1 An overview of diversity, equity and inclusion in education

This chapter introduces a conceptualisation of the main themes in the area of diversity, equity and inclusion, and reflects on the external contexts that affect them. It also presents a holistic framework on how governments and schools can address diversity, equity and inclusion. It further looks at its various components, such as governance, resourcing, capacity building, school-level interventions, and monitoring and evaluation. This framework guides the subsequent chapters of this report. In addition, the chapter discusses how more equitable and inclusive education settings can have broader implications not only for students but also for societies as a whole.

Introduction

This chapter provides the context shaping diversity, equity and inclusion in school education, conceptualises the main themes of the report and proposes a holistic framework for the analysis. It also discusses how more equitable and inclusive education systems can have broader implications not only for students but also for societies as a whole.

The chapter presents a holistic framework to analyse how governments and schools address diversity, equity and inclusion. It considers six dimensions of diversity - migration; ethnic groups, national minorities and Indigenous peoples; gender; gender identity and sexual orientation; special education needs; giftedness - and examines the intersections between them. The chapter reviews and discusses five key policy areas to consider when analysing equity and inclusion in education: governance; resourcing; capacity building; school-level interventions; and monitoring and evaluation. The subsequent chapters will analyse the issues relevant to each individual component of the holistic framework in more depth.

This chapter and this report focus mostly on school education. Indeed, while examples on early childhood education and care (ECEC) and higher education are mentioned when particularly relevant, they are not considered as key focus points in this report. The report is based on the work of the Strength through Diversity Project, which will also be referred to as “the Project” throughout.

Contextual developments shaping diversity, equity and inclusion in school education

Education policy does not happen in a vacuum. It requires openness and interactions between systems and their environments and is influenced by economic, political, social and technological trends (OECD, 2016[1]; OECD, 2019[2]). The major global developments of our time, such as demographic shifts, migration and refugee crises, rising inequalities, and climate change have contributed to the increasing diversity found in our countries, communities and classrooms. These changes warrant reflection about the implications that diversity has on education systems and conversely, the potential role education systems play in shaping these trends and building more sustainable, cohesive and inclusive societies for tomorrow.

Ageing population and urbanisation

In 29 out of 36[1] OECD countries, natural population decline[2] is a reality across several regions, and ageing in cities and rural areas is significant. This demographic change will have considerable social and economic impacts (OECD, 2019[3]). The first major driver of population decline is the declining total fertility rates (TFR).[3] The average TFR of OECD countries decreased from around 2.8 children per woman of childbearing age in 1970 to somewhere between 1.3 and 1.9 in 2020, which is well below the rate (2.1 children per woman) needed for population replacement (OECD, 2022[4]). Consequently, many OECD countries will experience declining numbers of students and graduates over the next decade (Santa, 2018[5]). The second major driver of population decline is ageing which results from people living longer lives and, consequently, the elderly population (aged 65 and over) continuing to grow at an unprecedented rate across all OECD countries (OECD, 2022[6]). The ageing population trend also poses a challenge to modern societies; ageing populations have different educational needs, compared to the traditional school population, particularly concerning their need to develop technological and digital literacy, which they would not have learnt as part of their initial education. From a lifelong learning perspective it is of great importance to foster the development of digital skills, using a combination of policies that provide high-quality education and training for all, anticipate changes in the demand of skills, and ensure that education and training systems are aligned with labour market needs (OECD, 2019[7]).

These changes in population composition have not affected countries uniformly but affected some areas more than others. On the one hand, the decline of agriculture and traditional primary industries in rural areas has made cities increasingly important and attractive. Young people migrate out of the countryside to study, find more and better employment opportunities, and make use of amenities in larger cities (OECD/European Commission, 2020[8]). This trend of rural depopulation has thus been driven by the positive net migration towards metropolitan regions in recent years, which is generally known as urbanisation (OECD, 2020[9]). The number of people living in cities more than doubled in the last 40 years from 1.5 billion in 1975 to 3.5 billion people in 2015, with almost half of the world's population living in cities, and this share is estimated to reach 55% by 2050 (OECD/European Commission, 2020[8]).

These trends have important implications for equity and inclusion within education systems. Quality and access to education show great variation between rural and urban areas, as cities offer more and better opportunities in education compared to rural areas (OECD/European Commission, 2020[8]). In most countries, there are more socio-economically disadvantaged students in rural[4] than in urban schools, and students in rural schools tend to underperform in secondary education and are less likely to complete a higher education degree in comparison to students in cities (OECD, 2014[10]; OECD, 2019[11]). In addition to the urban-rural gap in education systems, inequities within cities are also on the rise. Some of the urban inequities that threaten equity and inclusion in education are unequal allocation of educational resources, lack of access to cultural institutions, residential segregation in major cities, higher concentration of single-parent families, and more disparate income levels (OECD, 2014[12]). Geographic inequalities within cities are highly interlinked with social and economic status, which further presents a risk of residential and social segregation in schools (OECD, 2017[13]; OECD, 2019[14]). Moreover, there are significant differences in educational outcomes between students from different socio-economic backgrounds, which suggests that education is both a predictor and the outcome of segregation (Cerna et al., 2021[15]).

Ageing and urbanisation take place within the context of other socio-economic trends that vary widely among countries and regions. On the one hand, lower income countries tend to have higher fertility rates (World Bank, 2016[16]). On the other hand, countries with greater economic and political stability are preparing for the realities of a rapidly ageing population, whereby the elderly outnumber those of working-age.

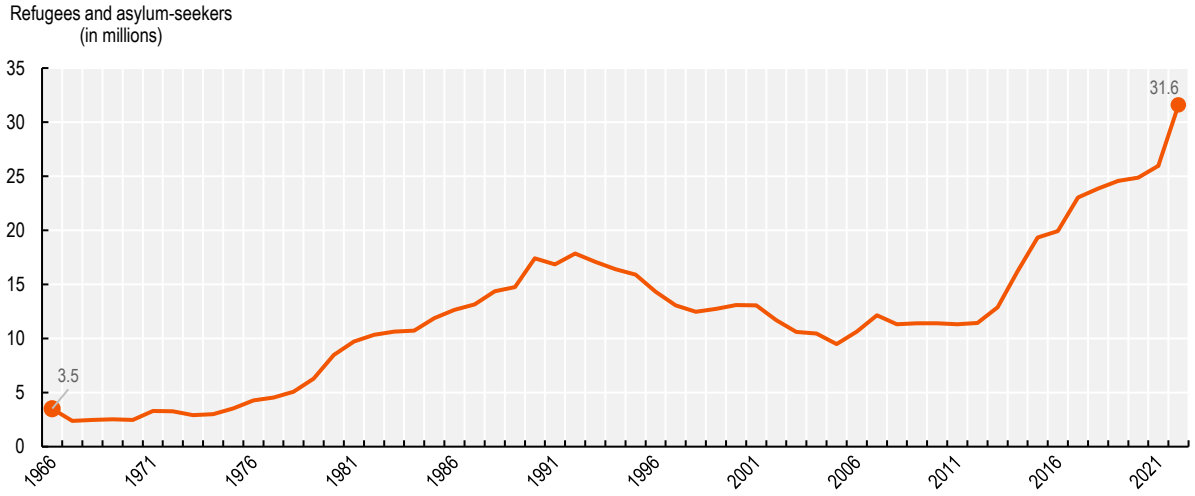
The increasing diversity associated with these trends has important implications for education systems (Cerna et al., 2021[15]). For example, many OECD countries are experiencing a general decline in the school-age population, resulting in excess school capacity in certain regions and communities. However, areas in which schools have the capacity to take more students are unlikely to be those that generally receive an influx of students (which are typically urban, rather than rural, areas). This phenomenon may thus drain resources from where demand outstrips capacity.

Increasing migration and refugee crises

Further demographic changes over the last decades have also been driven by migration flows, which are profoundly changing the composition of societies and accordingly of schools and classrooms (Cerna, Brussino and Mezzanotte, 2021[17]). Immigrants are significantly more concentrated in specific types of regions than the native-born population. in the 22 OECD countries with available data, more than half of the foreign-born population (53%) lives in large metropolitan regions, compared to only 40% of the native-born population (OECD, 2022[18]). Student populations and classrooms in urban areas are therefore more diverse and projected to become increasingly more so due to trends in migration (Cerna et al., 2021[15]). Refugee crises have also been occurring more often, and on a larger scale, in the last couple of decades. The rapid increase in the numbers of refugees can be seen in Figure 1.1. The 2014-2015 refugee crisis has had a major effect on OECD countries due to the number of those and the comprehensive policy response required. Even though many of the countries had already welcomed previous flows of refugees, the magnitude and diversity of the flows within a short time period was unprecedented (Cerna, 2019[19]).

According to data from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the number of globally displaced people (refugees, internally displaced people and asylum-seekers) as of June 2022 is at a record high of over 103 million people (UNHCR, 2022[20]). As of mid-2022, there were 31.6 million refugees and asylum-seekers around the world (Figure 1.1), with approximately half being under the age of 18 (UNHCR, 2022[20]). As of November 2022, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has also forced 7.8 million people to flee their homes, with the number of refugees continuing to rise (UNHCR Operational Data Portal, 2022[21]).

Figure 1.1. Number of refugees and asylum-seekers across the world



Source: UNHCR (2022[22]), Refugee Data Finder, www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/download/?url=d8zqXO (accessed 13 December 2022).

StatLink https://stat.link/utp1i8

Moreover, the adverse effects of climate change and natural disasters, such as rising sea levels, desertification and extreme weather conditions, will further exacerbate existing refugee crises, leading to a higher number of displaced people, and worsening living conditions for many vulnerable groups (UNHCR, 2022[23]). Indeed, millions of people are fleeing their homes due to natural disasters and this situation is projected to become more severe in the future (OECD/EBA, 2022[24]). Given the prominence and severity of refugee crises around the world, it is crucial that education systems address the diverse needs of refugee students, including their learning, social and emotional needs, and promote their inclusion in schools (Cerna, 2019[19]).

Importantly, demographic change and increased mobility lead to questions about the fundamental design of today's education systems, and their role in building nation-states by transmitting a common language, history and identity. Globalisation and increasing diversity are creating fissures in assimilationist models as influences beyond national affiliations progressively seep into our everyday lives. There is also a growing emphasis in the public discourse on the need to foster tolerance and respect of others since global competencies are crucial for maintaining international co-operation in the pursuit of world peace and addressing shared challenges like climate change.

Rising inequalities

Global economic growth has increased in recent decades, lifting millions out of poverty. However, this growth is not benefiting everyone equally. Almost all OECD countries have experienced rises in income

inequality in the last 30 years (OECD, 2011[25]; OECD, 2015[26]; OECD, 2016[27]), social mobility has stalled (OECD, 2018[28]), and the middle class has been squeezed by rising costs, employment uncertainty and stagnating income (OECD, 2019[29]; OECD, 2021[30]). Moreover, technological progress can exacerbate inequality. In the face of automation, artificial intelligence (AI) and digitalisation, labour market demand for medium-level skills is shrinking while high- and low-level skills (for tasks that are difficult to automate) are in increasing demand (OECD, 2013[31]; OECD, 2016[32]). This led to a hollowing out of jobs involving mid-level skills (OECD, 2016[32]). The result has been a pattern of job polarisation by skill level in many but not all OECD countries (Autor, 2015[33]; Berger and Frey, 2016[34]). This means important job gains in some industries and regions and significant job losses in others. As job prospects shift, the transition can be especially difficult for individuals in rural areas where there is lower technological readiness and fewer opportunities to adapt.

Widening inequality also has significant implications for growth and macroeconomic stability, as it can lead to a suboptimal use of human resources and raise crisis risk (Dabla-Norris et al., 2015[35]). Inequality perpetuates socio-economic disadvantage and intergenerational mobility by hindering the ability of disadvantaged people to invest in greater education and training for themselves and their children (Katharine Bradbury and Robert K. Triest, 2016[36]). In fact, children whose parents did not complete secondary school are 4.5 times less likely to go to tertiary education than children who have at least one parent with a higher education degree, on average across countries participating in the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) (OECD, 2014[37]). Education has an important role to play in breaking this cycle by ensuring that all students receive the opportunities and support needed to succeed in the global future.

Digitalisation

The way we work, consume and communicate with each other has changed rapidly over the past decades as nearly every area of people's lives and work has been reshaped by the digital transition (OECD, 2019[38]). New digital technologies and information and communication technology (ICT) generate both opportunities and challenges for inclusive education. On the one hand, there is potential to support and improve education processes of students with special education needs (SEN), minority groups and students living in areas that have more limited traditional educational offerings. Examples include personalised learning or Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to create more equitable and inclusive curricula (OECD, 2021[39]) as well as computer aided learning on tablets and iPads (UNESCO, 2020[40]). On the other hand, many countries face a real challenge regarding inequalities in access to digital technologies and the Internet in education. To overcome these inequalities, policies to encourage the participation of underrepresented groups in the digital economy have been put in place through online universities or digital learning workshops (van der Vlies, 2020[41]). Another aspect is gender-based digital exclusion due to a lack of access to skills and technological literacy for girls, who are less often exposed to technology, contributing to the digital gender divide in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education. To bridge inequalities of this nature, campaigns aimed at awareness-raising and policies providing enhanced, safer and more affordable access to digital tools are key (OECD, 2018[42]).

Digitalisation can have implications also for students' well-being, which is a core aspect of inclusion. Indeed, while digital spaces offer vast opportunities for children to play, learn and explore, there are increasing digital risks. Some examples include cyberbullying, hate speech and revenge porn which may negatively affect children's well-being (Burns and Gottschalk, 2020[43]). Children who are victims of cyberbullying, for instance, tend to show higher levels of anxiety and depressive symptoms, which may affect their education (Gottschalk, 2022[44]). Some students are more exposed to the risk of being cyberbullied than others: students with SEN and those who identify as LGBTQI+ (which stands for lesbian, gay, bi, trans, queer, intersex) generally incur in this risk. Girls are also more likely to be cyberbullied than boys are (ibid.), highlighting that this is a digital risk that may be disproportionately experienced by different

student groups and can therefore affect equity and inclusion in the school environment. Children with SEN, those facing mental health difficulties, and those with physical disabilities might also be disproportionately vulnerable to exposure to digital risks (El Asam and Katz, 2018[45]).

Data from the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2018 show that students' use of the Internet continues to increase while the opportunity to learn digital skills in school is far from universal. Indeed, students with a higher socio-economic status and with more educated parents are more likely to have better digital schools. Schools can foster proficient readers in a digital world by closing these gaps and teaching students basic digital literacy (Suarez-Alvarez, 2021[46]). Thus, providing all students with the critical thinking skills necessary to safely navigate digital spaces and technology is an important commitment for the development of an equitable and inclusive education system.

Weakening trust and social cohesion

The democratic process relies on the civic knowledge and skills of citizens, as well as their engagement in public matters (OECD, 2019[2]). Trust is an important indicator to measure how people perceive the quality of, and how they associate with, government institutions in democratic countries (OECD, 2022[47]). On average, OECD countries are performing reasonably well on various measures of governance, such as citizens' perceptions of government reliability, service provision and data openness. However, trust levels decreased in 2021 as countries struggle with the largest health, economic and social crisis in decades (though they remain slightly higher than in the aftermath of the 2008 economic crisis) (ibid.). Public confidence is now evenly split between people who say they trust their national government and those who do not. Historical data show that it takes a long time to rebuild trust when it is diminished: for instance, it took about a decade for public trust to recover from the 2008 crisis (ibid.). Furthermore, the OECD (2022[47]) has found that disadvantaged groups with less access to opportunities have lower levels of trust in government. In particular, younger people, women, people living on low incomes, people with low levels of education, and people who feel financially insecure consistently report lower levels of trust in government. Across countries, there is a sense that democratic government is working well for some, but not well enough for all.

Education can help societies increase trust and social cohesion. Indeed, individuals' higher levels of education generally translate into greater civic participation, such as voting and volunteering, which help to build social cohesion (Mezzanotte, 2022[48]; OECD, 2010[49]). All these facts combined can contribute to a successful and healthy democracy (ibid.). There are thus incentives for governments to invest in quality education for all citizens, including and particularly for diverse groups, to eliminate barriers to their inclusion in education and generate benefits for both individuals and the societies in which they live. There exists a large literature that examines the economic impact of diversity, including the assessment of how ethnic and immigrant diversity affects social cohesion. Most of this literature focusing on OECD countries addresses how diversity can affect trust, voting patterns, civic participation, preferences for redistribution and investment into public goods (OECD, 2020[50]).

Moreover, the inclusion of minority groups in education has an impact on other groups' development (Mezzanotte, 2022[48]). Indeed, there is mounting evidence that social interactions between groups have a positive impact on social cohesion, and particularly, trust. As children go through their early life experiences, they form their attitudes and beliefs about other groups, which may be harder to change as they grow older (ibid.). Young people must have opportunities to interact with members of other ethnic groups for meaningful cross-group bonds to develop - and diverse schools can offer more of these opportunities. Indeed, inclusive school environments are characterised by positive social experiences for all students (Nishina et al., 2019[51]), such as decreased bullying, reduced loneliness and greater numbers of cross-group friendships. In addition, studies on students in inclusive environments show that those who learn in such schools report greater interest in living and working in ethnically diverse environments when they become adults and are more likely to do so as adults. By contrast, ethnically isolated schools may

limit opportunities for young people to challenge skewed perceptions and assumptions about people from other racial groups (Tropp and Saxena, 2018[52]).

In increasingly diverse societies, the need to adapt education systems to all learners' needs will be essential in building cohesion and inclusive societies that leave no one behind. Indeed, inclusive education can offer all children a chance to learn about and accept each other's abilities, talents and needs (Mezzanotte, 2022[48]). This process, through the fostering of meaningful relationships and friendships, can strengthen social competences while also building social cohesion (Council of Europe, 2015[53]). In an increasingly globalised and complex world, inclusive education can strengthen the trust and sense of belonging of citizens and among citizens (Mezzanotte, 2022[48]).

Well-being and mental health

Across the OECD, up to one in five people are living with a mental health condition at any time, and around one in two people will experience mental ill-health in their lifetime (OECD, 2021[54]). Children and adolescents' mental health can have an important impact on their education. The majority of mental disorders tends to begin during school years: half of all mental illnesses begin by the age of 14 and three-quarters by mid-20s (Kessler et al., 2007[55]; OECD, 2018[56]), with anxiety and personality disorders sometimes beginning around age 11 (OECD, 2012[57]).

Mental health problems can affect many areas of students' lives, reducing their quality of life and academic achievement, including early dropout from school (Breslau et al., 2008[58]). They can also affect a student's energy levels, concentration, dependability and optimism, hindering performance (Eisenberg et al., 2009[59]; Suicide Prevention Resource Center, 2020[60]). Beyond education, living with a mental health condition makes it more difficult to stay in school or employment, harder to study or work effectively, and more challenging to stay in good physical health (OECD, 2021[54]). These individual and social costs also have an economic dimension. Mental health problems represent the largest burden of disease among young people, and mental ill-health is at least as prevalent among young people as among adults (OECD, 2015[61]).

Across all countries that have tracked population well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the mental health status of young people has been markedly worse than that of the general population (OECD, 2021[62]). Often, the mental health of these population groups has worsened faster than that of the general population. At the same time as mental health declined, there were significant disruptions to mental health support and services delivered in schools, and other settings outside of specialist mental health care. Worldwide, 78% of countries reported at least partial disruptions to related school programmes (WHO, 2020[63]). Data from March 2021 in Belgium, France and the United States reveal that the share of 15-24 year-olds reporting symptoms of anxiety and depression was more than twice as high than the most recent data available from before the outbreak (Sciensano, 2021[64]; Santé Publique France, 2021[65]; U.S. Census Bureau, 2021[66]).

The increased prevalence of mental disorders entails important challenges for education systems that have to support the mental health of students, and ensure that their well-being needs are being met.

COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has had, and is still having, a profound impact not only on people's health, but also on how they learn, work and live. At the peak of the crisis in 2020, more than 188 countries, encompassing around 91% of enrolled learners worldwide, closed their schools to try to contain the spread of the virus (UNESCO, 2020[67]). In 2020 and 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic interrupted the school attendance of 1.5 billion students (Vincent-Lancrin, Cobo Romaní and Reimers, 2022[68]), with schools remaining closed or being re-opened and then closed again depending on the severity of the health situation. Reasons for re-opening schools despite the unstable health conditions varied across countries,

but included the need to develop students' knowledge and skills, catch up on learning losses, provide extra services, and allow parents to return to work, among others (Reimers and Schleicher, 2020[69]). A number of schools switched to hybrid learning, combining in-person schooling with distance learning where students and teacher alternated between the two modes of delivery (OECD, 2021[70]).

School closures carry high social and economic costs for people across various communities. Their impact, however, is particularly severe for the most vulnerable and marginalised students and their families. The disruptions to learning caused by school closures can exacerbate already existing disparities within education systems while also affecting other aspects of these students' lives, such as interrupted learning, poor nutrition, exposure to violence and exploitation, and increased dropout rates (UNESCO, 2020[71]).

During school closures, education systems had to rapidly adapt and find solutions to ensure educational continuity for their students. However, as systems moved to e-learning, the digital inequalities in connectivity, the gaps in access to devices and the varying skill levels of students became a key challenge for ensuring equity and inclusion in education. For instance, parents in more advantaged families were likely to have had better digital skills and be better equipped to support home learning for their children. Many students living in camps, informal settlements and overcrowded places, such as refugee or Roma students, were unlikely to have had access to digital devices or a quiet place to study. Moreover, students with SEN may have experienced different barriers in accessing some types of devices or software, and non-native speaker students may have struggled without appropriate support (OECD, 2020[72]).

School re-openings, too, entailed challenges for countries to respond to disadvantaged and vulnerable students' needs. As mentioned before, disadvantaged and vulnerable students have been on average significantly less engaged in remote learning (Lucas, Nelson and Sims, 2020[73]), and countries have been considering various measures to ensure educational equity and inclusive environments in order to limit further educational gaps for these student populations. Some areas that require particular attention from governments include ensuring the return to schools and containing dropout rates for vulnerable populations, addressing learning gaps, ensuring the well-being of students while supporting teachers and monitoring that these efforts are inclusive of all students. The pandemic has also highlighted the need for efficient and targeted use of education resources, as discussed more in depth in Chapter 3.

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that the future is unpredictable, and that people require adaptability and resilience to cope in a world that is rapidly changing (OECD, 2021[74]). Education is key in strengthening cognitive, social and emotional resilience[5] among learners, helping them understand that living in the world means trying, failing, adapting, learning and evolving. Educational institutions and education systems, too, need to become more flexible and resilient to succeed amid unforeseeable disruptions. Resilient education systems plan for disruption, and withstand and recover from adverse events, are able to fulfil the human right to education, whatever the circumstances, and foster the level of human capital required by successful economies in the short and longer term (OECD, 2021[74]; Schleicher, 2018[75]). At the same time, resilient education systems develop resilient individuals who adjust to everyday challenges, play an active role in their communities, and respond to an increasingly volatile, uncertain and ambiguous global landscape (OECD, 2021[74]).

Climate change and environmental crises

The effects of the climate crisis are being, and will increasingly be, felt on a global scale (UNICEF, 2019[76]). Evidence shows that extreme temperature events have been increasing as a consequence of human-induced climate change (IPCC, 2021[77]). Increased temperatures, air pollution and extreme events such as floods, droughts and storms, are disrupting people's lives around the globe. These changes will not only have significant consequences for the health and human capital of societies, but also for the education of children. In particular, they may affect vulnerable children and exacerbate current education inequalities (UNICEF, 2019[76]). Indeed, groups that are more susceptible to climate-related risks are

individuals living under the poverty line in both urban and rural areas, those with physical impairments, young girls and boys, and minority and immigrant groups (Hijioka et al., 2014[78]; UNICEF, 2015[79]).

Climate-related disasters can damage or even destroy schools and learning materials as well as important infrastructure such as bridges and roads needed to access schools. These events can disrupt children's learning for months leading to missed days of school, absenteeism and lower academic performance in comparison to students in other schools. Moreover, climate change affects clean air, safe drinking water, and sufficient nutritious food and secure shelter, which has compounding effects on children's academic well-being. The risk in livelihood security and income results in parents being unable to afford school costs, and children often miss classes to help with household activities. In some cases, families are forced to migrate which frequently translates to dropouts or lower academic performance (UNICEF, 2019[76]).

Air pollution also creates a burden on student's learning. As reported by the World Bank (2022[80]), a study in Barcelona (Spain) shows that, adjusting for socio-economic status, students exposed to high pollution levels in school had less cognitive development growth than those in less polluted schools (Sunyer et al., 2015[81]). Similarly, evidence from the United States demonstrates lower test scores and more absences for children attending schools downwind of a major highway (Heissel, Persico and Simon, 2019[82]; UNESCO, 2020[83]). Furthermore, at the end of secondary school, high levels of transitory pollution and extreme temperatures can reduce students' performance on high-stakes exams used to select students for tertiary level education. Consequently, students most affected by adverse environmental conditions may be less likely to gain entrance into tertiary educational institutions or fail to enter the most prestigious institutions (Ebenstein, Lavy and Roth, 2016[84]; Graff Zivin et al., 2020[85]; Graff Zivin et al., 2020[86]; Park, 2020[87]). The resulting suboptimal educational and labour market sorting may alter long-term skill acquisition and earnings (Horvath and Borgonovi, 2022[88]; Kyndt et al., 2012[89]).

As socio-economically disadvantaged families and ethnic minority communities are more likely to live closer to pollution sources, such as toxic waste, where housing is more affordable, this can have a larger impact on the educational outcomes of disadvantaged student groups (Persico, 2019[90]). This is even more concerning in the Global South, where air pollution levels are higher, giving rise to growing challenges in offering suitable learning environments for students (World Bank, 2022[80]).

Developments in the area of equity and inclusion

An overview of the state of equity and inclusion in education systems across the OECD can provide an important starting point for this report's analysis. Indeed, without relevant information on the current state of equity and inclusion and progress achieved over the years in these areas, any analysis would only provide a partial picture. Yet, efforts to provide a comprehensive analysis of equity and inclusion face several challenges, stemming from measurement difficulties, complexity of the field, limited data availability, and more (as discussed more extensively in Chapter 6).

Data from PISA 2018 provides a first picture of the state of equity and inclusion of diverse student groups, namely in terms of socio-economic advantage and disadvantage, gender and immigration status. In terms of socio-economic status, PISA found that socio-economically advantaged students outperform disadvantaged ones across all OECD countries with available data. On average across OECD countries[6] the score difference between students in the top and bottom quarters of the ESCS[7] index was 89 points, with variations across countries. In terms of gender differences, the data shows a reading gap in favour of girls across all OECD countries in 2018, with an average difference of 29 points. The gap appears larger for students in the 10th (bottom) percentile, with an average of 41 points, compared to students that perform in the 90th percentile, who show a gap of 18 points. Lastly, in terms of immigration status, in almost all OECD countries there is a reading gap in favour of native students compared to immigrant students. On average, immigrant students performed 40 points lower than their native peers. This difference is

smaller, between the two groups, after accounting for gender, and students' and schools' socio-economic profile.

While this overview provides a static picture of the gaps in 2018, considering the trends over the past decade can provide important information regarding the evolution of these gaps. As countries have long considered the importance of improving their results and fostering equity in education and the inclusion of all students.

Table 1.1 provides an overview of evolution of the differences in scores between different groups from 2009 to 2018 (the specific values are provided in the Annex Table 1.A.1). The data show that gender is the only dimension of diversity that has seen a widespread evolution over this time period: it is the only dimension for which a large number of countries shows a significant reduction in the gap between girls and boys. No country displays a statistically significant increase in gender gaps in reading scores. Nevertheless, a wide variation of developments can be observed. In the Czech Republic, Estonia, Ireland, Poland, Slovenia and Sweden, the scores of boys and girls both increased, but it increased to a larger extent for boys, thus reducing the gender gap. In France, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mexico, Portugal, Republic of Türkiye and on average across OECD countries, reading scores for boys increased, but decreased for girls. Finally, in Hungary, Japan, New Zealand, the Slovak Republic and Switzerland, the scores of both groups decreased, but girls' performance to a larger extent, thus effectively also reducing the gender gap.

For the other two dimensions no clear pattern appears, as most changes are not significant and they are going in both directions. Notably, the Czech Republic, Finland and the Slovak Republic are the only countries that show a significant change between 2009 and 2018 in terms of socio-economic status of their students. While in the Czech Republic the scores of both groups increased over time (however more so for advantaged students, thus exacerbating the gap), the scores in Finland and the Slovak Republic decreased, but more so for disadvantaged students.

The immigration status variable shows mixed results: among the few countries with significant results, Italy and Luxembourg show a decrease in the gap between the two years. In both countries, the score of students with an immigrant background increased and the score for students without an immigrant background decreased, thus reducing the gaps. On the contrary, in the Netherlands, the scores for both groups decreased, but for students with an immigrant to a larger extent, thus increasing the gap. In Slovenia, the score of students with an immigrant background decreased while it increased for students without such background, thus also exacerbating the divide between the two groups.

Table 1.1. Differences in reading performance across groups of students

Changes from 2009 to 2018, by national quarter of socio-economic status, gender, and immigration status

 Reduction in the gap between 2009 and 2018  Increase in the gap between 2009 and 2018

Country	Socio-economic status (top-bottom quarter)	Gender differences (girls - boys)	Immigrant status (immigrant - non-immigrant)
Australia			
Austria	*m*	*m*	
Belgium			

Country	Socio-economic status (top-bottom quarter)	Gender differences (girls - boys)	Immigrant status (immigrant - non-immigrant)
Canada			
Chile			*m*
Colombia			
Costa Rica			
Czech Republic			
Denmark			
Estonia			
Finland			
France			
Germany			
Greece			
Hungary			
Iceland			
Ireland			
Israel			
Italy			
Japan			*m*
Korea			*m*
Latvia			
Lithuania			
Luxembourg			

Country	Socio-economic status (top-bottom quarter)	Gender differences (girls - boys)	Immigrant status (immigrant - non-immigrant)
Mexico			
Netherlands*			
New Zealand			
Norway			
Poland			*m*
Portugal*			
Slovak Republic			*m*
Slovenia			
Spain	*m*	*m*	*m*
Sweden	*m*		
Switzerland			
Türkiye			*m*
United Kingdom			
United States*			
OECD average			

Note: *The Netherlands, Portugal and the United States: Data did not meet the PISA technical standards but were accepted as largely comparable (see PISA 2018 Annexes A2 and A4). Differences that are statistically significant are indicated in darker colours.
Source: OECD (2019[91]), PISA 2018 Results (Vol II), Annex B.1., https://doi.org/10.1787/b5fd1b8f-en.

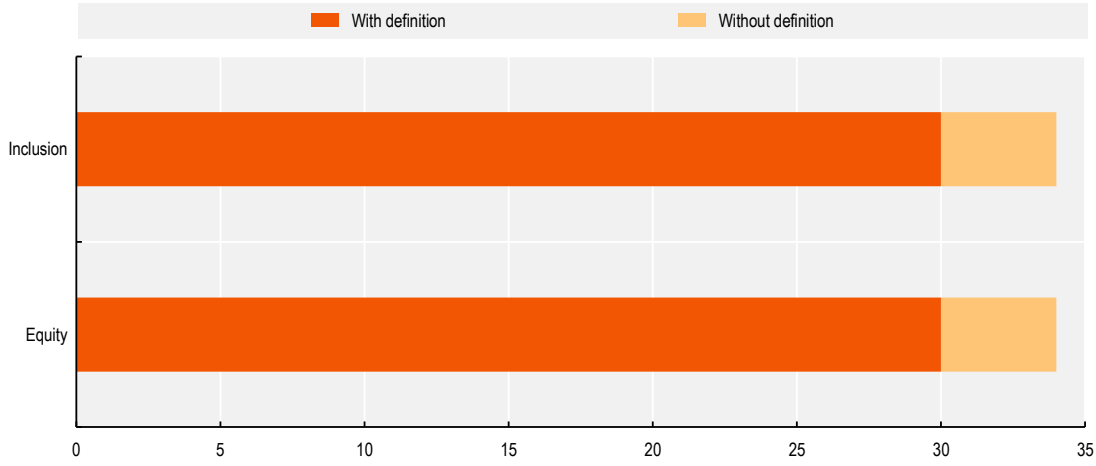
Conceptualising diversity, equity and inclusion in education

Defining the key concepts in the area of diversity, equity and inclusion in education is no easy undertaking. These concepts vary not only across literature, but also in the meaning that different education systems attribute to them. Indeed, there is neither a universal definition of equity nor of inclusion in education. The Strength through Diversity Project has adopted some definitions to operationalise the concepts and provide some basis for its analysis, but these are not meant to be normative or prescriptive for countries. Most countries and education systems have developed their own definitions, which reflect their history, priorities and educational goals.

Most jurisdictions across the OECD have a definition of equity and inclusion

The majority of education systems have a definition of both equity and inclusion (Figure 1.2). Twenty-eight jurisdictions reported in the Strength through Diversity Survey 2022 (see Annex 1.A) that they had a definition of equity, either formal or operational, and 30 have a definition of inclusion. Only four jurisdictions did not have a definition of inclusion (Australia, Finland, the Netherlands and New Zealand) and four did not have a definition of equity (Denmark, Finland, Lithuania and New Zealand).

Figure 1.2. Number of education jurisdictions with and without a definition of equity and inclusion



Note: This figure is based on answers to the question "If available, please provide an English translation of the definition of equity in education. Such definition(s) can be embedded in your legislative framework or can be part of document(s) published by a national (or sub-national) authority." and "If available, please provide an English translation of the definition of equity in education. Such definition(s) can be embedded in your legislative framework or can be part of document(s) published by a national (or sub-national) authority.". Thirty-four education systems responded to these questions.
Source: OECD (2022[92]), Strength through Diversity Policy Survey 2022.

StatLink https://stat.link/a6md94

An analysis of the definitions and explanations of concepts provided by education systems (reported in Annex 1.A) shows that commonalities exist across education systems in the adopted definitions of equity. Twenty-three of the 30 education systems that reported having a definition mentioned explicitly that education should be provided without prejudice to student characteristics, background or origins. These elements span across social status, nationality, ethnic origin, gender, special education need or disability, sexual orientation, religious and political affiliation, language, health condition, parent education and place of residence. In this regard, 12 systems highlighted that special efforts should be made to prevent discrimination in education. Fifteen education systems also underlined the importance of ensuring equality of opportunity between students. According to Slovenia's comprehensive definition, the notion of equal opportunity presupposes that each individual is treated in accordance with the law of justice - meaning that equals must be treated the same and others must be treated in accordance with their differences - in situations in which many people compete for limited resources (for example, acceptance into a quality school or university). Various systems, finally, underlined that access to education should be granted to all students (ten education systems), in order to avoid any gaps or differences between them (six), and allow them to achieve by removing barriers and obstacles (four). Additional points that were mentioned by a small minority of educations systems are reported in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2. Key elements mentioned by education systems' definitions of equity and inclusion

Equity		Inclusion	
Key elements mentioned by education systems' definitions	*Number of education systems*	*Key elements mentioned by education systems' definitions*	*Number of education systems*
Groups	23	For all	20
Equality of opportunity	15	Access/Participation	12
Discrimination/exclusion	12	Students with SEN	11
For all	10	Learning	10
Access	9	Groups	9
Differences/Gaps	6	Diversity	8
Potential/Achievement	6	Discrimination/exclusion	7
Barriers/obstacles	4	Mainstream education	7
Free	2	Support/Accommodation	6
Segregation	1	Equality of opportunity	6
Belonging	2	Barriers	6
Diversity	1	Development	5
		Social	4
		Process	3
		Quality	3
		Differences/Gaps	2
		Identity	2
		Belonging	2
		Participation of parents/community	2

Note: Text-analysis based on education systems' definitions and descriptions of equity and inclusion in education.
Source: OECD (2022[92]), Strength through Diversity Policy Survey 2022.

In relation to inclusion, the information reported in Annex 1.A shows the key elements that countries consider in their definitions. Out of the 30 countries that reported definitions in the Survey, 20 underlined that their understanding of inclusion concerns *all* students, without prejudice. Twelve countries also stressed the relevance of ensuring access and participation to the students to ensure their inclusion in education. In contrast to their approach to defining equity, several education systems (11) considered inclusion as concerning students with special education needs – at times exclusively and at times as a core but not exclusive focus. For instance, the concept of inclusion in the Flemish Community of Belgium "has a specific usage in that it refers to the leading principle for schools' approach to pupils with SEN". While Ireland does not have a general holistic definition on inclusion in education, it has a specific definition for the inclusion of students with SEN, which underlines that "a child with special educational needs shall be educated in an inclusive environment with children who do not have such needs unless the nature or degree of those needs of the child is such that to do so would be inconsistent". Seven countries highlighted the role of mainstream education in the inclusion of students with SEN.

Another common element, which is shared with the systems' definition of equity, was the focus on avoiding discrimination, with an explicit mention of various groups of students. However, it differs from equity as eight countries' definitions of inclusion made explicit reference to the concept of diversity. Colombia, Mexico and Scotland (United Kingdom), for instance, stressed the importance of valuing and respecting students' diversity.

A further difference is that inclusion definitions (for six education systems) stated the relevance of providing support and accommodations to students who require them, along with ensuring appropriate learning (ten systems) for all. Equality of opportunity was also mentioned by six education systems, as in the case of

equity, as the removal of barriers (six systems). Finally, three education systems stressed the idea of inclusion being a process, which is a key aspect of the definition proposed by UNESCO and adopted by the Strength through Diversity Project (as discussed in the next section). Three systems also highlighted the importance of ensuring the quality of the education provided in regard to inclusion, as it is not enough for children to be allowed into education if not provided with high-quality learning. Additional points that were mentioned by a small minority of educations systems are reported in Table 1.2.

Given that, as discussed, education systems' definitions vary widely, the Project has adopted specific definitions that allow for a shared understanding of the concepts when analysing policies and practices concerning equity and inclusion in education (Cerna et al., 2021[15]). These definitions are not meant to be prescriptive nor recommended for education systems to adopt, but reflect the main understanding of these areas in this report and throughout the work of the Project. The following sections describe the key concepts in the areas of equity and inclusion in education, and highlight the developments and principles that have led the Project to select these specific understandings.

Equity

The Strength through Diversity Project defines **equitable education systems** as being those that ensure the achievement of educational potential is not the result of personal and social circumstances, including factors such as gender, ethnic origin, Indigenous background, immigrant status, sexual orientation and gender identity, special education needs, and giftedness (Cerna et al., 2021[15]; OECD, 2017[13]). In operationalising equity in education, the OECD makes a distinction between horizontal and vertical equity (OECD, 2017[93]). While horizontal equity considers the overall fair provision of resources to each part of the school system (providing similar resources to the alike), vertical equity involves providing disadvantaged groups of students or schools with additional resources based on their needs (ibid.). Both approaches are complementary and play an important role in the process of inclusion of vulnerable groups of students (described below).

However, other organisations, projects and researchers adopt different definitions for the concept of equity, and for that of equality (Mezzanotte and Calvel, forthcoming[94]). For UNESCO, equity "considers the social justice ramifications of education in relation to the fairness, justness and impartiality of its distribution at all levels or educational sub-sectors" (UNESCO-UIS, 2018, p. 17[95]). UNESCO also defines the concept of **equality,** as "the state of being equal in terms of quantity, rank, status, value or degree". **Equality of opportunity**, in particular, is understood to mean that everyone should have the same opportunity to thrive, "regardless of variations in the circumstances into which they are born" (UNESCO-UIS, 2018, p. 17[95]). Having been granted such opportunities and considered their innate abilities, however, students' outcomes will still depend on how much effort they put in. This concept holds individuals accountable, as they are considered responsible for, and to have control over, their effort. This implies that the differences in outcomes that arise from differences in effort are fair, while those that derive from personal characteristics – such as socio-economic background or gender – are not fair. The definition adopted by the Project, as described above, is thus in line with the concept of equality of opportunity.

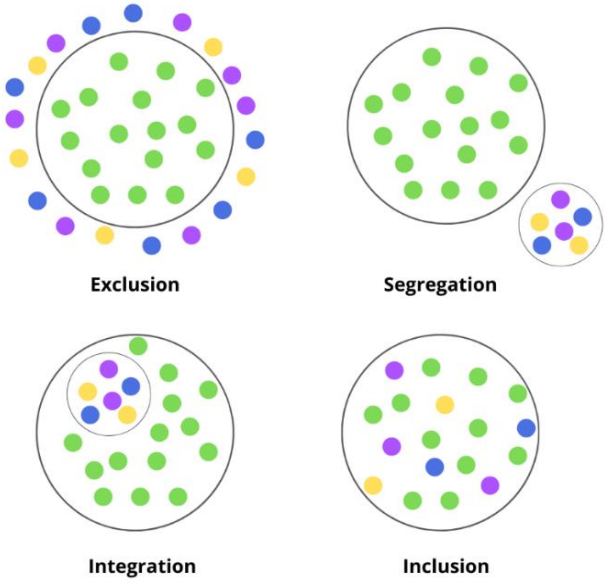
Inclusion

The OECD Strength through Diversity Project adopts a broad definition of **inclusive education**, while recognising that there exist various definitions of this concept and disagreements about these definitions (Cerna et al., 2021[15]). For the scope of this report and the broader work of the Project, inclusive education is defined as "an on-going process aimed at offering quality education for all while respecting diversity and the different needs and abilities, characteristics and learning expectations of the students and communities, eliminating all forms of discrimination" (UNESCO, 2009, p. 126[96]). More than a particular policy or practice related to a specific group of students or individuals, this definition identifies an ethos of inclusion and communities of learners, which does not only involve an individual dimension but also a

communal one. The goal of inclusive education is to respond to all students' needs, going beyond school attendance and achievement, while improving all students' well-being and participation (Cerna et al., 2021[15]).

Inclusion can also be conceptualised as a historical development of different models of education. Researchers generally categorise educational systems into four categories: exclusion, segregation, integration and inclusion (Figure 1.3)

Figure 1.3. Four types of educational model



Source: Mezzanotte (2022[48]), The social and economic rationale of inclusive education: An overview of the outcomes in education for diverse groups of students, https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/bff7a85d-en, adapted from Abt Associates (2016[97]), Summary of the evidence on inclusive education, https://www.abtassociates.com/sites/default/files/2019-03/A_Summary_of_the_evidence_on_inclusive_education.pdf (accessed 13 January 2022).

Firstly, **exclusion** occurs when students are directly or indirectly prevented from or denied access to education in any form. This may happen when students are not allowed to register or attend school, or conditions are placed on their attendance. Exclusion in education does not only mean "out-of-school children" but can have many expressions (International Bureau of Education, 2016[98]; UNESCO, 2012[99]). For instance, exclusion can be from entry into a school or an educational programme, due to inability to pay the fees or being outside the eligibility criteria. **Segregation** occurs when diverse groups of students are educated in separate environments (either classes or schools). This can happen, for instance, when students with a learning disability are forced to attend a school/class exclusively for students with disabilities, but also when schools teach either females or males only (i.e., same-sex or single-sex education). **Integration** is achieved by placing students with diverse needs in mainstream education settings with some adaptations and resources, on the condition that they fit into pre-existing structures, attitudes and an unaltered environment (UNESCO, 2017[100]). For example, integration can consist in placing a student with a physical impairment or a learning disability in a mainstream class but without any individualised support and with a teacher who is unwilling or unable to meet the child's learning, social or disability support needs. In literature and policy, integration and inclusion have been compared and sometimes confused, whereas the two concepts present significant differences.

Inclusion is a process that helps to overcome barriers limiting the presence, participation and achievement of all learners. It is about changing the system to fit the student, not changing the student to fit the system, because the "problem" of exclusion is firmly within the system, not the person or their characteristics (UNICEF, 2014[101]). According to UNICEF (2014[101]), inclusive education is defined as a dynamic process that is constantly evolving according to the local culture and context, as it seeks to enable communities, systems and structures to combat discrimination, celebrate diversity, promote participation and overcome barriers to learning and participation for all people. All personal differences (i.e., age, gender, ethnicity, Indigenous status, language, health status, etc.) are acknowledged and respected.

UNESCO (2008[102]) has also described the key factors of inclusive education for all students: i) the promotion of student participation and reduction of exclusion from and for education; and ii) the presence, participation and achievement of all students, but especially those who are excluded or at risk of marginalisation. The key message is that every learner matters and matters equally. Moreover, according to UNESCO (2005[103]), inclusion highlights the groups of learners who may be at risk of marginalisation, exclusion or underachievement, including students belonging to ethnic groups, national minorities or immigrant students, among others. UNESCO's interpretation also implies a moral responsibility to ensure that groups that are more statistically at risk are carefully monitored and steps are taken to ensure their presence, participation and achievement in education (UNESCO, 2005[103]).

Why it is relevant to differentiate between equity and inclusion

The concepts of equity and inclusion are strictly related and overlap, but they emphasise complementary elements that contribute to successful education systems. Equity stresses the role of providing the same opportunities to all students and equalising resources provided to support them. The goal of equity is to give the means to all students to achieve at the best of their capabilities.

A focus on educational equity may not be enough to fully address student diversity. Indeed, an exclusive focus on equity could lead to narrow assimilationist or isolationist policies and practices without fully addressing inclusion. For example, having all students achieving a minimum level of performance and meeting educational goals that are established without considering the diversity of their experiences (assimilation) can promote equity but not inclusion. Inclusion encompasses the principles of equity while broadening this focus through proposing a transformative approach to remove barriers for all students, stressing in particular the need to recognise and address different experiences, needs and challenges of diverse and vulnerable groups of students. While equity focuses on opportunities, inclusion is more strictly associated to who the individual is, i.e., their identity (e.g., cultural identity, gender identity), and whether the education system acknowledges individuals for who they are (i.e., the sense of belonging). Moreover, inclusion fosters students' well-being as a key element to ensure their full participation in education through the development of their self-worth and sense of belonging to schools and communities. Well-being is generally not as much of an explicit focus in relation to equity.

Improving equity does not necessarily result in the validation of an individual's sense of self and belonging within society. If that validation does not occur, it may hinder social cohesion on a larger scale and on a longer time frame. Educational research has brought about a better understanding of the necessity of responding to individual student needs by providing each learner with individualised feedback and providing inclusive and multicultural programmes (Nusche, 2009[104]). In this context, education systems cannot only play an important role in boosting equity, but also in fostering just and inclusive societies.

Why equity and inclusion in education matter

The importance of fostering equity and inclusion in educational settings has various rationales, spanning from human rights, to educational, individual and societal gains (Mezzanotte, 2022[48]). More equitable and inclusive education has been shown to provide benefits for all students in improving the quality of education

offered, as it is more child-centred and focused on achieving good learning outcomes for all students, including those with a diverse range of abilities (UNESCO, 2009[105]). Greater equity in education can help students achieve their potential, which can have implications on their outcomes later in life. A carefully planned provision of inclusive education can not only improve students' academic achievement, but also foster their socio-emotional growth, self-esteem and peer acceptance (UNESCO, 2020[83]). For instance, from a review by Ruijs and Peetsma (2009[106]), it appears that students with special education needs achieve academically better in inclusive settings than in non-inclusive settings. Research also shows that attending and receiving support within inclusive education settings can increase the likelihood of higher education enrolment for students with SEN (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2018[107]). These settings are also beneficial for students that have no disability or impairment, since attending a class alongside a student with SEN can yield positive outcomes for their social attitudes and beliefs (Abt Associates, 2016[97]). Similarly, with the inclusion in education of students from ethnic groups and national minorities, young people have the opportunity, through repeated exposure and practice, to engage with others who differ from them. This interaction can promote feelings of satisfaction and social efficacy within the current school setting and inform future social interactions and social adaptability in college, communities, and the workplace (Nishina et al., 2019[51]). The inclusion of diverse students can thus help to fight stigma, stereotyping, discrimination and alienation in schools and societies more broadly (UNESCO, 2020[83]). The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (1994[108]) asserts that: "Regular schools with inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discrimination, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all". As predicted by Contact Hypothesis (Allport, 1954[109]), increased inter-group contact can lead to a reduction of hostility, prejudice and discrimination between groups, which can refer to all types of diversity. Instead, a context that allows contact between diverse peers can build strong social skills, an important asset in today's diverse and international places of work.

Better academic and social outcomes for all students are correlated with improved labour outcomes later in life, as well as better health and well-being (Mezzanotte, 2022[48]). Literature has shown the correlation between skills earned in schools and income levels from the labour market (Hanushek and Woessmann, 2008[110]), and an even stronger correlation between the years of education achieved and the returns to education, through an increase in productivity or the signalling effect of education[8] (Hanushek and Woessmann, 2020[111]; Harmon, Oosterbeek and Walker, 2003[112]). Considering how important education and skills have become in the labour market, a critical question is whether such learning opportunities can be accessible to all. Previous OECD (2017[13]) work has found that countries have been advancing at different rates in providing quality education and skills development opportunities to disadvantaged individuals. In most countries, inequality in learning opportunities begins at birth, and often widens as individuals grow older (OECD, 2017[13]). These inequalities result in very different life outcomes for adults. In some countries, access to learning opportunities differs considerably between certain population groups, which highlights the need for more equitable and inclusion education systems.

Better education also provides a range of indirect benefits, which are also likely to entail positive economic consequences (Mezzanotte, 2022[48]). For instance, greater education is associated with better health status and increases in some aspects of social cohesion and political participation (OECD, 2006[113]). In terms of health, research shows that more years of education and higher levels of qualification are associated with a lower incidence of physical and mental disorders. These relationships have been shown to hold across different countries, income ranges, age and ethnic groups (OECD, 2006[113]).

These positive effects on individual outcomes also lead to broader societal benefits (Mezzanotte, 2022[48]). Economic literature has studied the role of education in rising incomes at the country level, in particular in terms of higher Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita and its annual growth rate (Bassanini and Scarpetta, 2001[114]; Hanushek and Woessmann, 2007[115]). Providing more education, knowledge and skills to individuals, i.e., accumulating human capital, increases their productivity and employability, which in turn rises the country's overall income and development. Individual non-economic outcomes also affect

society more generally: better education can contribute to reduced violence and crime rates, reductions in the cost of healthcare and welfare systems (e.g., unemployment benefits, etc.), and can foster innovation. Policies that support individuals in obtaining the highest qualifications of which they are capable have the potential to provide not only personal, but also economic, benefits. This includes both savings in national healthcare and socio-political costs, such as greater political engagement, higher levels of trust, and more positive inter-group attitudes (Easterbrook, Kuppens and Manstead, 2015[116]).

The World Bank also argues that equity and inclusion in education are essential for shared prosperity and sustainable development (Mezzanotte, 2022[48]; World Bank Group, 2016[117]). Disparities in education are one of the major drivers of income inequality, both within and among countries. Without basic education, individuals in the bottom of a nation's income distribution are unlikely to be successful in a globalised economy. As the World Bank World Development Report 2012 notes, fair and inclusive education is one of the most powerful levers for a more equitable society (World Bank, 2011[118]). While, as discussed, there are very important human, economic, social and political reasons for pursuing a policy and approach of more equitable and inclusive education, it is also a means of bringing about personal development and building relationships among individuals, groups and nations (UNESCO, 2005[103]). Inclusive education can further offer all children a chance to learn about and accept each other's abilities, talents and needs (Mezzanotte, 2022[48]). This process, through the fostering of meaningful relationships and friendships, can strengthen social competences while also building social cohesion (Council of Europe, 2015[53]). In an increasingly globalised and complex world, inclusive education can strengthen the trust and sense of belonging of people and among people.

Some scholars have raised concerns regarding the potential negative effects of an inclusive education system and the challenges in its implementation (Forlin et al., 2011[119]). For instance, a frequent argument against inclusive education is that it could have an adverse effect on the achievement of children without SEN (Mezzanotte, 2022[48]). The arguments against inclusion propose that students with SEN occupy the teachers' attention, which might adversely affect other children (Dyson et al., 2004[120]; Huber, Rosenfeld and Fiorello, 2001[121]). In contrast, proponents of inclusive education sustain that in inclusive classes there is more adaptive education, which might have a beneficial effect on all students (Dyson et al., 2004[120]). Overall, literature has identified mostly positive or neutral effects of inclusive education on the academic achievement of students without SEN, in particular at the lower education levels (Kart and Kart, 2021[122]). Evidence indicates that it is possible for all learners to achieve at high levels in an inclusive school system (AuCoin, Porter and Baker-Korotkov, 2020[123]; Mezzanotte, 2022[48]).

Diversity

Another important concept that relates to both equity and inclusion is diversity. Diversity corresponds to people's differences which may relate to their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, language, culture, religion, mental and physical ability, class, and immigration status (UNESCO, 2017[100]). More specifically, it refers to the fact that many people perceive themselves or are perceived to be different and form a range of different groups cohabiting together. Diversity is multidimensional, might relate to physical aspects and/or immaterial ones such as cultural practices, and makes sense according to the boundaries defined by groups of individuals.

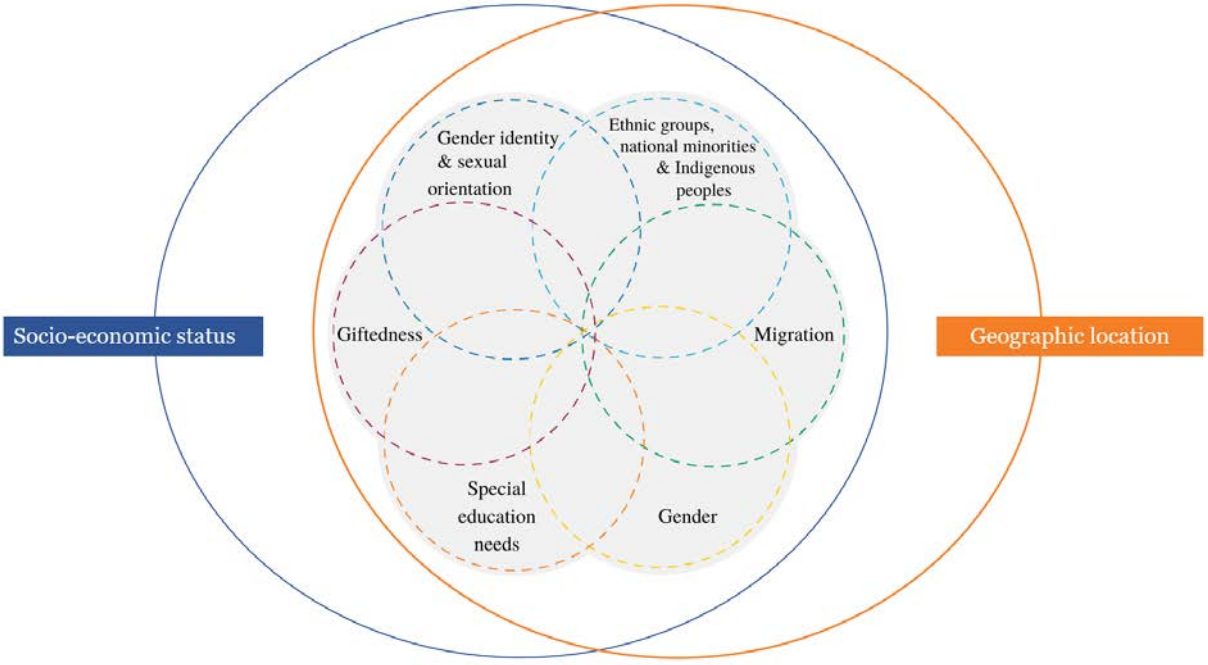
Students from diverse background are generally more disadvantaged in education, and, for this reason, become the target of equitable and inclusive reforms, practices and policies (Cerna et al., 2021[15]). As mentioned above, various countries emphasise the importance of focusing on specific groups of students and valuing their diversity in their definitions of equity and inclusion in education.

While acknowledging that many dimensions of diversity exist, the Strength through Diversity Project has focused on the following dimensions (Cerna et al., 2021[15]):

- Migration;
- Ethnic groups, national minorities and Indigenous peoples;
- Gender;
- Gender identity and sexual orientation;
- Special education needs;
- Giftedness.

Besides the six dimensions of diversity, the Project also considers the role of two overarching factors, namely students' socio-economic status and geographic location, as shown in Figure 1.4.

Figure 1.4. Dimensions of diversity



Source: Adapted from Cerna et al. (2021[15]), Promoting inclusive education for diverse societies: A conceptual framework, https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/94ab68c6-en.

The following sections first introduce the key concepts considered by the Project in relation to the six dimensions of diversity, followed by the two overarching factors that shape the educational experiences of students.

Migration

The Project considers the range of migration experiences that individuals may have, whether direct (foreign-born individuals who migrated) or not (individuals who have at least a parent or guardian who migrated) (Cerna et al., 2021[15]). Ancestry, intended as migration experiences that go beyond the parental generation, is not considered in itself, but reflected in analyses that consider ethnic groups and other national-minorities induced diversity.

The Project focuses on international migration as a source of migration-induced diversity, irrespective of reasons for migration and the legal status of the individual migrant, while reflecting on the educational implications of factors like legal status, migration experiences and age at migration. For the scope of the Project's analysis, individuals are considered to have an immigrant background or to have an immigrant-heritage if they or at least one of their parents was born in a country that is different from the country in which they access educational services (Cerna et al., 2021[15]; OECD, 2018[124]).

Ethnic groups, national minorities and Indigenous peoples

National minority is a complex term, for which no international definition has been agreed (Cerna et al., 2021[15]). It is therefore up to countries to define which groups constitute or not minorities within their boundaries. Minority groups can be categorised according to individuals' immigrant status and nationality of origins, but also depending on their ethnic affiliation and Indigenous background. While individuals can perceive themselves or be perceived as forming an ethnic group, they are not necessarily officially considered as a national minority in the country they live in. Roma communities for example, while being widely perceived as an ethnic group, are not always considered a national minority (Rutigliano, 2020[125]). National minority is also an administrative category and should be thought about as such. While being useful in data collection and policy making, it often does not reflect the complex diversity between and within different ethnic groups.

Ethnicity refers to a group or groups to which people belong, and/or are perceived to belong, as a result of historical dynamics as well as certain shared characteristics (Cerna et al., 2021[15]). With variations between different contexts, these characteristics can correspond to geographical location and ancestral origins, cultural traditions, religious beliefs, social norms, shared heritage and language. As ethnicity has its basis in multiple social characteristics, it is not deterministically defined and someone can be a member of an ethnic group even if they differ from other group members on some dimensions. Ethnic affiliation might ultimately depend on the agency of an individual who chooses to be part of a specific ethnic group and, as such, places their identity in the context of a broader social group. This affiliation can be non-exclusionary and change over the life course, as individuals choose to adopt or reject such affiliation. Finally, ethnicity is fundamentally a criterion of differentiation that can be both a source of recognition and valorisation, and of inequalities and discrimination.

The concept of **race** is close to the notion of ethnicity and the boundaries between both are often blurry (Cerna et al., 2021[15]). However, race as a concept has been deconstructed since the second half of the 20th century, mostly through a worldwide UNESCO campaign in the 1950s, upheld by renowned anthropologists. It was shown that the concept of race, besides bearing a strong negative connotation in numerous countries (e.g., European countries), has little biological basis as biological differences across individuals from different racial groups are minuscule. It was highlighted that racial differences across individuals would have no bearing on education policy if it were not for their overlap with ethnic differences and for the structural discrimination faced by members of certain "visible"[9] minority groups both in education settings and society more widely. It is important to acknowledge that some countries commonly use the notion of race in political and academic languages. However, its social origins rather than its biological bases are usually emphasised. Within the Project, the diversity related to the aforementioned characteristics is referred to as *ethnicity* and *ethnic diversity*, and the terms *race* and *racial diversity* are not used.

Indigenous peoples, according to the United Nations' definition, are those who inhabited a country prior to colonisation, and who self-identify as such due to descent from these peoples and belonging to social, cultural or political institutions that govern them (United Nations, 2019[126]). The colonisation process in some countries has had a double impact on Indigenous peoples and in particular on children in relation to education. In addition to undermining Indigenous young people's access to their identity, language and culture, colonisation has resulted in Indigenous children generally not having had access to the same

quality of education that other children in their country have enjoyed. These two factors have generally undermined the opportunities and outcomes of various generations of Indigenous peoples and children, and still affect these populations today. Education systems may need interventions on their general design, to recognise and respond to the needs and contexts of Indigenous students (OECD, 2017[127]).

Students from ethnic minority groups and Indigenous communities are different groups, and may require varying policy responses based on their specific needs. Nonetheless, they often face similar challenges when it comes to education.

Gender

Although the words "sex" and "gender" are often used interchangeably, their definitions are different (Brussino and McBrien, 2022[128]). Sex refers to the biological and physiological characteristics of being male or female, such as reproductive organs and hormones (Council of Europe, 2019[129]). Gender involves social roles and relationships, norms and behaviours that boys and girls are informally taught, such as how they should interact with others, what they might aspire to become and what opportunities they might expect, based on their sex (ibid.). These socially determined roles and behaviours may or may not correlate with the sex assigned at birth. The Council of Europe has defined gender as "socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women and men" (Council of Europe, 2011[130]). The World Health Organisation (WHO) states that the "characteristics of women, men, girls and boys that are socially constructed" include "norms, behaviours and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl or boy, as well as relationships with each other. As a social construct, gender varies from society to society and can change over time" (WHO, 2018[131]). Gender differs from sex as the latter refers to "the different biological and physiological characteristics of females, males and intersex persons, such as chromosomes, hormones and reproductive organs" (WHO, 2018[131]).

In education, gender gaps have historically favoured males. However, over the past century, many countries have made significant progress in narrowing and even closing, long-standing gender gaps in educational attainment and today males on average have lower attainment and achievement than females in many OECD countries (Borgonovi, Ferrara and Maghnouj, 2018[132]).

Gender identity and sexual orientation

"Sexual and gender minorities" refers to LGBTQI+ people, that is, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex individuals. The "+" is often added to the LGBTQI acronym to include people who do not self-identify as heterosexual and/or cisgender but who would not apply the LGBTQI label to themselves either. These people include questioning individuals, pansexual individuals, or asexual individuals (OECD, 2020[133]). While the notion of gender has shifted towards a more inclusive definition, away from a binary and heteronormative understanding, policy makers and educators are facing new challenges regarding inclusion in schools. Gender is increasingly being acknowledged as a spectrum, and gender identity refers to a person's internal sense of being masculine, feminine or androgynous. Sexual orientation corresponds to the sexual and emotional attraction for the opposite sex, the same sex or both (Cerna et al., 2021[15]).

Studies show that LGBTQI+ people tend to suffer from significant social exclusion. In most OECD countries, they are still stigmatised and suffer various forms of discrimination, including in education (OECD, 2019[134]). While there is little research on the difference of educational achievement between LGBTQI+ students and the rest of the population, various studies have shown that these students are greatly exposed to bullying and tend to feel unsafe in the classroom (UNESCO, 2016[135]). This phenomenon also affects heterosexual and cisgender individuals who are perceived as non-conforming to gender norms (ibid.). It highlights both a significant lack of inclusion of these people and a persisting rigidity of mainstream gender representations.

There is growing evidence that more inclusive measures at school level, such as a curriculum that contains references to gender fluidity, coupled with broad anti-discrimination laws and policies are key in fostering tolerance and the long-run socio-economic inclusion of LGBTQI+ people (Cerna et al., 2021[15]).

Special education needs

Special education needs (SEN) is a term used in many education systems to characterise the broad array of needs of students who are affected by disabilities or disorders that affect their learning and development (Brussino, 2020[136]; Cerna et al., 2021[15]). As there is no universal consensus on which disorders and impairments can cause a special education need, and each country adopts its own classification, the Project has grouped them into three broad categories: learning disabilities, physical impairments and mental disorders.

Learning Disabilities are disorders that affect the ability to understand or use spoken or written language, do mathematical calculations, coordinate movements, or direct attention (Brussino, 2020[136]; Cerna et al., 2021[15]). They are neurological in nature and have a genetic component. The severity of symptoms varies greatly across individuals because condition specific intensity differs in relation to co-morbidity. Learning Disabilities are independent of intelligence: individuals with average or high performance in intelligence tests (such as IQ tests) can suffer from one or multiple learning disabilities and as a result struggle to keep up with peers in school without support. The most common learning disabilities are: dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, and Auditory Processing Disorder (APD).

Physical Impairments affect the ability of individuals to access physical spaces due to reduced mobility or to access information that is delivered in specific ways: visual delivery for visual impairments and voice/sounds for hearing impairments. In the case of hearing impairments, the production of information via sounds can also be compromised. The severity of symptoms can vary and technological/physical aids can ensure that individuals with such impairments are able to access learning in standard school settings. Physical impairments can either have hereditary components or be the result of specific diseases or traumatic events that produce long-lasting physical consequences. The most common physical impairments are mobility impairments, visual impairments and hearing impairments (Brussino, 2020[136]; Cerna et al., 2021[15]).

Mental health. In recent years, students' mental health and its interaction with educational systems and services have received increasing attention (Brussino, 2020[136]; Cerna et al., 2021[15]). Poor mental health can be both a consequence of lack of support for students experiencing disabilities and impairments, as well as a distinct medical condition hampering students' academic progress and broader well-being. Due to the stigma associated with mental health conditions, many students in school suffer from mental health conditions that are long-standing and severely limiting. The experiences that children have in school can also be partially responsible for the onset of specific mental health conditions, for example due to the experiencing of bullying, social isolation and stress. The most common mental health conditions affecting children in school include:

- Developmental disorders, such as Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorder and Tourette's Syndrome;
- Depressive Disorders;
- Anxiety Disorders;
- Disruptive, Impulse-Control and Conduct Disorder (Oppositional Defiant Disorder - ODD, Conduct Disorder).

Giftedness

Gifted students are students who have been classified as having significantly higher than expected intellectual abilities given their age, with intellectual abilities being assessed through psychometric tests of cognitive functioning and/or performance in classroom evaluations. The specific methods (tests, portfolios, observations) used to identify giftedness vary greatly across countries and within countries and so do the specific cut-offs used to evaluate giftedness. Other conceptions of giftedness encompass more liberal or multi-categorical approaches that point out the limitations of describing intelligence in a unitary way (Murphy and Walker, 2015[137]). Students can also be considered to be gifted in specific domains that are not strictly academic in nature, such as music, sports and arts.

In conversations about educational policy and issues of equity and inclusion, gifted learners tend to occupy a marginal space. This marginalisation mostly stems from the assumption that in displaying signs of exceptionality and high intelligence, learners identified as gifted will inevitably achieve educational success without additional support. In reality, however, gifted students can happen to be left behind and underserved in classrooms unable to meet their specific educational needs (Rutigliano and Quarshie, 2021[138]).

The role of socio-economic condition and geographical location

Besides the six main dimensions of diversity, the Project accounts for the role that socio-economic variations play in educational outcomes. The effect of socio-economic background is observed in most countries and education is both the result and the determinant of socio-economic stratification (OECD, 2019[91]).

The Project examines the extent to which socio-economic condition determines the outcomes and opportunities different groups of students have and the extent to which legislative and organisational features in different education systems are more or less supportive of students' learning (Cerna et al., 2021[15]). In particular, it analyses socio-economic status as a lens through which other forms of diversity can be "distorted" and it uses it to evaluate the degree of equity and inclusivity of education systems.

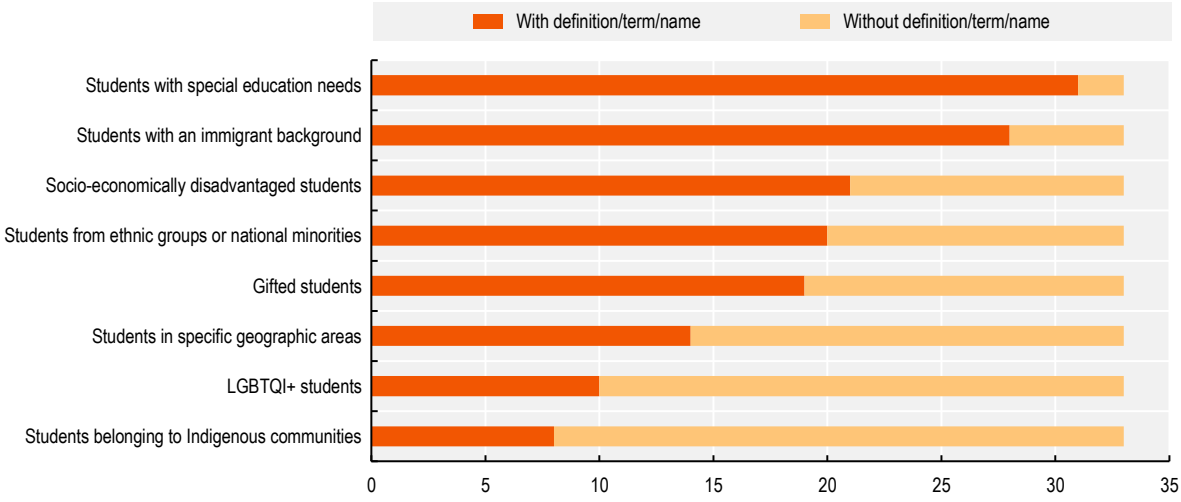
Socio-economic status is not the only overarching dimension that determines the parameters through which equity and inclusion operate in education systems: the geographical dispersion of different social and demographic groups and of schools plays an equally relevant role (as discussed in the section on Contextual developments shaping diversity, equity and inclusion in school education) (Cerna et al., 2021[15]). If different social and demographic groups are located in specific areas of a country or of a city, creating classrooms that reflect the broad heterogeneity of the overall population and curricula that build upon such diversity can be challenging. Similarly, the location of school, particularly lower and upper secondary schools, which tend to be fewer, bigger and more specialised than primary schools, can have an important bearing on how inclusive an education system can be.

OECD education systems focus on different dimensions of diversity, depending on their national context

Education systems across the OECD attribute an official or administrative term/name to different groups depending on their context and priorities. While their terminology does not always overlap with that of the Project, groups have been proxied to match the eight groups discussed earlier. Figure 1.5 shows that the majority of education systems that responded to the Survey attributed an official or administrative term/name to different diversity groups.

Figure 1.5. Definitions of dimensions of diversity (2022)

Number of education systems that indicated that they attribute an official or administrative term/name or have definitions of the following groups of students (ISCED 2)



Note: This figure is based on collated answers to the question "Please select all the student groups to which your education jurisdiction attributes an official or administrative term/name. This administrative term/name does not have to be embedded within the education jurisdiction, but can be part of other (e.g., social, health) jurisdictions." and "If available, please provide English translations of formal definitions for the following groups at ISCED 2 level. Such definitions can be embedded in your legislative framework or can be part of documents published by a national (or sub-national) authority.". Thirty-three and thirty-one education systems responded to these questions respectively. Response options were not mutually exclusive. Some education systems use terms that have been proxied for the categories considered by the Strength through Diversity Project, although their definitions do not overlap exactly.
Options selected have been ranked in descending order of the number of education systems.
Source: OECD (2022[92]), Strength through Diversity Policy Survey 2022.

StatLink https://stat.link/oa248z

A large number of education systems (31) referred having a term for students with SEN. The understanding of this term varies quite significantly across systems. While some jurisdictions focused on disability or more medical understandings of SEN (e.g., the Flemish Community of Belgium or Sweden), others considered more generally the additional learning needs of the students. Portugal, for instance, abandoned the system of categorisation of students in 2018. While used as a proxy in Figure 1.5, the term "special education needs" is therefore no longer used, having been replaced by "students in need of educational support measures". Similarly, Scotland (United Kingdom) adopts the term "students with Additional Support Needs" This definition is broad and applies to children or young people who, for whatever reason, require additional support, in the long or short term, in order to help them make the most of their school education and to be fully included.

Similarly, a large number of education systems, 28, adopted a term for students with an immigrant background. Many of these systems, however, identify these students through different proxies. Generally, systems identify students based on them holding a different nationality or speaking a different mother-tongue/have language learning needs. For instance, the Czech Republic considered students with an immigrant background as belonging to one of two groups: "foreigner pupils", as determined by foreign citizenship; and "students with insufficient knowledge of the language of instruction".

Other systems, instead, had more detailed classifications that cover several groups of students with and immigrant background. Slovenia, for instance, had a number of group classifications:

- Former migrants who hold Slovenian citizenship: persons born in the Republic of Slovenia and living in Slovenia since birth (second and third generation migrants whose mother tongue is not Slovenian), or persons not born in Slovenia who obtained Slovenian citizenship;
- Persons who do not hold Slovenian citizenship, namely persons who obtained a permit for permanent residence in the Republic of Slovenia and persons with permit for temporary stay in the Republic of Slovenia;
- Asylum-seekers and persons under international protection;
- Citizens of member states of the European Union;
- Children of Slovenian emigrants and workers abroad (with or without Slovenian citizenship) who returned to Slovenia.

According to the country's Basic School Act children who are foreign citizens or stateless persons and reside in the Republic of Slovenia have the right to compulsory basic school education under the same conditions as citizens of the Republic of Slovenia.

Twenty education systems also adopted terminology for ethnic groups and national minorities. In Europe, a large proportion of countries identify the Roma community, with different national declinations of the term and group, such as Travellers, Sinti, and more (an in-depth description of European classifications of Roma individuals is provided in Rutigliano (2020[125])). Other systems also identified as minorities groups that are linked to different country origins. Finland, for instance, considered Kvens/Norwegian Finns (people of Finnish descent in northern Norway) and Forest Finns (Finnish people who settled in Norway). Japan also specifically identified Koreans living in Japan, and Slovenia the members of the native Italian and Hungarian national communities.

Twenty-one and 14 systems adopted specific terms for students from a socio-economically disadvantaged background and students in specific geographic areas respectively. Across different systems, socio-economic status was generally proxied on a threshold for family income levels, established based on whether families are eligible or receive social assistance benefits, proxied on parents' employment status/education level/standardised set of home possessions, or on a combination of these indicators (18 systems) (Varsik, 2022[139]). Specific geographic areas were identified by systems in terms of: i) being remote areas (12 systems); the socio-economic level or development of the area (9 systems); and specific Regions/Provinces/States (9 systems) (ibid.). Several educations systems considered more than one of these categories (ibid.).

Nineteen systems also identified gifted students, although the terminology adopted varies among them (as discussed in Rutigliano and Quarshie (2021[138])). Ireland, for example, defined "exceptionally able students", while Scotland (United Kingdom) defined them as "highly able". Instead, Türkiye and the United States respectively adopted the term "talented" and "gifted and talented" students.

LGBTQI+ students and Indigenous students were the two groups that are reportedly less often identified by OECD education systems. Respectively, ten and eight systems adopted a specific term for these two groups.

Intersectionality

There are many possible intersections between dimensions of diversity, but also with overarching factors such as socio-economic status and geographical location (Cerna et al., 2021[15]). The term intersectionality is based on Crenshaw's (1989[140]) work on gender and ethnicity and has been widely used in other areas in recent years (Davis, 2008[141]; Lutz, Herrera Vivar and Supik, 2011[142]). Identities overlap and intersect with new implications for educational policies. In the area of diversity and inclusion, the Project understands

intersectionality to mean that a person can embody multiple dimensions of diversity and, as such, be exposed to the different types of discrimination and disadvantages that occur as a consequence of the combination of identities (Lavizzari, 2015[143]). It explores how the six dimensions intersect with one another and with the overarching factors of socio-economic status and geographic location (e.g., if student attends school in an urban or rural area). More discussion on intersectionality is provided in Chapter 2.

Holistic framework for diversity, equity and inclusion

This report supports the view that diversity, equity and inclusion in education systems need to be approached holistically, building on their interdependencies in order to generate complementarities and prevent inconsistency of objectives. This chapter illustrates the synergies that can be generated between the different components in response to the overarching policy questions of the Strength through Diversity Project (Cerna et al., 2021[15]):

- "How can education systems support the learning and well-being outcomes of diverse populations and make systems more inclusive?" and
- "How can education systems support all individuals so that they are able to engage with others in increasingly diverse and complex societies?"

Assessing the equity and inclusiveness of education systems is a complex process that involves a range of policy areas and requires a comprehensive analytical approach and great care in the use of concepts (Cerna et al., 2021[15]). In particular, assessing the equity and inclusiveness of education systems requires the adoption of a holistic approach to diversity, equity and inclusion in education. This entails breaking out of policy silos and connecting them into a structured policy framework linking key areas for diversity, equity and inclusion in education (ibid.).

The Strength through Diversity Project examines comprehensively if and how education systems can ensure that societies are well-equipped to provide equitable and inclusive educational opportunities. As such, it considers the specific vulnerabilities and assets some students may experience because of their background and circumstances and how best education systems can reduce the prevalence or the effects of risk factors for academic underachievement and low overall well-being. This comprehensive and innovative analytical framework can guide countries in developing education systems that are responsive to the needs of diverse populations, as contextualised in this chapter. The holistic framework has been developed based on a thorough review of prior work conducted by the OECD on equity and fairness in education and has used the review to critically identify and examine points of departure and unanswered questions for the conceptualisation of inclusive education. In particular, the holistic framework extends the existing theoretical underpinnings of OECD work on equity in education.

As mentioned above, the framework examines six dimensions of diversity (i.e., migration; ethnic groups, national minorities and Indigenous peoples; gender; gender identity and sexual orientation; special education needs; and giftedness) and their intersections. To ensure inclusive and equitable approaches in education systems, reflecting on the following elements is key:

- That an overall, systemic framework for governing diversity, equity and inclusion in education is designed (Issue 1: Governance).
- That resources are used effectively to support diversity, equity and inclusion in education (Issue 2: Resourcing).
- That the system is able to build capacity for all stakeholders to support diversity, equity and inclusion in education (Issue 3: Capacity Development).
- That schools provide effective interventions to support diversity, equity and inclusion in education (Issue 4: School-level Interventions).

- That processes and outcomes are monitored and evaluated to support diversity, equity and inclusion in education (Issue 5: Monitoring and Evaluation).

The five main issues are organised in policy areas and described below. They are also presented in Table 1.3 below.

Table 1.3. Policy areas to analyse diversity, equity and inclusion in education systems

1. Governing diversity, equity and inclusion in education	2. Resourcing diversity, equity and inclusion in education	3. Developing capacity for managing diversity, equity and inclusion in education	4. Promoting school-level interventions to support diversity, equity and inclusion in education	5. Monitoring and evaluating diversity, equity and inclusion in education
1.A Educational **goals** and curricula for equity and inclusion	**2.A General distribution** of resources and diversity in education	**3.A Awareness** of diversity in education at the system level	**4.A Matching resources** within schools to individual student learning needs	**5.A Monitoring and Evaluation** of **outcomes** of diversity, inclusion and equity in education at the system level
1.B Regulatory framework for diversity and inclusion in education	**2.B Targeted distribution** of resources	**3.B Recruitment, retention, preparation and evaluation** of school staff	**4.B Learning strategies** to address diversity	**5.B Evaluating processes** for diversity, inclusion and equity in education at the local and school level
1.C Responsibilities for and **administration** of diversity in education		**3.C Preparation of all students** for diversity in education	**4.C Non-instructional support** and **services**	
1.D Education provision to account for diversity in education			**4.D** Engagement with **parents** and **communities**	

Source: Adapted from Cerna et al (2021[15]), Promoting inclusive education for diverse societies: A conceptual framework, OECD Education Working Paper No 260, https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/94ab68c6-en.

Issue 1: Governing diversity, equity and inclusion in education

This issue is concerned with how diversity, equity and inclusion are governed in education. One aspect concerns how diversity, inclusion and equity are influenced by the key foundations of education systems. This relates to system features, such as educational goals and student learning objectives (including curriculum policies) and the regulatory framework for diversity and inclusion (e.g., recognition of diversity and the need for specific provisions, rights of specific student groups). Another aspect concerns the responsibilities for and the administration of diversity (e.g., distribution of responsibilities, stakeholder engagement, organisation and supervision), and the education provisions to account for diversity including diversity offerings, learning environment, choice and selection. This policy area is discussed in Chapter 2.

Issue 2: Resourcing diversity, equity and inclusion in education

This issue is concerned with how diversity, equity and inclusion are resourced in education. One aspect examines the general distribution of resources for diversity in education (e.g., funding formulas). Another aspect deals with targeted distribution of resources including matching human resources to schools and programmes to fund provisions for specific student groups. This policy area is examined in Chapter 3.

Issue 3: Developing capacity for managing diversity, equity and inclusion in education

This issue is concerned with how to develop capacity for managing diversity, equity and inclusion in education. One aspect concerns building awareness of diversity in education at the system level among all students and across society. Another aspect relates to the recruitment, retention, preparation and evaluation of school staff such as teachers, school leaders and support staff. It also concerns professional learning and mentoring. A third aspect concerns the preparation of all students for diversity including student-to-student mentoring. This policy area is discussed in Chapter 4.

Issue 4: Promoting school-level interventions to support diversity, equity and inclusion in education

This issue is concerned with how to promote school-level interventions to support diversity, equity and inclusion in education. One aspect concerns the matching of resources within schools to individual student learning needs (including allocating teacher resources within schools [e.g., class size], use of space, use of time, Information Communication Technology [digital technologies] resources) and learning strategies to address diversity (e.g., student assessment including diagnostic assessment, individualised learning, classroom strategies and use of technology). Another aspect relates to non-instructional support and services (e.g., career counselling, personal counselling, medical and therapeutic services) and engagement with parents and communities. This policy area is examined in Chapter 5.

Issue 5: Monitoring and evaluating diversity, equity and inclusion in education

This issue is concerned with how to monitor and evaluate diversity, equity and inclusion in education. One aspect relates to the monitoring and evaluation of outcomes of diversity, equity and inclusion at the system level (such as evaluation of policies and programmes targeted at equity and inclusion, development of indicators, reporting on outcomes). Another aspect concerns evaluating processes for equity and inclusion and equity at all levels, including the evaluation of schools and local education administration and their role in achieving equity and inclusion. This policy area is discussed in Chapter 6.

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Annex 1.A. Methodologies and definitions

Strength through Diversity Survey Methodology

On 15 March 2022, the Strength through Diversity Project (hereinafter "Project") asked OECD countries to respond to the Strength through Diversity Policy Survey (hereinafter "Survey"). The Survey aimed to collect comparative information on education systems' policies for equity and inclusion, and provide a unique opportunity to compare education jurisdictions' definitions, data collection policies and practices in the areas of equity and inclusion. No such comparable data is regularly collected from OECD countries.

The Survey was divided in four modules with 39 items. The first three modules were content-related: module 1 regarded definitions and information on data collection; module 2 concerned the policy framework of the education system; and module 3 included a couple of items about intersectionality. Module 4 contained a few follow-up questions on the Survey. Countries were asked to fill out the Survey considering lower secondary education (ISCED 2) as the education level of reference.

Countries in which education is a devolved responsibility were asked to fill out a separate response for each sub-national entity. Some countries decided to follow this advice (Belgium and the United Kingdom), while others collated the information and sent one response (e.g., Australia, Canada and the United States). Given the combination of national and sub-national entities in the Survey responses, we refer to the responding participants as "education systems".

Education systems were responding to the Survey in an electronic format using LimeSurvey between March and August 2022. In total, 34 education systems submitted responses: Australia, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Czech Republic, Denmark, England (United Kingdom), Estonia, Flemish Community (Belgium), Finland, France, French Community (Belgium), Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Northern Ireland (United Kingdom), Norway, Portugal, Scotland (United Kingdom), Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Türkiye and the United States. Six OECD countries did not participate in the Survey: Austria, Costa Rica, Germany, Hungary, Israel and Poland. Given that policy contexts change in time, it is important to regard this information as representative of the year 2022 (school year 2021/22) in the participating education systems. In some cases, education systems provided additional information using the available text boxes or via email. These are used to complement and specify quantitative information.

Despite a wide coverage of OECD education systems, not all items were equally responded to. Therefore, caution needs to be exercised when generalising these results beyond the education systems covered in the responses.

Annex Table 1.A.1. Difference between 2009 and 2018 in diverse student groups gaps

Country	Difference 2018 - 2009					
	Top - Bottom quarter ESCS		Gender differences (girls - boys)		Immigrant status (immigrant - non-immig)	
	Diff.	S.e.	Diff.	S.e.	Diff.	S.e.
Australia	-2	(5.7)	-5	(4.0)	2	(6.8)
Austria	m	m	m	m	-6	(8.1)
Belgium	-5	(6.5)	-5	(5.4)	-6	(7.5)
Canada	1	(5.9)	-5	(2.9)	-4	(4.7)
Chile	-5	(8.0)	-2	(5.5)	m	m
Colombia	-4	(10.8)	1	(5.0)	-43	(28.2)
Costa Rica	3	9	0	4	6	8
Czech Republic	**21**	(8.2)	**-15**	(5.1)	31	(16.2)
Denmark	-3	(6.3)	1	(4.1)	2	(5.5)
Estonia	2	(7.8)	**-14**	(3.6)	4	(7.9)
Finland	**18**	(6.7)	-4	(3.6)	23	(14.6)
France	-3	(10.5)	**-15**	(4.8)	-8	(11.1)
Germany	9	(8.8)	**-14**	(4.9)	7	(8.3)
Greece	-7	(9.1)	-5	(5.5)	-6	(12.4)
Hungary	-4	(10.2)	**-11**	(5.7)	-1	(12.9)
Iceland	13	(8.0)	-4	(4.8)	-7	(14.2)
Ireland	-10	(7.9)	**-16**	(5.8)	-15	(8.2)
Israel	18	(9.1)	6	(7.8)	9	(8.8)
Italy	-10	(7.3)	**-21**	(4.2)	**-30**	(6.8)
Japan	-2	(8.7)	**-18**	(8.0)	m	m
Korea	7	(9.5)	-12	(7.7)	-7	(12.2)
Latvia	2	(7.8)	**-15**	(4.2)	-3	(15.5)
Lithuania	5	(7.2)	**-20**	(3.5)	**-17**	(4.1)
Luxembourg	7	(6.9)	**-10**	(3.2)	-3	(16.7)
Mexico	-2	(8.0)	**-14**	(3.0)	**26**	(10.8)
Netherlands*	9	(9.0)	5	(4.0)	-11	(6.7)
New Zealand	-7	(7.7)	**-17**	(5.6)	0	(7.2)
Norway	4	(7.4)	0	(4.1)	m	m
OECD average	1	(8.3)	**-9**	(4.7)	-1	(10.1)
Poland	2	(8.4)	**-17**	(3.6)	6	(10.8)
Portugal*	8	(8.5)	**-14**	(3.7)	m	m
Slovak Republic	**20**	(9.6)	**-17**	(4.9)	**16**	(8.0)
Slovenia	-8	(6.7)	**-13**	(3.5)	m	m
Spain	m	m	m	m	m	m
Sweden	-2	(9.0)	**-11**	(3.9)	17	(9.3)
Switzerland	11	(9.7)	**-8**	(3.8)	4	(5.9)
Türkiye	-16	(10.1)	**-18**	(5.3)	m	m
United Kingdom	-12	(7.4)	-5	(5.8)	-3	(8.8)
United States*	-8	(10.2)	-1	(4.9)	-15	(8.1)

Note: *The Netherlands, Portugal and United States: Data did not meet the PISA technical standards but were accepted as largely comparable (see PISA 2018 Annexes A2 and A4). Differences that are statistically significant are indicated in bold.
Source: OECD (2019[91]), PISA 2018 Results (Vol II), Annex B.1., https://doi.org/10.1787/b5fd1b8f-en

Annex Table 1.A.2. Definitions of equity

Education system	Is there a definition of equity in education?	Definitions of equity in education
Australia	Yes	There is no national definition of equity in education in Australia. However, it has been described and defined in a number of ways depending on the purpose. For example, The Equity and Excellence in Australian Schools review defined it as "ensuring that differences in educational outcomes are not the result of differences in wealth, income, power or possessions". This definition recognised that not all students are the same or can achieve the same outcomes; rather it meant equity of access for all students to a high-quality education. To facilitate the analysis of equity, in national reporting student outcomes are usually disaggregated (where data is available) by priority equity cohorts, which can include reporting by gender, Indigenous status, language background other than English, geographic location, socio-economic status, parental occupation, parental education and disability.
Canada	Yes	In Canada, equity and inclusion in education is described and defined at the provincial and territorial levels to serve regional and local needs and contexts.
Chile	Yes	The Ministry of Education refers to cultural diversity when dealing with equity and inclusion. Cultural diversity refers to the wealth that for centuries the different tribes, ethnic groups, peoples and countries have built, and to the evolution of thoughts, technologies, religions, ideologies and all the elements described in the exposed definition of culture that in general reflect the complexity of individual and collective identities in a particular historical context. With regard to this richness, in 2001, the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity was adopted, which identifies cultural pluralism and establishes that a common heritage of humanity should be recognised. Valuing cultural diversity ultimately refers to the respect for the dignity of each individual, and to the respect for human rights in their highest expression of an ethical principle.
Colombia	Yes	Permanent process that enables, recognises, values and responds appropriately to the diversity of characteristics, interests, possibilities and expectations of children, adolescents, young people and adults. It focuses on promoting the comprehensive development and participation of all people in a learning environment without any discrimination or exclusion, guaranteeing, within the framework of human rights, the support and reasonable adjustments required, reducing the gaps, through practices, policies and cultures that eliminate existing barriers in the educational context.
Czech Republic	Yes	The topic of equality of access to quality education is one of the main goals of the Strategy for the Education Policy of the Czech Republic 2030+. It defines measures to be implemented to improve the situation regarding access to quality education for all, regardless of their socio-economic status. It also focuses on strengthening the competences of school leaders and teachers, which will contribute to the development of the potential of all students, including with regard to equal opportunities (independent of gender, race, skin colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or beliefs, political opinions or any other opinions, belonging to a national minority, disability, age, and sexual orientation).
England (UK)	Yes	Under the Equality Act 2010, schools must not discriminate against a pupil in a number of respects, because of a characteristic protected by the Act – including race. State-funded schools are also subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty which requires public bodies, in exercise of their functions, to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by or under the Act; advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. We have published guidance for schools on how to comply with their duties under the Equality Act 2010 - Equality Act 2010: advice for schools - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).
Estonia	Yes	There is no specific definition for equity in education but the principles are embedded in the various laws and legislative Acts, e.g., pursuant to the §37 and §12 of the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia, everyone has the right to education and is equal before the law and may not be discriminated against on the basis of nationality, race, colour, sex, language, origin, religion, political or other views, property or social status, or on other grounds. These principles are further described by the Equal Treatment Act §2 and the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act §6. See also: https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/ee/508012015002/consolide/current.
Finland	N/A	
Flemish Comm. (Belgium)	Yes	Achieve optimal learning and development opportunities for all pupils.

Education system	Is there a definition of equity in education?	Definitions of equity in education
France	Yes	The principle of equity in education is defined in Article L 111.1 of the Education Code in its paragraph 5: to guarantee the right to education to everyone, "in respect of equal opportunities, aid is allocated to pupils and students according to their resources and merits. The distribution of the means of the public education service takes into account the differences of situation, notably in economic, territorial and social matters". This is the basis of the priority education policy, which consist of giving more to those who need it most and concentrating resources in the territories where the greatest social difficulties are concentrated. The priority education policy is a targeted policy, which is applied in 1 091 priority education networks (a middle school and its attached schools) identified on the basis of four criteria): rate of scholarship holders, rate of disadvantaged population, rate of late entry into 6th grade and percentage of students residing in priority neighbourhoods of the city policy (QPV) (zoning which itself is built from the poverty rate since 2014).
Greece	Yes	According to the Hellenic Constitution (2019, Art. 16, Par. 4) “All Greek citizens have the right to free education, at all levels in public schools. The State supports both students who excel, and those who need help or special protection, depending on their abilities”. This means that there are no distinctions based on sex and sexual orientation, religion and ethnicity, and also include students with special educational need and/or disabilities. In addition, Greece constantly strives for the successful inclusion of students from migrant backgrounds into its education system aiming for their full registration and attendance.
Iceland	Yes	Equal study opportunities: At compulsory school all pupils are entitled to appropriate education. Pupils should have equal opportunities, regardless of their abilities or circumstances. Therefore, special effort should be made to prevent discrimination on the basis of whether the pupil is of Icelandic or foreign origin. Opportunities are not to depend on whether pupils are boys or girls, where they live, what class they belong to, their sexual orientation, their health, whether they have disabilities, or their circumstances in other respects.
Ireland	Yes	In Ireland, a specific definition on equity in education is not set out in legislation. However, Equity is referred to as a key goal for educational provision, for example in the Department of Education’s most recent Statement of Strategy (2021-2023). The Equal Status Acts (2000-2015) and other equality legislation set out nine grounds for equal treatment and anti-discrimination. The nine grounds are: gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community. These Acts apply to the provision of educational services and set out four areas in which an education institution must not discriminate: 1) the admission of a student, including the terms or conditions of the admission of a student, 2) the access of a student to a course, facility or benefit provided by the school, 3) any other term or condition of participation in the school, and 4) the expulsion of a student or any other sanction.
Italy	Yes	The Constitution of the Italian Republic guarantees school education for all in Article 34, thus fulfilling the mandatory duty of solidarity provided by Article 2 and responding to the fundamental principle of equality and non-discrimination enshrined in Article 3 of the Italian Constitution: "All citizens have equal social dignity and are equal before the law, without distinction of sex, race, language, religion, political opinions, personal and social conditions. It is a task of the Republic to remove the obstacles to economic and social freedom and equality of citizens, hinder the full development of the human person and the effective participation of all workers in the political, economic and social organisation of the Country." Among the rules applying the principle of equality in education provided for in the Constitution are: the Law n. 40 of 6 March 1998; the Legislative Decree n. 286 of 25 July 1998 “Consolidated act of provisions concerning regulations on immigration and rules about the conditions of aliens”; the Law n. 107 of 13 July 2015 – “Good School Reform Act” Comprehensive reform of the school and training system; the Law n. 47 dated 7 April 2017 "Protection measures for Unaccompanied Foreign Minors". Other references and definitions can be found in the Guidelines for the reception and integration of students with a non-Italian citizenship (February 2014) and the Guidelines for educational rights of pupils outside their family (December 2017). Italy has chosen the full integration of everyone in the public education system and intercultural education as its cultural horizon. In order to ensure education rights, migrant pupils (even the undocumented ones) can be enrolled in every period of the year and have the same rights to social and health assistance as Italian pupils.
Japan	Yes	Although it is not the definition of equity in education per se, Article 26 of the Constitution of Japan states that “[a]ll people shall have the right to receive an equal education correspondent to their ability, as provided by law,” and Article 4 (1) of the Basic Act on Education states that “[t]he people must be given equal opportunities to receive an education suited to their abilities, and must not be subjected to discrimination in education on account of race, creed, sex, social status, economic position, or family origin”.
Latvia	Yes	In line with the Education law, everyone has the right to qualitative and inclusive education, and the persons have the right to acquire education regardless of the material and social status, race, nationality, ethnic origin, gender, religious and political affiliation, health condition, occupation, and place of residence.
Mexico	Yes	Equity in education implies that the State guarantees the full exercise of the right to education for all people, based on combating socio-economic, regional, capacity and gender inequalities, supporting students in conditions of social vulnerability and offering everyone a relevant education that ensures their access, progress, permanence and, where appropriate, timely graduation from education services.

Education system	Is there a definition of equity in education?	Definitions of equity in education
Netherlands	Yes	Children with the same talents are entitled to equal opportunities. Every child must be able to fully develop his or her background, parents' level of education, their financial situation or students' special educational needs should not affect a child's school performance. In Article 1 of the Constitution it is stated: All those who are in the Netherlands are treated equally in equal cases. Discrimination on the grounds of religion, belief, political affiliation, race, sex or on any ground whatsoever is not permitted.
New Zealand	N/A	
Northern Ireland (UK)	Yes	Ensuring equality of opportunity in education for all children irrespective of Section 75 Group.
Norway	Yes	All pupils shall be treated equally and no pupil is to be subjected to discrimination. The pupils must also be given equal opportunities, so that they can make independent choices. School must consider the diversity of pupils and facilitate for each pupil to experience belonging in school and society.
Portugal	Yes	Equity is one of the guiding principles of the law on Inclusive Education (DL 54/2018). Equity is the guarantee that all children and pupils have access to the necessary support to realise their learning and development potential.
Scotland (UK)	Yes	Equity in education means that personal or social circumstances are not obstacles to achievement, and that all children and young people are well supported and have the same opportunities to succeed.
Slovak Republic	Yes	The Schools Act n. 245/2008 stipulates: in §3, c): "equal access to education, taking into account the special educational needs of the individual and her/his co-responsibility for her/his education", in §3, e): "prohibition of all forms of discrimination and especially segregation", in §145: "rights provided under this Act shall be guaranteed on equal terms to each applicant, child, pupil and student in accordance with the principle of equal treatment in education defined by a separate law" (which is the Act on Equal Treatment - Anti-discrimination Act, No 365/2004 Coll.).
Slovenia	Yes	"Equity in education, which is an essential element of social justice, is closely associated with equality. Therefore, equity in education is understood often as equality of educational opportunities, which is essential for all citizens in contemporary societies and based on liberal and democratic principles to have an equal opportunity to succeed in life. The notion of equal opportunity presupposes that each individual is treated in accordance with the classic law of justice (equals must be treated the same and non-equals must be treated in accordance with their differences) in situations in which many people compete for limited resources (for example, acceptance into a quality school or university). The conception of social justice as equal opportunity therefore allows inequality in the achievements of individuals, but only if everyone has the same opportunity to attain such achievements, and if the inequality in the achievements of individuals is a consequence of their free choice, ability, invested effort and accepted risk. Due to the fact that an individual possessing equal opportunity in society is strongly dependent on equal opportunities in education, a state that strives for a just society must, with various measures (the implementation of positive discrimination policies for children from socially and culturally underprivileged environments; ensuring everyone the same extent of free education; enabling the individualisation of the school system and instruction that offers every pupil optimal opportunities to acquire a quality education and to take shape as an autonomous individual; the inclusion of children with special needs in cases where such inclusion would be of more benefit to them than schooling in special schools, etc.), first ensure everyone equal educational opportunity. Furthermore, unless there are sound reasons for establishing differences, justice in education always demands the equal, impartial and proportional treatment of pupils in assessment of knowledge, reward, punishment, etc. This means that pupils who demonstrate the same knowledge must gain the same grade, those who infringe the same rules must receive the same punishment, etc." (Ministry of Education and Sport, 2011[144]).
Spain	Yes	The new Education Law (LOMLOE) states that equity is one of the principles on which the Spanish education system is based. The Law provides a precise definition of the extent of equity in education (Article 1. Principles): Equity, which guarantees equal opportunities for the full development of the personality through education, educational inclusion, equal rights and opportunities, also between women and men, which help to overcome any discrimination and universal accessibility to education, and which acts as a compensatory element of personal, cultural, economic and social inequalities, with special attention to those arising from any type of disability, in accordance with the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, ratified by Spain in 2008. The Law also states that in order to give effect to the principle of equity in the exercise of the right to education, the public administrations will develop actions aimed at persons, groups, social environments and territorial areas that are in a situation of socio-educational and cultural vulnerability, with the aim of eliminating the barriers that limit their access, presence, participation or learning, thereby ensuring reasonable adjustments according to their individual need and promoting the necessary support to promote their maximum educational and social development, so that they can access an inclusive education, on equal terms with others. Likewise, the Law states that compensation policies shall reinforce the action of the education system in such a way that inequalities arising from social, economic, cultural, geographic, ethnic or other factors shall be avoided.

		It is the responsibility of the State and the Regions (Autonomous Communities) to set their priority objectives with a view to achieving more equitable education (Article 8. Principles, from Chapter II Equity and compensation of inequalities in education).
Education system	**Is there a definition of equity in education?**	**Definitions of equity in education**
Sweden	Yes	The Swedish Education Act highlights three aspects of equity: equal access to education, equal quality of education and that education should be compensatory (meaning that the education should take into account students' different needs and strive to offset differences in students' conditions).
Türkiye	Yes	Constitution of Türkiye of 1982, as amended in 2017 Article 10: "Everyone is equal before the law without distinction to language, race, colour, sex, political opinion, philosophical belief, religion and sect, or any such grounds. Men and women have equal rights". Article 42: No one shall be deprived of the right of education. Basic Law on National Education, No. 1739 dated 1973 Article 4: Educational institutions are open to everyone regardless of language, race, gender, disability or religion. In education, no person, family, group or class shall be granted privilege.
United States	Yes	While there is no explicit definition of the phrase "equity in education," the concept of equality of opportunity, access, and outcomes is embedded throughout various policy documents including the U.S. Department of Education's mission, which is to "…promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access." To fulfil this mission, the Department embeds equity and inclusion throughout its operations and programmes to meet the needs of every learner. The current Administration has established strategic priorities based on feedback from children, educators, parents and families, and their communities toward this end. On 20 January 2021, the President of the United States issued Executive Order 13985, "On Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government". The Executive Order stresses the concept of equal opportunity as the bedrock of American democracy and defines equity for the purposes of the Executive Order as, "the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment, such as Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of colour; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality (Section 2: Definitions"). The U.S. Department of Education issued its attendant 2022 Agency Equity Plan on 14 April 2022.

Note: Education jurisdictions were asked to provide an English translation of their definition of equity in education. Such definition(s) can be embedded in legislative framework or can be part of document(s) published by the national (or sub-national) authority. This table is based on answers to the question from the Strength through Diversity Policy Survey "If available, please provide an English translation of the definition of equity in education. Such definition(s) can be embedded in your legislative framework or can be part of document(s) published by a national (or sub-national) authority". Thirty-four education systems responded to this question.
Source: OECD (2022[92]), Strength through Diversity Policy Survey 2022

Annex Table 1.A.3. Definitions of inclusion

Education system	Is there a definition of inclusion in education?	Definition of inclusion in education
Australia	N/A	
Canada	Yes	In Canada, equity and inclusion in education is described and defined at the provincial and territorial levels to serve regional and local needs and contexts.
Chile	Yes	Taking into consideration that cultural diversity overarches any educational approach, and that school culture is part of the identity framework of each subject, inclusion as an approach becomes an essential element to guide the construction and development of an education where everyone feels included. In this way, the Ministry of Education in implementing inclusive education, has made a conceptual transition from integration to inclusion, opening the concept beyond the importance of considering students with particular conditions of disability or special educational needs. Inclusion is understood to attend to each and every one of the differences that identify the members of an educational community, contemplating the diversity of educability conditions, as stated in the document Inclusive Educational Communities, Keys to Action. This approach is materialised in three guiding principles of inclusive educational actions: Presence (access, welcome and integration); Recognition (visibility, identity and diversities); Relevance (pedagogical practices, learning styles and contexts).

Education system	Is there a definition of inclusion in education?	Definition of inclusion in education
Colombia	Yes	Permanent process that enables, recognises, values and responds appropriately to the diversity of characteristics, interests, possibilities and expectations of children, adolescents, young people and adults. It focuses on promoting the comprehensive development and participation of all people in a learning environment without any discrimination or exclusion, guaranteeing, within the framework of human rights, the support and reasonable adjustments required, reducing the gaps, through practices, policies and cultures that eliminate existing barriers in the educational context.
Czech Republic	Yes	The method of education, which tends to the maximum development of each pupil with regard to their individual needs and specificities.
England (UK)	Yes	The approach over inclusion is summarised in the statutory guidance on the relevant legislation, the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice: "As part of its commitments under articles 7 and 24 of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the UK Government is committed to inclusive education of disabled children and young people and the progressive removal of barriers to learning and participation in mainstream education. The Children and Families Act 2014 secures the general presumption in law of mainstream education in relation to decisions about where children and young people with SEN should be educated and the Equality Act 2010 provides protection from discrimination for disabled people".
Estonia	Yes	The Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act provides for the implementation of inclusive education as the guiding principle for the organisation of education. According to the law, general education of good quality adheres to the principles of inclusive education and is equally available to all persons regardless of their social and economic background, nationality, gender, place of residence or special educational needs. Inclusive education primarily means the basic right of a person to education of good quality. The basic values, principles for organising studies and general objectives of studies of a general education school are the same for all learners, regardless of their special educational needs or whether the studies are conducted in a regular school or in a school created for students who need support. See also: National Education Systems, Estonia/Eurydice, Ch. 12. Educational Support and Guidance: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/educational-support-and-guidance-20_en.
Finland	N/A	
Flemish Comm. (Belgium)	Yes	Achieve optimal learning and development opportunities for all pupils (this definition underlies many Acts/decrees in education in Flanders and can be considered as the overarching, equitable and inclusive aim of Flemish education). Nevertheless, it is important to note that the concept of inclusion in the context of Flemish education has a more specific usage in that it refers to the leading principle for schools' approach to pupils with SEN. In particular, each school is to provide broad basic care (for all) and increased care for pupils who need it. This broad basic care is the phase in the care continuum in which the school, based on a vision of pupil guidance, stimulates the development of all pupils within the four guidance domains by: Offering a powerful learning environment, Monitoring pupils systematically, Actively working to reduce risk factors, and strengthening protective factors.
France	Yes	The French concept of inclusion does not have the same elements as in other OECD countries. According to Article L111-1 of the Education Code: "Education is the first national priority. The public education service is designed and organised with pupils and students in mind. It contributes to equality of opportunity and to the fight against social and territorial inequalities in school and educational success. It recognises that all children share the capacity to learn and progress. It ensures inclusive schooling for all children, without distinction. It also ensures the social mix of the school population within educational institutions. To guarantee the success of all, the school is built with the participation of parents, regardless of their social origin. It is enriched and strengthened by dialogue and co-operation between all the actors of the educational community.
Greece	Yes	The introduction of a new law on education (4823/2021) in Greece reforms the supportive educational structures with an explicit orientation for inclusion. The 4823/2021 Act is founded on an "educational approach, which takes into account the needs of the heterogeneity of the student population and aims to remove barriers to learning and ensure equal access to the educational system of all students, including students with disabilities and special educational needs" (Law 4823/2021 Article 4).
Iceland	Yes	Inclusive education refers to a compulsory school in pupils' locality or immediate area which meets the educational and social needs of pupils in a mainstream school environment guided by principles of human dignity, democratic values and social justice. The inclusive school assumes that everyone has equal or equivalent study opportunities, and the education is appropriate for each individual. The attitude of the inclusive school is characterised by respect for the rights of all pupils to participate in the learning community of the local school regardless of their attainment or status. This

		basic principle in school operations in Iceland involves universal involvement, access and participation of every pupil in school activities.
Education system	**Is there a definition of inclusion in education?**	**Definition of inclusion in education**
Ireland	Yes	In Ireland, a general overall definition on inclusion in education is not set out. A definition for the inclusion of students with special educational needs is set out in the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN Act) – 2004: A child with special educational needs shall be educated in an inclusive environment with children who do not have such needs unless the nature or degree of those needs of the child is such that to do so would be inconsistent with — (a) the best interests of the child as determined in accordance with any assessment carried out under this Act, or (b) the effective provision of education for children with whom the child is to be educated. Educational provision around inclusion is governed by the Equal Status Acts (2000-2015), which places certain requirements on schools and educational institutions in relation to how they deliver their services. The Equal Status Acts specify four areas in which an education institution must not discriminate: 1) the admission of a student, including the terms or conditions of the admission of a student; 2) the access of a student to a course, facility or benefit provided by the school; 3) any other term or condition of participation in the school; and 4) the expulsion of a student or any other sanction. The Acts require that schools and educational institutions do not discriminate across the nine grounds in our equality legislation (the nine ground are: gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community). They must reasonably accommodate students with disabilities. Harassment and sexual harassment is prohibited in education institutions.
Italy	Yes	As highlighted in the Legislative Decree n. 66 of 2017, inclusion at school: a) concerns girls and boys, pupils and students, responds to different educational needs and is realised through targeted educational and didactic strategies for the development of the potential of everyone in accordance with the right for self-determination and reasonable accommodation and in the perspective of the best quality of life; b) is realised through cultural and educational projects, the organisation and curriculum of educational institutions, as well as through the definition and sharing projects among schools, families and other public - private subjects, operating in the educational community; c) constitutes fundamental commitment of all the components of the educational community which, within the framework of the specific roles and responsibilities help to ensure the educational success of girls and boys, pupils and students.
Japan	Yes	Although it is not the definition of inclusion in education per se, Article 4 (1) of the Basic Act on Education states that "[t]he people must be given equal opportunities to receive an education suited to their abilities, and must not be subjected to discrimination in education on account of race, creed, sex, social status, economic position, or family origin." For example, in terms of disabled people, Article 16(1) of the Basic Act for Persons with Disabilities states that "[t]he national government and local public entities must give accommodation to children and students with disabilities being able to receive their education together with children and students without disabilities insofar as possible, so that persons with disabilities are able to receive a full education based on their age and capabilities and in accordance with their particular characteristics, and must take necessary measures to improve and enhance the contents and methods of the education".
Latvia	Yes	In line with the Education Development Guidelines 2021-2027 "Future Skills for Future Society", inclusive education is a process that ensures that the diverse needs of all learners are met, maximising opportunities for each learner to participate in learning, culture and diverse communities and minimising exclusion from education and learning.
Mexico	Yes	Inclusion: is a transformative process that ensures full participation and access to quality learning opportunities for all children, youth and adults, respects and values diversity, and eliminates all forms of discrimination in and through education. It represents a commitment to make educational institutions and other learning environments such places, where all are valued and feel part of, and where diversity is seen as a richness (Cali Commitment, UNESCO).
Netherlands	N/A	
New Zealand	N/A	
Northern Ireland (UK)	Yes	Inclusion in education would generally be taken to mean the inclusion of all children wherever possible irrespective of the Section 75 Group they represent.
Norway	Yes	Inclusion means that all children and pupils should feel that they belong. They should feel safe and discover that they are valuable and that they are able to help shape their own learning. An inclusive environment welcomes all children and pupils. School shall develop an inclusive environment that promotes health, well-being and learning for all. Schools shall [...] help each pupil to preserve and develop her or his identity in an inclusive and diverse environment. When developing an inclusive

		and inspiring learning environment, diversity must be acknowledged as a resource.
Education system	**Is there a definition of inclusion in education?**	**Definition of inclusion in education**
Portugal	Yes	Inclusion is one of the guiding principles of the law on Inclusive Education (DL 54/2018). Inclusion is the right of all children and pupils to access and participate, fully and effectively, in the same educational contexts. It was adopted the UNESCO definition: a process aimed at responding to the diversity of pupils' needs through increased participation of all in learning and in life of the school community.
Scotland (UK)	Yes	Inclusive education is an approach that recognises and values the diversity of learners and is able to respond flexibly to that diversity in such a way that barriers to participation, learning and achievement are removed, and a high-quality education for all is developed and sustained.
Slovak Republic	Yes	According §2 lett. ai) of national school law n. 245/2008 inclusive education is common education of children, pupils, students or participants in education, carried out on the basis of equal opportunities and respect for their educational needs and individual peculiarities, and supporting their active involvement in educational activities of the school or school facility.
Slovenia	Yes	The principle of inclusion is embedded in the legislative framework and in national guidelines and strategic documents. "Education that follows the often-mentioned generally accepted values and norms of civilisation - human rights and duties, tolerance and respect, which promote mutual assistance and solidarity, care for the environment, which support knowledge and respect for intergenerational differences, etc., and also support the goals of inclusion and integration. (White Paper on Education, 2011). One of the education goals of the Republic of Slovenia (defined by the Organisation and Financing of Education Act, Article 2) is: “provide the optimal development of the individual, irrespective of gender, social background or cultural identity, religion, racial, ethnic or national origin, and regardless of their physical and mental constitution or invalidity". Also, other goals support the principle of inclusion. The 2a Article defines that kindergartens, schools and other institutions for education of SEN children shall, in line with the education goals, guarantee a safe and supportive learning environment wherein physical punishment of children and of any kind of violence against and among children are prohibited, as well as discrimination on the grounds of gender, sexual orientation, social and cultural background, religion, race, ethnic and national origin, physical and mental development is prohibited.
Spain	Yes	Inclusive education is an aspiration for "all, without exception", with the most vulnerable being at the forefront of action plans as they face the greatest barriers. It is understood as the process of helping to overcome barriers that limit the presence, participation and achievement of learners, as well as the process of strengthening the capacity of the education system.
Sweden	Yes	The National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools defines inclusion as meaning that the education should be organised so that everyone can participate based on their circumstances and succeed in learning.
Türkiye	Yes	Basic Law on National Education, No. 1739 dated 1973 Article 4: Educational institutions are open to everyone regardless of language, race, gender, disability or religion. In education, no one person, family, group or class shall be granted privilege.
United States	Yes	Similar to the previous question, while there is no explicit definition of “inclusion in education,” the concept is implicit within the Department’s mission and throughout guiding policy documents to meet the needs of all students. Inclusion also has particular meaning within the special education context to ensure that special education students can receive support while staying in a general education classroom. The governing legislation for children with disabilities is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) which requires states to have in effect policies and procedures to demonstrate that the State has established a goal of providing full educational opportunity to all children with disabilities, aged birth through 21, and a detailed timetable for accomplishing that goal.

Note: Education jurisdictions have been asked to provide an English translation of their definition of inclusion in education. Such definition(s) can be embedded in the legislative framework or can be part of document(s) published by the national (or sub-national) authority. This table is based on answers to the question from the Strength through Diversity Policy Survey “If available, please provide an English translation of the definition of inclusion in education. Such definition(s) can be embedded in your legislative framework or can be part of document(s) published by a national (or sub-national) authority”. Thirty-four education systems responded to this question.
Source: OECD (2022[92]), Strength through Diversity Policy Survey 2022.

Notes

[1] The data reported did not include the most recent OECD member countries, Colombia and Costa Rica, which joined in 2020 and 2021 respectively.

[2] Natural population decline is meant to occur due to low birth rates and ageing.

[3] The total fertility rate (TFR) in a specific year is defined as the total number of children that would be born to each woman if she were to live to the end of her child-bearing years and gave birth to children in alignment with the prevailing age-specific fertility rates.

[4] In line with OECD conventions, this report identifies "rural schools" in the PISA data as those in communities with fewer than 3 000 people and "urban schools" as those located in any city with more than 100 000 people, unless otherwise noted (OECD, 2017[145]).

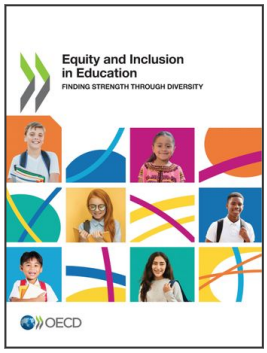
[5] Resilient learners can adapt to various tasks and environments, taking advantage of opportunities to reach their individual potential. Such learners have the capacity and agency to identify and capitalise on opportunities given to them by the system and to create their own. They are also able to move between learning tasks and environments, engaging pro-actively in efforts to enhance them (OECD, 2021[74]).

[6] The data excludes Spain for a lack of available information, and includes Costa Rica (which is not included in the OECD PISA reports published in 2019).

[7] ESCS refers to the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status.

[8] Economic literature is divided into two streams that correlate the returns to education to two different phenomena. On the one hand, human capital theory sustains that earning premiums are associated with productivity increases that occur as people acquire additional qualifications. On the other hand, an important concern is that education may have a value in the labour market not because of any effect on productivity but for 'spurious' reasons. In particular, education may act as a signal of ability or other characteristics that employers value because it contributes to productivity but which they cannot easily observe, which is defined as a signalling effect of education (Riley, 2001[147]; Spence, 1973[146]).

[9] "Visible minority" is an administrative category used in Canada that refers to "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour" as defined in the Employment Equity Act (Cerna et al., 2021[15]).



From:

Equity and Inclusion in Education

Finding Strength through Diversity

Access the complete publication at:

https://doi.org/10.1787/e9072e21-en

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD (2023), "An overview of diversity, equity and inclusion in education", in *Equity and Inclusion in Education: Finding Strength through Diversity*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.1787/0c767cb5-en