education - to higher education: Saber 3rd, 5th, 7th and 9th, Saber 11th, Saber TyT and Saber Pro.[109] In 2022, the Evaluar para Avanzar strategy was established, with a formative assessment design to help educators and educational institutions monitor and evaluate a student's progress during their time through the education system. International assessments such as Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), International Study on Teaching and Learning (TALIS), International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) and Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study (ERCE) are part of this ecosystem. As shown in Figure 11 and Appendix 3, all of these make up the National Assessment Ecosystem with the information needed to represent students' academic competencies and other factors associated with learning. For example, parental involvement, school environment, social and emotional skills, school climate, among others.

However, the measurement of the quality of early childhood education that has been carried out in Colombia led by the Early Childhood Directorate of the Ministry of Education has been disjointed from the assessment ecosystem headed by ICFES. However, the measurement project included in the NDP 2023 gave ICFES the power to develop and apply the instrument for assessment at this educational level. It is hoped that this provision will make it possible

to overcome this disarticulation between the measurement of the quality of early childhood education and the rest of the assessment ecosystem.[110] However, the measurements led by the MEN in early childhood date back to 2015. At that time, the first instruments were built and validated from the adaptation of the MELQO (Measurement of Early Learning Quality Outcomes) tool to the From Cero a Siempre (Zero to Forever) policy. After carrying out pre-pilots and pilots, in 2018 the MEN carried out the first Medición de la calidad de la Educación Inicial (Measurement of the Quality of Early Childhood Education in Colombia - IMCEIC) in the institutional modality in[111] Service Units of the Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar (Colombian Institute of Family Welfare - ICBF)[112] and in 2021, in the transition grade in public educational institutions.
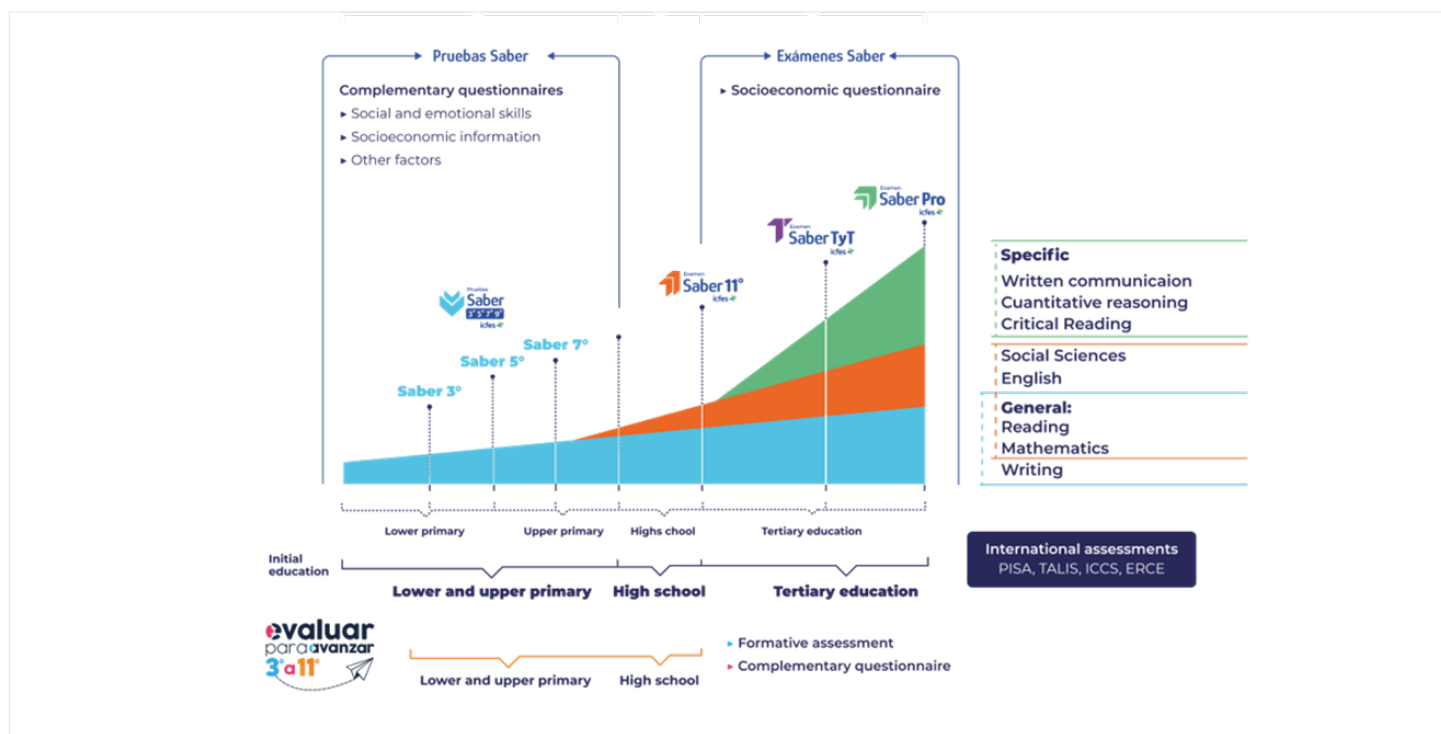
Figure 13 — Quality Assessment Ecosystem in Education

This figure includes all tests of the Quality Assessment Ecosystem in Education from 3rd grade until higher education, formative assessment Evaluar para avanzar from basic education through high school and all the international assessments. The Figure also evidence the importance of the questionnaires like socio emotional learning, socioeconomic and associated factors.

Education Secretariats

The Secretarías de Educación (Education Secretariats) must administer education in the municipalities and departments, i.e., "organize, execute, monitor and evaluate the educational service; appointing, removing, transferring, sanctioning, encouraging, licensing and permitting teachers, school administrators and administrative staff; to guide, advise and in general direct education in the municipality."[113] Due to the decentralized design of the system, the secretariats became a central actor in the planning, implementation and evaluation of educational policies at the local level.

Although Colombia is composed of 1101 municipalities, nested in 32 departments, not all municipalities are legally authorized (or "certified") to autonomously define and distribute their resources for education and define a local public policy agenda for the education

system. There are 98 certified secretariats in the education system, which means that the 32 departmental secretariats oversee the educational needs of 1035 municipalities and only 66 municipalities lead and supervise the administration and organization of their own resources. Secretariats are a fundamental actor due to their role in improving the quality of education. However, the 98 secretariats vary in their design and in the resources available to them, resulting in differences in their ability to implement improvement plans based on data from the assessment ecosystem.

International Organizations

The Colombian assessment ecosystem includes international organizations such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) through the international tests in which Colombia participates. On the one hand, the OECD conducts three tests: PISA, Social and Emotional Skills Study (SSES) and TALIS. On the other hand, UNESCO is carrying out the ERCE.

The OECD "is an international organization whose mission is to design better policies for a better life [...] promote policies that promote prosperity, equality, opportunity and well-being for all people."[114] Colombia has participated in the PISA tests uninterruptedly since 2006, which represents the most complete series of data from international tests in the country.[115] The OECD "provides specific advice to governments to develop policies that improve the skills of all members of society, and to ensure that these skills are used effectively, in order to promote inclusive growth for better jobs and lives."[116] In 2013, Colombia became a member country of the OECD and as part of the process:

> Has conducted in-depth assessments of all relevant areas of the Organization's work, including a comprehensive review of the education system, from early childhood to tertiary education. The report National Education Policy Reviews: Education in Colombia assesses Colombia's policies and practices in relation to OECD best policies and practices in the field of education and skills. To this end, it assesses five principles inherent in strong education systems: an approach focused on improving learning outcomes, equity in educational opportunities, the ability to collect and use evidence to inform policy, effective financing of reforms, as well as the level of participation of all actors in policy design and implementation.[117]

UNESCO "is the agency dedicated to achieving the establishment of peace through international cooperation in the fields of education, science, culture and communication and information."[118] In particular, the Latin American Laboratory for the Assessment of the Quality of Education (LLECE) "together with the participation of 19 countries, contributes to the monitoring of progress in the learning of students in the region and is the space for exchange, collaboration and innovation for the ERCE."[119] LLECE works with most Latin American countries

> In assessments that measure the learning achievement of primary school students. Their experience in the implementation of studies allows them to generate relevant information on learning achievement and other educational indicators, which account for various aspects related to the quality of education in a comprehensive sense and respond to the challenges of the Education 2030 Agenda.[120]

Since 1997, Colombia has participated in all editions of the ERCE, thus maintaining continuity of information in a Latin American context.[121] Although Colombia's participation in ERCE began earlier, this test has only had 4 cycles -PERCE in 1997, SERCE in 2006, TERCE in 2023 and ERCE in 2019 - , while PISA has been carried out 8, of which Colombia has participated in 6 of them - 2006, 2009, 2012, 2015, 2018 and 2022 -.

Educational Institutions

Finally, within the structures to support the monitoring and evaluation of educational quality, we find schools which play a fundamental role in at least two ways. On the one hand, they are the recipients and executors of educational policies and improvement generated from the national to the local level, that is, from the Ministry to the Secretariats. And, on the other hand, it is at that level that classroom assessments are designed and applied.[122] According to Decree 1290 of 2009, it is the third level of student assessment after those of the international and national levels. At this level, it is established that "the assessment of student learning carried out in primary and secondary education establishments is the permanent and objective process for assessing the level of performance of students."[123] This assessment has five purposes:

> 1. Identify the student's personal characteristics, interests, development rates and learning styles to assess their progress. 2. Provide basic information to consolidate or reorient educational processes related to the integral development of the student. 3. Provide information that allows the implementation of pedagogical strategies to support students who present weaknesses and superior performance in their educational process. 4. Determine the promotion of students. 5. Provide information for the adjustment and implementation of the institutional improvement plan.

As will be seen in other sections of this document, these assessments are fundamental and are even fed by inputs that come from ICFES and the assessment ecosystem itself. However, the articulation between the ecosystem assessments and classroom assessments can present challenges that lead to misalignments in terms of their purposes. Beyond this, classroom assessments are fundamental to understanding the functioning of the system insofar as they represent a fundamental component of the use of results and their relationship to pedagogical practices.

Prioritizing Equity in Monitoring and Evaluation Systems: Inclusion of Students in Marginalized Contexts

According to the Constitution, Colombia is a social state governed by the rule of law that "recognizes and protects ethnic and cultural diversity."[124] In terms of education, the Constitution states that "members of ethnic groups shall have the right to an education that respects and develops their cultural identity. The eradication of illiteracy and the education of people with physical or mental limitations, or with exceptional abilities, are special obligations of the State."[125] The specific provisions for ethnic communities, people with disabilities and[126] migrants and the guidelines for each of these populations in the national assessment ecosystem are described below. In addition, a section is included that briefly describes the role of international organizations in the inclusion of children in contexts of marginalization, especially Venezuelan migrant children, and adolescents in Colombia.

Venezuelan migrant children and adolescents

Since 2018, Colombia has received returned Venezuelan or Colombian migrants throughout the national territory. By 2021, according to United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR),[127] 4.6 million Venezuelans had left their country and by September 2023 it was reported that the figure had risen to 7.7 million people.[128] Colombia shares 2000 kilometers of border with Venezuela, being the country that has received the largest number of Venezuelan migrants since its migration crisis began. For the year 2023, according to the Interagency Group for Mixed Migratory Flows (GIFMM), there were 2,894,593 Venezuelans in Colombia.[129] Of the total number of migrants, 36% are under 18 years of age - the age of majority in Colombia[130] -, which prompted the issuance of regulations and circulars to regulate access to education for migrant children and adolescents in the Colombian education system.

The regulations have changed over the years, reflecting lessons learned and changes in accordance with the context and changes in migratory flows.[*] For example, those students who do not have a migratory regularization document are allowed access to schools and are assigned a number established by the MEN (Número Establecido por la Secretaría de Educación - NES), thus guaranteeing access to the education system. As of 2021, there were 496,027 migrant students across the system, representing about 5% of the total students in the country.[131] For the same year, 5120 Venezuelan migrant students took Saber 11º, as shown in Figure 14.
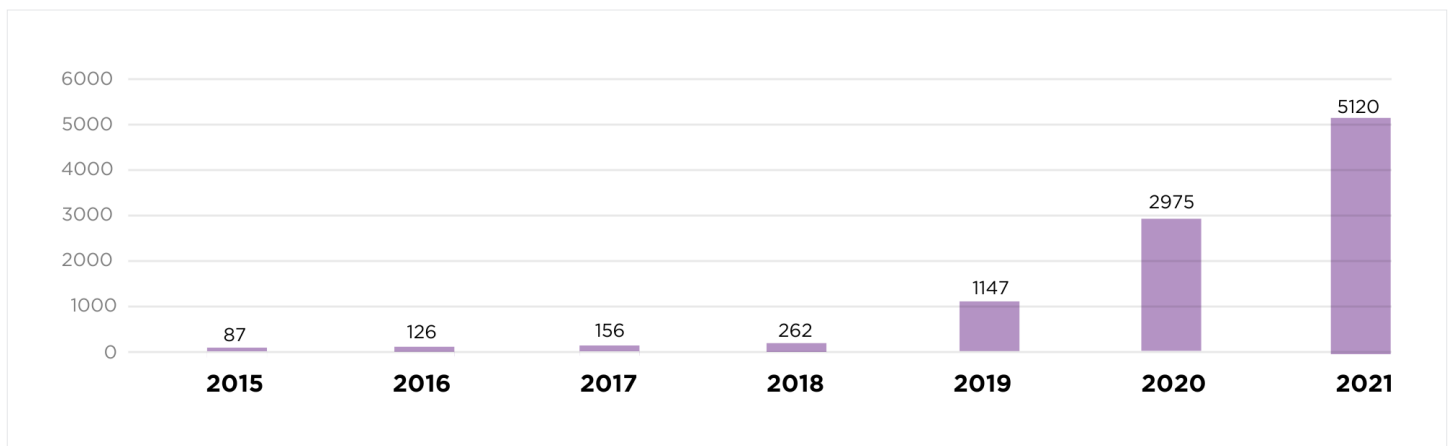
Figure 14 — Number of Venezuelan migrant students who took Saber 11º between 2015 and 2021

The graphic above shows the number of Venezuelan migrant students who took Saber 11º between 2015 and 2021, going from 87 in 2015 to 5120 in 2021.

Source: National Migration Observatory (2021)

Just as the number of migrant students in the education system has increased, so has the number of migrants taking State Exams such as Saber 11º, Validation of the Baccalaureate, Saber Pro, Saber TyT and Pre Saber. To regulate this phenomenon, ICFES has issued two resolutions. The first is Resolution 675 of 2019, which regulated the registration process for the exams:

> For the Baccalaureate Validation Exam, Venezuelan nationals who do not possess a valid identification document may register and take the Baccalaureate Validation Exam with the Venezuelan identity document. To claim the results, any document, certification, or

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* Political Constitution of Colombia 1991, Article 67 and Joint Circulars between the National Ministry of Education and Migration Colombia: no. 45 of 2015; No. 7 of 2016; No. 1 of 2017; and No. 16 of 2018.

administrative act issued by a Colombian authority or Venezuelan authority that allows inferring that it is the same person must be attached, among these, is the certification that proves to be registered in the Administrative Registry of Venezuelan Migrants in Colombia (RAMV) issued by the Unidad Nacional para la Gestión del Riesgo y Desastres (National Unit for Disaster Risk Management - UNGRD). the one that proves to be carrying out procedures for migratory regularization and the Consular Registry issued by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Registration for the exam and passing it has exclusive effects for the purposes of issuing the baccalaureate degree and does not generate any immigration status.

The submission of these documents will be required by ICFES after the application of the test and only to those examinees who have passed the exam, to the email address provided by the examinee at the time of registration. The publication of the results and delivery of the diploma may be done after the official date until ICFES verifies the sending of the documentation and its suitability.

The certificate of bachelor's degree and title will be issued with the Venezuelan National Identification Document (DNI) with which it was registered, without prejudice to the fact that such data can be updated with a valid identification document in Colombia when it is possessed.

The Special Residence Permit (PEP) is a sufficient document to register and take the exam, along with the presentation of your Venezuelan DNI, without the application of the provisions of this paragraph.[132]

The second is Resolution 171 of 2023, which amended Resolution 675 of 2019 and excluded the Special Residence Permit (PEP). From now on, registration for exams by Venezuelan migrants such as Saber 11º, Validation of the Baccalaureate, Saber Pro, Saber T&T and Pre Saber could be done through the Temporary Protection Permit (PPT) issued by Colombian Migration Office or through the PPT processing certification or any other document issued for the same purpose by the Special Administrative Unit of Migration Colombia.[133]

Additionally, for students enrolled with NES who are going to take the Saber 11º Exam "they will be able to identify themselves and enter the exam application site by presenting a photo identification document, including the student card of the Educational Institution that registered them for the exam, the Venezuelan DNI or some other document issued by a Colombian public authority".[134] These measures have allowed Venezuelan migrant students to access the exams that make up the assessment ecosystem.

Children and adolescents with disabilities

As previously indicated, students and the population with disabilities have special protection from the Colombian State. With regard to the fundamental rights of people with disabilities, it is stated that "the State shall especially protect those people who, because of their economic, physical or mental condition, are in circumstances of manifest weakness and shall punish any abuse or mistreatment committed against them."[135] In addition, "the State will advance a policy of prevention, rehabilitation and social integration for the physically, sensory and mentally disabled, who will be provided with the specialized care they require."[136]

According to the General Education Act, people with exceptional limitations or abilities - people with physical, sensory, mental, cognitive, emotional, or exceptional intellectual

capacities - are an integral part of the public education service. Educational establishments organize, directly or by agreement, pedagogical and therapeutic actions that allow the process of academic and social integration of these students.[137]

For people with disabilities, there is a regulation that requires entities to make reasonable accommodations for both national and classroom assessments[138]. There is a development of this regulation in the State Examinations carried out by ICFES and of the policy of reasonable accommodations that includes:

> The set of measures that allow optimal access to the exam to the entire population that takes it, eliminating the barriers that may arise from the interaction of the characteristics of the exam and those of the students. These adjustments are manifested in the design of exams with the purpose of providing the student, whose disability merits it, with an alternative booklet that includes a series of modifications that respond to the curricular flexibility of the contents evaluated through a differential approach.[139]

It states that:

> ICFES will provide examinees with disabilities with the reasonable support they require on the day of the exam. For the Entity to establish the type of support required, the school, the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) or the examinee must report, detail or support the information about the disability during enrollment, under the terms and conditions indicated by ICFES. The Entity will establish special procedures to verify the information reported with the registrant.

> PARAGRAPH. ICFES will allow the entry and use of the elements belonging to the examinees with disabilities that they need for the presentation of the exam, if they do not interfere with the security policies of ICFES.[140]

In addition, following the self-determination of people with disabilities, ICFES determined that during registration, students who report a disability other than motor disabilities may choose: "(i) the type of exam to be applied, whether it consists of the standard booklet or the booklet with reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities; and (ii) whether or not to submit the English language test when selecting the booklet with reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities."[141] This applies to all tests and examinations carried out by ICFES, for more details see Appendix 3.

ICFES contemplates 12 types of disability, which have different types of adjustments depending on their needs:[142]

1. Intellectual-cognitive disability
2. Autism Spectrum Disorder
3. Visual impairment-blindness
4. Visual impairment-low vision
5. Colombian Sign Language (LSC)
6. Hearing Impairment-Spanish User
7. deafblindness
8. Physical disability (mobility)
9. Mental/Psychosocial Disability
10. Voice and speech disorder
11. Systemic Disability
12. Multiple Disability

Children and adolescents from indigenous communities

The Colombian Constitution recognizes the ethnic diversity of the country and in different norms takes measures for its protection and inclusion. Regarding education, the General Law has a specific chapter on the education of ethnic groups. Education in ethnic groups:

> It is guided by the general principles and purposes of education established in comprehensiveness, interculturality, linguistic diversity, community participation, flexibility, and progressivity. Its purpose will be to strengthen the processes of identity, knowledge, socialization, protection and appropriate use of nature, community systems and practices of organization, use of vernacular languages, teacher training and research in all areas of culture.[143]

In this context, ethno-education is understood as education for:

> ethnic groups are those offered to groups or communities that make up the nationality and that have their own culture, language, traditions, and indigenous privileges. This education must be linked to the environment, to the productive process, to the social and cultural process, with due respect for their beliefs and traditions.[144]

For example, in primary education, it includes among its objectives "to develop the basic communicative skills to read, understand, write, listen, speak and express oneself correctly in Spanish and also in the mother tongue, in the case of ethnic groups with their own linguistic tradition, as well as the promotion of a love of reading."[145]

In the exams carried out by ICFES, students who are reported during the registration process "as members of indigenous communities or ethnic groups may choose between presenting the standard booklet, which contains the English test, or the booklet for members of indigenous communities or ethnic groups, without the English test".[146] (see Appendix 3). For the Saber 11th Exam in 2019, it was recognized that members of indigenous communities or ethnic groups with their own linguistic tradition have Spanish as a second language. Therefore, they will be able to state during the registration process for the Saber 11 test whether or not they wish to take the English test.[147]

The Role of UN Agencies and NGOs in the Inclusion of Children in Marginalized Contexts

Finally, in this section we make a brief description of some international agencies and their role in the inclusion of children in contexts of marginalization in educational and assessment issues. It is important to emphasize that despite the importance of these initiatives in the country, their participation in the education system can generate misalignments, to the extent that their recognition of the purposes of the standards of the Colombian curriculum may vary and the inclusion of new monitoring and measurement tools may generate dispersion or difficulties in coherence with the other elements of the system.

As mentioned in the previous section, "millions of Venezuelan refugees and migrants have fled the crisis in their home country seeking refuge in neighboring countries […] Colombia hosts the largest number of refugees and migrants from Venezuela, ranking as the second largest refugee host country in the world."[148] In this context, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and UN agencies work to support the inclusion of children and adolescents from marginalized groups, such as migrants and refugees, in the Colombian education system.

On the one hand, we find some examples to highlight in terms of the inclusion of migrants such as UNICEF, the Norwegian Refugee Council, Save the Children and World Vision, among many others, which have focused their actions on supporting enrollment in the education system and designing programs with flexible learning models; developing methodologies to prevent xenophobia; distributing school supply kits; and providing technical support for teachers.[149] On the other hand, as observed in other chapters of this document, the monitoring and evaluation of its initiatives and interventions uses frameworks and languages that may not coincide or recognize the one used in the country's assessment ecosystem and that enhance misalignments that need to be addressed.

Holistic Learning and Equity within Monitoring and Evaluation Systems

This last section provides an analysis of holistic learning and equity within monitoring and evaluation systems. In Colombia, this analysis of holistic learning and equity can be carried out with information from auxiliary and sociodemographic questionnaires that accompany the tests. In that regard, we briefly describe four examples below.

The first is Saber 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 9th grade, which has three auxiliary questionnaires that aim to collect socio economic information, associated factors, and students' social and emotional skills. Teachers and principals also complete a questionnaire of associated factors that helps identify trends related to school environments.[150]

Saber 11º has a socioeconomic questionnaire that allows information to be collected about students' learning processes, as well as factors related to academic performance. These questionnaires inquire about the characteristics of the family nucleus (composition, employment, and educational situation), characteristics of the household (availability of goods, socioeconomic status, availability of internet connection and cable television service) and the time spent by the family on entertainment. The information collected in this questionnaire is for academic, research, and public policy purposes. The responses provided by the respondents are confidential and do not affect their results.[151]

The technical, technological, and vocational higher education exit exams Saber TyT and Saber Pro (see more information in Appendix 3) have two sessions. In the first, students, in addition to presenting the generic modules common to all, must complete a socioeconomic questionnaire that aims to collect information about the teaching and learning processes, as well as factors that may affect their performance. It includes questions about the composition of the household, the family's employment and educational status, household characteristics (availability of household items, socioeconomic status, access to the internet and cable TV service), and the amount of time the family spends on entertainment.[152]

Finally, EPA has auxiliary questionnaires by educational cycle (elementary school, elementary school, secondary and middle school) that:

> It seeks to identify students' beliefs, attitudes, and feelings in situations of change. The results of the Auxiliary Questionnaires will be reported by year to observe the response trend of the students and thus recognize the strengths or possible difficulties perceived by them with respect to their social and emotional skills, collaborative learning, their perceptions about resources, teaching practices and opportunities they have for learning and their growth mindset.[153]

Q&A: How can you approach our results and recommendations?

How do we present our results?

The flexibility of our Holistic Learning Assessment Systems (HOLAS) framework enables us to present our results in two ways:

1. **By each one of the 12 dimensions or sub-elements of the HOLAS framework, across stakeholder groups.** These 12 dimensions are organized into three key elements (see section above, The HOLAS framework for more information):

   - **Information**, highlighting for what purpose and with what quality the information produced by education monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems is generated, used, accessed, and shared;

   - **Goals**, emphasizing the clarity of holistic learning objectives within the system, the alignment of information from education M&E systems with these objectives and other crucial education system components, along with the norms promoting the use of this information in decision-making; and

   - **Support**, detailing the mechanisms that are in place to ensure comprehensive, evidence-informed holistic learning at different levels of the education system, including the availability and quality of resources, professional development opportunities, and organizational structures.

2. **By integrated key results, organized by three key HOLAS elements.** These results summarize our participants´ voices around three main themes of analysis:

   - Whether information is available within the country to make informed decisions of educational intervention and evaluation,

   - Whether the goals of the educational system have been established in a participative, open, and clear way with multiple actors within the system, and

   - Whether clear systems of support are in place to help central actors define and enact learning goals, monitoring, evaluation services, and training for front line and back end educational staff.

These results emphasize (mis)alignments within and across HOLAS framework dimensions that promote or impede more equitable holistic learning M&E systems as follows:

1. **Information:** Difficulties in communicating and accessing key progress in the M&E of social and emotional learning in the Colombian system led by national authorities.

2. **Goals**: Alignment between educational goals and assessments, primarily focusing on academic outcomes at elementary and secondary levels.

3. Support: Challenges in maintaining continuity of M&E efforts in politically challenging contexts, discrepancies in funding across regions, and the necessity for improved support to sub-regional authorities and frontline providers.

We have organized our results into the three elements mentioned. Each element presents the key findings and includes recommendations to promote alignment in the education system.

What section should I read first?

Well, this will depend on your context and purpose.

The **Results by sub-elements (Section 1)** may be useful if you consider yourself an in-depth reader and want a detailed overview of our findings. This section may be for you if:

- You want to delve into the three key elements that define holistic learning M&E systems and each of their four sub-elements or dimensions. You will find here detailed results about each sub-element and barriers and enablers to their attainment.

- You are new to the Colombian educational M&E system and would benefit from a snapshot of it.

- You aim to understand within different dimensions of holistic learning M&E systems how the roles, interactions, and perceptions of key stakeholder groups differ or converge.

- **You have your own specific focus!** In this initiative, we focused specifically on how education M&E systems include and align for childhoods from contexts of marginalization and holistic learning (or not). You may have other themes you are interested in exploring, and given the richness of our mixed-method study, our results may include additional information of relevance to your interests!

Our **Integrated results and recommendations (Section 2)** may be useful if you consider yourself a thematic reader and want to read about specific topic areas and recommendations for how the Colombian educational M&E system can be strengthened to best support these areas. This section may be for you if:

- You are familiar with the Colombian M&E system and have some background understanding of the three main analysis areas.

- Seek to obtain actionable insights on how to strengthen the coherence of the Colombian M&E system for equitable holistic learning.

How do I access these sections?

Section 1 is available online only (see below, [Results by sub-element from the systems' diagnostic report](#) to access it). There you will find links to our results for each of the 12 sub-elements within the HOLAS framework.

Section 2 is available in its entirety in this report and, as noted above, it includes four main sets of results and recommendations (see section below, [Integrated results and recommendations from the systems' diagnostic report](#) to read it).

OK, I have accessed these sections. How are the results and recommendations structured?

Table 9. The structure of the results and recommendations

Section 1: Results by sub-element	Section 2: Integrated results and recommendations
Each of the 12 online sub-element results is structured to contain…	Each of the three elements of the HOLAS framework is structured to contain …
A definition. We begin with a brief definition of how the team has described the sub-element as they conducted the interviews, coded the data, and analyzed the results. Each definition is structured to contain a set of criteria that provide imperatives as to what an M&E system that is aligned for equitable holistic learning might look like.	**A summary.** Each section begins with a text box that highlights key findings.
Main findings. Main findings for each sub-element are organized according to the relevant criteria. They provide insights into the extent to which and how criteria are being met (or not), as well as among what stakeholder group, for what types of assessment, at what level, and more.	**Bite-sized integrated results.** For each one of the three, main dimensions of the HOLAS framework, a series of results are presented..
Barriers, enablers, and suggestions for each sub-element. Tables at the end of each sub-element identify barriers and existing enablers to meeting the criteria, as well as suggestions for improvement at different system levels. These barriers, enablers, and suggestions were identified by interviewees. .	**Recommendations to address the integrated results.** After laying out the key results, we outline recommendations to address these, per the analysis conducted from the mixed-methods approach, inputs from the Steering Committee, and our prior knowledge of the education system. These recommendations are not a comprehensive list of suggestions to transform all potential misalignments in the Colombian education system; rather, they provide some suggestions in line with the expertise and assets of the research team. We highly encourage stakeholders to look across sub-elements in the Results by sub-element and especially the suggestions for improvement identified by stakeholders, to identify additional recommendations!

What do we suggest to keep in mind while reading and interpreting our results?

Data sources and sampling. We invite readers to reflect on how our sampling decisions and our integration of various data sources influenced our pattern of results. In the Results by sub-element definitions, we specify what type of data was used to make conclusions about each criteria (see section below, [Results by sub-element](#)).

What is (not) included in the sub-element criteria. In designing our HOLAS framework, our goal was to thoroughly examine the educational M&E system, with a specific emphasis on holistic learning outcomes and the underlying system characteristics that facilitate these outcomes. This focus has helped us gather deep insights but also means we've concentrated on a specific scope of analysis.

Results by sub-element from the systems' diagnostic report

In this section, we provide links to the results organized by key sub-elements or dimensions of the Holistic Learning Assessment Systems (HOLAS) framework, which are central to our analysis. While these results are not included in this report, they can be accessed online through the the links provided in this document.

These results by sub-element informed our integrated findings and recommendations (see section below, Integrated results and recommendations from the systems' diagnostic report). In addition, we encourage readers to identify additional areas of alignment and misalignment across sub-elements based on your particular interest areas!

1. Information: Focuses on how and with what quality (1.3) the information produced by education monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems is generated, accessed, used (1.2), and shared (1.4) by education authorities, organizations, frontline providers, and researchers for a variety of purposes (1.1). Access our findings for the four dimensions of this element here:

1. Diversify, understand, and align the purposes of assessments

2. Use information for supporting equitable holistic learning

3. Ensure quality of information

4. Enable access to information

2. Goals: Focuses on the definition and clarity of holistic learning objectives within the system (2.1), the alignment of information from education M&E systems with these objectives and other crucial education system components (2.2), and the established norms governing the use of this information in decision-making (2.3), including the level of autonomy stakeholders have in doing so (2.4). Access our findings for the four dimensions of this element here:

1. Establish clear goals for holistic learning

2. Align assessments with key elements of education systems

3. Take evidence-based decisions

4. Promote agency among frontline providers and authorities in monitoring and evaluation

3. Support: Includes the mechanisms that are in place to ensure comprehensive, evidence-informed holistic learning at different levels of the education system, including the availability and quality of resources (3.1), professional development opportunities (3.3 and 3.4), and organizational structures (3.2). Access our findings for the four dimensions of this element

here:

1. Provide high-quality guidance materials

2. Establish strong organizational structures for effective monitoring and evaluation

3. Provide high-quality holistic learning opportunities to support equity and well-being among authorities and frontline providers

4. Ensure access to high-quality professional development opportunities around data, evidence, and measurement

Others: You can also access a brief summary of emerging aspects not originally included in the HOLAS framework.

We offer guidance on how to approach and interpret our results and recommendations (see section above, [Q and A: How can you approach our results and recommendations?](#)).

In addition to presenting integrated results and recommendations and these results by sub-element, original reports organized by data source - quantitative descriptive, quantitative social network, and qualitative - are available upon request. If you wish to obtain these, please contact us at [a.molano@uniandes.edu.co.](mailto:a.molano@uniandes.edu.co)

Integrated results and recommendations from the systems' diagnostic report

Data from surveys, interviews and network reports were collected from a total of 37 participants in Colombia inquiring about their perceptions of alignment and misalignment between the goals of the educational system, its available assessment tools, and the situation of migrant children within the educational system of the country. These key stakeholders represent the points of view of researchers working on the field of child development and education, policymakers, staff at NGOs and multilateral organizations, and classroom teachers. While some of their views contrast with public and official documents that describe the nature, structure, and functioning of the Colombian educational system, in our analysis we prime their voices as a representation of the current understanding of central players of the system about its strong points, opportunities, and challenges. The differences of understanding between these group of actors and the official sources also highlights a central theme of our findings: while Colombia has advanced tremendously in the creation of a structure to support academic, social, and emotional learning from early childhood to the end of secondary school -11th grade-, for both native and migrant children and adolescents, some of these advancements have not been fully communicated and shared, even with some of the most important actors of the system itself.

A hypothesis for such behavior lies in the variability of terms and definitions that have been used, over the last 20 years across the country, to refer to central goals of the educational process -i.e. competencies, skills, learning goals, measurement goals, holistic learning – some of the present in the discourse of our participants-, and that constitute different "brands" of educational outcomes promoted by the system -i.e. Ministerio de Educación Nacional (National Ministry of Education - MEN-, Secretarías de Educación -Education Secretariats-, NGOs, and the Instituto Colombiano para la Evaluación de la Educación -Colombian Institute for the Evaluation of Education - ICFES[*]-. While according to the network analysis, many individuals participating in our project have occupied positions within different public and private institutions within the country, it is possible that some misalignment may be generated by the push to adopt the vocabulary that is most prevalent in their current position, and to distinguish it from other similar "brands". In other words, it is possible that while promoting similar goals, different positions may generate miscommunication among actors, simply by trying to differentiate their theories from others present within the system.

> This phenomenon described by Aber, Brown, Jones, Berg, and Torrente[154] as a branding problem, may create important misalignment within the Colombian educational system. From the perspective of these authors, it also can be solved by making sure "*our intervention theories need to solve the problem of identifying and reliably measuring the* **essential ingredients,** *the causal agents that lead to positive change, rather than the brands that package the causal agents. Identifying and reliably measuring the causal agents that often lay obscured within the brand are key paths to enhancing successful replication and scale-up of evidence-based approaches*" (pp.419).

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[*] Participants of the study report the existence of 38 different instruments designed to assess social and emotional skill development within the country. Furthermore, these different instruments are reported as not directly related to standards defined by the ministry, nor national instruments developed by the national institute of educational assessment (ICFES). According to our participants these tools are mostly developed by researchers and NGO´s and are restricted to specific research questions and settings.

With this hypothesis in mind, in this document we summarize our participants´ voices around three main themes of analysis: (1) whether information is available within the country to make informed decisions of educational intervention and evaluation, (2) whether the goals of the educational system have been established in a participative, open, and clear way with multiple actors within the system, and (3) whether clear systems of support are in place to help central actors define and enact learning goals, monitoring, evaluation services, and training for frontline and back end educational personal.

Although the full report presents findings for these dimensions in detail, in the next paragraph we summarize the main theme of the finding and provide some initial insight into a set of recommendations that may help align the goals and processes of the educational system in Colombia.

Information

The main takeaways of this element are:

1. The MEN is the primary educational authority in the country, responsible for setting national standards and learning goals for early childhood, elementary, and secondary education in subjects like Language, Math, and Social Sciences. However, there is a noted lack of clarity in defining newer terms related to social and emotional development and holistic learning.

2. Despite the ICFES being recognized for its measurement and assessment capabilities, mainly through the well-known SABER 11 test, efforts to include more innovative assessments like open-ended questions and social and emotional skills evaluation are less acknowledged.

3. A gap exists in the communication and alignment of educational goals and terminology among national and local educational institutions, leading to variability in how information is utilized and acted upon across different municipalities. This discrepancy is particularly pronounced in areas with more vulnerable populations.

4. There is a consensus on the need for better access to and quality of educational assessment data beyond the SABER tests. Participants highlight obstacles in accessing data from other tests and a general distrust regarding educational authorities' use of this data.

5. Efforts to strengthen communication within the educational system are deemed necessary to ensure that all stakeholders, including local and international researchers, NGOs, and educational authorities, are on the same page regarding educational goals and assessments.

The MEN is recognized, as intended by the law, as the most important educational authority within the country. From all the perspectives represented in our data, the MEN stands as the national entity in charge of defining the learning and development goals of children and adolescents within the early childhood, elementary, and secondary educational systems. This task, according to our participants, is mostly fulfilled as the Ministry over the last 20 years has engaged in the definition of National Standards and minimal requirements for Language,

Math, Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, and Citizenship Competencies. Yet, also from the perspective of some participants, new terms such as social and emotional development, holistic learning, or school climate lack some clarity and definition. This finding is somehow surprising as, according to our reading, there are clear theoretical parallels between the goals of citizenship education – including in Colombia, since 2009, the development of cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and attitudinal skills and competencies – and current theories of social and emotional development -i.e Jones and Bouffard[155]-. From our perspective, what this finding highlights is the lack of clarity and communication efforts that have marked the recent evolution of the educational system in Colombia. Perhaps, as one participant indicated, what is most urgently needed is a **common language** to refer to our aspirations and goals for the educational process of Colombian children.

According to our data, this misalignment in communication transfers to other national and local institutions down to the very classrooms in which children interact. For example, the ICFES is regarded by our participants as the leading source of information, with a high reputation for its measurement and assessment processes, but mostly focused on academic standards and bounded by the rules of standardized assessment -i.e. timed and multiple-choice questions-. Surprisingly, only a subset of our participants recognize the efforts of the institute to innovate with open-ended questions, questionnaires to characterize the economic and social characteristics of the students, formative assessment -e.g. Evaluar para Avanzar -Evaluate to move Forward-, and social and emotional assessment tools in 3,5,7 and 9th grade -SABER 3,5,7,9-. Perhaps the popularity of SABER 11 – a standardized test students take by the end of their secondary education that was first created in 1968– obscures all these other initiatives like the Instrumento de la Calidad de la Educación Inicial grado Transición -Measurement of the Quality of Early Childhood Education in Colombia in the transition grade - IMCEIC-.

> "In basic standards, **I do not remember that there are guidelines to measure social and emotional skills,** for example, socioeconomic factors, on the other hand, yes."
>
> -Policymaker

SABER 11, a summative evaluation of academic learning, and for monitoring the population is the most widely recognized assessment among participants which can be explained by the fact that it is a requirement to finish high school and, in most universities, serves as a selection criterion for admission to higher education. Moreover, there are economic incentives for the highest scores for the institutions or participation in special programs -as occurs mainly in Bogotá- and for students, subsidies, or scholarships in some higher education institutions, which undoubtedly contribute to the salience of SABER 11 and its recognition as one of the most important tests in the country.

> "**The educational institutions and the whole system in general, is subject to these SABER tests,** because schools are evaluated by these SABER tests. Even the institutional prestige is based on those SABER tests".
>
> -Teacher

In conjunction with the above, efforts to assess social and emotional learning are more recent than those to assess academic learning. A national assessment about these topics has not

been consolidated, although ICFES has included the assessment of "social and emotional skills in grades 3°,5°,7° and 9°" in the "Auxiliary Questionnaires." The stakeholders who participated in this study mentioned 38 different assessments that include the social and emotional learning of boys and girls that show local efforts and are not related to the ICFES assessment.

In addition to what has been mentioned before, it is important to keep in mind that issues of access and quality of the information that ICFES puts together related to other tests -not SABER-, hinder the use of this data. Even though it is more common to access written reports about assessments, databases are generally unavailable to the public, except for the SABER tests, which can be consulted through their web page. Although educational authorities, both national and local, state that there are simple procedures for accessing data from other tests, other participants mentioned that there are obstacles -despite following such procedures-. Some researchers, NGO members, and policymakers identify that there is distrust from education authorities about the use of the data, referring to ethical or political issues. About other assessments, there is no evidence that psychometric reports, data, or items are shared. Researchers and participants from non-governmental organizations consider it necessary to have access to updated information and a higher level of disaggregation of national assessments and monitoring systems.

> "There was also at the time, […] a policy note that was written jointly with the IDB -Inter-American Development Bank- and the ICBF -Colombian Institute of Family Welfare- and published by the ICBF, but I don't know where it is, I have no idea. **But let's say that beyond that, we cannot do more with that information until there is something written**, the IDB has published it, and let's say that we can publicly share that information without getting into a contractual mess. This happens a lot with many projects because since it is research, the researchers are the ones who have the intellectual rights to it."
>
> -Researcher

Regarding the quality of information, participants reported not having evidence of procedures to guarantee the quality of the different evaluations, except those who do or have done academic research or identify as researchers. Sometimes, quality is taken for granted according to the prestige or tradition of the institutions, yet more evidence is needed to corroborate the validity of the national tests.

> "**I mean, then if you do not understand the psychometric in a holistic, comprehensive way, well, obviously, you will be afraid to show the data**; even to the government itself because then it would be fearful of the inconsistency. Because then you gave the average such and such and [Uses her Name] gave it something else, so, man! They are different things or different models. Even if the same software is different, the same AR package is different, there are so many things going on. But if people don't understand that, then obviously it's going to generate a somewhat hostile environment, which I would understand would be scary to share data."
>
> -Researcher

Given the scenario described in the above paragraphs, the need to strengthen the communication effort of the ICFES to showcase all the information that is available for key actors within the system is extremely needed.

As the two leading educational authorities at the national level, MEN and ICFES are recognized by all the participants as the main source of information and analysis about the current situation of the system and the needs of native and migrant children. However, it is also recognized by the participants that due to the autonomy granted to local authorities and schools, and the big differences in resources among them, there are huge amounts of variability between municipal and departmental Secretariats and Schools in the extent in which they can use and act upon this information. Richer municipalities -such as Bogotá, Palmira, Cali or Barranquilla- have developed their evaluation, assessment and information units, and are recognized by many participants as leading figures in the discussion. Municipalities in which the cost of life is smaller are also those who attract a more migrant and vulnerable population, and at the same time are those who lack more support to understand the realities of their educational system.

> "**We have a very centralist tradition. In general, we always look to Bogotá to show us the way.** And to a certain extent, it is justified. Bogotá is like a small country within the country and with a completely different reality. But there are situations that have shown how Bogotá is a pioneer in some public policies in the education sector that were thought to be unfeasible and then have been appropriated at the national level with very good results."
>
> -Researcher

Unsurprisingly, these poorer municipalities are also those who attract more efforts from local and international researchers, foundations and NGOs. However, as recognized by several of our participants, an important amount of this work introduces its own language, employs its own assessments, and at times fails to connect with the mandates of the MEN and the Local Secretariats of Education. Once again, from our perspective, failures in the communication among actors often result in a saturation of new terms, definitions, and goals that put teachers in a situation where it is hard to promote student learning, while at the same time, having to report to different stakeholders using different terms.

Building from this narrative, we believe the system could be strengthened from the information perspective pursuing some of the following recommendations.

a. Move from Brands to Principal Ingredients: The MEN as the highest authority within the country can lead initiatives to communicate –again—the National Standards as the most important tool to guarantee equal educational opportunities for all children while respecting the educational autonomy that the law grants to each school. This responsibility also lies within ICFES and Local Secretariats as according to our results, final users -teachers, policy makers, researchers- sometimes fail to recognize the alignment between goals and assessments. This phenomenon is more prevalent in dimensions such as social and emotional development, school climate, and early childhood education where new terms and language have been introduced to keep pace with international research – a desirable goal – but failing to evaluate its alignment or misalignment with the Colombian normative framework, potential parallels that exist between terms and theoretical frameworks and assessments.

b. Continue aligning goals and assessments in Early Childhood Education: In this educational level there are a multiplicity of terms and actors that participate in the Colombian education system, with additional challenges arising from the way in which this level is administratively organized in the country. Although the comprehensive early childhood care policy[156] has represented a major step forward for the articulation of multiple stakeholders, there are still elements that make it difficult for this articulation to take place. For example, the leadership of the MEN is not as clear as in primary and secondary schools. In this way, some actors mention the ICBF as the key actor without clearly identifying the way in which the actions and purposes of these two entities are articulated. The administrative division in which the MEN has traditionally dealt with grade zero or transition and the ICBF with earlier care and education introduces an element of misalignment to the extent that, as recognized by several participants, discussions continue to take place on basic elements of what is expected to promote children's development or learning.

Although, unlike higher levels, in early childhood education the importance of social and emotional development/learning is widely recognized and has the same status as cognitive development IMCEIC, there is generally little recognition by actors -both national and international- of the developments that exist in the country in terms of curricular guidelines and monitoring and education systems. Thus, approaches with terminologies and instruments that are not aligned with the goals of the system are multiplying. Once again, it is likely that communication efforts will be insufficient for the different actors that are incorporated into this intervention scenario to recognize these advances.

On the other hand, to the extent that measurement efforts in early childhood education are more recent than those represented by ICFES and SABER 11, the recognition of assessment tools at this level is almost exclusively limited to those who have participated or wanted to participate in the development of such tools. Current efforts that include ICFES in measuring the quality of early childhood education could potentially decrease these misalignments.

c. Strengthen Communications and Dissemination Strategies: Multiple voices in our work highlight the role of ICFES as one of the leading sources of information about the educational system in Colombia. Yet, these views also describe the work of the institute as one focused on academic outcomes. A contrast of these perspectives with the production of ICFES highlight important challenges in their communication strategies. Programs as Evaluar para Avanzar; Medición de Clima Escolar -School Climate measurement-, SABER 3,5,7,9; Medición de Factores Asociados -Associated factors-; Evaluación del Potencial Creativo -Assessment of creative Potential), and the multiple reasonable adaptations that ICFES has introduced to respond to the variability of educational needs of students demonstrate that educational assessment within Colombia has evolved, yet key stakeholders within the system have not received the news. Simple communication strategies may educate key stakeholders within the system about the availability of these data -https://www.icfes.gov.co/data-icfes-, and simple analytical strategies led by the Institute or the MEN may help overcome legal restrictions associated with the privacy of information. Accordingly to our analysis, these strategies are already in place for SABER 11 and could be extended to other educational levels.

d. Implement bottom-up flows of information: Schools and teachers typically receive the results of the SABER test to generate improvement plans that reflect an increase in scores which reflects a "top-down" information flow. The information coming from national education authorities serves as a basis for decision-making at the local level, such as the justification of the management of educational institutions to make changes or for planning, which opposes "bottom-up" information flows, in which communities or schools collect information that serves as a basis for decision making at the national or sub-national level.

As evidence of the above, many of our participants expressed there is an important amount of information that is routinely collected in most of the schools in the Colombian Educational system. Yet, since most of these are not regarded as official sources of information, students, teachers, and parents are left with the impression that these data do not represent their educational realities.

A simple strategy will be to implement ways in which teachers and schools can upload, contrast and discuss official information in light of the learning evidence they frequently collect.

e. Educate against ranking uses: journalists, foundations and private organizations frequently use ICFES data -specifically, SABER 11- not to inform decisions at the local level but to rank schools according to the performance of current students.[*] This practice, which has been criticized all over the world,[157] creates a perception that the only goal established within the educational system is high academic performance, and that ICFES ill intentionally ranks schools to favor private and elite institutions. The reality is that these rankings only reflect the process of self and social selection that drive children and families to certain schools and away from others.

f.   Communicate results in a language closer to the users and more relevant to each audience (teachers, institutions, and decision-makers at different system levels, among others). Improving communication minimizes reliance on sophisticated skills for data collection and analysis and increases information usability. A crucial part of this communication effort should be to make all databases available and usable by the public.

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[*]   A common use within the country is for leading magazines and newspapers to publish a rank of schools based on their average performance of 11th grade cohorts. This practice is not promoted by MEN or ICFES, yet it has developed an audience among educators and families. An example of such ranking can be found here: Daniel Mateo Chacón Orduz, "¿Cuáles son los mejores colegios de Colombia?", in El Tiempo (december 9th, 2023), https://www.eltiempo.com/vida/educacion/pruebas-saber-11-los-mejores-colegios-de-colombia-en-2023-832740.

Goals

The main takeaways of this element are:

- In the Colombian educational system, there is alignment between educational goals and assessments, primarily focusing on academic outcomes at elementary and secondary levels, regulated by National Standards and assessed by ICFES through standardized tests like SABER 11th.

- Despite the focus on academic outcomes, there is recognition of the importance of social and emotional development, school climate, and early childhood education, with existing goals and definitions developed over the last decade to address these educational outcomes.

- There is a lack of awareness or acknowledgment among many actors in the education sector of the theoretical parallels between "citizenship competencies" defined nationally and international frameworks on social and emotional learning, leading to duplicated efforts in assessment and development.

- Debates continue around the goals, assessment tools, and practices for early childhood education, despite the establishment of the Cero a Siempre program as a State policy in 2016, indicating ongoing discussions about how best to support early childhood development in Colombia.

As reported in the previous section, within the Colombian educational system there is an agreement between educational goals and assessments, yet this alignment is perceived to be restricted to academic outcomes in the elementary and secondary levels.[*] The existence of National Standards that describe the minimal requirements that every child must fulfill at any given grade is recognized by several actors as a central mechanism to regulate the system at these levels. At the same time, ICFES is regarded as the key institution that translates such goals into standardized assessments, yet the popularity of the SABER 11th tests often obscures other assessment initiatives that the institute has pursued.

> "**But if they tell me from the beginning what they are going to assess me on this integration, on social-emotional and citizenship education**, is that we get to this point, I know where I am going and that is what guides the assessment. But I feel that this has not been articulated, and not only in this type of process, but even pedagogically, it is very complex to reach that conclusion."
>
> - Policymaker

While discussing the relevance of measures of social and emotional development, school climate, and early childhood education many actors reported a void in the definitions that read as if these constructs were unexplored by the Colombian educational system. Yet our own review of the normative background and work available in the country demonstrates that goals and definitions have been constructed, over the last 10 years, to address these as important educational outcomes. Perhaps this general perception among our participants

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[*]   According to our participants for early childhood education there is still some debate about the goals and aims of education and the assessment tools that could be used to monitor it.

derives, once again, from differences in the language that has been used, by different actors, to describe these important cognitive, emotional, social and relational processes that are aspired to occur within schools to promote the healthy development of children and adolescents. A clear example of these differences in language is the concept of Citizenship Competencies – for which the country has a set of national standards published in 2009 –, and how it is described by many actors as different from the notion of social and emotional learning.

Our own explorations of national and international frameworks that describe these two ideas indicate a close parallel between the set of cognitive, emotional, attitudinal, and behavioral processes that in the Colombian context are known as "citizenship competencies" and international frameworks are described as social and emotional skills. Yet, these theoretical parallels appear to go unnoticed by many public and private actors within the country, and many efforts of assessment and development duplicate existing alternatives.

A similar phenomenon occurs with the goals and expected outcomes of early childhood education within the country. While in 2016, as the results of multiple discussions among sectors within the country, law 1804 was sanctioned, and the Cero a Siempre -Zero to Forever- program was declared as a State policy, there still multiple debates about the goals of early childhood education, the tools that could be used to assess it, and the practices that can be enacted to promote it.

Building from this narrative, we believe the system could be strengthened from the goal setting processes perspective pursuing some of the following recommendations.

a. Provide in-service training for first line respondents to understand and align their working frameworks to the national standards: Teachers at all educational levels highlighted the importance of in-service training, along with the need to guarantee the time and structural conditions for these to take place. Teachers emphasized also the importance to align these in-service opportunities both theoretically and methodologically with their own practices and pre-service experience. In this line, they suggested reducing theoretical lectures, which are sometimes read as repetitive, and instead promote the practical use of knowledge about standards and assessments in the classroom. In this regard the work that some NGO´s are conducting in the country is regarded as crucial, as in some cases local authorities are the ones that contact these organizations to supply their training needs.

b. School climate is regarded as a central topic for multiple stakeholders, yet tools and strategies are not perceived as easily available: Reports from multiple participants highlight the perceived importance, at many levels, of strategies and tools to promote and assess school climate and its variability across the country. Perhaps as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the important influx of migrant students into the educational system, educators are recognizing the need to support students and school personnel with the tools to recognize and evaluate risk and protective factors within their immediate environment. Despite the acknowledgement of the importance of this dimension, stakeholders also recognize the lack of tools available for them to promote and assess it in their schools. A notable exception to this statement comes from recent work developed by ICFES[158], where a school climate survey directed towards students in 11th

grade was designed and piloted in 2023. While results are not yet available, this could be an initiative that may be extended to other levels of the education systems.

c. Establish mechanisms for sustainability of the educational language and participative revisions when those are deemed necessary: As noted before, a central theme of our analysis is the coexistence of multiple languages to describe holistic learning goals within the Colombian educational system. While there appears to be a consensus about the academic learning standards, other dimensions of human development and school life are described by actors and stakeholders with multiple names. This phenomena, described in other context by Aber et al[159] and highlighted in other parts of this document may be addressed by a participatory goal setting process, where actors of multiple levels discuss and agree on a common language for the "identifying and reliably measuring the essential ingredients, the causal agents that lead to positive change, rather than the brands that package the causal agents".[160]

Support

The main takeaways of this element are:

- The sustainability of monitoring and evaluation systems in education is challenged by high personnel turnover and contract instability in government institutions, affecting the continuity of efforts at both national and local levels.

- There is a need for improved training and professionalization of staff in national and local institutions to ensure alignment in standards, assessment tools, and instructional practices, along with addressing labor stability for key personnel.

- Effective use of information about learning and development standards requires shifting away from unidirectional, deficit-based training towards more interactive and dialogic approaches that engage teachers and educational institutions.

- Equity in education, particularly for vulnerable populations such as Venezuelan migrant children and indigenous communities, relies on access to the system and tailored actions that recognize the unique needs of these groups, despite challenges in implementation and potential conflicts with host populations.

A final section of our analysis focuses on the systems of support identified by our participants and stakeholders to promote the widespread adoption of learning and development standards as well as assessment tools that support the monitoring of their progress in an equitable way for native and migrant populations within the country.

> "When we start looking at this, the first thing we look at is, in the literature review, we look at the last 20 years. Since the previous development plans, a little more than 20 years, from '98 to 2020. There, we had five development plans; **there was an evaluation system in all the development plans, and no evaluation system** continued. [...] What we did was to collect all that there was and say, well, from here this, yes, let us take this, this is very interesting. Moreover, some things are found in this current system."
>
> - Policymaker

Central points for this dimension and key recommendations derived from them are presented below.

a. The permanence and continuity of monitoring and evaluation efforts is one of the system's major challenges: From the perspective of multiple stakeholders, the continuity of many of the monitoring and evaluation systems, at both the national and local level, may be compromised by the high turnover of personnel and officials holding office at central institutions of the government. While both MEN and ICFES have highly qualified professionals in their staff, many positions are hired as contractors. These later cases are susceptible of removal with each change of administration. This situation, according to our participants, is further complicated by the somewhat limited opportunities for training both at the local and national levels in terms of standards, assessment tools and alignment with instructional practices. From our perspective an alternative to address these issues lies in a double strategy. On one hand, national and local institutions may work to train and professionalize their staff – to align their language and perspectives – while, on the other hand addressing the central institutional gaps in the labor stability of their staff and central workers. This later point is reflected in the presidential communication 100-011[161], from 2023 where all institutions of the national level are provided with a process to redesign their staff structures and formalize contractors that are deemed central to the missional call of the entity.

b. Information needs to reach frontline service providers to carry out transformations in the classroom: Specifically referring to information about the learning and development of children at different levels in the system, participants highlight the needs to recognize the needs and characteristics of teachers, as well as their agency within the process. Massive, unidirectional, pre-established training and socialization strategies that are based on a "deficit model" do not favor the use of information. In this sense, the participants at the national level (with the exception of ICFES) emphasize their interest in promoting the strategy of dialogic circles that allow a different interaction with teachers and educational institutions. Only teachers clearly identify spaces for peer support within schools to provide feedback and improve the work around assessments -in the week of institutional planning and academic councils-. It is likely that other actors will not recognize the existence of these spaces or their place as scenarios that enhance the use of data; It may also be that their existence is taken for granted. When discussing issues of information, support, and training teachers and principals highlight the urgent need to foster their own social and emotional skills.

c. Equity is fundamentally related to access to the education system: Multiple participants highlight that information systems such as the Sistema Integrado de Matricula -Integrated Enrollment System-SIMAT- or the Sistema de Seguimiento Niño a Niño -Child-to-child Monitoring System-SSSNN- are central in designing actions aimed at the care of vulnerable populations, including Venezuelan migrant children, children victims of the armed conflict, indigenous communities, Afro-Colombians or children with special educational needs. Particularly for Venezuelan migrant children, participants recognize the legislation (Temporary Protection Statute for Venezuelan Migrants[162]) that allowed the education system to relax the requirements for admission to educational institutions

while protecting the right to education. On the part of teachers and civil servants, it was identified that generating specific actions for the migrant population is problematic. Especially, once access to the system is guaranteed, children have the same conditions and opportunities as Colombian children. It seems that the category "migrant" is not an organizer of the teachers' activities, since their statements showed that they considered the needs of particular children independently of that condition. Additionally, it was commented that in border scenarios, the distinction between Colombian and Venezuelan children is blurred because the lives of families and children take place between the two countries; On the contrary, directing actions only at Venezuelan children in order to be more equitable, generates conflicts with the host population, which generally shares similar conditions of vulnerability.

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Appendix 1. Glossary of terms

Childhoods in contexts of marginalization or vulnerability

Groups of children and their caregivers - broadly defined - that face or are at the risk of facing discrimination, exclusion, and/or barriers in their access to resources, opportunities, and power as a result of persistent disadvantage rooted in adverse structural conditions, unequal power dynamics, and systemic inequities.[163] We recognize individuals' ability to act and produce their desired results even when faced with challenging structural conditions that can limit their field of action. In this report, we use the term childhoods in contexts of marginalization or vulnerability primarily to refer to three groups that are of special interest to this project: children with disabilities, children from indigenous or native groups, and refugee and migrant children from Venezuela (see below definitions, migrants and refugees). The term children in contexts of marginalization can also be used to refer to other groups of children in contexts of vulnerability, such as out-of-school children and children in rural or hard-to-reach areas. In referring to childhoods in contexts of marginalization, we also include the various actors that actively partake in the education process of children in contexts of marginalization, such as their teachers and principals.

Disabilities

Disabilities result from the interaction between individuals with one or more health conditions with personal and environmental factors, including negative attitudes, inaccessible services and infrastructure, and limited social support.[164] People with disabilities often face barriers to their full and effective participation in society, including their education. Thus, children with disabilities often have different education needs which are addressed through special needs or inclusive education programs (see below definition, special needs education and inclusive education). Examples of disabilities include physical impairments, sensory impairments, cognitive impairments, intellectual impairments, and mental illness or mental health conditions like depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, and bipolar disorder.[165]

Early childhood education

Education services and programs provided to young children, generally under the age of six, before they enter primary-level education. In Peru, early childhood education specifically refers to children from zero to five years of age, in line with the children targeted by the Educación Inicial (Initial Education) level of the Educación Básica Regular (Basic Regular Education or EBR) system.[166] In Colombia, children from three to six years of age are included in this definition, capturing children in the Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar (Colombian Institute of Family Welfare or ICBF) early care programs, early education, and preschool.[167]

Education in emergency and protracted crises (EiEPC)

EiEPC relates to the availability of quality and continuous holistic learning opportunities for children and adolescents of all ages across all education modalities and levels of schooling in situations of emergency and protracted crisis,[168] also called "crisis contexts" or "humanitarian contexts." Emergencies and protracted crises include situations in which a community of people experience an event or a series of events that threaten their health, safety, livelihood,

and/or wellbeing.[169] Crises can be differentiated by the rapidity of their onset: They may be sudden onset or emergency (in which they arise rapidly with little or no warning) or slow or delayed onset (in which they emerge gradually over months or years). They may also be differentiated by their duration: Some crises are relatively time-bound, while others are protracted, causing vulnerability over a prolonged period of time.[170] Examples of emergencies and protracted crises include, but are not limited to, interstate and intrastate conflicts, contested governance and civil strife, climate-related disasters, refugee and migration flows, and pandemics and other public health crises. In the Peruvian and Colombian context, we use the term EiEPC to refer to educational opportunities for both host-country children and the exponential increase in the Venezuelan refugee and migrant population in Peru and Colombia, which has been referred to as a "migrant crisis"[171] (see section above, Overview of the Education System).

Education systems barrier, enabler, and suggestion levels

Drawing on political economy analysis frameworks,[172] the levels of the education systems at which barriers, enablers, and suggestions identified by the interviewees during data collection occur. These include: policy/societal level (barriers and enablers that relate to high-level norms, resources, capacities, information, and incentives within education systems), operational level (barriers and enablers that relate to practical components of education service delivery such as curriculum, teacher training, infrastructure, data systems, and assessments), and school/teachers level (barriers and enablers that relate to in-school dynamics such as the participation of teachers and principals in trainings and assessment processes).

Educational assessment

We use the term educational assessment broadly to refer to the processes, materials, and methods designed to provide information about the attainment of educational goals (e.g., access, quality, continuity) for a variety of purposes. Assessments can take many different forms, including checklists, surveys, performance-based measures such as examinations or tests, qualitative interview protocols, and more. In our definition, educational assessments can be used to measure the attainment of educational goals at the individual level - such as among students, caretakers, teachers, and principals - as well as at school, district, regional, and/or country levels, amongst others.[173] We conceive educational assessments as a component of overarching monitoring and evaluation systems in the education sector (see below definition, educational monitoring and evaluation systems). In the study conducted by our team and summarized in this report, we discovered that interviewees referred to a wide range of tools, tests, and examinations as "assessments," without necessarily following the established definition here.

Educational assessment content

We use the term content of educational assessments, tools, or monitoring and evaluation systems to refer to the primary domain the assessment, tool, or monitoring and evaluation system is meant to measure. In this report, we have categorized the content of educational assessments as pertaining to:

- Children's academic learning: Assessments designed to gauge children's attainment of knowledge, competencies, or skills that educational systems have traditionally

explicitly emphasized as essential for children's learning. Examples include assessments of children's literacy or numeracy skills.

- Children's social and emotional learning: Assessments designed to gauge children's social and emotional knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, competencies, skills, and/or well-being. Examples include assessments of children's emotion awareness or self-regulation (see below definition, social and emotional learning).

- Children's holistic learning: Assessments designed to measure both children's academic and social and emotional learning or development (see below definition, holistic learning).

- Teachers' pedagogical skills and practices: Assessments designed to capture the knowledge, techniques, strategies, and approaches that teachers utilize to facilitate children's academic and/or social and emotional learning. Examples include assessments of teachers' knowledge of curricular content or teachers' instructional strategies (such as tailored teaching practices).

- Teachers' social and emotional skills and well-being: Assessments designed to capture teachers' social and emotional knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, competencies, skills, and well-being. Examples include assessments of teachers' emotion regulation or burnout.

- Settings-level process quality: Assessments designed to gauge the social processes (e.g., relationships, norms, participation in activities) within a setting, such as a school or classroom. Examples include assessments of school climate or community violence.

- Settings-level structural quality: Assessments designed to measure the resources (human, physical, economic, temporal) and/or organization of resources (social, physical, economic, temporal) within a setting, such as a school or classroom. Examples include assessments of school infrastructure, student or teacher attendance, and student/teacher ratio.

- Other: Assessments, tools, or monitoring and evaluation efforts whose content cannot be described under the previous categories. Examples include monitoring and evaluation systems that cover enrollment, the receipt of State services, or the performance or competencies of principals, amongst others.

Educational assessment level

Educational assessment level refers to the geographic scope the information, the assessment, tool, or monitoring and evaluation system is designed to provide. These include: international (assessments that are designed to evaluate respondents in multiple countries); national (assessments that are designed to evaluate respondents at the national level in Colombia or Peru); sub-national, regional, or local (assessments that are designed to assess respondents at the sub-national, regional or local level within Colombia or Peru); classroom assessment (assessments that are designed to assess respondents within the classroom in Colombia or Peru); and others (whose scope cannot be established in the prior categories). In referring to "regional" tools, we allude to tools used in regions of Colombia or Peru, and not to tools used in the Latin American or South American regions.

Educational assessment type

Type of educational assessments, tools, or monitoring and evaluation systems relates to the primary purpose for which the assessment, tool, or monitoring and evaluation system was designed. In this study, we initially coded the primary purpose of assessments according to commonly recognized broad categories: monitoring tools (assessments that are used to describe and compare across a population(s) or program(s) to identify areas of need or improvement;); summative assessments (assessments that are used to evaluate learning or achievement at the end of an instructional unit or program, often by comparing it against some standard or benchmark), formative assessments (assessments that are used to identify what skills/competencies children or service providers have and what skills they need in order to provide feedback and scaffolded support); and others (those that cannot be identified in the prior categories, such as epidemiological surveillance systems, data analysis services, or webpages that provide interactive visualizations to facilitate information use by users).

We note one important caveat to and concern about this categorization of assessments. While the use of these labels allows for alignment with common understanding and practice, they obscure the variety of ways that information from the assessments are often used. Summative information on what students have learned may be used for decision-making on individual grade promotion; program effectiveness; school and national level resource allocation, and comparisons with other countries, to name only a few. But to enable such very different decisions, assessments must be designed, implemented, and tested in different ways. Recognizing the need to nuance traditional formative and summative assessment typologies, when we report the results on the purpose of assessments (see section, Results by sub-element > 1.1), we provide as granular information as possible on how information from the assessments are actually used.

Educational monitoring and evaluation systems

Educational monitoring and evaluation systems, also called educational measurement systems, are the group of assessments, tools, information systems, and structures that exist across school, program, district, regional, and/or country levels of education systems to generate, analyze, and use information on the attainment of educational goals for a variety of purposes. While educational assessments are specific materials, methods, and processes designed to provide information about the attainment of select educational goals by specific entities, organizations, or actors in the education system (see above definition, educational assessment), monitoring and evaluation systems encompass the set of data, evidence, information, and/or data visualizations about educational attainment broadly produced, including through assessments.[174]

Element

Within the HOLAS framework, three key elements, or components, describe the nature of relationships between the education authorities and organizations and frontline service providers (e.g., school leaders and teachers) within holistic learning outcome measurement systems: information, goals, and support. Information focuses on how and with what quality the information produced by education monitoring and evaluation systems is generated, accessed, used, and shared by education authorities, organizations, frontline providers, and researchers for a variety of purposes. Goals hones in on the definition and clarity of holistic learning objectives within the system, the alignment of information from education

monitoring and evaluation systems with these objectives and other crucial education system components, and the established norms governing the use of this information in decision-making, including the level of autonomy stakeholders have in doing so. Support includes the mechanisms that are in place to ensure comprehensive, evidence-informed holistic learning at different levels of the education system, including the availability and quality of resources, professional development opportunities, and organizational structures. Each element consists of several sub-elements (see definition below, sub-element).

Holistic learning

Holistic learning refers to an educational approach that acknowledges and addresses the dynamic and interrelated nature of human development across a variety of domains, including academic, social, emotional, cognitive, physical, and others (such as spiritual and cultural). Our definition also acknowledges and includes the individual, family, classroom and school processes and contextual factors that support learning and development within and across these domains. In the data collection processes conducted by our team and summarized in this report, we discovered that interviewees had various understandings of holistic learning, without necessarily following the definition established here.

Migrants

People who choose to reside in a country outside of their nationality and who - contrary to refugees - do not face direct threats of persecution, serious harm, or death if they return to their country of origin. Migrants choose to migrate for a myriad of reasons, such as to pursue professional development or education opportunities and to reunite with their families.[175] This includes people without a regular immigration status in their country of arrival. Throughout this report, we use the term "migrants" to refer to Venezuelan migrants; we do not use this term to refer to refugees, internal migrants, or internally displaced persons.

Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are synergistic processes. While both involve the collection, analysis, interpretation, and sharing of information about educational inputs, processes, outputs, outcomes and goals, they differ in purpose and periodicity. Monitoring tends to refer to the continuous collection of data to track the level and quality of curricular, program, and/or policy implementation against outputs, outcomes, and goals, while evaluation assesses the extent to which curricula, programs, and or policies are effective, equitable, and sustainable at achieving the desired outcomes and goals at discrete periods of time.

Refugees

People who are in a country outside of their nationality and are unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin due to war, armed conflict, violence, and/or a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion; in contrast to migrants, refugees face threats to their lives and/or freedom and are protected by specific international legal frameworks.[176] In this report, we use the term "refugees" to refer to Venezuelan refugees.

Social and emotional learning

While diverse definitions for social and emotional learning exist, for the purpose of this project social and emotional learning has been defined as the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply a wide array of non-academic knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and skills that are essential for their success in school, work, home, and their communities.[177]

Within this umbrella definition, we follow the Harvard EASEL Lab's taxonomy and identify six broad domains of social and emotional learning: cognitive (skills required for individuals to direct behavior towards the attainment of a goal), emotion (skills to to recognize, express, and control emotions), social (ability to interpret other people's behaviors, navigate social situations, and interact positively with others), values (skills and abilities to support individuals to be prosocial and productive members of society), perspectives (skills related to how individuals view and approach the world), and identity (how people understand and perceive themselves and their abilities).[178] Within and across these domains, how specific social and emotional knowledge, behaviors, attitudes, and skills are defined, named, manifested, categorized and prioritized varies within and across cultures and contexts. In this study, for example, spirituality and religion, environmental consciousness, respect and responsibility towards the environment, and sustainability are also included under the umbrella of social and emotional learning.[179]

Special needs education and inclusive education

Special needs education refers to educational provisions designed to facilitate the learning of individuals who, for a wide variety of reasons, require additional support to access and meet learning objectives commensurate with their age in an educational program. Reasons may include (but are not limited to) permanent or temporary impairments, difficulties, or challenges (see definition above, disabilities); late entry into the educational system; high intellectual abilities; or personal, family and/or school historical conditions.[180] Common provisions include adaptive pedagogical methods and materials, additional supports or resources, or specialized equipment or learning spaces,[181] beyond the means and resources usually used by teachers to respond to individual differences amongst their students. [182]Traditionally the term special needs education has been used to refer to provisions that support learning through integration into existing education programs or through separation into programs in the same or alternate educational institutions. It does not traditionally encompass inclusive education, which proactively addresses barriers to participation and learning and ensures that curricula, and teaching and learning materials are adapted, made accessible and appropriate for all learners.

We note that the term special needs education is contested. However, we use it throughout this report given that it is the term used in legal frameworks in Peru and Colombia and that it is often used in practice, as detected throughout the interviews (see section above, Systems analysis methodology).

Sub-element

Within the HOLAS framework, each systemic element (see definition above, element) consists of four dimensions, also called sub-elements, that provide imperatives as to what a measurement system aligned for holistic learning looks like. The Information element includes (i) Diversify, understand, and align the purposes of assessment, (ii) Use information for supporting equitable holistic learning, (iii) Ensure quality of information, and (iv) Enable access to information. The Goals element encompasses (i) Establish clear goals for holistic learning, (ii) Align assessments with key elements of education systems, (iii) Take evidence-based decisions, and (iv) Promote agency among frontline providers and authorities in monitoring and evaluation. The Support element comprises: (i) Provide high-quality assessment guidance materials, (ii) Establish strong organizational structures for effective monitoring and evaluation, (iii) Provide high-quality holistic learning opportunities to support equity and well-being among authorities and frontline providers, and (iv) Ensure access to high-quality professional development opportunities around data, evidence, and measurement (for more information, see section above, The HOLAS framework).

Appendix 2: The definitions by HOLAS sub-element

Element	Sub-element	Definition
1. Information	1.1 Diversify, understand, and align the purposes of assessments	This dimension relates to the variety of and alignment between assessments in the educational system and the extent to which stakeholders understand their "fit for purpose."We specifically consider three criteria within this dimension. 1. **Variety of assessment purposes and types.** The extent to which a <u>variety of types of assessments</u> are available to assess different <u>holistic outcomes and processes.</u> 2. **Stakeholders' understanding of assessment purposes.** The extent to which different stakeholders can clearly and accurately identify the purposes for which educational assessments were originally designed. 3. **Alignment between assessments for different purposes.** The extent to which assessments of similar skills or outcomes that were designed for different purposes provide information that is aligned or coherent.
	1.2 Use information for supporting equitable holistic learning	This dimension relates to the extent to which information from a variety of types of assessments - as well as from monitoring and evaluation systems - is used responsibly by stakeholders to make holistic learning-oriented decisions. We specifically consider three criteria within this dimension. 1. **Type of decisions.** The extent to which information is used (or not) for decision making that supports holistic learning outcomes. 2. **Eco-system information flows for decision-making.** The extent to which information informs decision-making by authorities and is also shared back with and used by schools, teachers, or community stakeholders. 3. **Fair use.** The extent to which information is used in a way that is fair and equitable. This includes the extent to which information does not explicitly or implicitly stigmatize marginalized groups, and actively supports equity in the allocation of resources and opportunities
	1.3 Ensure quality of information	This dimension relates to the quality of education measures, assessments, assessment tools, monitoring and evaluation systems and/or the data obtained from them. We specifically consider four criteria within this dimension. 1. **Sufficiency of evidence of information quality**. The extent to which there is sufficient evidence **that information provided** by the assessments or tools is valid, reliable, and/or fair. Sufficiency is determined based on the purpose of the assessment. 2. **Mechanisms and practices to ethnically ensure information quality.** The extent to which practices and **mechanisms** are in place and utilized to ensure data from assessments or tools meets quality standards commensurate with the intended use of the information. 3. **Availability of evidence of information quality.** The extent to which reports of the psychometric **properties**/quality of assessments are publicly available. 4. **Fairness**. The extent to which there are mechanisms and practices in place to ensure inclusion and meaningful representation of marginalized groups at all stages of the assessment **process**, from the design to data collection to analysis and dissemination.
	1.4 Enable access to information based on open-science principles	This dimension relates to the degree (or not) of physical or digital access to various objects used in or resulting from the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) process, including results, data, measures, materials, and analytic code (hereafter, M&E objects). It also relates to stakeholders' practices of sharing such M&E objects. We specifically consider two criteria within this dimension. 1. **Principled availability of/access to guidance documents, data, or results.** The extent to which M&E objects from various stages of the monitoring and evaluation process can be obtained. This includes whether there are clear pathways for accessing or retrieving objects and whether objects are readily provided upon request. 2. **Sharing of evaluations, data, results and materials.** The extent to which there are mechanisms, processes, and expectations in place for stakeholders to share and disseminate M&E objects to diverse stakeholders.

2. Goals of the education system	2.1 Establish clear goals for holistic learning	This dimension relates to whether clear learning objectives for both academic and social and emotional learning are outlined in official documents for all children within the education system. We specifically consider two criteria within this dimension. 1. **Clarity on the objectives of holistic learning.** The extent to which academic and social and emotional learning objectives are outlined in official documents in a coherent, consistent and explicit manner. 2. **Clarity of objectives to support holistic learning for marginalized groups and refugees.** The extent to which there are official documents that outline clear and explicit objectives to strengthen, promote, and enhance the holistic learning outcomes of marginalized groups.
	2.2 Align assessments with key elements of education systems	This dimension relates to the extent to which education measures, assessments, assessment tools, and/or monitoring and evaluation systems are aligned with curricula, standards, and professional development trainings within the education system. 1. **Alignment of educational assessments with corresponding standards or regulations.** The extent to which there are clear and specified linkages between an educational assessment or tool and corresponding national or sub-national standards or regulations. 2. **Alignment of educational assessments with front-line provider training opportunities.** The extent to which the design and results of educational assessments and tools are aligned with professional development opportunities for front-line service providers. 3. **Alignment of assessments with other elements of the system.** The extent to which the design and results of educational assessments and tools are aligned with other elements of the education system, such as non-formal education.
	2.3 Take evidence-based decisions	This dimension relates to the extent to which decisions are made based on a cumulative body of knowledge about the drivers of holistic learning outcomes. We specifically consider one criteria within this dimension. 1. **Evidence of factors that enhance student holistic learning.** The extent to which educational authorities make decisions based on evidence of drivers of holistic learning outcomes, including access, quality, and continuity of education.
	2.4 Promote agency among frontline providers and authorities in monitoring and evaluation processes	This dimension refers to the extent to which front-line providers such as teachers and principals and sub-national educational authorities are perceived as capable of undertaking monitoring and assessment activities. We specifically consider two criteria within this dimension. 1. **Stakeholder support for sub-national staff design and use of assessments.** The extent to which diverse stakeholders perceive that sub-national educational authorities are capable of designing and implementing their own educational assessments or tools, as well as using the resulting data. 2. **Stakeholder support for school staff design and use of assessments.** The extent to which diverse stakeholders perceive that front-line providers are capable of designing and implementing their own assessments or tools, as well as using the resulting data.
3. Supporting education authorities and frontline providers	3.1 Provide high-quality assessment guidance materials	This dimension relates to the existence and quality of guidance materials that allow sub-national authorities and front-line service providers to design, administer, and effectively use assessments. We specifically consider two criteria within this dimension. 1. **Materials for classroom assessments design and use.** The extent to which materials to support classroom assessment design and use - such as dashboards, rubrics, item banks, and workbooks with assessment examples - are perceived as practical and high quality. 2. **Materials for monitoring and evaluation assessment design, understanding, and data utilization.** The quality of guiding materials that foster knowledge and skills related to the design, comprehension, and the effective utilization of education monitoring and evaluation data. Such resources may include manuals, frameworks, item banks, infographics, and more.

	3.2 Establish strong organizational structures for effective monitoring and evaluation	This dimension relates to the extent to which there are strong national and sub-national organizational structures to support monitoring and evaluation efforts. We specifically consider five criteria within this dimension. 1. **Existence and leadership.** The extent to which national or sub-national M&E offices exist and have clear and established mandates to lead monitoring and evaluation processes; and the degree to which these offices coordinate with each other when required. 2. **Dedicated and trained staff.** The extent to which there are qualified, permanent staff who are part of the offices leading the monitoring and evaluation processes. 3. **Funding.** The extent to which adequate funding is secured on an annual basis for national and sub-national monitoring and evaluation offices. 4. **Research, practice, policy, and partnerships.** The extent to which national and sub-national M&E offices are capable of establishing external partnerships that facilitate and enhance M&E processes at all stages. 5. **Continuity of M&E efforts in challenging political contexts.** The extent to which M&E organizational structures maintain (or not) their long-term vision and operational capacity despite the changes that occur within educational systems, particularly during times of political and economic crisis
	3.3 Provide high-quality holistic learning opportunities to support equity and well-being among educational authorities and frontline providers	This dimension relates to the extent to which there are system-level mechanisms in place to strengthen educational authorities and front-line service providers' capacities for equitable and inclusive practices. We specifically consider three criteria within this dimension. 1. **Opportunities to foster the social and emotional skills of front-line service providers.** The extent to which there are evidence-informed pre-service and in-service professional development opportunities that acknowledge and support the well-being and social and emotional skills of front-line service providers. 2. **Training opportunities for education authorities and front-line provides to improve equity and inclusion.** The extent to which educational authorities and front-line service providers have access to pre-service or in-service initiatives to strengthen capacities for addressing the needs and ensuring equitable and inclusive participation of marginalized groups in curriculum and assessment. 3. **Availability of peer support for front-line providers to improve equity and inclusion.** The extent to which front-line providers have access to regular peer and professional supports to implement specific strategies to promote holistic well-being, equity, and inclusion.
	3.4 Ensure access to high-quality professional development opportunities around data, evidence, and measurement	This dimension relates to the extent to which there are system-level mechanisms in place to strengthen educational authorities' and front-line service providers' capacities for generating and using assessments, data and evidence. We specifically consider three criteria within this dimension. 1. **Content of professional development opportunities around assessments, data, and evidence.** The extent to which professional development opportunities for educational authorities and front-line service providers includes content related to assessment, data, and evidence. 2. **Quality of professional development opportunities around data, evidence and assessments.** The extent to which professional development opportunities for educational authorities and front-line service providers around assessment, data, and evidence allow for hands-on experience, knowledge application, and certification as opposed to "chalk and talk" methods. 3. **Availability of peer support and supervision in data, testing and assessment for front-line providers.** The extent to which a strong peer network is available at the school or program level to provide regular feedback and improve front-line providers' use of assessments, data, and evidence.

Appendix 3. National monitoring and evaluation ystem

In this annex you can find information about each of the evaluations mentioned throughout this document.

National Monitoring and Evaluation System						
Tool	**Description and application**	**Office**	**Modality**	**Sampling Frame**	**Constructed constructs, competencies and/or concepts measured**	**Adaptation and use in children in marginalized contexts**
IMCEIC Institutional [183]	Measuring the quality of early childhood education in Colombia in the Institutional modality is composed of two instruments: on the one hand, the IMCEIC (Instrument for the Measurement of the Quality of Early Childhood Education in Colombia) and, on the other, the IVDAN (Instrument for the Assessment of the Development and Learning of Girls and Boys). "The IMCEIC is made up of an observation guide in which data are collected on the structural conditions of the process, a survey for managers, a survey for teachers and a survey for parents and/or caregivers. These surveys provide information on the conditions of educational establishments (EE), sociodemographic data of families and teachers, coordination efforts between EE and other services, and family involvement, among others. The guide, on the other hand, provides observable information on certain characteristics of the environment, both internal and external. The IVDAN is also an instrument adapted from IDELA.	MEN	Direct observation of the child Direct Observation of Classroom Interactions Questionnaires for Families, Teachers, and Principals	312 Colombian Institute of Family Welfar (ICBF) service units from 64 municipalities in 28 departments	Direct assessment of development: communication, logical-mathematical, social and emotional thinking, motor skills and coordination, and executive functions. Decent: logical thinking and social and emotional self-regulation.	N/A
MMCEIC Transition [184]	The Measurement of the Quality of Early Childhood Education in Colombia in the transition grade is composed of two instruments: on the one hand, the IMCEIC and, on the other hand, the IVDAN). " (continues on the next page)	MEN	Direct observation of the child Direct Observation of Classroom Interactions Questionnaires for Families, Teachers, and Principals	Representative probabilistic, stratified and multi-stage sample of all Official Educational Establishments with Transition grade in all departments of the country. (continues on the next page)	IVDAN Guide: Logical-mathematical thinking, communication, social and emotional development, executive functions, and motor skills IVDAN Teacher Survey: logical spatial thinking and self-regulation and social-emotional development.	N/A

	"The IMCEIC is made up of an observation guide in which data are collected on the structural conditions of the process, a survey for managers, a survey for teachers and a survey for parents and/or caregivers. These surveys provide information on the conditions of educational establishments (EE), sociodemographic data of families and teachers, coordination efforts between EE and other services, and family involvement, among others. The guide, on the other hand, provides observable information on certain characteristics of the environment, both internal and external. The IVDAN is also an instrument adapted from IDELA.			The sample consisted of 416 EEs, 198 in urban areas and 218 in rural areas. three girls and three boys were randomly chosen from a transition grade classroom for a total of 1,864; For each of them, a family member or caregiver was interviewed for a total of 1,838. Of each selected student, a teaching director and the teacher of the selected classroom transition grade were surveyed.		
SABER 3rd, 5th, 7th and 9th [185]	Saber 3rd, 5th, 7th and 9th are national tests that aim to collect information that accurately measures the learning processes of students through the assessment of different areas of knowledge. The test provides input on social-emotional skills and associated factors that may influence learning development. According to ICFES, this test aims to improve learning understood as a comprehensive process that takes place in changing educational and social contexts. The year 2023 included seventh grade for the first time, as the pilot stages were successfully passed.	ICFES	Paper. Electronic for Students with Special Educational Needs	Representative sample of students in 3rd, 5th, 7th and 9th grades in the country. The sampling design was designed to allow estimates at the departmental level and other variables such as: grade, sector (public-private) and area (urban-rural). Saber 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 9th has a baseline established in 2021 and 2022	Mathematics (3rd and 5th) Reading (3rd, 5th, 7th and 9th) Writing (5°) Natural Sciences (5th) Environmental Education (5th) Mathematics (7th and 9th) Actions and activities (9th) Citizenship Education (9th)	N/A
Saber 11° [186]	The State test for Secondary Education, Saber 11, is a mandatory standardized assessment tool in every institution that provides secondary education. It is a requirement for students to obtain the respective degree and access the next level of education. Each institution will enroll all students who are registered in the respective grade and appear in the Sistema Integrado de Matricula (Enrollment Integrated System - SIMAT) of the MEN. (continues on the next page)	ICFES	Paper	Census for all students graduating from high school	Critical Reading, Mathematics, Social and Civic Studies, Natural Sciences, and English and Auxiliary Socioeconomic Questionnaire	For students belonging to indigenous communities or other ethnic groups reported during the registration process, there are two options regarding the exam. The first is to take the exam with the standard booklet. (continues on the next page)

	The essential structure of the test shall be maintained for at least twelve years from its adoption. There may be modifications, but they should not affect the comparability of the results over time. The Saber 11 test has a baseline established in 2014. This means that the current version of the test will remain until 2026, when the next version can begin.	ICFES	Paper		Critical Reading, Mathematics, Social and Civic Studies, Natural Sciences, and English and Auxiliary Socioeconomic Questionnaire	The second is to take the exam without the English test. And for students with special educational needs who report during the enrollment process, the test comes with reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities and they can also choose not to take the English test.[187]
SABER TyT	The State Examination for Higher Education, Saber Ty&T, is a standardized assessment tool that officially measures the quality of formal education provided to students completing technical and technological programs. According to Law 1324 of 2009 and Decree 3963 of 2009, the State Examinations for the Quality of Higher Education are mandatory to obtain an undergraduate degree. The structure of Saber TyT will be maintained for at least 12 years from the first time they are applied. It may have modifications, but they should not affect the comparability of the results over time. This exam has three main purposes: 1. Verify the level of competency development of students about to complete undergraduate academic programs offered by higher education institutions. 2. Generate value-added indicators for higher education institutions in relation to the level of competence of those entering this level; provide information for comparison between programs, institutions and methodologies, and show their evolution over time 3. Serve as a source of information for the construction of quality assessment indicators for higher education programs and institutions and the public education service. These indicators promote the qualification of institutional processes, the formulation of policies and support the decision-making process in all aspects and components of the education system.[188]	ICFES	Electronic until 2022. Paper during 2023.	Census of students who have successfully completed 75% of the credits in their respective technical and technological training programs.	Saber TyT assesses generic and specific competencies divided into two sessions: the first session consists of five modules of generic competencies (Quantitative Reasoning, Critical Reading, Citizenship Competencies, Written Communication and English) that assess the knowledge, skills and abilities that an individual possesses and are considered necessary for any profession. The second session consists of specific competency modules that assess fundamental skills for the performance of future graduates of higher education programs and an auxiliary socioeconomic questionnaire (Icfes 2023d). The second session is attended by students who are taking the exam for the first time and who are enrolled directly by their Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to take specific competency modules.	For students with special educational needs who are informed during the registration process, the test is conducted with reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities, and they may choose not to take the English test.

| Saber Pro[189] | he State Examination for Higher Education, Saber Pro, is a standardized assessment tool that officially measures the quality of formal education provided to students completing undergraduate programs. According to Law 1324 of 2009 and Decree 3963 of 2009, the State Examinations for the Quality of Higher Education are mandatory to obtain an undergraduate degree. The structure of the Saber Pro will remain in place for at least 12 years from the first time it is applied. It may have modifications, but they should not affect the comparability of the results over time.[190] This exam has three main purposes: 1. Verify the level of competency development of students who are about to complete undergraduate academic programs offered by higher education institutions.

2. Generate value-added indicators for higher education institutions in relation to the level of competence of those entering this level; Provide information for comparison between programs, institutions and methodologies, and show their evolution over time
.
3. Serve as a source of information for the construction of quality assessment indicators for higher education programs and institutions and the public education service. These indicators promote the qualification of institutional processes, policy formulation and support the decision-making process in all aspects and components of the education system. | ICFES | Electronic until 2022. On paper during 2023. | Census for students who have successfully completed 75% of the credits in their respective undergraduate programs. | Saber Pro assesses generic and specific competencies divided into two sessions: the first session consists of five modules of generic competencies (Quantitative Reasoning, Critical Reading, Citizenship Competencies, Written Communication and English) that assess the knowledge, skills, and abilities that an individual possesses and that are considered necessary for any profession. The second session consists of specific competency modules that assess fundamental skills for the performance of future graduates of higher education programs and an auxiliary socioeconomic questionnaire. The second session is attended by students who take the exam for the first time and who are registered directly by their Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to take specific competency modules. | For students with special educational needs who report during the registration process, the test comes with reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities, they can also choose not to take the English test. |
| Evaluar para Avanzar (EPA)[191] | The main objective of EPA is to provide a set of tools that support and accompany teaching processes. The information collected serves as a diagnosis for the competencies and skills of children, youth, and adolescents, which can help improve educational strategies and strengthen formative assessment strategies from 3rd to 11th grade. This tool is optional, but it is available to all public and private schools in the country.

(continues on the next page) | ICFES | Online Offline On paper | Optional | Mathematics Communicative skills in language and reading. Natural sciences and environmental education Natural sciences Citizenship Education Social & Civic English | N/A |

	To access these tools, the principal can register their institution through an electronic platform, validate students, and register professors. Subsequently, teachers can associate their students with the platform. Although this tool is not mandatory, it is desirable because it allows teachers to have more information about their students.					

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