



Inclusive Education and Co-Production

A review to identify opportunities for co-production

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1 Table of Contents

- 1 Introduction 2
 - 1.1 Review methods..... 2
- 2 Public education systems in Europe 2
 - 2.1 Rates of educational inclusion..... 3
 - 2.1.1 Defining disability..... 6
 - 2.2 Inclusive education policies..... 6
- 3 Perceptions and realities of educational inclusion..... 7
 - 3.1 Measuring attitudes inclusive education..... 7
 - 3.2 Views of Educators 8
 - 3.2.1 Differing disabilities..... 8
 - 3.2.2 Resource allocation 8
 - 3.2.3 Leadership, training and accountability..... 9
 - 3.3 Views of Parents 10
 - 3.3.1 Navigating the system 11
 - 3.4 Views of Pupils..... 12
 - 3.4.1 Social inclusion..... 12
- 4 Co-production and inclusive education 13
 - 4.1 Co-production background 13
 - 4.2 Defining educational co-production 14
 - 4.2.1 School governance 14
 - 4.2.2 Free schools 14
 - 4.2.3 Parental Involvement..... 15
 - 4.2.4 Co-production with external actors 16
 - 4.3 Challenges 16
 - 4.3.1 School autonomy..... 17
 - 4.4 Supporting disabled students 17
 - 4.5 Opportunities for co-production in different countries..... 18

4.5.1	Single structure.....	18
4.5.2	Common core	18
4.5.3	Differentiated	18
5	Conclusion	19
6	References.....	20

2 Introduction

This report covers a review of recent research literature into educational inclusion, focused on ISCED-1 (primary) and ISCED-2 (lower-secondary) compulsory education in Europe, although some research from non-European countries is discussed. It identifies areas of potential for co-production to increase the rate of educational inclusion and the quality of education and support for disabled young people.

2.1 Review methods

Due to the broad scope of the project, a systematic review of the literature into the views of education stakeholders on educational inclusion and co-production is not feasible. We have adopted a narrative review method, focusing on identifying key issues at various levels, areas of exemplary practice, and the general trend of educational inclusion across Europe.

3 Public education systems in Europe

There are three basic structures of compulsory public education systems in Europe (Eurydice 2018), although elements of two structures may be present in some jurisdictions.

- Single structure education, with no clear distinctions between ISCED-1 and ISCED-2, and a general education provided to all pupils. Pupils generally all receive the same type of certification. This system is used in the Nordic countries and in some eastern European countries and the Balkans.
- Common core systems, where there is a clear distinction between ISCED-1 and ISCED-2, but pupils in both systems follow the same general curriculum. Pupils generally all receive the same type of certification. The common core system is used in English-speaking and many southern European countries, including Italy, Greece, Spain and Portugal. It also exists to a degree in Eastern Europe.
- Differentiated systems, where pupils are differentiated at the start or during ISCED-2, either into technical, vocational and academic streams, or different branches of a general stream. Pupils may receive different types of certification at the completion of their studies. It is primarily used in German speaking countries, as well as Switzerland, Lithuania and the Netherlands.

Our review covers multiple countries using each educational structure. Direct comparisons between different countries on attitudes to inclusion can be difficult, due to cultural and language differences, existing rates of inclusion and systemic differences.

3.1 Rates of educational inclusion

There is no apparently meaningful relationship between the degree of inclusion (defined as the proportion of pupils with SEN designations spending at least 80% of their time in a mainstream classroom) and a given educational structure, after accounting for GDP per Capita. Likewise, there is no correlation between educational inclusion rates and welfare state typologies (Esping-Andersen 1990).

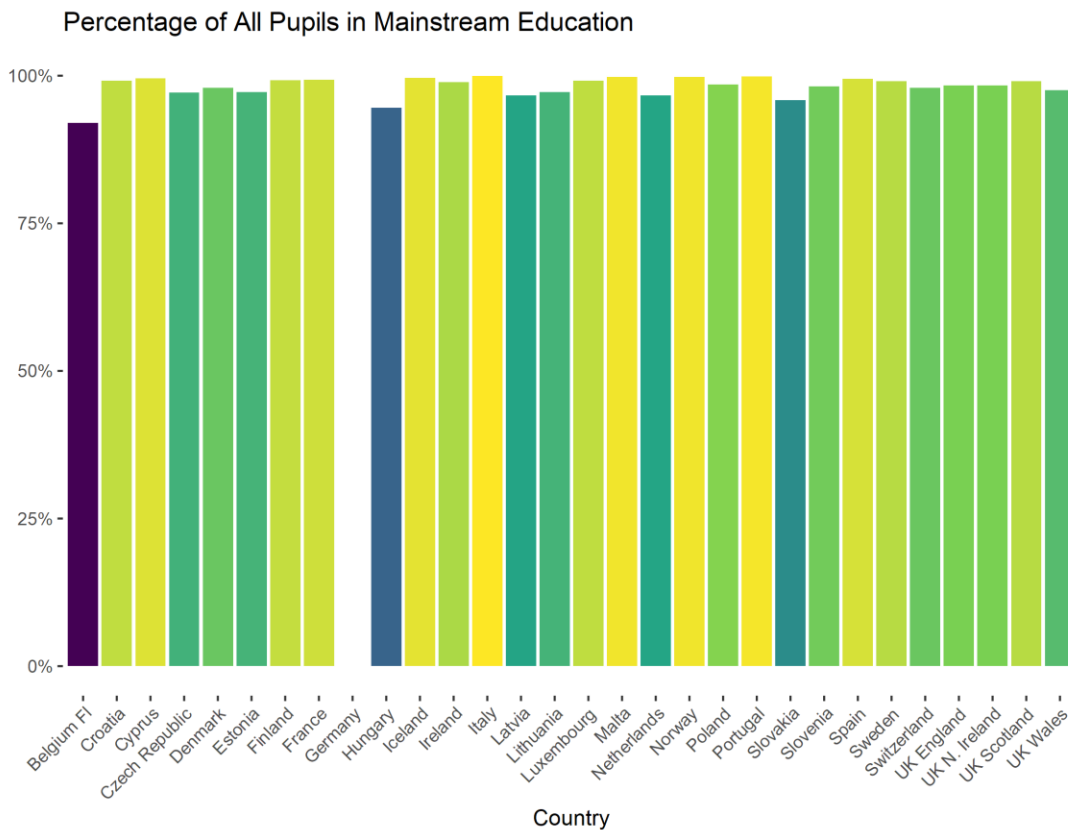


Figure 1 - Inclusion rates by country

There is also no relationship between education organisational structure (Eurydice 2018) and inclusion rates (Figure 2).

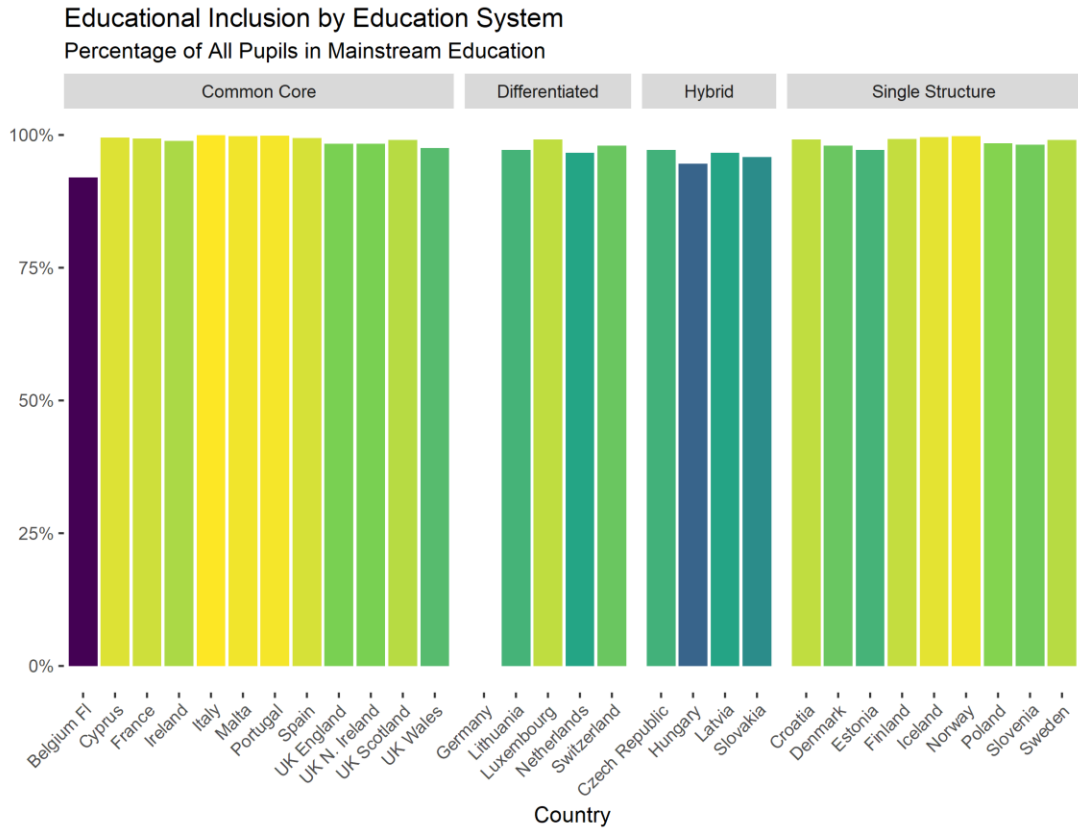


Figure 2 - Inclusion rates by country and education system

As the European Agency Statistics on Inclusive Education (EASIE) data (Ramberg, Lénárt, and Watkins 2018) covers more countries than most welfare state regime research, I used loose typologies based on Esping-Andersen (1990), Kammer, Niehues, and Peichl (2012) and the typology summaries presented by Arts and Gelissen (2010). Welfare regimes are grouped into the liberal, social-democratic and conservative regimes used by Esping-Andersen, along with a conservative/social-democratic hybrid regime, a southern regime (sometimes called Mediterranean) and post-socialist regime for the former Yugoslavia and Warsaw Pact states.

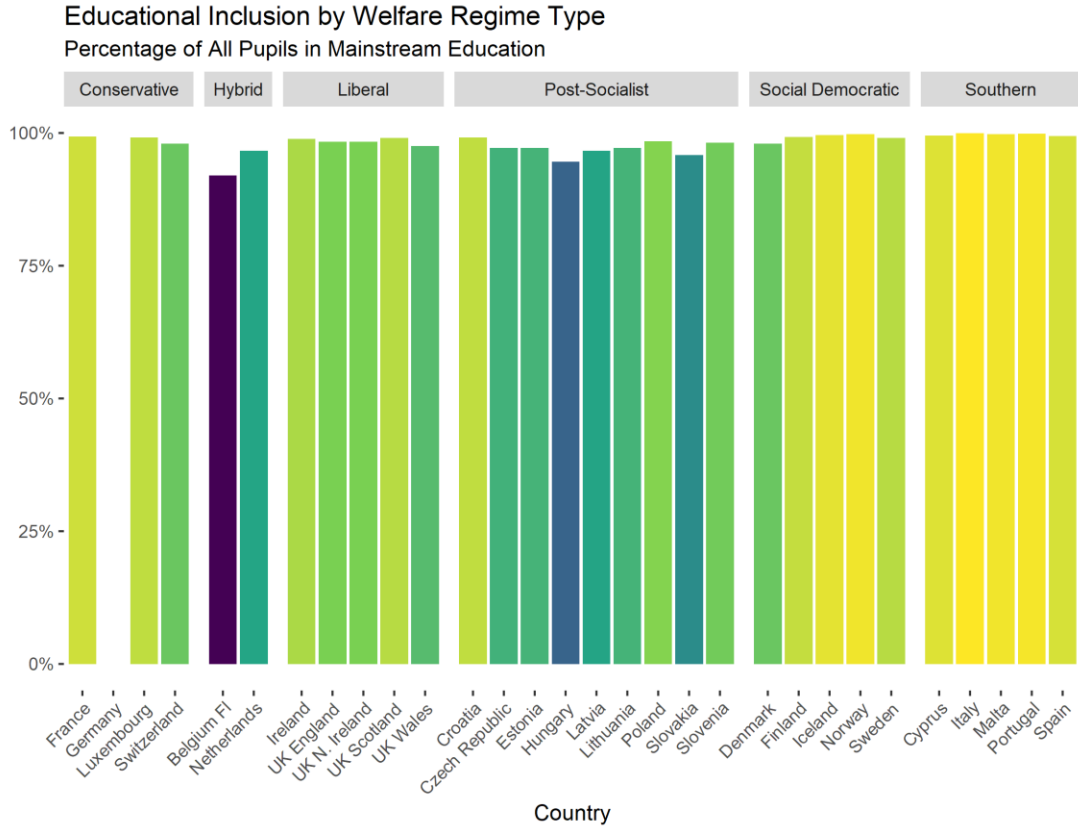


Figure 3 - Inclusion rates by country and welfare regime

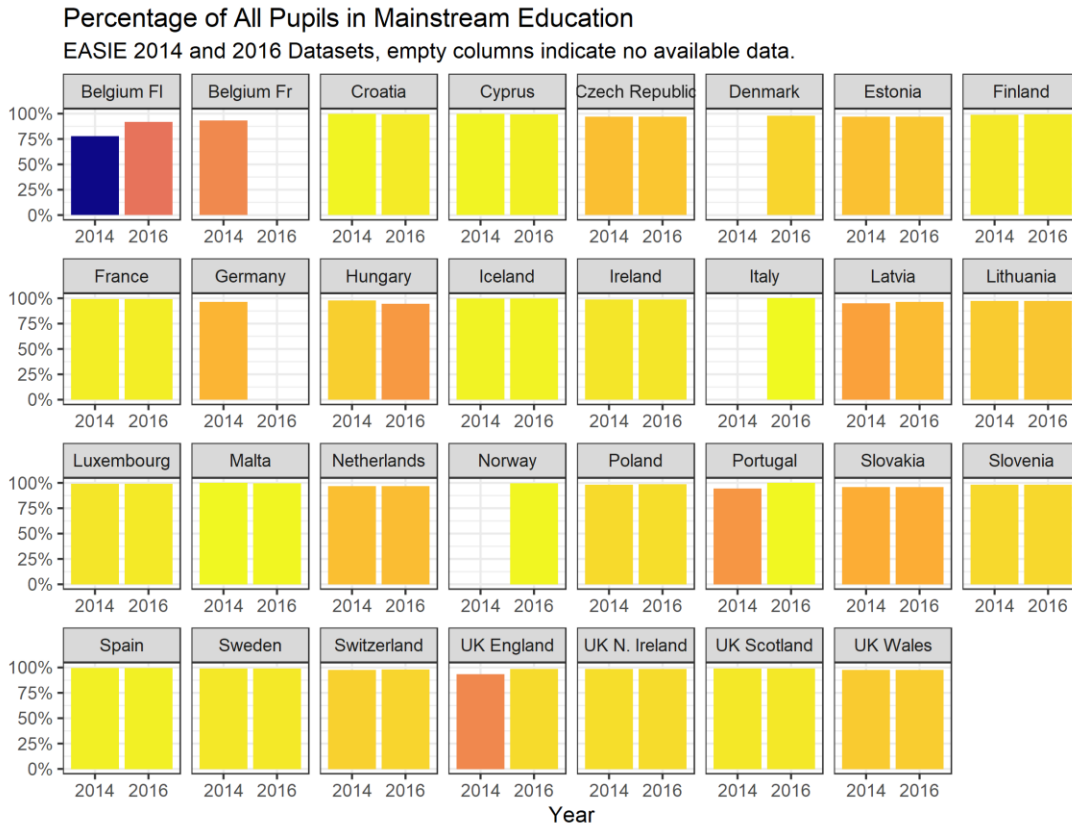


Figure 4 - Inclusion rates in 2014 and 2016

There were few changes in the rates of educational inclusion in most countries between 2014 and 2016, as seen in Figure 4. The one exception being Flemish Belgium, where inclusion rates went from 78% to 92% of all pupils spending at least 80% of their time in inclusive classrooms. This likely indicates changes in measurement, as the inclusion rates in Flemish Belgium are so much lower than any other education system in Europe.

3.1.1 Defining disability

There are variations in how different educational systems define and designate SEN. For example, the most recent EASIE data (Ramberg, Lénárt, and Watkins 2018) reports that 100% of all pupils with in the Netherlands with a SEN designation are in special schools, despite the extensive literature on the inclusion of disabled children in mainstream Dutch schools (for example, Renske Ria de Leeuw, de Boer, and Minnaert 2018; R. R. de Leeuw et al. 2018), suggesting that attending a special school is a requirement for SEN designations. The implications for funding for mainstream schools to meet the needs of their disabled pupils are unclear.

3.2 Inclusive education policies

Some countries are late adopters of inclusive education in law. The Netherlands only adopted inclusive education by default, requiring all mainstream schools to support disabled learners in 2014 (R. R. de Leeuw et al. 2018). In other countries, rates of

educational inclusion are slowly decreasing, by at least some measures; in England the percentage of pupils with SEND in special schools has increased substantially; in 2008 35.9% of pupils with Education Health and Care Plans (indicating SEND pupils with the highest support needs) attended special schools, which increased to 44.2% in 2018 (Department for Education 2018).

Many countries began to move towards inclusive education for disabled children in the 1980s, in some cases the International Year of Disabled Persons in 1981 prompting debate and campaigns by parents and teachers (Smyth et al. 2014). A comparative study of Spain, Ireland, Austria and the Czech Republic found that actual educational practice on inclusion failed to keep up with legislation. Legislation was also self-hobbling, such as Ireland including a caveat that reasonable adjustments will be provided “as resources permit” in two key pieces of education legislation (Smyth et al. 2014; citing Shevlin and Rose 2008).

Across educators, parents and schoolchildren, there do not appear to be any relationships between the education system typology and attitudes to inclusive education, or rates of inclusive education. Likewise there does not appear to be any correlation between welfare state typology and attitudes to social inclusion.

4 Perceptions and realities of educational inclusion

This section discusses the rates of educational inclusion across Europe; that is the percentage of all disabled young people spending the majority of their educational time in mainstream classes. It then covers the perceptions of inclusion among education stakeholders, including teachers, parents, disabled and non-disabled pupils, education policy-makers, and the general public.

4.1 Measuring attitudes inclusive education

There is no consistency in approaches to actually measuring these attitudes in the literature. According to a review by Vignes et al. (2008), only the Chedoke-McMaster Attitudes Toward Children with Handicap Scale (CATCH) (Rosenbaum, Armstrong, and King 1986) and the “Inclusion Scale” (Voeltz 1980) measured affective, behavioural and cognitive aspects of attitudes towards others. The Multidimensional Attitudes Scale Toward Persons With Disabilities (MAS) developed by Findler, Vilchinsky, and Werner (2007) also attempts to measure affective, behavioural and cognitive aspects of attitudes. These scales are commonly written in English and so must be translated for use in other languages, impacting on their effectiveness, or researchers must develop measurement tools in other languages (see for example de Boer, Timmerman, et al. 2012) that may or not be comparable to each other.

Saloviita (2015) point out that many studies of teacher’s attitudes do not report the wording of the questions used, and few if any are robust by the standards of other types of psychometric questionnaires. There does not appear to be any measure in wide-spread use for either teacher or parental attitudes towards inclusive education.

Researchers also adopt qualitative approaches, seeking to describe and explore attitudes to inclusive education. Qualitative approaches provide more insight into views and experiences of inclusive education, but are not as readily comparable, as they have to take account of different educational systems, different sets of questions, language differences, and a lack of measurable psychometric validity. Given the approaches adopted by researchers are a mixture of qualitative and largely non-robust psychometric questionnaires, measuring trends and engaging in comparisons within and across different educational systems remains difficult.

4.2 Views of Educators

Systemic research reviews have focused on teachers at ISCED-1 level, rather than ISCED-2, at least in part because this appears to be the education level most commonly studied. The systemic review conducted by de Boer, Pijl, and Minnaert (2011) on the views of mainstream, primary teachers towards inclusion found a mixture of negative and neutral attitudes towards inclusion, but of the 26 studies included in the review only five were from European countries, with the majority from the USA.

The tools used to assess attitudes to inclusive education are varied; some studies use scales – typically a five-point Likert scale – while others are more qualitative and aim to present the overall experience and understanding of inclusive education amongst educators.

4.2.1 Differing disabilities

The type and severity of disability can influence teacher's attitudes towards inclusive education. A review by Avramidis and Norwich (2002) found that in a majority of studies teachers had more positive views of including children with mild disabilities – particularly physical disabilities – in mainstream classrooms. A survey of 1,360 Slovenian ISCED-1 teachers with at least one SEN pupil in their class found the most positive attitudes towards pupils with physical disabilities, and the least towards pupils with behavioural and emotional disabilities (Čagran and Schmidt 2011). A survey in the Netherlands including university students studying special education using CATCH (Rosenbaum, Armstrong, and King 1986) found less positive attitudes towards people with intellectual disabilities than other categories (de Laat, Freriksen, and Vervloed 2013).

4.2.2 Resource allocation

Teachers in multiple studies reported concerns over being able to properly support both SEN and non-SEN pupils in their class, and that they were not given the resources and support needed to make inclusion successful, even if they supported the idea in principal.

Coutsocostas and Alborz (2010) found that just under half of 138 Greek secondary school teachers surveyed (47.5%) opposed the inclusion of all SEND pupils in mainstream school environments. Almost 4/5ths of teachers did not think that the move towards more inclusive education was successfully implemented, and that they lacked adequate training, support and resources to make it work. They were concerned that

SEND pupils were disrupting the learning of their non-disabled peers. Tsakiridou and Polyzopoulou (2014), in a survey of 416 Greek preschool, primary and secondary school teachers, found that teachers had a generally neutral view towards inclusion, with a slightly more favourable attitude towards pupils with social difficulties (defined as “shyness”, “language disorders”, “speech disorders” and “absenteeism” Wilczenski 1995).

Tsakiridou and Polyzopoulou (2014) found less opposition and hostility to inclusive education among Greek teachers than Coutsocostas and Alborz (2010), but that teachers still reported a lack of specialist support, resources and training to adequately integrate disabled pupils into mainstream classrooms and meet the educational needs of all disabled and non-disabled learners. As discussed by Smyth et al. (2014) the failure to properly resource support in mainstream schools can undermine the effectiveness of that inclusion. Teachers in Greece, like their counterparts in countries as wide-ranging as Serbia (Galović, Brojčin, and Glumbić 2014), Bosnia and Herzegovina (Memisevic and Hodzic 2011), Finland (Savolainen et al. 2012) and the Netherlands (Pijl 2010) expressed concerns over a lack of support, and a negative impact from inclusion on children without disabilities. A meta-analysis of the impact of inclusive education on the academic achievement of non-SEN pupils found a weak positive effect, although 39 of the 47 studies included in the meta-analysis were from North America, the remaining eight were conducted in a variety of European countries (Szumski, Smogorzewska, and Karwowski 2017). A survey of principals of Irish special schools found they believed pupils transferred from mainstream schools to special schools due to a lack of proper support and resources in mainstream schools (Kelly et al. 2014).

4.2.3 Leadership, training and accountability

Absolute lack of resources are an obvious barrier to effective inclusion. However, organisational culture and leadership are also important in ensuring inclusion is effective (Ainscow and Sandill 2010; Dyson et al. 2004). Including the effectiveness of inclusion in government assessments of individual teachers, schools and the education system as a whole, and tasking education leaders with promoting a culture of inclusion and a collaborative approach to education (Ainscow and Sandill 2010) can help embed an inclusive ethos into the education system.

Most European education systems include at least some high-stakes testing, which are used for monitoring the performance of individual schools or the system as a whole. Tests can also determine the education pathways taken by individual pupils, the type of certification they are awarded, and their ability to take post-compulsory studies (Eurydice 2009). In countries that take a market-based approach to educational accountability – through providing parents and pupils with a range of educational choices, and incentivising schools to compete for pupils (and funding) on the basis of educational quality – and use a mixture of central inspections and publication of national test results to provide information to parents and their children (Eurydice 2009, 2015). Wilson, Croxson, and Atkinson (2006) discussed the perverse incentives produced by the (now modified) English system of high stakes testing regime, which relied on the percentage of pupils in a school hitting particular benchmarks, encouraging schools to

direct support and resources towards borderline students at the neglect of everyone else, including learners with SEN. Accountability structures give central and/or regional governments a high degree of influence over decisions made at a school level, even in systems where schools have a high-degree of *de jure* autonomy (Mattei 2009). The use of high-stakes testing presents a possible challenge to acceptance of inclusive education by teachers and school leaders concerned that inclusion may lower results on those tests and have a detrimental impact on their career and reputation.

Boyle, Topping, and Jindal-Snape (2013) found Scottish headteachers and deputy headteachers are more supportive of inclusive education than regular classroom teachers and department heads. Boyle, Topping, and Jindal-Snape (2013) do not speculate on why this may be the case, but they are school leaders who spend comparatively little time in classrooms and are responsible for ensuring government policies of inclusion are incorporated into educational practice. Boyle, Topping, and Jindal-Snape (2013) found that newly qualified teachers are much more positive about inclusion than those who had spent more than a year teaching, suggesting this may be because the ethos of inclusion fostered and encouraged by education training institutes does not adequately translate into most classrooms. The in-classroom effects posited by teacher-training methods aiming to encourage inclusion (e.g. Florian and Rouse 2009) do not appear to have been adequate to the task in Scotland. 68% of teachers surveyed by Boyle, Topping, and Jindal-Snape (2013) reported having no further training in special education. School leaders and teacher-trainers have embraced educational inclusion, but that enthusiasm is often not matched by classroom teachers.

Headteachers in Cyprus also report positive views towards educational inclusion (Hadjikakou and Mnasonos 2012), in line with Cypriot teachers (Batsiou et al. 2008). A small study in Sweden found that school leaders who saw the role of “special educators” – a role requiring an 18 month training course that replaced the “special teacher” role in 1990 – as primarily about coordinating and supervising education led to a more inclusive approach than those who saw special educators as analogous to the previous “special teacher” function (Mattson and Hansen 2009). Lindqvist and Nilholm (2013) found Swedish school leaders believed the competence of teachers and of special education support were the most vital factors in successful educational inclusion. MacFarlane and Woolfson (2013) conducted a survey of 111 Scottish primary school teachers that found teacher’s practices of inclusion were influenced by what they understood to be their school leader’s priorities and expectations.

4.3 Views of Parents

de Boer, Pijl, and Minnaert (2010) found that across 10 studies of parental attitudes (two from Greece, one from Italy, six from the USA and a single Australian study) parents of both disabled and non-disabled children have views of inclusive education ranging from neutral to positive. However they note that support for educational inclusion is the most socially acceptable position, but that the parents of both disabled and non-disabled children may not opt for inclusive education if given the choice.

Parents of children with emotional and behavioural disabilities moving from special into mainstream education in Helsinki viewed their integration as less successful than the

parents of children with other disabilities (Hotulainen and Takala 2014). Gasteiger-Klicpera et al. (2013) asked parents about how satisfied they were with their choice of schooling for their disabled child. The lowest satisfaction was amongst the parents of children with less severe disabilities choosing special schools/classes for their child, and this group also felt less informed when making that choice. Multiple studies (Gasteiger-Klicpera et al. 2013; Hotulainen and Takala 2014) asked parents about their children's social experience at school, which assumes a close-enough relationship between parent and child for a parent to adequately assess their child's social inclusion.

Runswick-Cole (2008) developed a typology of the parents of disabled children, based on interviews with 24 parents (no participant was the partner of another participant): Parents who would never consider non-mainstream schooling; Parents who initially planned to send their children to a mainstream school but ultimately do not, or move them from a mainstream to a special school; Parents who would never consider mainstream schooling. The parents in the first category were often sceptical of expert judgement of their child's abilities, and unlike parents in the other two groups rarely spoke specifically about their child's impairment(s). Parents in the second category believed in the value of inclusive education but found that mainstream schools were not adequate to meet their child's support needs, being unable to provide the dedicated space, assistance or therapy that would (in theory) be available at a special school. Moreno, Aguilera, and Saldana (2008) conducted interviews with one or both parents of 60 Autistic children in Seville, Spain, reporting that the parents of children in special schools were more satisfied with their schooling than parents with their child in a mainstream school. The special schools selected by the parents in this study were Autism-focused, with specialist provision. The parents whose children attended mainstream schools were less satisfied with the support, particularly autism-focused support, available for their child.

de Boer and Munde (2015) found parents were less supportive of the inclusion of children with profound intellectual and multiple disabilities, in a survey of 190 parents of ISCED-1 aged children in the Netherlands, of whom 21% had a child with a disability.

There are few clear associations between background variables and parental attitudes to inclusive education, aside from having a child with a disability (de Boer and Munde 2015). de Boer, Pijl, et al. (2012a) found significant effects of parents gender (mothers more positive than fathers) and having a disabled child on views of inclusive education. There is some evidence that parents with greater feelings of shame about having a child with learning disabilities are more likely to chose non-inclusive education settings for their child (Yotyodying and Wild 2016).

4.3.1 Navigating the system

Many parents struggle to navigate and understand the education system and procedures to ensure their child receives the proper support. There is some literature on training parents as advocates to help secure rights for their children (e.g. Burke 2013), but an advocacy-oriented approach misunderstands the problem. Many education systems are not designed to accommodate parental involvement, and teachers are

often not equipped with the skills needed to productively engage with parents (Westergård 2013, 2015).

Parents of autistic children locate the most barriers to inclusive education with teachers, based on a review of 28 papers by Falkmer et al. (2015). Clear communication and trusting relationships between schools and families were the most often identified barriers/enablers to effective inclusion. Parents rarely mentioned wider aspects of system wide policies or the availability of public funds.

4.4 Views of Pupils

A systemic review of research with ISCED-1 aged pupils found they had generally neutral attitudes towards peers with disabilities (de Boer, Pijl, and Minnaert 2012). However, as with parents, young people may give what they believe to be the most socially acceptable answers when asked about their views of educational inclusion and their disabled peers.

4.4.1 Social inclusion

Educational inclusion means disabled pupils not only being in the same school and classroom, but being fully integrated into the non-educative life of the school; that is to say social groups, extra-curricular activities, etc.

4.4.1.1 Social inclusion in different countries

Most research has found that disabled pupils are less socially included within their school environment than non-disabled pupils, with some variation depending on the methods of measurement and the types of disabilities included in the sample. In practice, this ranges from disabled pupils having smaller and more contained social networks than their non-disabled peers, to being actively excluded from social activities and group-based academic activities. Pupils with behavioural disorders, such as ADHD or Autism, are more likely to be excluded (de Boer, Pijl, et al. 2012a; Hoza et al. 2005; Koster et al. 2010). de Boer, Pijl, et al. (2012b) found that girls – but not boys – were more likely to have negative perceptions of same-sex peers with behavioural issues.

Comparative research on variations in social inclusion have not suggested that particular educational systems are better or worse at fostering social inclusion. Bossaert et al. (2015) compared the social participation of Flemish, Dutch and Norwegian pupils with disabilities in mainstream schools. They did not find any significant differences between the three education systems, but this may be due to the different organisational structures in each system which make directly-equivalent comparisons impossible. Norway's greater orientation towards inclusive education means the Norwegian sample includes more disabled pupils with high support needs, whose counterparts with similarly severe disabilities in the Netherlands or Flemish Belgium would likely be in special schools. Children's attitudes towards disabled peers appear to be influenced by their parents' views (de Boer and Munde 2015), and if there are countries where disabled children are more likely to be socially included that may be reflective of a deeper cultural ethos internalised by parents, rather than anything the

school or curriculum are able to do. Analysis of two English surveys – the Millennium Cohort Study and the Longitudinal Study of Young People – found that disabled pupils were more likely to be bullied than non-disabled pupils, even after controlling for a range of variables associated with bullying victimisation (Chatzitheochari, Parsons, and Platt 2016).

Schwab, Sharma, and Loreman (2018) developed the “Inclusion Climate Scale” (ICS) for a study in the German region of North Rhine-Westphalia. Although they included three questions on social inclusion, they were excluded due to poor correlation with the scale as a whole. This suggests that researchers studying the social inclusion of disabled young people in school may be asking questions in a way that pupils do not understand, or that the social participation of young disabled people does not correlate with the other factors included in the ICS or similar scales.

A cross-sectional sample of 1,241 ISCED-1 pupils in Germany found that, in a multilevel network analysis, SEN pupils were much more socially excluded, with fewer friends, than their non-SEN classmates (Henke et al. 2017). The survey asked participants to identify their friends in the class, and while SEN and non-SEN pupils identified similar numbers of people as being their friend, SEN pupils were much less likely to have that person mutually identify them as a friend.

5 Co-production and inclusive education

There are potentially opportunities for co-production in education, but co-production – meaning not a shared activity but a change in power relationships – requires questioning what the purpose and goal of education ultimately is, which is beyond the scope of this review. However, advocates of inclusive education can use co-production to encourage and support effective educational inclusion.

5.1 Co-production background

Co-production refers to both the “co-creation” of public services as well as their co-production; that is involving citizens in both the design and delivery of public services (Verschuere, Brandsen, and Pestoff 2012; Voorberg, Bekkers, and Tummers 2015). This can take the form of oversight, such as through charity trustees or a project steering groups, as well as day-to-day involvement in the delivery of services or project work. Co-production can involve the public as a whole, or only those who use a particular public service (Osborne, Radnor, and Strokosch 2016).

The fundamental distinction between co-production and other methods of public involvement in services, such as consultations or satisfaction surveys, is of direct accountability. While citizens are able to express their views on public services through electoral mechanisms, co-production allows for more immediate and specific methods of accountability between public services, the users of those services, and the public as a whole.

5.2 Defining educational co-production

Literature on education considers education to be an inherently co-produced exercise, both between pupils and teachers, and between the school and the broader community, including parents, guardians and civil society as a whole. However, this broad definition of co-production is at odds with the more focused definition of co-production used in disability research and in health and social care service provision. The narrower definition of co-production emphasises power, accountability and influence. For example, in a research project with a steering group of disabled people the researchers are accountable to the steering group, and would have to justify any decisions that are at odds with what the steering group wants. This is the “lowest” level of co-production. “Higher” levels of co-production with disabled people would reach all the way to disabled people and non-disabled people working alongside each other as equals to provide some service or undertake some project.

5.2.1 School governance

The most obvious route for educational co-production is through school governance. Most education systems participating in the PISA programme, including those in European countries, have school governance boards that provide some oversight of the school’s operations and teaching (OECD 2016). The ability of these boards, or of similar structures such as parent organisations without the same formal powers, to influence or direct school activities varies considerably. Likewise, their organisation and composition varies, as well as the process of selecting board members. In most European countries boards consist of a mixture of teachers, administrative staff, parents and sometimes student representatives. Boards may oversee a single school or all schools within a given area.

Research in Sweden by Kristoffersson (2009) found that although school boards were becoming increasingly popular with policy makers, parental buy-in was limited, and many parents expressed an interest in participating in school governance but simply did not have the time to do so effectively. While parents of non-SEND pupils may express support for inclusive education when asked, they may not push for inclusive education if they become school board members, and may even attempt to reduce inclusion of pupils with behavioural, emotional or social disabilities, fearing that they may disrupt the education of others.

5.2.2 Free schools

The highest level of co-production in education would involve parents and even pupils taking responsibility for the oversight, curriculum, practices, etc, of a school. This may even involve setting up and running a school, usually called a “free school”. Legally there are only two jurisdictions in Europe where this is possible – England and Sweden. In both England and Sweden free schools have more leeway in terms of curriculum and teaching methods than “traditional” schools, although they are subject to the same regime of inspections by central government authorities, and their pupils must demonstrate the same knowledge, skills and competencies as all other pupils.

In practice most Swedish schools are run by private providers; although there are some parent-run trusts Wiborg (2010) describes them as being set up in response to the closure of other schools. In England, parents have proposed and set up relatively few free schools, compared to existing educational charitable trusts and religious groups, representing roughly 13% of the total free schools set up in the first five years of the programme (Allen and Higham 2018). Parent-led free school proposals in England were the least likely to be located in economically deprived areas (Higham 2014). Even schools located in areas of social deprivation had a pupil intake considerably less deprived than the local average (Allen and Higham 2018), realising the concerns about social stratification raised by critics of the programme at its outset (Morris 2011; Leeder and Mabbett 2011). Free school programmes in general, regardless of who runs the school, appear likely to entrench existing socioeconomic inequalities. There is little evidence to suggest that free school programmes can facilitate educational inclusion, at least how they are enacted in both England and Sweden.

5.2.3 Parental Involvement

Outside of governance structures, there are opportunities for parents to participate in their child's education, including for the parents of children with disabilities to advocate for their children to have adequate support and to be educated in inclusive settings. Parental involvement in this way is not without barriers. Hornby and Lafaele (2011) groups the barriers to parental involvement in education into four strands: parent and family factors, child factors, parent-teacher interaction factors, and societal factors.

Class – variously cultural capital, income, time and ability to understand the educational system – can be a significant barrier to parental involvement. Research with low-income and low-educational attainment parents suggests that they do want their children to have a better education than they had, and that schools are able to overcome those barriers to engage with parents (Sime and Sheridan 2014). Parents, regardless of socio-economic circumstances, may also be unaware of their children's rights, and reluctant to advocate if they are aware. Damianidou and Phtiaka (2018) organised a small-scale intervention with the parents of disabled children in Cyprus, and found that improving awareness of their children's rights and the school's legal responsibilities to provide adequate support could have a positive impact on educational inclusion and parental satisfaction.

The parents of children with SEN often have more formal and informal opportunities to engage with teachers and the education system as a whole, including involvement in developing education and support plans and lobbying for their child to receive the support to which they are entitled. Interviews and focus groups with the parents of disabled children in the United States found that parents who had an open, honest engagement with their child's school were the most satisfied with their involvement (Rodriguez, Blatz, and Elbaum 2014). This included the ability to openly disagree with school staff, having a designated point of contact who can answer their questions, and schools that actively sought the views of a disabled child's parents when developing support plans. Another American study found that the school proactively inviting parent involvement in special education was the only significant predictor of that involvement (Fishman and Nickerson 2015).

Teachers themselves can represent a barrier to effective parental involvement. Teachers need both formal competencies in the skills needed to facilitate cooperation with parents, and support to translate those skills into practice (Westergård 2013, 2015). Effective co-production also requires a degree of mutual recognition of expertise and knowledge; parents (and their children) need to recognise the professionalism and pedagogical expertise of teachers, while teachers need to understand the knowledge and views of parents.

Systemic barriers to parental engagement and co-production more generally include the ways in which schools are inspected and judged. Schools in systems with high-stakes examinations and/or inspection visits will direct resources towards producing the best exam results and responding to the criteria used in school inspections. If parental engagement and educational co-production are not part of that criteria, schools have little incentive to engage in it. Advocates of inclusive education should consider using the governance boards discussed above as a way to encourage education.

5.2.4 Co-production with external actors

Effective education co-production extends beyond the parents, students and staff of a school, and includes other individuals and institutions. Paletta (2012) found that in Italy's distributed governance system of education management, the most effective schools (defined by standardised test outcomes after controlling for socio-economic background) had more external collaboration than less effective schools. I was not able to locate any research into engagement with outside organisations for the purpose of improving inclusive education.

5.3 Challenges

Parent-led educational initiatives, such as free schools set up by parent co-operatives, entrench existing educational inequalities, making education less democratic, accountable and exclusive. While parents of both disabled and non-disabled children in many countries express views broadly in support of inclusive education de Boer, Pijl, and Minnaert (2010) point out that parents may be giving answers they know to be socially acceptable, but may be less supportive in practice.

Education faces challenges that are not present in other sectors. In health care or research, "experts by experience" involved in co-production are typically adults, while those who have most at stake in education are children, and are viewed as unable to make decisions about their education in the way that an adult can make decisions about their healthcare. Parents are also likely to be conservative in the educational choices they make for their children, and want their children to have similar educational experiences to what they had as children.

Greater co-production in inclusive education will require policy makers directing financial and human resources towards co-production produce positive outcomes, and poorly resourced initiatives are unlikely to deliver improvements or value-for-money (Bovaird and Loeffler 2012).

5.3.1 School autonomy

The Eurydice (2018) classification of education systems is based on the overall education system structure. The OECD (2018) *Education at a Glance* indicators include information on the relative autonomy of individual schools or local groups of schools in making decisions. Education systems with high levels of school autonomy (at least in theory) provide more opportunities for co-production and community involvement.

Highly autonomous systems where most education decisions are made locally, either at the level of the school itself or local government, such as Finland (which according to OECD 2018 makes all decisions about ISCED-2 education at the local or school level), the Czech Republic and the Netherlands (based on Table D6.4a in OECD 2018) appear to be the most ripe for co-production in inclusive education. The Netherlands, Czech Republic, England, Latvia, Flemish Belgium and Iceland make 60% or more of all decisions at the school level (Table D6.1 in OECD 2018). In England, Finland and Iceland, 50% or more of decisions made at a local or school level are done so in full autonomy, rather than within a set framework dictated by higher levels of government.

Decision making processes such as those in the Netherlands and Denmark that involve civil society organisations and other groups in those decisions should be expanded, and disability organisations can consider taking a more active role in those processes.

5.4 Supporting disabled students

Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are a vital component of effective inclusive education, and exist in various forms in all European education systems. In some systems (e.g. Finland Karila and Alasuutari 2012) IEPs are created for every child regardless of disability. IEPs offer the chance for a co-produced, collaborative process of determining and implementing place reasonable adjustments and support for disabled pupils, to ensure their academic and social inclusion at school. This process can involve parents, teachers, other experts (such as doctors or support workers) and above all the disabled young person themselves.

Experiences of co-production in the IEP process in Europe appear to be under-researched, and the degree of outside involvement appears to be limited. Efforts to increase this, such as the Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) introduced in England in 2014 with the intention of developing an personalised, holistic support plan (Ko 2015) have met with mixed results. The intention to increase the involvement of disabled young people in the development of their EHCP is recognised by education professionals, but organisational culture has not yet caught up with this intention (Franklin, Brady, and Durell 2018), and research with the parents of children with Down Syndrome found they often felt excluded or ignored (Kendall 2019).

There is an increase in interest in co-production in the disability sector generally, including in research and service delivery. The involvement of disabled people and their organisations in education at ISCED-1 and ISCED-2 level is relatively underexplored in the existing literature.

5.5 Opportunities for co-production in different countries

I have briefly outlined below some possibilities for co-production in six different countries, two from each of the three systems of education organisation outlined by Eurydice (2018).

5.5.1 Single structure

5.5.1.1 Sweden

As discussed [above](#), the free school programme in Sweden (like in England) provides few opportunities for co-production, and likely less opportunity than traditionally organised schools run by local government. Pestoff (2006) found that only 15% of preschool aged children in Sweden were attending third-sector childcare centres, the only kind of childcare to foster extensive parental participation and co-production.

5.5.1.2 Finland

Decision making in Finnish schools is largely a collaborative process between individual schools and local government, with some decisions made within a framework set by the national government. Finland's use of individual education plans for all children (Karila and Alasuutari 2012) opens up potentials for co-production not just with disabled children but all children and their parents, which could increase buy-in and support for co-production in education.

5.5.2 Common core

5.5.2.1 England

As discussed [above](#) the Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) introduced in 2014 are supposed to include extensive engagement with the young people who receive them and their family, as well as other experts. However, in practice EHCPs are often under-resourced and co-production is limited.

5.5.2.2 Italy

Italy's differentiated education governance system prompts engagement by individual schools with other schools and other institutions. However, not all schools engage in external collaboration, and it is unclear if many schools engage with disability organisations (or if Italian disability organisations have the capacity to engage in co-production in education). Individual education plan development in Italy does not need to include the student who will actually be covered by the IEP.

5.5.3 Differentiated

5.5.3.1 Germany

Bovaird et al. (2015) assess Germany as having high levels of potential for co-production in public services, and Parrado et al. (2013), using the same dataset, found Germany was typically in the middle of a group of five countries – UK, Germany,

Denmark, France and the Czech Republic – in terms of their co-production in the policy domains of health, public safety and the environment. However, the German education system is highly centralised (OECD 2018), with most decisions about education made at the Länder – sub-national – level. This can make co-production at the school level more difficult. While all Länder have instituted individual education plans, it is unclear how much input young people or their families have into their development (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education 2018).

5.5.3.2 Netherlands

The high rate of decision making and school autonomy means Netherlands has high potential for co-production. Additionally, the high degree of autonomy in Dutch schools means that influencing individual schools could potentially be the only way to ensure disabled pupils receive effective support in mainstream settings. As with other differentiated education systems, there is a risk that inclusion and support may be restricted to certain types of schools, particularly at the ISCED-2 level. Given the high autonomy of Dutch schools and wide range of pedagogical principles informing teaching practice, there is potential to explore if there are particular schools or styles of pedagogy that are particularly effective at ensuring educational co-production and inclusion.

6 Conclusion

There is extensive literature on attitudes to inclusive education, particularly amongst the key stakeholders of teachers, parents and pupils (both with and without disabilities). Attitudes to co-production are less well documented, and the co-production paradigm that is present in other areas of public services appears less well developed in education. Co-production is ultimately a question of professionals taking the views and experiences of service users seriously; in the case of education this means young people and their parents.

1. Inclusive education is generally viewed positively by stakeholders, but there are concerns among teachers and parents.
2. Teachers in many countries express concern that inclusion may not be properly resourced, and that they will either have to devote additional support to support to disabled students at the cost of those without disabilities, or that disabled students in mainstream settings will receive a worse education than they would in a specialist setting.
3. Parents, particularly of non-disabled children, worry about the impact of children with behavioural, emotional and social disabilities on the classroom environment and their children's education.
4. Teachers are open to engaging with parents, including on inclusive education, but need support and the development of specific competencies to make that engagement worthwhile, and provide the basis for co-production.
5. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) have potential as a method of co-production involving disabled students, their family, teachers and other professionals. However

they are underexplored in the literature and engagement with disabled students and/or their family often appears tokenistic or minimal.

6. There is room for improvement on engagement that can lead to fruitful co-production between education systems, individual schools and disabled people and their organisations. Civil society is involved one way or another in almost every European education system, but information on the involvement of disabled people's organisations is almost entirely absent.

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