Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

EDU/WKP(2021)17

Unclassified

English - Or. English

16 November 2021

DIRECTORATE FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Promoting inclusive education for diverse societies: A conceptual framework

OECD Education Working Paper No. 260

Lucie Cerna (OECD), Cecilia Mezzanotte (OECD), Alexandre Rutigliano, Ottavia Brussino (OECD), Paulo Santiago (OECD), Francesca Borgonovi (OECD), Caitlyn Guthrie (OECD)

This working paper has been authorised by Andreas Schleicher, Director of the Directorate for Education and Skills, OECD.

Contact: Lucie Cerna, lucie.cerna@oecd.org

JT03485401

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Acknowledgements

The Working Paper was drafted by current and former members of the OECD *Strength through Diversity: Education for Inclusive Societies* project. The authors would like to thank participants of several Meetings of Country Representatives of the project and participants of the Policy Advice and Implementation Division seminar for their feedback on earlier versions of this Working Paper. The authors also thank Andreas Schleicher and Jody McBrien for their comments, and Daiana Torres Lima and Rachel Linden for their help formatting and publishing the document.

Abstract

In many countries, schools and classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse along a variety of dimensions, including migration; ethnic groups, national minorities and Indigenous peoples; gender; gender identity and sexual orientation; special education needs; and giftedness. To navigate this diversity, adopting a multidimensional and intersectional lens could help education systems promote equity and inclusion in education and foster the well-being and learning of all students. Such an approach could also support education systems in preparing all individuals so that they can engage with others in increasingly complex and diverse societies. To build equitable and inclusive education systems, analysing policy issues regarding governance arrangements, resourcing schemes, capacity building, school-level interventions, and monitoring and evaluation is key. The *Strength through Diversity: Education for Inclusive Societies* project seeks to help governments and education systems address diversity to achieve more equitable and inclusive education systems. This paper presents the project's theoretical and analytical framework.

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1. Introduction

In many countries, classrooms and societies are becoming increasingly diverse along a variety of dimensions, including migration; ethnic groups, national minorities and Indigenous peoples; gender; gender identity and sexual orientation; special education needs and giftedness. Dimensions of diversity can intersect in many ways, and also with other factors such as socio-economic status and geographic location. It is important to address and take into account diversity in all its facets through a multidimensional and intersectional approach. This is fundamental for education systems to be equitable and inclusive and to promote strong communities. Equitable and inclusive education systems support students to achieve their full educational potential irrespective of their personal and social circumstances, and help them to develop a sense of belonging and self-worth.

This approach aims to advance the debate on educational equity from normative evaluations on how resources are allocated, towards validating the self-worth of individual students in the pursuit of truly inclusive societies. This is crucial to improving the learning and well-being outcomes of individuals within diverse populations but also to supporting all people to engage with others constructively in increasingly diverse and complex societies.

Various studies on diversity, equity and inclusion exist, so it is important to draw on different strands of research to bring the studies together. Issues related to the definition of educational objectives and standards, the organisation of schooling, resource allocation and trade-offs countries face in striving for inclusion in education also need to be considered. Furthermore, emphasis should be put on the governance challenges related to the development of coherent and comprehensive approaches aimed at serving diverse populations in coordination with other areas of policy making including health and social services. These policy issues represent key areas to promote more equitable and inclusive education systems where all students can thrive in increasingly diverse classrooms.

Assessing the inclusiveness of education systems (i.e., the extent to which they promote the inclusion of diverse learners) is a complex process which deals with a range of policy areas, and requires a comprehensive analytical approach and great care in the use of concepts. In particular, assessing the inclusiveness of education systems requires the adoption of a holistic approach to diversity and inclusion in education policy. This entails breaking out of policy silos and connecting them into a structured and comprehensive policy framework linking key areas for diversity, equity and inclusion.

The OECD *Strength through Diversity: Education for Inclusive Societies* project seeks to help governments and education systems address diversity to achieve more equitable and inclusive education systems. Following Phase 1 of the Strength through Diversity project, *The Integration of Immigrants and Refugees in Schools and Training Systems*, this paper sets out a proposed conceptual framework to study diversity, equity and inclusion in education.

2. Analytical framework

2.1. Background and context

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 climate change, rising inequalities and demographic shifts, have contributed to the increasing diversity found in our countries, communities and classrooms (OECD, 2019[2]; International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2020[3]; OECD, 2016[4]). Diversity has important implications on education systems and conversely, the potential role education systems play in shaping these trends and building more sustainable and inclusive societies for tomorrow.

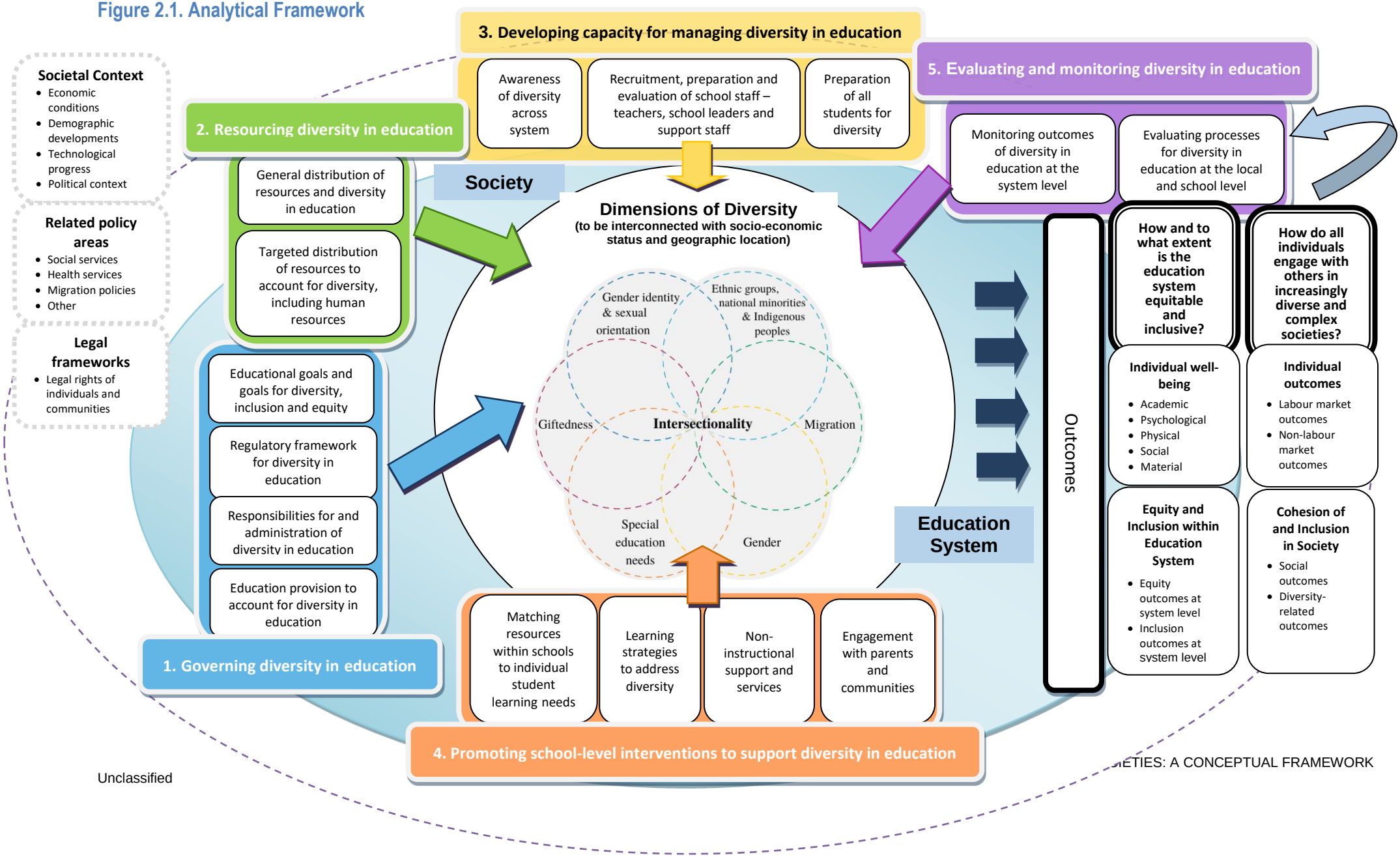
The democratic process relies on the civic knowledge and skills of citizens, as well as their engagement in public matters (OECD, 2019[2]). Yet striking a fair balance between all parties in the face of increasing diversity is no easy endeavour. Rising inequality and an increasing gap between rural and urban areas has led many citizens to take to the streets to voice their concerns and demands. This form of civic participation is gaining popularity at a time when many countries have seen a drop in voter turnout and a decline in public trust of institutions.

Moreover, digitalisation has made it easier to disseminate inaccuracies and outright lies, and there is growing concern about the algorithms and echo chambers that only confirm the prior beliefs of individuals. This widens the gap between the “self” and the “other”, making it difficult to establish common ground and foster social cohesion. At the same time, digital technologies have also increased our access to information and given a voice to some of the most marginalised and vulnerable groups in society. These groups are diverse and many have historically faced exclusion from participation in mainstream political debates, possibly because of their gender, immigration background or because they are part of an ethnic minority. Including diverse voices in the public policy debate is not only a matter of human rights; it has the power to intrinsically transform the way policies are made so that they better reflect today’s diverse societies. The need to adapt education systems to all learners’ needs will be essential in building inclusive societies that leave no one behind.

Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that global phenomena can spread rapidly, which causes the need for strong coordination among countries to respond timely and consistently. Education systems, too, require greater crisis management planning and for flexibility of their teaching staff and practices. It is also fundamental that plans take into account the need for adapting response to diverse needs, as to ensure equity and inclusion not only in emergency solutions such as distance learning practices but also after the end of a pandemic to ensure that no one is left behind. All these global developments have important implications on how we analyse diversity, equity and inclusion in education.

The analytical framework is presented in Figure 2.1 and will be discussed in the following sections.

Figure 2.1. Analytical Framework



2.2. Theoretical foundations

The project follows in the footsteps traced by the first phase and takes a holistic approach to examine 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.

The project adopts a resilience framework to analyse what education systems can do to promote positive change considering broad individual and social well-being as the end goals of this process. Resilience refers to "the capacity of individuals, institutions and societies to overcome adversity and display positive adjustment" (Daniel and Wassell, 2002[5]; Howard, Dryden and Johnson, 1999[6]). The concept of resilience explains individuals' ability to cope with adverse circumstances and the different ways in which they respond to these circumstances. As a result, experts and policy makers can analyse what role institutional and social features play in reducing individuals' vulnerability to adversity (OECD, 2018[7]). Susceptibility depends on the specific assets and vulnerabilities that actors have when adversity strikes, but also to the unique combination of risk, protective factors and circumstances that accompany the experience of adverse events. In this sense, focusing on resilience might help identify the policies and practices that support and promote individuals' positive adjustment in the face of adversity. The resilience framework adopted in the project considers that those who experience adverse circumstances are not equally susceptible to such circumstances and, as a result, display different degrees of adjustment. The framework applies to individuals, organisations such as schools and whole societies.

In particular, the goal is to develop a comprehensive and innovative analytical framework that could guide efforts to consider how countries can develop education systems that are responsive to the needs of diverse populations. The project also aims to support countries in articulating coherence in the system on the definition of clear policy goals and the design and implementation of policy efforts directed at reaching such goals. Increased international migration, evolving legal frameworks recognising the rights of individuals with special education needs, evolving societal attitudes towards the rights of LGBTQI+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, queer and intersexual) individuals and of women and men and the opportunities offered by digital technologies are just some of the societal factors that shape the demand for education responses to diversity.

The development of the analytical framework is based on a thorough review of prior work conducted by the OECD on equity and fairness in education and uses the review to critically identify and examine points of departure and unanswered questions for the conceptualisation of inclusive education.

In particular, the project extends the current theoretical underpinnings of OECD work on equity in education. Building on underlying debates among contrasting theories of distributive justice, the project framework is based on egalitarian principles mandating formal equality of opportunities rather than outcomes, by focusing on aspects of distributive theories that are often viewed as peripheral, rather than the core of such theories: self-worth and identity.

The project considers how equity should be considered as a precondition for inclusion but also how the mere allocation of resources aimed at guaranteeing formal equality of opportunity does not necessarily result in the validation of individuals' sense of self which is a critical component

of what a just and inclusive society is. By focusing on individuals' identity and sense of self-worth, the project moves from normative evaluations on society's methods for allocating resources in education to broader conceptions of what justice entails.

The crucial role played by individuals' sense of self-worth (i.e., the emotional component of self-confidence) and the uniqueness and individuality in enabling factors determining self-worth are at the core of the theories of distributive justice conceived by Rawls (1971[8]) and Sen (2009[9]). In these theories, the role of personal responsibility in the use of resources to achieve well-being and the intrinsic value of the opportunity to exercise such personal responsibility are also central.

In "A Theory of Justice", Rawls considers *the social bases of self-respect* as one of the five primary goods that should be equalised (the other four primary goods are basic liberties including freedom of association, freedom of movement and choice of occupation, powers and prerogatives of offices and positions of responsibility, income and wealth).

Sen focuses on functioning and capabilities to move the materialistic focus on "primary goods" inherent in Rawls's theory. Sen emphasises what individuals can achieve with goods (functioning) and their ability/freedom to mobilise resources (capabilities). Although Rawls and Sen's theories differ in many ways, they also share several common underpinnings, in particular when considering the implications for education systems of guaranteeing *the social bases of self-respect*.

Education systems are a key social basis of self-respect and while they can be organised in ways that enable all individuals, in their individuality, to construct their self-respect, they can also stand in the way of such progress.

2.3. Inclusive education and equity in education

2.3.1. Educational equity

Equitable education systems are those that ensure the ***achievement of educational potential*** is not the result of personal and social circumstances, including factors such as gender, ethnic origin, immigrant status, special education needs and giftedness (OECD, 2017[10]; OECD, 2012[11]). This assumes the role of education systems in achieving equity is to provide equality of opportunities so each individual reaches his/her education potential. Overall, "achieving greater equity in education is not only a social-justice imperative, it is also a way to use resources more efficiently, and to increase the supply of knowledge and skills that fuel economic growth and promote social cohesion" (OECD, 2018[12]). Moreover, in operationalising equity in education, OECD distinguishes between horizontal and vertical equity (OECD, 2017[13]). 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 marginalised groups of students.

2.3.2. Inclusion in education

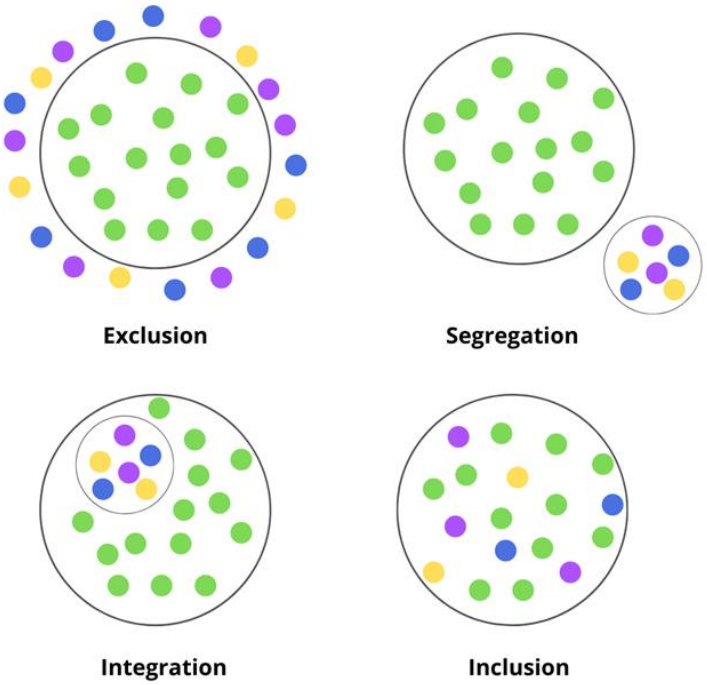
Social inclusion is a commonly used concept that is broadly understood as "the process of improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of people, disadvantaged on the basis of their identity, to take part in society" (World Bank, 2013[14]). However, be it in society or in education, the definition of inclusion often lacks clarity in academic research where it tends to be used as

an umbrella term, sometimes confused with integration or participation (Bossaert et al., 2013[15]). The project understands **integration** to characterise an educational system in which learners labelled as having "special educational needs", for example, are placed in mainstream education settings with some adaptations and resources, but on condition that they can fit in with pre-existing structures, attitudes and an unaltered environment (UNESCO, 2017[16]). While integration was for long dominant in political discourse, inclusion has progressively become an equally - and sometimes more important - paradigm.

In fact, **inclusion in education** is not a new concept and has been widely accepted as a necessary driver for educational policy starting with UNESCO's Salamanca Declaration of 1994. The emphasis was put on the need to reform education systems, which can be possible only if mainstream schools become capable of educating all children in their local communities. However, this declaration was exclusively directed at students with disabilities. It is only recently that inclusive education has begun to be understood as necessary to reach all learners by responding to current challenges implied by an increasing diversity in the classroom, and in societies at large (Ainscow, 2019[17]). Today, inclusive education is overall viewed as "a matter of adopting a socio-ecological approach regarding the interactions between students' capabilities and environmental demands, stressing that educational systems must adapt to and reach all students – and not vice versa" (Amor et al., 2018[18]).

In order to distinguish between integration and inclusion, reference is often made to a multi-stage model. Alternatively, as Shelley Moore put it, transition from integration to inclusion can be viewed as an evolution over time (Moore, 2016[19]). The model describes four development stages of education: exclusion, separation, integration and a matter of adopting a socio-ecological approach regarding the interactions between students' capabilities and environmental demands, stressing that educational systems must adapt to and reach all students – and not vice versa (Amor et al., 2018[18]).

Figure 2.2. The four models of education



Source: Adapted from (Hehir et al., 2016[20]), A Summary of the Evidence on Inclusive Education. https://www.abtassociates.com/insights/publications/report/summary-of-the-evidence-on-inclusive-education#:~:text=After%20reviewing%20evidence%20from%20more,social%20development%20of%20those%20children (accessed on 10 November 2021)

As shown by Figure 2.2 the different processes on which are based different models of education can be divided in four categories. First, **exclusion**, occurs when students are denied access to education. This may happen when students are not allowed to register or attend school, or conditions are placed on their attendance. In general, it can also occur when a student is excluded from education as a punishment for misbehaviour or other issues. **Segregation**, instead, occurs when diverse groups of students are educated in separate environments (either classes or schools). This can happen when students with a learning disability are forced to attend a school exclusively for students with disabilities, but also when schools instruct either females or males only (i.e., same-sex or single-sex education). More recently, integration and inclusion have often been compared and sometimes confused, whereas the two concepts present significant differences. **Integration** is achieved by placing students with diverse needs in mainstream education settings with some adaptations and resources, but on condition that they can fit into pre-existing structures, attitudes and an unaltered environment (UNESCO, 2017[16]). Integration can consist in placing a student with a physical impairment or a learning disability, for example, in a regular class but without any individualised support and with a teacher who is unwilling or unable to meet the learning, social, or disability support needs of the child.

Inclusion, instead, is a process that helps 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[21]). According to international standards such as those set up by UNICEF (2014[21]) and UNESCO (UNESCO, 2017[16]; UNESCO, 2020[22]), 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. The key message is that every learner matters and matters equally.

There are still considerable challenges when it comes to the design and implementation of educational policy for inclusion, starting with the conceptualisation of inclusive education itself. At the OECD, **inclusive education** has traditionally been understood as an aspect of equity (the other being fairness) that implies a minimum standard of education for all and, more generally, that people are provided with the minimum skills to participate in society (OECD, 2004[23]; Field, Kuczera and Pont, 2007[24]; OECD, 2012[11]). The project aims to go beyond the definition of inclusive education as a simple dimension of educational equity, though both concepts cannot be thought of separately. Rather, it considers inclusive education as a global orientation aimed to reform and improve the overall education system. The key difference between the two approaches is that while inclusion requires education systems to evaluate and re-imagine broad educational goals and standards, equity is narrowly confined to ensuring that there are no between-group differences in existing educational outcomes across social and demographic groups.

Following these observations, at this stage, the project proposes to adopt the following broad definition of inclusive education: “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[25]). Rather than a particular policy or practice related to a specific group of students/individuals, this definition identifies what characterises an ethos of inclusion (Rutkowski, Rutkowski and Engel, 2014[26]). It is believed that such an ethos requires a cultural change based on a shared commitment amongst staff at national, local and school levels (Ainscow, 2019[17]), and identifies communities of learners, shifting the focus of attention from the individual to the communal (Lynn Boscardin and Jacobson, 1997[27]). In this sense, and because it is based on quite subjective notions, while inclusive education can be a common orientation recognised internationally, its implementation requires a certain sensitivity to the different cultures. Inclusion and equity are overarching principles that should guide all educational policies, plans and practices, rather than being the focus of a separate policy (UNESCO, 2017[16]).

Inclusive education, while being closely linked to equity, aims to strengthen the capacity of school systems to reach out to all students (Ibid.) by responding to the diversity of their needs and ultimately guaranteeing self-worth and a sense of belonging. It means that education systems must be able to implement mechanisms that foster a proper environment for the well-being of these students, an environment that allows them to express their full potential. It should make them feel safe, achieve the best performance possible and, when applicable, feel in accordance with their own cultural values and representations while being enrolled in mainstream schools. It is the role of policy makers and educators to address these challenges together, guaranteeing the educational achievement of all while strengthening intercultural understanding and social justice.

Key to this definition are the following:

- A focus on ***the on-going nature*** of the learning process. As a result, the project aims to adopt a life-course perspective and approach, examining issues of coherence and coordination between different levels of schooling and education and interactions between formal and informal learning opportunities afforded to students.
- A focus on ***the need to offer quality education for all while respecting diversity***. The project conceptualises the objective of respecting diversity not as the narrow protection against discrimination or the middle ground development of compensatory policies, but as a broad ambition to ensure that the unique knowledge and talents of diverse learners are valued and included in frameworks used to benchmark education quality. The notion of self-worth is also crucial for understanding how individuals value themselves in the context of diversity. Self-worth is understood as the emotional component of self-esteem, and meant as the appraisal of one's own personal value (Eromot and Levy, 2017[28]).
- A focus on ***students and communities***. The project considers the social belonging of individuals to communities and the tensions and opportunities that embracing diversity in education entails.

The development of inclusive education policies builds on anti-discrimination policies and the identification of compensatory mechanisms in education to create systems that are ***affordable***, ***accessible***, ***acceptable*** and ***adaptable*** to learners' needs (Osler and Starkey, 2005[29]). It considers how separation policies, aimed at creating homogeneity out of heterogeneous populations, result in the isolation of some populations given broader social and economic inequalities and power imbalances between different social groups.

Although the project aims to assess the inclusiveness of different education systems and policies and practices reflecting an ethos of inclusion, it also evaluates the extent to which education systems are ***equitable***, defined in terms of offering equity of educational opportunities to diverse student populations.

One important consideration of this project is to differentiate between inclusive education and educational equity. Drawing on the previous discussion, this project understands inclusion to mean achieving equity and ensuring self-worth and sense of belonging of individuals to communities.

2.4. Dimensions of 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[16]). More specifically, it refers to the fact of many people who 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.

The first phase of the project examined how education policies could be adapted to better serve the needs of diverse learners, while focusing on a very specific dimension of diversity: migration-induced diversity. However, the new educational demands resulting from international migration can be mostly ascribed to the increased linguistic, cultural, religious and ethnic heterogeneity that accompanies birthplace diversity. Additionally, new demands arise because many individuals who experienced migration journeys may also have special educational needs related to learning disabilities, physical impairments and/or mental disorders. The relative importance of these demands and how they play out in national education systems depends, crucially, on the composition of student populations more broadly defined, not just on the composition and needs of students with an immigrant background. The second phase of the project directly considers multiple dimensions of diversity and the interrelations between these dimensions.

The dimensions of diversity covered are the following:

- migration-induced diversity
- ethnic groups, national minorities and Indigenous peoples
- gender
- gender identity and sexual orientation
- special education needs
- giftedness.

The dimensions of diversity in the above list encompass a wide range of groups of individuals. Many of these groups have historically faced exclusion from mainstream education because they were considered either incapable or unworthy of conforming to the educational standards identified by education institutions or because their heritage and community were excluded from the formal learning content covered in mainstream educational settings. The intensity and severity of exclusion from education differ greatly across groups and across countries for the same group. For some, exclusion was complete and resulted in lack of participation. For others, exclusion entailed lack of participation in the definition of educational goals and standards and/or barriers preventing full access to high-level educational qualifications. The push to create

homogeneous learning environments and a narrow focus on academic standards also led to unique challenges for gifted children with respect to social, emotional and physical well-being.

The following sections provide definitions and illustrate some of the questions of the project.

2.4.1. Migration-induced diversity

The first phase of the project developed a comprehensive set of reports (OECD, 2018[7]; OECD, 2018[30]; OECD, 2019[31]) and working papers (Cerna et al., 2019[32]; Guthrie et al., 2019[33]; Borgonovi and Pokropek, 2017[34]; 2018[35]; Cerna, 2019[36]; Forghani-Arani, Cerna and Bannon, 2019[37]; Bilgili, 2017[38]; 2019[39]) examining migration-induced diversity and the effects it has on education systems. Following the framework developed in the first phase of the project, the second phase considers broad migration experiences individuals may have, whether direct (foreign-born individuals who migrated) or not (individuals who have at least a parent or guardian who migrated).

The project continues to focus on international migration as a source of migration-induced diversity, irrespective of reasons for migration and the legal status of the individual migrant. However, the project will continue to consider and reflect on the educational implications of factors like legal status, migration experiences and age at migration. 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. Attention is devoted to reflect the specific challenges for academic performance and broader well-being experienced by first-generation immigrant students, second-generation immigrant students, mixed-heritage students and returning foreign-born students (OECD, 2018[7]).

2.4.2. Ethnic groups, national minorities and Indigenous peoples

National minority is a complex term, for which no international definition has been agreed. Therefore, it is up to countries to define the groups that constitute or not minorities within their boundaries. These minority groups can be categorised regarding individuals' immigrant status and nationality of origins, but can also depend 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 as a national minority (Rutigliano, 2020[40]). Moreover, national minority is 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.

The word **ethnicity** derives from the Greek word ethnos, meaning a nation. 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. 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. Because 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 he or she differs from other group members on some dimensions. Ethnic affiliation ultimately might depend on the agency of an individual who chooses to be part of a specific ethnic group and, as such, places his or her 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 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. 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 value in numerous countries, has little biological bases. Biological differences across individuals from different racial groups are, in fact, minuscule and racial differences across individuals would have no bearing on education policy if it were not for their overlap with ethnic differences and for structural discrimination faced by members of certain "visible"[1] 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' working 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[41]). The experience of the colonisation process in some countries has had a double impact on Indigenous peoples and, in particular, on children. On the one hand, it has undermined Indigenous young people's access to their identity, language and culture. On the other, Indigenous children have not generally had access to the same quality of education that other children in their country enjoyed. These two factors have generally undermined the opportunities and outcomes of various generations of Indigenous peoples and children; they 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[42]).

Students from ethnic minority groups and Indigenous communities are different groups; hence, they need varying policy responses based on their specific needs. Nonetheless, they often face significant challenges when it comes to education. For example, an OECD report on the Slovak Republic showed that Roma individuals tend to be subject to lower educational attainment and higher dropout rates (OECD, 2019[43]). The reasons for this phenomenon are complex and depend on the context, but usually include issues such as historically rooted discrimination, bullying, language barriers and misunderstood cultural variations. The project considers broad ethnic differences, for example, by examining how education systems serve Roma students or Indigenous students, as well as specific dimensions that contribute to and are part of ethnic affiliation, such as linguistic diversity and religious diversity. It looks into the implications these differences have for the organisation of schooling – including instruction, the organisation of school lunches and the account for cultural practices and festivities – as well as for setting the goals and standards of instruction.

In parallel, attention is given to the way different countries produce categories and collect (or not) data related to ethnic groups and national minorities, which may significantly differ from one context to another (Balestra and Fleischer, 2018[44]). The different approaches affect the design and implementation of educational policies and projects directed to the inclusion of these

[1] "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.

groups of students. The project considers: (1) the outcomes of these groups, (2) the extent to which discriminatory attitudes limit the opportunities different groups of students have to achieve high levels of academic, social, psychological, physical and material well-being, and (3) the extent to which fostering the inclusion of ethnic groups, national minorities and Indigenous peoples can benefit the whole student population.

2.4.3. Gender

According to its traditional definition, gender might refer to the fact of being male or female. Historically, and in many countries across the world, gender gaps have 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[45]).

There is increasing recognition that gender gaps vary by age, level of education and academic domain and that new gender gaps may be emerging as a result of digital and information and communication technologies (digital technologies) both in new domains such as digital literacy and computational thinking as well as in attitudes and dispositions such as perseverance and self-regulation. Furthermore, the closing of the gender gap in overall attainment and achievement has not been accompanied by a closing of the gender gap in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) educational choices.

Recent research points to new trends in gender gaps in education, particularly in favour of females, as confirmed by the latest Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results (OECD, 2019[46]). For instance, research suggests that standardisation of curricula tends to be associated with lower overall achievement in standardised tests but also with wider gender gaps in favour of females who perform better than males, mainly in reading performance. However, the extent of gender gaps varies across the life cycle (Borgonovi, Choi and Paccagnella, 2018[47]). Moreover, education systems characterised by late selection (for instance, making a choice between a vocational, professional or academic track) tend to have higher mean levels of performance and wider gender gaps in achievement in favour of females who seem to benefit the most from late selection (currently occurring around the age of 15 in most countries) (van Hek, Buchmann and Kraaykamp, 2019[48]).

2.4.4. Gender identity and sexual orientation

“Sexual and gender minorities” refers to LGBTQI+ people, that is, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, queer and intersexual 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[49]). 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 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.

Studies show that LGBTQI+ people tend to suffer from significant social exclusion. In most OECD countries, they are still stigmatised and exposed to various forms of discrimination, starting with education, although some LGBTQI+ individuals manage to make it to top levels of achievement and employment (OECD, 2019[50]). 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[51]). This phenomenon also affects heterosexual 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 (e.g., 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 (OECD, 2020[49]). The project aims to analyse and evaluate some of the policies and other initiatives related to the inclusion of these individuals, and their potential effects on the whole school population.

2.4.5. Special education needs

Special Education Needs (SEN) is a term used in many education systems to characterise the broad array of needs of students affected by learning disabilities, physical impairments and/or who suffer from mental disorders. The challenges for schools in providing high-quality education to students with SEN relate to the identification of their needs and the organisation and adequate resourcing of responses. These interventions should aim at ensuring that these students develop academically, socially, psychologically and physically and that their long-term material well-being is enhanced by the skills and knowledge they acquire in education (Brussino, 2020[52]; Mezzanotte, 2020[53]).

Learning disabilities, physical impairments and mental disorders differ depending on the severity of symptoms, the frequency of the symptoms and the extent to which they limit students' involvement in different learning and social activities that take place at school. For example, while all students with dyscalculia will suffer from a chronic condition, the severity of the symptoms vary in the population also depending on how early diagnosis and specialised support is arranged. Furthermore, students suffering from dyscalculia will be limited by their condition in classes involving maths, but not during classes on poetry or literature and will not generally suffer social penalties although they may develop low levels of psychological well-being because of their condition. Often, special education needs occur in co-morbidity, which indicates the co-existence of at least two disorders in an individual. In particular, learning disabilities are often comorbid to mental illnesses and specifically to developmental disorders. For example, between 50% and 90% of children with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) have at least one comorbid condition, and approximately 50% of all children with ADHD have at least two (Canadian ADHD Resource Alliance (CADDRA), 2018[54]). However, it is also worth noting that physical impairments do not always cause special education needs, so many of these students will not require additional support.

The project focuses on the following conditions:

Learning Disabilities. Learning disabilities are disorders that affect the ability to understand or use spoken or written language, do mathematical calculations, coordinate movements, or direct attention. 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. Learning disabilities can reduce not only students' academic well-being but also their social and psychological well-being. The most common learning disabilities are:

- dyslexia
- dyscalculia
- dysgraphia
- auditory Processing Disorder (APD).

Physical Impairments. 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. Without support, many students with physical impairments are at a risk of suffering not only from low levels of academic well-being but also social, psychological and physical well-being. Depending on the specific form of impairment, individuals may need to acquire specific sets of skills that will enable them to access, retrieve and process information. Examples include Sign Language(s) and the Braille system. Other impairments may require assistive technology, such as voice recognition software. The most common physical impairments are:

- mobility impairments
- visual impairments
- hearing impairments.

Mental health. In recent years, students' mental health and its interaction with educational systems and services have received increasing attention. Poor mental health can be 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. Because of the stigma associated with mental health conditions and the fact that mental health conditions affect the sense of agency that individuals have to seek for support, 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).

Countries differ markedly in how they identify, organise and resource educational responses for students with learning disabilities, physical impairments and/or who are affected by mental disorders, but also in the technological and physical changes that schools can put in place to support them (Brussino, 2020[52]; Mezzanotte, 2020[53]).

2.4.6. 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 when using the same method or test (identifying the 95th percentile, the 98th percentile or 99th percentile) and the reference group used (national population of the same age group, etc.). Students can also be considered to be gifted in specific domains that are not strictly academic in nature, such as music or sports.

Despite high levels of cognitive functioning, gifted children may underachieve in school because of boredom and resulting bad disciplinary behaviour. They can also struggle with social relations and have low levels of emotional and psychological well-being because their high cognitive functioning can lead them to be bullied or isolated. Moreover, some gifted students can face difficulties in social encounters because their high functioning in cognitive domains may lead them to feel lost in situations that they cannot comprehend and classify, such as social situations.

Definitions of giftedness do not generally consider students' socio-economic status and the ability of a student's classmates. However, many of the negative outcomes (e.g., progression that falls short of potential, low social and psychological well-being) experienced by gifted students can also be experienced by high-achieving students who do not qualify for giftedness according to strict normative criteria. In particular, these negative outcomes are often experienced by high-achieving students with high levels of academic functioning attending highly socio-economically deprived schools in disadvantaged areas with low levels of overall performance among the student body and low expectations among teaching professionals.

2.4.7. Other dimensions of diversity

Other dimensions of diversity could also be explored in the scope of the project, depending on countries' interest and priorities. Some possible topics are the following:

Religious minorities

The 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development acknowledges that religious minorities are among the minorities at risk of being left behind across the world. In the case of immigrants, for instance, evidence shows that to the extent that immigrants and natives belong to different religious denominations and have different cultural traditions, school choice based on such considerations can lead to a lack of integration in schools (OECD, 2018[7]). In countries where parents tend to give a significant importance to the school's religious philosophy, fragmentation of the school population is more likely to happen (Ibid.).

The increase of diversity in OECD countries often implies a greater diversity in terms of religious affiliation, and tensions as well as discriminatory practices can arise that prevent some religious minorities from seeing their right to education fully realised. Inclusive education practices might provide an interesting way to tackle these issues and ensure that schools adapt to these students' needs while fostering tolerance among the whole school population.

Age and aging

Countries across the OECD are in the midst of a rapid demographic transformation, with a general increase in populations' average age, along with an increase in the proportion of elderly citizens. In fact, rising life expectancy coupled with declining birth rates in most OECD countries has had a significant impact on the profile of the populations (OECD, 2019[2]).

This new demographic panorama is creating various complex challenges for education systems, which concern the student populations, the teaching force and the long-term impact of education per se. In fact, as the population of children generally decreases in OECD countries, the range of skills that the students need to learn actually increases. On the one hand, the digitalisation of societies and labour markets require schooling systems to provide a wide array of skills and tools to the students, so that they can adapt in this ever changing scenario (OECD, 2019[55]). On the other hand, education cannot target exclusively children and young people anymore: the demographic transition that most OECD countries are undergoing requires them to adopt a lifelong learning approach to education.

This also implies a reconsideration of traditional models of education and encourages approaches to teaching and learning that are more fluid, adaptive and innovative. In particular, lifelong learning should play a stronger role in strengthening human capital and individuals' skills and abilities. Access and participation in formal and informal education throughout the lifespan could keep populations healthier, more physically and cognitively active, and more connected to society (OECD, 2013[56]).

2.5. The role of socio-economic condition and geographical location

The public provision of education depends on the consideration of educational participation and the acquisition of a key set of knowledge and skills as a right and a duty. As such, publicly funded education systems and compulsory schooling legislation are designed with the purpose of limiting the influence of a child's family origins on the acquisition of standards. However, large variations in the educational outcomes of children from families of different socio-economic circumstances are observed in most countries, and education is both the result and the determinant of socio-economic stratification.

The project examines in detail the extent to which socio-economic conditions determine 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. In particular, it analyses how socio-economic status is a lens through which other forms of diversity can be "distorted" and uses this lens to evaluate the degree of inclusivity of specific education systems.

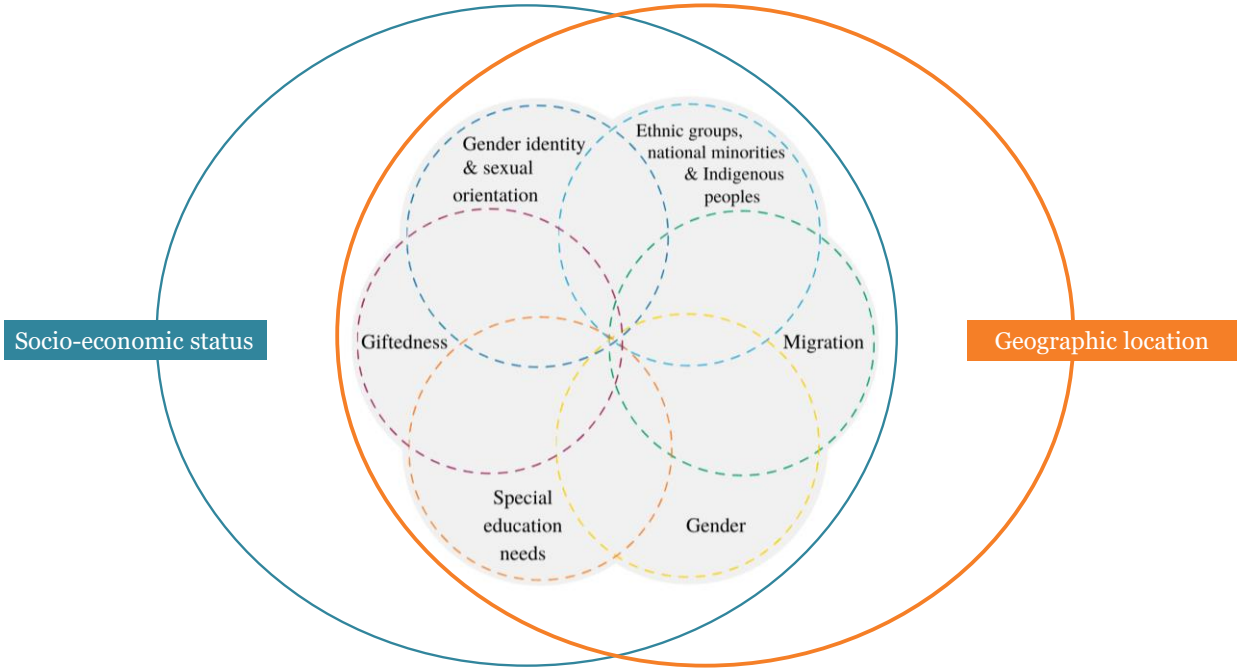
A second dimension that determines the parameters through which equity and inclusion operate is the geographical dispersion of different social and demographic groups and of schools. If different social and demographic groups are located in specific areas of a country or of a city, creating classrooms 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.

2.6. Intersectionality

There are many possible intersections between dimensions of diversity, but also with overarching factors such as socio-economic status and geographical location. The term intersectionality is based on Crenshaw's (1989[57]) work on gender and ethnicity and has been widely used in other areas in recent years (Davis, 2008[58]; Lutz, Herrera Vivar and Supik, 2011[59]). Identities overlap and intersect and form new, more specific identities with new implications. 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[60]). 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) (Figure 2.3).

Figure 2.3. Intersectionality between dimensions of diversity and overarching factors



Note: The image synthetises the intersections that can occur in terms of personal characteristics of individuals that are specifically analysed by the Strength through Diversity project as dimensions of diversity, without prejudice to others that can be impactful on people's life experiences such as religion, age, etc. Socio-economic status and geographic locations are considered "overarching dimensions" that intersect with each other and have a general impact on all other characteristics.

Individuals are complex creatures with as many colours as the rainbow. While different aspects of identity are more salient in different circumstances because of internal or external factors, what shapes overall well-being is the complex interplay of different aspects. Some examples of intersectionality include:

- First-generation immigrant and socio-economically disadvantaged girls coming from countries with strong patriarchal communities.
- Boys whose mother tongue differs from the language of instruction who struggle with language acquisition.
- Recruitment and retention challenges to attract, retain and support male teachers from ethnic minority groups.
- Support to guarantee the educational opportunities of a visually impaired boy in a class with a high percentage of immigrant-heritage students.

The project considers the intersectionality of dimensions of diversity and how it affects policy-making. An intersectionality perspective encourages a different way of looking at all aspects of policy: how problems are defined, how solutions are developed and implemented,

and how policy is ultimately evaluated (Hankivsky, 2005[61]). It explores what policies, programmes and approaches can best support the needs of learners with different intersecting identities.

2.7. Multilevel approaches to diversity in education

The dimensions of diversity (see Section 2.4) describe the variety of characteristics an individual student might bring into a classroom. However, the design and implementation of inclusion policies involve factors that go beyond the individual student level. These include:

1. ***Students:*** see Section 2.4 for dimensions of diversity at the student level.
2. ***Teachers and support staff:*** diversity within the teaching workforce, the number and quality of teachers, teachers' professional development and awareness of personal bias, diversity-related knowledge in teacher education (and similar aspects for support staff).
3. ***School leaders:*** diversity among school leaders, quality of school leaders and their commitment to building inclusive learning environments; preparation for diversity.
4. ***Schools:*** characteristics of school facilities and school climate, socio-economic diversity, availability of resources, family and community engagement, learning environment.
5. ***System and sub-system:*** distribution of responsibilities and resources, curriculum, characteristics of education system (degree of school choice), learning settings, incentive structures for teachers and school leaders, roles of stakeholder groups.
6. ***Society:*** economic conditions (e.g., income inequality), labour market trends, demography and cultural diversity (migration, minority groups, etc.), political environment, role of media and perceptions of diversity in society, social policies.

The interaction among school agents and the articulation across levels of diversity are taken into account in multilevel approaches to diversity in education. Furthermore, the impact that concentrations of diversity can have are a further element that must be considered. As a matter of fact, there is not only the individual effect of diversity through a single student, but also a "concentration effect" when a certain dimension of diversity is highly concentrated in a single school (Cerna et al., 2019[32]).

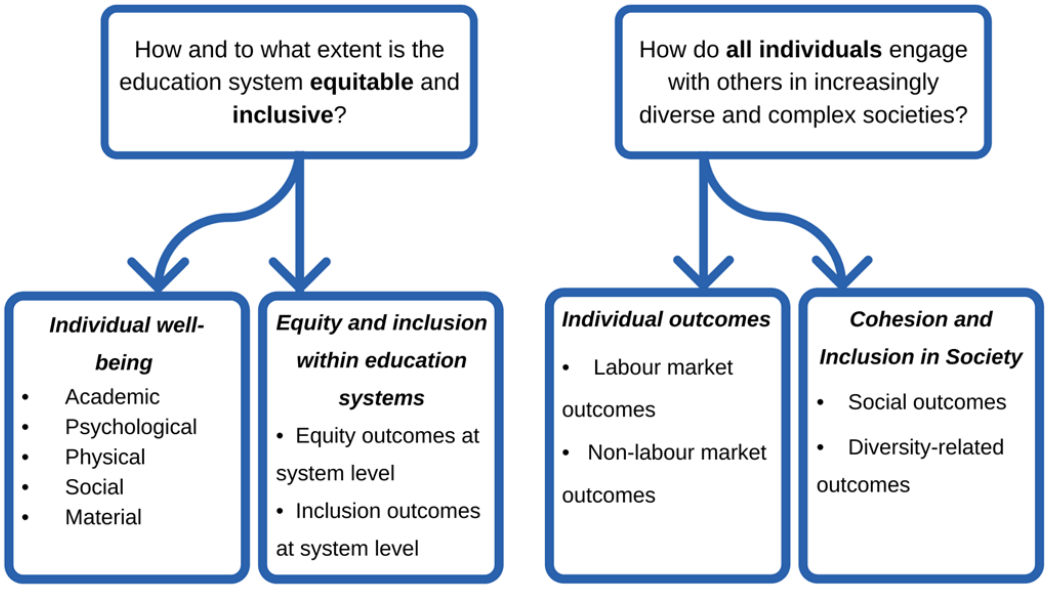
Equity and inclusion cannot be studied in isolation. Societal, school system and school-level factors all influence the design and implementation of education policies aimed at promoting the academic outcomes and broad well-being of diverse populations, setting standards, creating curricula, organising instruction, developing evaluation and assessment tools and providing adequate resourcing policies. These factors influence the design of education policies to support diverse populations in terms of the needs for new policy initiatives, the factors that constrain policy opportunities and the factors that influence policy implementation, impact and cost. Without an adequate understanding of the range of factors involved, and the ways they influence the impact of equity-related and inclusive policy initiatives, there is a risk of developing ineffective policy responses. It is important to understand the interactions between factors at these three levels and education policies aimed at promoting equity and inclusion.

Considering other policy areas beyond education such as social, health, employment and migration policies is also key.

2.8. Outcomes

Outcomes consider individuals, systems and the wider society. They include both immediate (education-related) and later (non-education-related) outcomes (as shown in Figure 2.4).

Figure 2.4. Outcomes for the project



2.8.1. Question 1: How and to what extent is the education system equitable and inclusive?

Individual well-being

The project adopts a similar approach to the one considered in the first phase of the *Strength through Diversity* Project by examining how inclusive education policies can promote the broad well-being of individuals. The different dimensions of well-being (as outlined below) are considered and policies and practices will be evaluated based on their capacity to promote and sustain overall well-being. Although these dimensions are key ingredients of the concurrent well-being of individuals and contribute to their personal development in the short, medium and long-term, a first aim of the project is to consider the hierarchical ordering/organisation of these dimensions.

Does inclusive education require a re-thinking of current hierarchical ordering of educational objectives? Would such re-ordering result in differences in how schooling is organised? For example, at the moment, schooling in many countries is organised with the objective of

maximising students' academic well-being, even if this comes at the expense of emotional and social well-being (in the form of high levels of anxiety and isolation).

Over the past decade, there has been growing interest in students' well-being and in comparing education systems, not only in terms of how well students fare academically, but also in how well they promote students' overall development and quality of life. Research shows that high levels of well-being among students are associated with positive and fulfilling life-experiences, while low levels of well-being are associated with the opposite (Pollard and Lee, 2003[62]). Children in school spend a considerable amount of time in their classrooms, socialising with classmates and interacting with teachers and other staff members. What happens in school is therefore key to understanding if students enjoy good physical and mental health, how happy and satisfied they are with different aspects of their life, how connected they feel to others and the aspirations and expectations they have for their future (Adamson, 2013[63]; Bradshaw, Hoelscher and Richardson, 2006[64]; Currie et al., 2012[65]; OECD, 2009[66]; Rees and Main, 2015[67]). Overall, students who enjoy high levels of well-being are generally less involved in risky behaviours (Currie et al., 2012[65]) and perform better at school (Gutman and Vorhaus, 2012[68]).

OECD's work on child well-being (OECD, 2015[69]) identifies two distinct approaches to its conceptualisation and measurement:

- The developmental approach underscores the importance of building human capital and social skills for the future (Bronfenbrenner, 1979[70]); valuing children's well-being today influences adults' well-being tomorrow.
- The children's rights approach recognises children not exclusively as future adults, but rather as human beings with their own rights and dignity. In this sense, the approach focuses on their well-being "here-and-now" and relies on their direct input regarding what aspects are important to them and how they might be measured (Casas, 1997[71]; Ben-Arieh, 2010[72]).

The project defines well-being as "a dynamic state characterised by students experiencing the ability and opportunity to fulfil their personal and social goals. It encompasses multiple dimensions of students' lives, including cognitive, psychological, physical, social and material. It can be measured through subjective and objective indicators of competencies, perceptions, expectations and life conditions" (Borgonovi and Pál, 2016[73]). This definition puts an emphasis on the multidimensionality of students' well-being, which encompasses both students' states and outcomes, as well developmental processes that may act as risk or protective factors shaping well-being in later life.

According to this definition, well-being dimensions cover:

- **Academic well-being:** The academic dimension of students' well-being refers to the skills and foundations students have to participate effectively in today's society, as lifelong learners, effective workers and engaged citizens. It comprises students' proficiency in academic subjects, their ability to collaborate with others to solve problems and their sense of mastery in school subjects. It incorporates actions and behaviours that may promote the acquisition of knowledge, skills or information that may aid them when they are faced with new, complex ideas and problems (Pollard and Lee, 2003[62]).

- **Psychological well-being:** The psychological dimension of students' well-being includes students' evaluations and views about life, their engagement with school, the extent to which they have a sense of agency, identity and empowerment, and their opportunities to develop goals and ambitions for their future (Borgonovi and Pál, 2016[73]).
- **Physical well-being:** The physical dimension of students' well-being refers to students' health status, safety and security, having the opportunity to engage with others and not to be limited by physical barriers in access and mobility. It also encompasses the ability to exercise and adopt healthy eating habits (Statham and Chase, 2010[74]).
- **Social well-being:** The social dimension of students' well-being refers to the quality of their social lives (Rath and Harter, 2010[75]) including their relationship with their family, their peers and their teachers (positive or negative), and how they perceive their social life in school and beyond (Pollard and Lee, 2003[62]).
- **Material well-being:** Material resources make it possible for families to better provide for their children's needs and for schools to support students' learning and healthy development. Households who live in poverty find it difficult to ensure that their children have access to the educational and cultural resources they need to thrive in school and to realise their potential (Borgonovi and Pál, 2016[73]).

Well-being has therefore an important "subjective dimension in the sense of satisfaction associated with fulfilling one's potential" (Fraillon, 2004[76]) and a collective one in fostering safe and healthy environments, as well as informed and active individuals. The project focuses on the role of inclusive education in strengthening these elements.

Equity and inclusion within education systems

Beyond individual-level outcomes, equity and inclusion at the system level are important outcomes that have to be promoted and measured:

- **Equity outcomes at system level**: In many education plans, equity outcomes are measured through various indicators ranging from access and participation to learning outcomes. Some guidelines propose how to assess equity outcomes at the system level, advising to measure concepts such as meritocracy, impartiality and redistribution in relation to education systems (UNESCO, 2018[77]), as well as the distribution and quality of educational resources, teaching practices and student performances (OECD, 2013[78]). Data suggest that equity is crucial for the overall outcomes of an education system.
- **Inclusion outcomes at system level**: Equity alone can have a limited impact on dropouts and educational attainment. These issues are further tackled through inclusive education, i.e., one that fosters students' self-worth and sense of belonging. In fact, understood as a holistic approach, inclusion might help address educational challenges rooted in the broader social context. Being inclusive is a more recent educational focus of many countries and there is a lack of comprehensive data on inclusion in education. The project looks at inclusion outcomes both in terms of process (e.g., designing of policies) and the results (e.g., evaluation of policies said to be inclusive).

2.8.2. Question 2: How do all individuals engage with others in increasingly diverse and complex societies?

The project strives to analyse the extent to which inclusive education affects the way each one of us engages with others in increasingly diverse and complex societies. In order to do so, it is necessary to look at outcomes at the individual level, both labour and non-labour market related, and at outcomes at the societal level. Whether diversity in itself can foster positive outcomes has been a core question in social sciences. There is growing evidence that inclusion measures aimed at including individuals with diverse backgrounds tend to positively affect individuals and societies.

Individual outcomes

Labour market outcomes (e.g., employment rate, unemployment rate, NEET[2] rates, access to a paid job): Inequitable education policies and practices have a negative impact on individuals' opportunities in the labour market and hinder economic and social development (OECD, 2012[11]). Data show that educational attainment positively affects labour market outcomes for individuals. Individuals with higher levels of education are more likely to find employment, remain employed, learn new skills on the job, and earn more over their working life relative to those with lower levels of education (OECD, 2010[79]; 2019[80]). An education that is inclusive for all students tends to reduce the level of school dropouts and enhances students' attainment leading to more people completing higher levels of education (The Traveller Movement, 2019[81]; Fresno et al., 2019[82]), which ensures better opportunities and participation for individuals and better labour market outcomes.

Non-labour market outcomes (e.g., health, global competence, life satisfaction): Also, health outcomes are generally better among people with higher educational attainment. In fact, considerable international evidence shows that education is strongly correlated to health and to determinants of health such as health behaviours, risky contexts and preventative health care use (Feinstein, Sabates and Anderson, 2006[83]) (OECD, 2010[84]). Moreover, recent research shows that the inclusion of certain groups of students, such as students with learning disabilities, tends to improve their social skills, mainly in terms of social interaction with their peers (King and Ryan, 2019[85]), in turn increasing individuals' skills and life satisfaction.

Cohesion and inclusion in society

Social outcomes (e.g., trust, volunteering, political efficacy, crime): The OECD Framework for Inclusive Growth notes that governments are facing an increasing distrust of citizens towards public institutions coupled with falling civic engagement and political efficacy. Inclusive policies in all sectors, including education, are today unavoidable and necessary (Secretary-General of the OECD, 2018[86]).

Besides the fact that equitable and inclusive education can improve individual outcomes and help fulfil individuals' human rights to develop their capacities and to participate fully in society, it has important implications for a society as a whole. In fact, education generally translates into greater levels of civic participation such as voting and volunteering, all of which help to build safer neighbourhoods and social cohesion (OECD, 2010[84]). Ensuring equity and the inclusion of diversity in education involves guaranteeing every person the possibility to feel a sense of belonging and self-worth, and to participate fully in society.

[2] NEET is an acronym that stands for "Not in Education, Employment, or Training".

Moreover, the economic benefits are not limited to individuals. Investing in education provides governments positive public returns at every level of education. Educated citizens earn more, pay higher taxes over a lifetime, and cost less for their governments in terms of social entitlements and welfare (OECD, 2019[80]).

Education seems, therefore, to have a strong positive effect on a great array of social issues faced by every society. For instance, researchers find a negative correlation between education and the level of crime – the latter decreases significantly when completion in education and educational attainment increase (Hjalmarsson and Lochner, 2012[87]).

Diversity-related societal outcomes (e.g., representation in workplace and political representation): while social mobility is influenced by a range of factors, such as individuals' family and social environment, education that provides equal opportunities for all can help individuals move up the social ladder, and thus help to create more equitable societies (OECD, 2012[11]; OECD, 2018[88]). For example, to enhance the representation as well as inclusion of diversity in schools might lead to a better representation and inclusion of diversity in the labour market. A review of studies on this topic shows that, even though there are debates in the current literature, diversity in the work place tends to correlate positively with the team performance, at least in the context of advanced economies and industrial sectors (Valfort, 2017[89]). However, discrimination is a widespread issue across OECD countries and is costly both to individuals and for an economy as a whole (OECD, 2008[90]).This phenomenon starts with education, and an inclusive lens might bring positive long-run effects.

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3. Key issues for analysis

The overarching policy questions of the project are as follows:

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

The analysis is organised according to five key issues. To ensure inclusive and equitable approaches in education systems, reflecting on the following elements is key:

- That an overall, systemic framework for governing diversity, inclusion and equity in education is designed (Issue 1: Governance).
- That resources are used effectively to support diversity, inclusion and equity in education (Issue 2: Resourcing).
- That the system is able to build capacity for all stakeholders to support diversity, inclusion and equity in education (Issue 3: Capacity Development).
- That schools provide effective interventions to support diversity, inclusion and equity in education (Issue 4: School-level Interventions).
- That processes and outcomes are monitored and evaluated to support diversity, inclusion and equity in education (Issue 5: Monitoring and Evaluation).

The five main issues are organised in policy areas and described below. They are also listed in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1. Policy areas to analyse inclusion, equity and diversity in education systems

1. Governing diversity, inclusion and equity in education	2. Resourcing diversity, inclusion and equity in education	3. Developing capacity for managing diversity, inclusion and equity in education	4. Promoting school-level interventions to support diversity, inclusion and equity in education	5. Monitoring and evaluating diversity, inclusion and equity in education
1.A Educational **goals** and goals for diversity, inclusion and equity [including curriculum policies]	**2.A General distribution** of resources and diversity in education [e.g., funding formulae]	**3.A Awareness** of diversity in education at the system level (among all students; across society)	**4.A Matching resources** within schools to individual student learning needs [allocating teacher resources within schools (e.g., class size); use of space; use of time; digital technologies resources]	**5.A Monitoring and Evaluation** of **outcomes** of diversity, inclusion and equity in education at the system level [evaluation of policies and programmes targeted at inclusion and equity; development of indicators; monitoring; reporting on outcomes]
1.B Regulatory framework for diversity and inclusion in education [recognition of diversity and the need for specific provisions; rights of specific student groups]	**2.B Targeted distribution** of resources [including matching human resources to schools; programmes to fund provision for specific student groups]	**3.B Recruitment, retention, preparation and evaluation** of school staff [teachers, school leaders, support staff, including professional development and mentoring]	**4.B Learning strategies** to address diversity [student assessment (including diagnostic assessment); individualised learning; classroom strategies; use of technology for learning]	**5.B Evaluating processes** for diversity, inclusion and equity in education at the local and school level [evaluation of schools and local education administration (their role in achieving inclusion and equity)]
1.C Responsibilities for and **administration** of diversity in education [distribution of responsibilities; specific agencies; stakeholder engagement; organisation; supervision]		**3.C Preparation of all students** for diversity in education [including student-student mentoring]	**4.C Non-instructional support** and **services** [e.g., career counselling; personal counselling; medical and therapeutic services]	
1.D Education provision to account for diversity in education [diversity of offerings; learning setting; choice; and selection]			**4.D** Engagement with **parents** and **communities**	

3.1. Issue 1: Governing diversity, inclusion and equity in education

This issue is concerned with how diversity, inclusion and equity 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 students 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.

3.1.1. Educational goals and goals for inclusion, diversity and equity (Issue 1.A)

Clear and widely supported goals for student learning provide the solid reference point on which to establish education policy, including policies for equity and inclusion in education. They are expressed both at a generic level (e.g., overall educational goals) and in more specific ways (e.g., curricula) (OECD, 2013[91]).

Educational goals

Countries typically devise statements about the ultimate goals of their education system and governments generally establish priorities for education policy for the period they are in office. In addition, it is becoming increasingly common for governments to set up education targets alongside indicators to assess progress towards these targets.

Overall goals for education systems typically emphasise the following aspects: the personal development of individuals; the acquisition of skills and competencies (e.g. learning in the course of life, critical thinking); equality of educational opportunities; and values and attitudes (e.g. civic skills, fundamental rights, principles of democracy, respect of diversity, protection of the environment).

Education policy priorities, often associated with specific education targets, generally address the following aspects:

- educational outcomes (e.g., completion rates, performance levels, quality of outcomes); equity of outcomes (e.g., outcomes for particular student groups)
- education processes (e.g., implementation of a reform; accountability and transparency; school leadership; quality of teaching)
- education staff (e.g., raising the status of teaching, working conditions)
- specific target areas (e.g., expansion of vocational education, strengthening of early childhood education).

The project gives particular attention to the articulation of equity and inclusion among educational goals. It also reviews the formulation of education targets associated with diversity, equity and inclusion as well as the associated measures to review progress towards the targets. This involves reviewing the type of differential analysis that countries undertake on student performance across specific student groups in order to monitor educational equity and inclusion.

Student learning objectives (Curriculum)

At the level of student learning objectives, countries develop a basis for common expectations of outcomes from schooling, in a variety of forms such as curricula, study programmes, educational standards and learning progressions (henceforth referred to as "curriculum").

The curriculum is a key means for enacting principles and rights of inclusion and equity within education systems. Developing an inclusive curriculum might involve broadening the definition of learning used by teachers and education policy makers, so that the students are actively involved in learning (UNESCO, 2017[16]). The type of curriculum taught in education systems and the flexibility to organise curriculum so that it responds to the needs of students can greatly affect whether a system is equitable and inclusive. This includes the choice of subjects, textbooks and topics covered in grades as well as the flexibility at the school level to adjust the curriculum to local needs.

Policies that promote inclusion through the curriculum might, among other elements, include direct or indirect references to diversity, such as gender fluidity or ethnic minority groups' history, flexibility for accommodations and modifications (e.g., for students with special education needs; gifted students; rural contexts), and a consistent citizenship education based on a participative pedagogy. The definition of citizenship education, starting with the notion of citizenship, is broad. However, it is broadly understood as "a subject area which aims to promote harmonious co-existence and foster the mutually beneficial development of individuals and the community in which they live. In democratic societies, citizenship education supports students in becoming active, informed and responsible citizens, who are willing and able to take responsibility for themselves and for their communities" (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2018[92]), from the local to the international levels. Such education might also equip students to "learn to learn together" and acquire the skills to communicate with people from different cultures (Cerna et al., 2019[32]). In increasingly diverse societies and in addressing current challenges, promoting citizenship education may be key to ensure some of the bases for inclusion, cohesion and sustainability among and between our societies. The project will therefore review approaches to citizenship education in the curriculum across countries and analyse its potential for strengthening the inclusion of education systems and its effect on societies.

The curriculum is also a key policy instrument in promoting inclusion through shaping individuals' sense of self and of belonging within society. For instance, in order to promote the sense of self and belonging of Indigenous students, countries can establish Indigenous languages as a regular educational offering and promote interculturalism in the curriculum across the board. An OECD Review of Indigenous Education in Canada highlighted the need to give visibility to Indigenous cultures in schools and classroom as well as the value of adopting Indigenous cultural practices and including Indigenous histories and cultures in the curriculum. The review also stressed the importance of using curriculum resources developed by and reflecting Indigenous peoples and the benefit of providing learning opportunities in Indigenous languages (OECD, 2017[42]).

3.1.2. Regulatory framework for diversity and inclusion in education (Issue 1.B)

Policies to promote equity and inclusion in education are developed within regulatory frameworks, both inside and outside the education system. Countries typically establish legislation to protect the rights of individuals within society, such as the right to non-discrimination, and institute special provisions for specific groups of individuals in recognition of diversity and distinct needs. In addition, frequently in recognition of educational disadvantage, education systems regulate provisions for specific groups of students to promote equity and inclusion. This is usually framed as part of a students' rights charter, involves dedicated resources for given student groups, requires specialised identification of needs and leads to specific monitoring of outcomes. In addition, inclusive laws and policies might encourage students' participation, or more broadly the participation of children and young people, in educational policy making and the design of school projects at different levels. Participation of students and specifically of diverse

students is a fundamental right, which is embedded in international human rights treaties and can substantially enhance their personal development, sense of belonging and self-worth as well as respect for others (Lansdown, Jimerson and Shahroozi, 2014[93]). The project will both review legislation and regulations within countries that frame the development of policies to promote equity and inclusion in education systems and analyse their impact on the effectiveness of such policies.

3.1.3. Responsibilities for and administration of diversity in education (Issue 1.C)

A wide range of agents and institutions take responsibilities for and govern diversity and inclusion in education. These include education authorities both at the national level (e.g., ministry of education and dedicated units within it) and at the sub-national level (e.g., states, regions, municipalities). These typically have specific units to manage diversity and inclusion in education or to develop policies targeted at specific student groups (e.g., students with special education needs). In some countries, dedicated governance and provision of education exist for specific groups (e.g., Māori-medium education in New Zealand, Intercultural universities in Mexico).

Diversity and inclusion in education also require the coordination of the Ministry of Education with other ministries, namely the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Affairs, and the ministry in charge of migration issues and with agencies dedicated to immigration issues, protection of the rights of minorities, and gender equality.

Most countries' approach to diversity and inclusion in education combines central direction (either at the national or sub-national level) over policy development and standard setting with a measure of devolved responsibility for the implementation of inclusion policies at the local and school levels. The devolution of interventions to support diversity in education to the local level typically comes along with national frameworks, guidance materials, and tools for the use of school agents.

Approaches to stakeholder engagement are also important to shape policies for diversity and inclusion in education. Countries establish consultation mechanisms to collect the views of stakeholders (e.g., teacher unions, employers' organisations, organisations representing specific groups [e.g., students with special education needs, Indigenous peoples, LGBTQI+ community, Roma people]) and partners with given institutions (e.g., NGOs supporting immigrants and refugees, associations supporting gifted children) in developing and implementing inclusive policies in education. In particular, civil society organisations often connect local communities with governments, working alone or in partnership with governments, and often benefit from the support of public institutions. In many countries, they might provide practical help (financial and material), moral support (valorisation, cultural activities), and sometimes fill gaps when governmental actors can hardly be present (Ulleberg, 2009[94]).

3.1.4. Education provision to account for diversity in education (Issue 1.D)

The nature and diversity of education service delivery are important mechanisms for education systems to respond to the diverse needs of students. This relates to educational offerings (e.g., range of study pathways, distinct or adjusted curriculum for some student groups), learning settings (e.g., specialised classrooms for students with special education needs, welcome classes for newcomer students) and school choice and student selection policies.

Diversity of offerings

In order to deliver the curriculum and realise students' learning objectives, countries establish study programmes, disciplinary subjects, and study pathways at the secondary level. The diversity of such educational offerings has considerable impact on the extent to which the education system is able to accommodate the whole diversity of students' abilities, interests and backgrounds and grant equal educational opportunities to all. For instance, an adjusted curriculum possibly delivered in special classes

can be developed to increase the motivation of gifted children and improve their learning outcomes. In addition, offering Indigenous languages as part of study options or delivering some subjects in an Indigenous language is a strategy to improve the sense of self-worth and belonging of Indigenous students and to improve the intercultural competencies of non-Indigenous students. Similarly, offering extra classes of the language of instruction is an effective strategy to improve the integration of immigrants who are non-native speakers.

Learning settings

Although inclusion is the outcome, there might be cases in which it might be more feasible and equitable to provide certain students with specialised learning opportunities. Providing specialised learning settings can be a further strategy to accommodate different needs of a diverse student population. Some countries have established distinct education sub-systems that serve primarily a given group of students. In New Zealand, the 1989 Education Act made provisions for Māori communities to set up and govern their own schools, which facilitated the establishment of a Māori-medium sector (Nusche et al., 2012[95]). The Māori-medium sector provides a range of learning pathways from early childhood education through to tertiary education. It aims to provide education in an environment where the values of Māori teaching and learning philosophies are promoted and Māori is used as the language of communication. Countries also organise the provision for students with special education needs.

Additionally, most countries set a range of options to respond to the educational needs of students with learning disabilities, physical impairments or mental disorders. These include specialised schools, exclusively dedicated to serve students with special education needs, specialised classes within mainstream schools and the integration in mainstream classes within mainstream schools.

School choice and selection

School choice and student selection can entail both positive and negative consequences for students, depending on how they are regulated (OECD, 2019[96]). On the one hand, school choice may increase student engagement by enabling students to attend schools that more closely match their needs and preferences (Vaughn and Witko, 2013[97]). Similarly, school choice might improve the alignment between the educational vision of a specific school and the beliefs and identity of a student and his/her family.

On the other hand, school choice might be detrimental for some students (such as immigrant students and students from ethnic minority groups, students with special education needs) who might have less access or information about available choices. In fact, in the absence of proper regulation, school choice may increase school stratification based on students' ability, socio-economic status and ethnicity (Levin, 1998[98]; Burgess and Briggs, 2010[99]; Ladd, H.F., Fiske, E.B., Ruijs, 2011[100]; Ladd and Fiske, 2001[101]; Söderström and Uusitalo, 2010[102]; Urquiola, 2005[103]; Hsieh and Urquiola, 2006[104]). School choice can also be a way for families to maintain identity for minorities and for majorities not to mingle with minorities. This can lead to a smaller social mix in schools.

3.2. Issue 2: Resourcing diversity, inclusion and equity in education

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

3.2.1. General distribution of resources (Issue 2.A)

A key concern in designing funding allocation mechanisms is to ensure that funding is allocated equitably to schools according to their needs. There are two broad approaches when designing mechanisms to allocate funding that recognises different needs across schools. A first approach includes the additional funding in the main allocation mechanisms for particular schools (e.g., by including weightings in the funding formula to systematically allocate additional resources to certain categories/groups of students). Another approach includes the provision of targeted funding in one or a series of different grants external to the main allocation mechanism (see Section 3.2.2). Typically, a mix of these funding mechanisms is found in many systems (OECD, 2017[13]).

As part of the general distribution of resources, typically, in most OECD countries, a funding formula is used to promote equity and inclusion by ensuring that similar funding levels are allocated to similar types of provision (horizontal equity) and that differential amounts can be added to the basic allocation according to the assessed degree of educational need (vertical equity). For example, in recognition of higher educational needs, schools' funding per student with special education needs is higher than their funding per regular student. This differential funding has significant impact on the ability of schools to respond to the needs of individual diverse students. Funding distribution on the basis of formulae is often combined with discretion at the school level in how to use equity funding, granting professionals more flexibility in meeting the school's specific needs (OECD, 2017[13]).

3.2.2. Targeted distribution of resources (Issue 2.B)

Targeted programmes provide funding to be used by schools for specific purposes and thereby ensure responsiveness to emerging priorities and the identified needs of particular groups. Examples include extra resources for student tutoring at the school or remediation classes; school meals programmes; resources to hire additional specialised teachers (e.g., extra classes of the language of instruction to immigrant students); resources for physical infrastructure (e.g., to ensure the mobility of students with disabilities in schools); and programmes to train teachers to address diversity in classrooms. Many countries provide targeted additional resources in-kind, most typically additional teaching hours or positions. Another form of in-kind allocation is the provision of professional development opportunities for staff. Targeted programmes can also provide funding directly to students as with scholarship programmes to retain disadvantaged students in secondary education.

3.3. Issue 3: Developing capacity for managing diversity, inclusion and equity 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.

3.3.1. Awareness of diversity at the system level (Issue 3.A)

Raising awareness of diversity in society, of the challenges and opportunities it brings to education and of the need to respond to the needs of specific student groups is important to gain support for the implementation of equity and inclusion policies in education. Raising awareness can take place through information campaigns, which can help fight negative attitudes, stereotypes and prejudices that can hinder inclusive approaches in education. Ministries, other governmental agencies, national or international

non-governmental organisations acting at local, sub-national, national or international levels, can carry out campaigns. For example, the broad dissemination of knowledge on learning disabilities such as dyslexia or dysgraphia or development disorders such as ADHD is likely to lead to a better recognition of the educational needs of these students, improved interactions with their peers at school and improved social and psychological well-being (Mezzanotte, 2020[53]). Moreover, raising awareness on gender biases and stereotypes can support both students and teachers in becoming aware of their own subconscious biases and to act upon this knowledge. For example, this knowledge could support girls in pursuing their interests in STEM[3] or other subjects that are generally considered more "masculine". Raising awareness can also be steered through formal legislation. For instance, a country can explicitly establish the principle of interculturalism and protection of Indigenous languages and culture through legislation and this improves general intercultural awareness among the population and provides more leverage for the inclusion of Indigenous needs in the education system.

3.3.2. Recruitment, retention, preparation and evaluation of school staff (Issue 3.B)

Capacity development within an education system plays a key role in supporting diversity, equity and inclusion. This involves not only the development of skills among school staff to address diversity in education but also recruitment practices that ensure the profile of staff closely matches the diversity of the student body (Brussino, 2021[105]).

Ensuring diversity of school staff and, in particular, of teaching staff can be an effective strategy to improve student learning outcomes in a context of student diversity. Some countries report concerns about an imbalance between the cultural or language diversity of the student population and that of the teaching body at a time when the proportion of minority students is increasing. This might reflect relatively limited opportunities or lack of incentives for ethnic groups or national minorities to enter professional occupations like teaching, seriously limiting the important contribution teachers from ethnic minority backgrounds could bring as role models for students from similar backgrounds. Teachers from minority backgrounds might help improve the understanding of cultural differences by teachers and students in general. Furthermore, many countries are alarmed by the fact that the proportion of males in teaching is declining, especially in light of concerns about boys' achievement in schools. Hence, there is a need to promote the benefits of a teaching career to groups who are often under-represented among teacher ranks, such as males and individuals from minority cultural backgrounds. Such strategies would include promoting positive teacher role models from similar backgrounds, investigating the reasons behind potential negative views about teaching and correcting misconceptions about the job, and disseminating information about teaching through fora and media that are relevant to such groups. The retention of teachers from minority groups is as important as their initial recruitment. In fact, research shows that teachers from ethnic minorities tend to have a larger turnover than others do (Ingersoll, May and Collins, 2017[106]). Greater diversity of teachers may mitigate feelings of isolation, frustration, and fatigue that can contribute to individual minority teachers leaving the profession when they feel they are alone.

All efforts to improve inclusion in education and help all students succeed depend on well-skilled and well-supported teachers who take into account the diversity of their student populations in their instructional approaches. This involves ensuring that initial teacher education programmes adequately prepare new teachers to respond to diverse needs in the classroom, individualise teaching, and treat students fairly; and offering continuous professional development activities that keep teachers up-to-date on approaches and methods to ensure inclusive practices in classrooms (Forghani-Arani, Cerna and Bannon, 2019[107]).

[3] The acronym STEM stands for "science, technology, engineering and mathematics" and refers to any subject that falls under these four disciplines.

To be able to manage diverse classrooms, teachers need to be equipped with relevant knowledge, capabilities, dispositions, values and skills. Examples include knowledge and understanding of diversity issues and reflectivity about identities, perspectives and practices, as well as teacher agency and autonomy, empathy, and pedagogical judgement and tact (Forghani-Arani, Cerna and Bannon, 2019[107]). Furthermore, strong communication and listening skills, creativity and problem solving are crucial for teachers when working in diverse classrooms. Some knowledge of cultural anthropology, social psychology, child cognitive development, integrated learning and second language acquisition are desirable knowledge areas to be developed among teachers. Teachers would also benefit from being encouraged to develop attitudes such as curiosity, open-mindedness, awareness of others, tolerance and having high expectations for students (OECD, 2017[108]). These needs place considerable demands on initial teacher education programmes in their efforts to improve teachers' capacity for managing diversity.

While initial teacher education is crucial for the development of values of inclusiveness, of non-discriminatory attitudes and inclusive pedagogical practices among a new generation of teachers, in-service training opportunities should also be offered periodically to ensure that all generations of teachers adopt the most effective teaching practices for inclusion. Continuous professional development programmes include support for student teachers in the transition to the teaching workforce (induction and mentoring) as well as opportunities to practice and learn about new strategies to manage diversity once they are in the profession. Teachers generally perceive addressing special education needs and teaching in diverse classrooms as the areas of greatest need for their professional development (OECD, 2019[109]). For instance, fair assessment of students tends to be an important area for teachers' professional development to ensure inclusive assessment practices and avoid assessment biases. Assessment should be sensitive to the needs of particular groups such as cultural minorities, students whose mother tongue is not the language of instruction and students with special education needs.

As part of the management of the teaching profession, teacher appraisal is also an important component to assess teachers' needs in effectively teaching in diverse classrooms and in providing incentives for teachers to respond to those needs. This requires teacher standards that include criteria on teaching in diverse schools and classrooms, teacher appraisal processes that place good emphasis on teachers' skills and knowledge to address diversity, and results from teacher appraisal that both inform future professional development activities of teachers in this area and provide the incentives for teachers to acquire such skills and knowledge.

Additionally, effective inclusion and equity practices rely on the preparation of school leaders and support staff to address diversity in schools. The initial training and professional development of school leaders is expected to include aspects associated with diversity, equity and inclusion. School leaders should be able to analyse their own contexts, identify local barriers and facilitators, plan an appropriate development process and provide leadership for inclusive practices and effective strategies for equity in education (UNESCO, 2017[16]). They also need to include diversity and inclusion perspectives into school self-evaluation processes and the preparation of school development plans in collective efforts with the whole school community. At the same time, schools need to ensure that the school has the right staff mix to address diversity needs, i.e., in addition to a teaching body and school leadership team with the desirable profile, schools should also hire the specialised staff most relevant for the school's student profile (e.g., assistants for students with special education needs, psychologists, teaching assistants).

3.3.3. Preparation of all students for diversity in education (Issue 3.C)

Students need to be prepared for diversity to support inclusive education systems. Various factors can contribute to the development of students' positive attitudes towards diversity and to the reduction of stereotypes and prejudice. Examples of these factors are the dissemination of information about the needs of specific groups of students, opportunities for open discussions on diversity and inclusion and

curriculum-based learning on diversity-related issues. In addition, schools can be proactive in developing a proper school climate, promoting positive relationships among students and providing a safe environment for all students through the transmission of values of dignity, acceptance and diversity (OECD, 2018[7]). This can involve mentoring between students – e.g., between an older student and a younger one; or targeted at a student with a special education need (e.g., student with a learning disability or mental disorder). Another effective practice is to "buddy" a newcomer student with a student from the host country.

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

This issue is concerned with how to promote school-level interventions to support diversity, inclusion and equity 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.

3.4.1. Matching resources within schools to individual student learning needs (Issue 4.A)

In most countries, schools benefit from some autonomy to use their resources (such as teachers, other staff, physical infrastructure, time) as they see fit. One way to match school resources to individual student learning needs is to distribute students into learning groups to provide the right level of challenge and support to each one. This might involve grouping students by ability (e.g., for gifted children) or by specific needs (proficiency in language of instruction), or organising learning groups of different sizes (e.g., smaller groups for students with special education needs). Class size can affect the amount of time teachers can spend with diverse students and the number of professionals needed in each class to support students with different learning needs. Several studies indicate that smaller classes are more beneficial for specific groups such as students with low socio-economic, migrant or minority background (Björklund et al., 2004[110]; Andersson, 2007[111]).

Another strategy involves matching teacher resources to individual student learning needs. This might involve matching specific teachers (and their specific characteristics) to given student groups – e.g., a teacher with specialisation in special education needs to smaller groups of students with special education needs; or assigning more than one teaching staff to a given student group – e.g., one teacher with one teaching assistant, two teachers, etc. For example, the addition of support teachers in classes that have many children with special education needs can prove important for the progression of both children with special education needs and their classmates.

As an example, specialised support for students with special education needs can be delivered in the form of one-to-one tuition, with a specialised teacher or teaching assistant supporting an individual student inside or outside a mainstream class; or in small group, where a small number of students receive assistance from a teacher or a teaching assistant.

The organisation of teaching and learning time might also affect the learning outcomes of specific groups. Some groups might benefit from longer classes (e.g., gifted children) while others might benefit from extra classes as part of the regular curriculum (e.g., language classes for immigrant students). The school might also organise extra-curricular activities considered to have an impact on the overall well-being of students. This can consist of tutoring for students falling behind (including students at a disadvantage), more

advanced classes for gifted students, or recreational and social activities likely to improve the overall well-being of students.

Another important resource is the school's physical infrastructure. The way in which spaces in schools are designed can influence the ability of the school to be inclusive. It can directly affect the school's climate, interactions and relationships in school, and the ability to engage the community around the school. It also concerns the well-being of particular groups such as with the accessibility for students with physical impairments or ways to organise spaces that are sensitive to minority cultures.

Finally, the school also needs to manage its digital technologies infrastructure to ensure these technologies provide the necessary classroom support to all students, and more specifically students with the greatest learning needs. This involves the allocation of digital technologies resources to classrooms and across specific groups of students and the acquisition of digital technologies materials that fit the needs of particular groups of students.

3.4.2. Learning strategies to address diversity (Issue 4.B)

Much of the response to the diverse needs of learners takes place in the classroom. This relates to classroom strategies, approaches to student assessment and the use of digital technologies for student learning. Various classroom strategies can address the diversity of student needs. These include differentiated teaching; individualised learning, such as one-to-one tuition; and small group approaches and can involve the promotion of student-oriented teaching strategies, which are found to lead to better student outcomes (OECD, 2018[112]). Addressing diverse needs in a classroom might involve the use of a variety of teaching formats and practices, adopting multiple ways of representing content to different learners, and adopting different rhythms with different students. These strategies might require different configurations to resource the teaching, e.g., one teaching assistant supporting the teacher in the classroom.

In addition, digital technologies can play an important role in supporting students with various needs, including those with special education needs (such as learning disabilities and physical impairments) as well as immigrant and minority students. For the former group, for instance, digital technologies can provide greater access to learning and mobility. For the latter group, for example, digital technologies can serve as a translation device. Additionally, digital technologies can support inclusive practices by motivating learners, deepening their engagement in the learning process and creating opportunities to build relationships (FutureLab, n.d.[113]). For instance, technologies with visual elements can be effective in engaging learners. Online learning can also benefit learners who struggle in formal learning contexts or are not able to attend school for personal, cultural or family reasons (FutureLab, n.d.[113]).

Moreover, assistive technology (AT) can help students work around their challenges, while also playing to their strengths (UNESCO, 2010[114]). This can be particularly important for children who struggle with learning, regardless of the subject. AT can enable children to thrive in school and in life, and can even help grow their confidence and independence (Couteret, 2009[115]). Examples of specific AT tools include text-to-speech (TTS), dictation (speech-to-text), and word prediction, but there are currently many more that vary based on the subject in consideration (reading, mathematics, listening, etc.). Lastly, digital technologies can further enhance the communication and collaboration between the different actors involved in supporting students. For example, it can be a means to strengthen communication between teachers and school leaders, and the families of children with special education needs.

Another important issue is to develop assessment strategies that suit the needs of different learner groups. There are risks of conscious or unconscious bias in teacher-based assessment. Bias in teachers' assessment may be related to teachers' prior knowledge of student characteristics such as behaviour, gender, special educational needs, immigrant background, first language, overall academic achievement

or verbal ability (OECD, 2013[91]). Such bias can also occur in the design of standardised student assessment.

The objective should be to develop an inclusive student assessment system based on the principle that all students have the opportunity to participate in educational activities, including assessment activities, and to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and competencies in a fair way. Hence, teacher assessment practices as well as the content and format of standardised assessments should be sensitive to particular groups of students and avoid biases by socio-economic background, special education needs, immigrant or minority status, and gender. While innovative and motivating assessment strategies are important for all students, this is particularly the case for vulnerable students or students at risk of dropping out. Several studies indicate that certain formats of assessment may advantage or disadvantage certain student groups. Hence, to ensure fairness in assessment, it is important to offer a range of different assessment formats and tasks (e.g. test-based, performance-tasks, oral, written) (OECD, 2013[91]). Dimensions of inclusive assessment, such as the sensitivity to cultural and linguistic aspects of assessment, need to be included and developed in both initial education and professional development for teachers. The accessibility and lack of bias of standardised assessments for certain groups at risk of underachievement should receive due attention. This requires studies on differential test functioning for particular groups and the provision of specific test accommodations where necessary (e.g. extra time for students with a learning disability; oral administration of a test by an assessor who is familiar with the student's linguistic background, for second language learners).

Moreover, diagnostic assessment can be categorised as a dimension of formative assessment, which is carried out to identify student learning needs and plan specific interventions to address particular ones.

3.4.3. Non-instructional support and services (Issue 4.C)

The educational effectiveness of schools depends not only on teachers and school leaders, but also on the availability of non-instructional support and services at the school. In particular, services such as counsellors, psychotherapists, trauma therapists and social workers can be particularly relevant for students from very diverse backgrounds (Cerna et al., 2019[32]). Additional services such as physiotherapy can also be offered particularly to students with physical impairments. Many of these services are generally associated with the needs of children with mental disorders or with learning disabilities, but they can be relevant for various populations of students. For example, these professionals can support asylum seekers, refugee children and ethnic minority children in their psychological and social well-being as well as in their academic well-being. Support services to schools can also be provided by specialised resource centres outside school such as a special school or a centre providing services for students with special education needs, e.g., through extra support for students or by assisting teachers in mainstream schools to address special education needs.

Additionally, providing effective career and educational guidance can help ensure that the information needs of all students are met and that they receive equal opportunities to achieve throughout education and beyond (Cerna et al., 2019[32]). Guidance is particularly important for transitions in the education system (such as between primary and lower secondary level, upper secondary and tertiary level) and between education and the labour market since some students might be left behind. For example, effective guidance could be key in helping students to overcome gender-based expectations on their future careers: boys and girls should be supported in making choices based on their interests and talents, rather than on pre-conceptions on which subjects either group should be studying or which field they should be working in.

Furthermore, some students with special education needs require timely and high-quality medical assessment to adequately diagnose their needs and orient them towards the most adequate educational provision. This would ensure recommended therapies support children and improve their behaviour and performance at school and that children have access to the extra services to which they are entitled.

3.4.4. Engagement with parents and communities (Issue 4.D)

Engaging local communities, parents and families is important for schools who seek to create inclusive and equitable school environments. Most countries promote the participation and involvement of the whole school community (including parents) in education, including through school governance structures and initiatives and mechanisms to foster a positive school climate. This ensures horizontal accountability in assessing the extent to which schools are inclusive, greater responsiveness to the diversity-related challenges of the communities served by the school and the development of joint strategies to improve school climate. Local communities can play an important role in educating children and youths and in supporting parents in creating safe and positive environments (Smith et al., 2017[116]).

Parents are essential in both conveying the needs of their children and in collaborating with the school to address such needs. For instance, the involvement of Indigenous communities in local school activities helps to meet the needs of Indigenous students. In Chile, traditional teachers bring the cultural values and vision of their Indigenous community to the classroom, and mentor teachers support traditional teachers in course planning and development of pedagogical strategies (Guthrie et al., 2019[33]). This combination represents an opportunity for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students to become familiar with Indigenous traditions and at the same time encourages a mutual learning process among teachers. This also implies greater support to schools to reach out to these communities.

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

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

3.5.1. Monitoring and evaluation of outcomes of diversity, inclusion and equity in education at the system level (Issue 5.A)

Establishing system-level frameworks to monitor the access, participation and achievement of all learners is fundamental to evaluate the progress of education systems towards reaching diversity, inclusion and equity goals and subsequently informing policies in these areas. This includes monitoring student performance across specific groups (e.g., by gender, migrant status, special education needs, socio-economic or ethnic background) as well as across localities and regional authorities. National research into how student background characteristics and school contextual characteristics are associated with student performance can identify the type of information that is most pertinent to collect systematically and include in the national indicators framework for education (OECD, 2013[91]). The value of annual monitoring reports (e.g. “State of Education” in the country) is enhanced by regularly reporting information on student learning outcomes for groups where there is evidence of system underperformance. In New Zealand, for example, standard reporting data are disaggregated for the three major ethnic groups (European, Māori and Pasifika) and progress towards the achievement of government goals for the educational success of Māori learners is reported in a series of annual reports (Nusche et al., 2012[95]).

Additionally, there is a need to collect information on broader aspects of education quality, such as student attitudes, motivation and well-being and the overall teaching and learning environment in schools. As part of this effort, there should be consideration on how to best include in the national monitoring system the perceptions of stakeholders regarding the teaching and learning environment and, in particular, the ability

of the education system to be inclusive. One option for doing this is to administer a national-level questionnaire to a sample of students, parents, school leaders and teachers in the system to collect views and perspectives about a range of aspects, including academic, psychological, physical, social and material well-being.

Countries also need to systematically evaluate education programmes targeted at improving inclusion and equity in education. To facilitate the evaluation of programme effectiveness and impact, it is important that all new programmes have an evaluation component in their original design, including elements such as targets and baseline indicators. Results should then be used to make strategic decisions about specific programmes, including discontinuation, adjustments, re-design and improvements to implementation.

3.5.2. Evaluating processes for diversity, inclusion and equity in education at the local and school level (Issue 5.B)

As previously mentioned, direct interventions to support diversity, inclusion and equity in education take place at the local and school levels in the context of the central regulatory framework. Hence, the effective monitoring of equity and inclusion outcomes as well as the evaluation of related processes at the local and school levels are central to the continuous improvement of equity and inclusion in education. Both local governments with responsibility for education and individual schools need feedback on their performance to help them identify how to improve their interventions to support diversity, inclusion and equity in education; and they should also be accountable for their results in this area.

In particular, school evaluation – both school self-evaluation and external school evaluation – plays a key role in ensuring the effectiveness of school-level interventions to support diversity, inclusion and equity in education (OECD, 2015[117]). A number of aspects are important to consider to account for diversity, equity and inclusion in school evaluation processes. First, the reference standards for school evaluation (criteria for evaluation), which define what a successful school is, need to consider diversity, equity and inclusion issues. These tend to be transversal to a range of dimensions such as student learning (engagement, achievement and progress); teaching and pedagogical practices; leadership, governance and management; school culture; and engagement with the community. School evaluation processes should also review compliance with regulatory aspects, including those related to ensuring the rights of diverse groups. Second, school-level indicators on equity and inclusion need to be developed to assist school evaluation procedures. Third, it is important for external evaluators to be well prepared to address issues of diversity in education. Fourth, it is key to ensure the commitment of schools to give prominence to equity and inclusion in school self-evaluation, including through the analysis of factors such as school climate, relationships, classroom climate, support for learning, response to special education needs and home-school links. Fifth, the results of school evaluation need to inform the improvement of school processes, including those more directly linked to equity and inclusion (OECD, 2015[117]).

4. Methodology

4.1. Main components of the project

The project methodology is based on countries working collaboratively with the OECD. It involves examining country-specific issues and policy approaches in ensuring diversity, inclusion and equity in education, and placing these experiences within a broader analytical framework to generate insights and findings relevant to countries as a whole. The collaborative approach provides countries with an opportunity to learn more about themselves by examining their experiences against those of other countries. It is also intended to add to the broader knowledge base by accumulating international evidence on the impact of policy reforms to improve diversity, inclusion and equity in education, and the circumstances under which they work best.

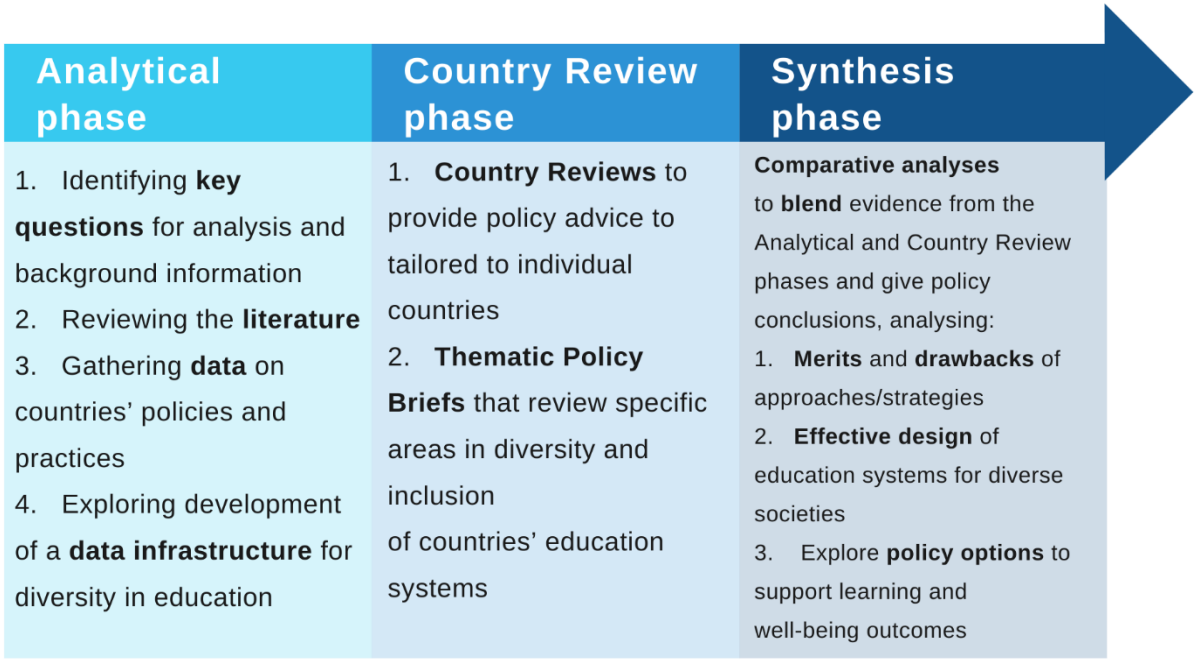
Despite these potential advantages, comparative work can be challenging. The contexts within which education systems support the learning and well-being of diverse populations can vary markedly across countries depending upon their educational traditions, school governance culture and economic conditions. Policy initiatives to improve diversity, inclusiveness and equity in education that work well in one national context are not necessarily transferable across national borders. The project is sensitive to the role played by contextual factors in influencing the particular policies that are attempted in countries, and the factors that shape their implementation and impact. The questions to guide the project are framed so that diversity, inclusion and equity policies can be understood in relation to the values, vision and organisation of schools in different countries as well as the broader economic, social and political contexts.

The work is a combination of desk-based analysis and country reviews. This is complemented with meetings of country representatives to discuss progress and policy fora to share policy experiences. The work is organised in three phases (summarised also in Figure 4.1):

- An *Analytical Phase*, to draw together evidence-based policy lessons from international data, research and analysis.
- A *Country Review Phase*, to provide policy advice to individual countries tailored to the diversity and inclusion issues of interest in those countries, based on the international evidence base, combined with evidence obtained by a team of experts visiting the country. This phase will also be informed by thematic policy briefs that will review specific areas in diversity and inclusion of countries' education systems, upon their request.
- A *Synthesis Phase*, with the preparation of comparative analyses to blend analytic and country review evidence and provide overall policy conclusions.

The project adopts an integrated approach in the analytical, country review and synthesis phases to consider the important linkages and dependencies that exist between what happens at different levels of education and the interaction between formal and informal learning across the life cycle. The three phases will use the tools developed for Phase I of the *Strength through Diversity Project: The Integration of Immigrants and Refugees in School and Training Systems*.

Figure 4.1. Project phases



4.1.1. Phase 1: Analytical phase

The Analytical Phase uses several means – country background reports, literature reviews and data analyses – to analyse the factors that shape equity and inclusion in education to support diverse populations, the associated challenges and possible policy responses. Taken together, the Analytical Phase aims to explore the existing national and international data infrastructures that support the development of strong evidence about inclusion and diversity in education, analyse existing responses and better understand the conditions under which policies and practices that address these concepts achieve their objectives.

Part 1: Identifying the key questions for analysis and the background information needed from countries

A first step in the project has been to identify the key questions for analysis as part of the analytical framework. Recent experience with conducting policy reviews has demonstrated the value of reaching consensus on the key policy question(s) to focus the analysis and keep it on track. Previous sections of this document propose an analytical framework and key issues that can be considered when looking at dimensions of student diversity in education systems. Feedback from country representatives has allowed the project to prioritise dimensions for analysis and identify the information needed from countries about their approaches to supporting the learning and well-being outcomes of diverse populations and supporting all individuals to engage with others in increasingly diverse and complex societies.

Part 2: Reviewing the literature

The project is taking stock of the existing knowledge base as well as the quantitative and qualitative evidence on the effects of alternative approaches to inclusion and equity in education and on the impact of policies seeking to improve the learning and well-being outcomes of diverse populations. The project team has been reviewing the literature and evidence, presented it to countries in policy fora as well as

meetings of country representatives and summarised it in working papers. The project is also refining its policy analysis tools to use in analysing individual country practices. Work on this part has started with four literature reviews on different dimensions of diversity: students with special education needs (Brussino, 2020[52]), students belonging to Roma communities (Rutigliano, 2020[40]), students with ADHD (Mezzanotte, 2020[53]) and gifted students (Forthcoming).

Part 3: Gathering data on countries' policies and practices

There are important differences between countries with respect to the way education systems can become more inclusive and equitable and the way education systems ensure individuals engage with others in increasingly diverse and complex societies. The project is collecting detailed information on approaches to diversity, inclusion and equity in education, which take into account the key questions for analysis organised around the following main policy areas:

- Governance arrangements for diversity, inclusion and equity in education.
- Use of resources to support diversity, inclusion and equity in education.
- Capacity development for all stakeholders to support diversity, inclusion and equity in education.
- School-level interventions to support diversity, inclusion and equity in education.
- Monitoring and evaluation to support diversity, inclusion and equity in education.

Every effort is being made to collect this information from as many OECD countries as possible, in ways that minimise the burden on countries and make it easy to share and add to the public knowledge base. The main objective is to take stock of current policies and practices in countries and summarise them either as a standalone output or as part of the comparative synthesis work. Data also draws from Phase I of the *Strength through Diversity* Project, in addition to other work within the OECD and other international organisations.

Information on countries' policies and practices is being gathered through Country Background Reports (CBRs). These are prepared following guidelines formulated by the project in response to a common set of issues and questions, and use a common framework to facilitate comparative analysis and maximise the opportunities for countries to learn from each other. The Guidelines for the preparation of CBRs have been published on the project website (OECD, 2021[118]). This information will be complemented at a later stage of the project by a survey to collect information on countries' approaches to inclusion and equity in education.

4.1.2. Phase 2: Country Review phase

Phase II of the project expands the methodology for country-specific policy analysis from Spotlight Reports to comprehensive country reviews to facilitate a deeper understanding of the issues and policy approaches specific countries use to manage diversity in education. This strand of country-specific policy analysis places a country's experiences within the project's broader analytical framework to generate insights and findings that are relevant to a range of stakeholders. Additionally, thematic policy briefs will contribute to generating country-specific knowledge on key topics in the management of inclusion and diversity in education. They will also contribute to the project's specific knowledge that will feed into the synthesis phase.

Part 1: Country reviews

Country reviews provide both value to the individual country and important input into the comparative work. Countries are invited to request a country review, which involves an OECD-led review team providing from an international perspective, an analysis of policies to improve diversity, inclusion and equity in education in the country, and tailored policy advice and recommendations to improve the impact of those policies.

The scope and focus of each review will be determined by the country in consultation with the OECD, depending on the country priorities. Areas of analytical focus for individual country reviews will be chosen from the dimensions of diversity being analysed in the project (e.g. migration-induced diversity, Indigenous peoples, special education needs, ethnic diversity, gender, and gender identity and sexual orientation). By providing an external perspective on diversity, equity and inclusion issues, the country reviews are also intended to contribute to national discussions, as well as inform other countries about effective inclusion and equity policies in education.

Each country review will include an intensive country visit (typically five-seven days in length, but possibly longer to account for a country's circumstances) to fully understand the country's context, policies and practices and will include meetings with all major stakeholders. There will also be a two-day visit by the project team to make plans for the main visit (or, alternatively, preparatory meetings through video-conferences). For each country review the project team will deliver a draft report to the country for comment within four months after the review visit has taken place. Country comments are taken into account before the report is finalised and published.

In some countries, education policy is, in part or in whole, a regional/provincial/state responsibility. Subject to the approval of national authorities, the project may carry out a "Country Review" at a sub-national level rather than the whole country.

Part 2: Thematic policy briefs

The aim of the targeted thematic policy briefs is not to generate detailed policy recommendations, but to develop diagnostic analyses grounded in comparative data of policy design and system performance that help national audiences clearly understand their specific challenges related to inclusion in education through a comparative perspective, and identify policy reform priorities. Countries can choose to focus **on one of the five policy levers** (see Section 3.) that are at the core of the project's analysis of the inclusiveness of education systems. Countries could also select **specific sub-areas of such levers**. For instance, a thematic brief could focus on the learning strategies and non-instructional services targeting the inclusion of students from ethnic minorities or Indigenous backgrounds, the targeted distribution of resources for students with SEN, or the engagement of parents and communities for the inclusion of Roma students.

Countries are also allowed to request that the thematic policy brief focuses on **one diverse group** (i.e., training to combat stereotypes on gender and sexual orientation in the teaching staff or classroom strategies for the learning of immigrant students). Countries can also request a specific **focus on COVID-19** implications, challenges and potential policy solutions throughout the thematic brief. For instance, a thematic brief considering capacity building of teachers could include a focus on training for teachers in digital technologies for the inclusion of specific diverse groups such as students with SEN or non-native language speakers in distance learning settings. The project considers it possible that countries may opt for a country review after participating in a thematic policy brief.

The policy brief will be 30-40 pages long and take about six months to complete. It will draw upon available data and qualitative review of countries' policies and practices to provide a comparative analysis of key policy challenges in the chosen policy area. The thematic policy briefs will draw, in part, upon results of the Strength through Diversity Policy Survey, which will be developed and administered in 2021 in one survey instrument.

The project will present the policy brief to participating countries for review and comment during a national policy seminar/webinar, and subsequently make it publicly available as an OECD document. It aims to support national policy discussions by bringing international evidence to bear.

4.1.3. Phase 3: Synthesis phase

This comparative phase involves the project using the earlier steps to analyse policy options and highlight good practices across countries. This could include the following points:

- Analyse the merits and drawbacks of different approaches and strategies that countries use to improve diversity, inclusion and equity in education.
- Analyse how countries can effectively design education systems that ensure all individuals engage with others in increasingly diverse and complex societies.
- Explore policy options available to countries to improve the ability of education systems to both support the learning and well-being outcomes of diverse populations and contribute to societies that are more inclusive of diversity.

Given the nature of the project, the synthesis phase will be thematic and, as such, will potentially involve a series of volumes/reports that would target specific groups of learners and diversity-related challenges (e.g. gender, special education needs). Hence, the findings will be published in a comparative synthesis report or in a series of thematic comparative reports.

4.2. Modes of participation

Participation in the OECD project is open to OECD member countries, invitees and participants to the Education Policy Committee, as well as other partner countries. The following levels of participation are possible for each country:

- country representatives project meetings (organised back to back with the policy fora)
- policy fora: overall contribution to policy exchange
- country Background Report: Preparation of a Country Background Report (CBR), by the concerned country, to feed into the comparative analysis
- country review: Preparation by the project team of a country review report, which provides in-depth analysis and policy recommendations to the concerned country, as explained above
- thematic policy briefs: Preparation by the project team of thematic policy briefs, which provide analysis and identify policy reform priorities in a specific area to the concerned country.

Actively engaged countries (meaning countries preparing a CBR, or engaging in a country review or a Thematic Policy Brief) are expected to attend meetings of country representatives. Country participation in a country review requires the preparation of a CBR. Each country opting for a CBR or a country review is expected to appoint a National Co-ordinator to take responsibility for co-ordinating the review with the OECD.

4.3. Deliverables

The project will produce a number of outputs designed to assist policy making in the area of inclusive and equitable education, including:

- A taking-stock of current policies and practices in countries to improve the inclusiveness of education systems and the support students have to engage with others in increasingly diverse and complex societies.
- Proceedings from each Policy Forum.

- A series of working papers addressing specific policy aspects to inclusion and equity in education.
- Country background reports.
- Country review reports that present findings and propose priority actions for improving inclusion and equity in education and the impact of policies and practices surrounding a specific dimension(s) of diversity.
- Thematic policy briefs that analyse policy areas related to inclusion and equity that are of particular interest for countries, and that identify policy reform priorities.
- Meetings of country representatives to review progress and share experiences.
- A typology of approaches to examine inclusive education in as many OECD and partner countries as possible.
- A comparative synthesis report or a series of thematic comparative reports that will draw out the key lessons for policy makers and policy options available to countries to improve inclusive education.

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