

Influence Maps for EU Countries



A Transnational Appraisal of
Virtual School and College Provision

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Abstract	VISCED partners produced for each of 11 selected countries, about which they have an in-depth understanding, an annotated table which describes the degree of influence that other countries and entities have on national “ICT in education” strategies. These have been represented in graphic form i.e. <i>influence maps</i> .
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1. Executive Summary

- *Europe/the EU* and PISA are perceived as clearly the most influential entities across the 11 geographical areas studied.
- All countries and regions studied - except England - appear to be influenced by either Europe or the EU. The degree of influence is more uneven than that for PISA scores (see below) but in several cases is much greater – varying as it does between 5% and 40%.
- PISA scores feature as a significant influence on national policies in all of the countries and regions featured. There is notable agreement concerning the level of influence at between 5% and 15% across all 11 countries and regions.
- Six countries are considered to look to North America (sometimes, specifically the USA) for a lead on policy. The influence could be even greater since two ‘influencers’ (Sweden and England) are themselves considered to be influenced by the North America or the USA.
- There is notable ‘clustering’ around what appears to be geographical and/or language connections. The Scandinavian and Baltic nations collectively look to each other. The English speaking nations appear to look keenly (although not exclusively) to other English speaking nations (Australia, Ireland and England all look to North America or the USA). Cultural factors, history, tradition and the consequent perceived transferability may be at play.

2. Introduction

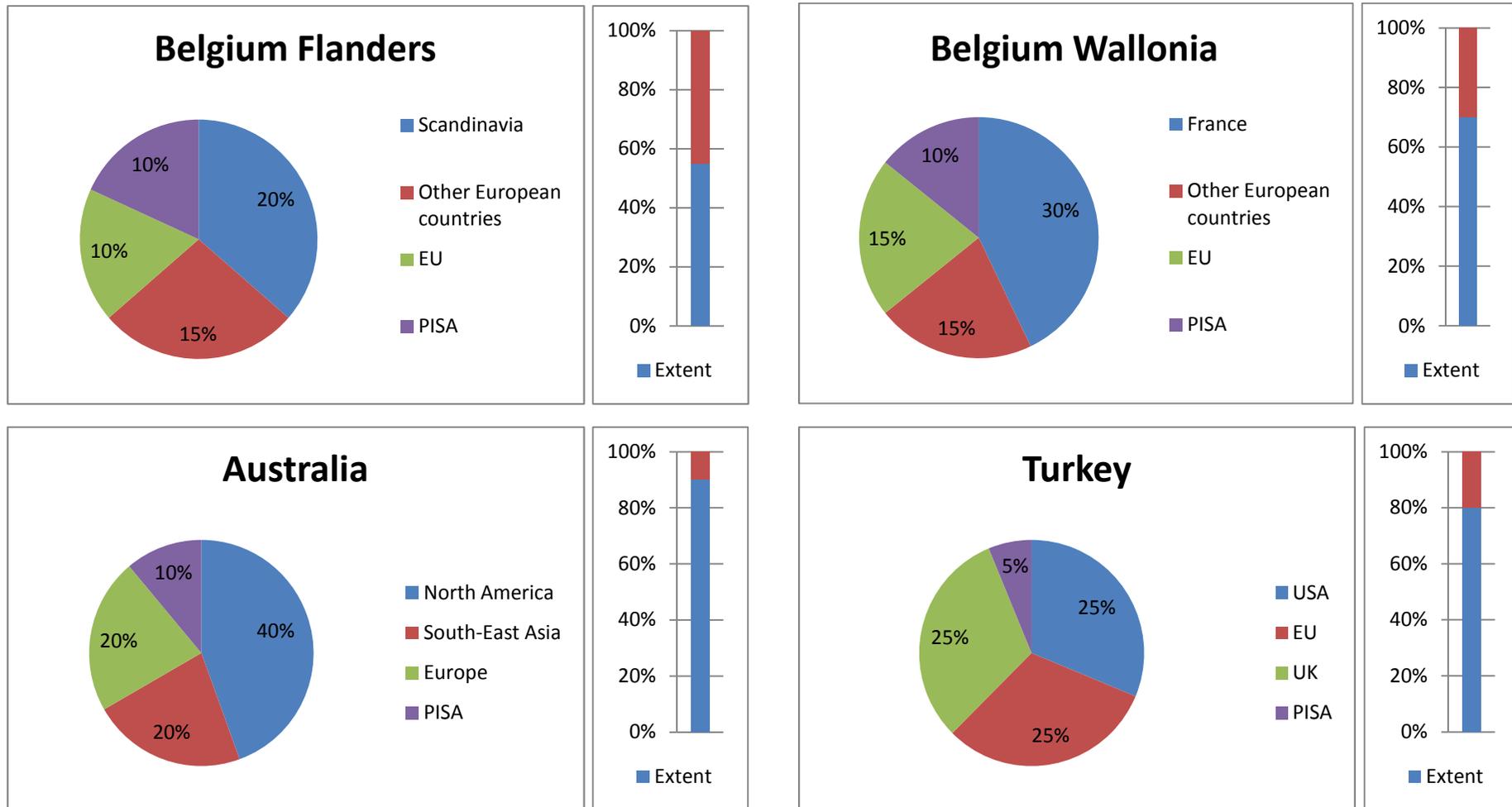
The maps depict approximate influence which countries, commercial vendors etc. have on ICT in education strategies and policy developments in other countries. It should be noted that these concentrate on current strategies for ICT in school (and college) education - *where ICT strategies and policies are available and contain sufficient detail from which to draw*. Where there are no visible national ICT strategies (such as in Sweden and England) then the broader education strategies have been used alongside visible industry penetration and influence. The data for each of the countries was collected by identifying and analysing available government documentation resulting in annotated tables where the influence was estimated in percentages. The total for each country is always less than 100% since this research estimates the itemised *external* influences on any country as a percentage of its overall influences. Thus, the difference between the total quoted and 100% is comprised by internal influences and, in some rare cases, miscellaneous, less obvious, external influences (e.g. in the case of England - Singapore, China, South Korea).

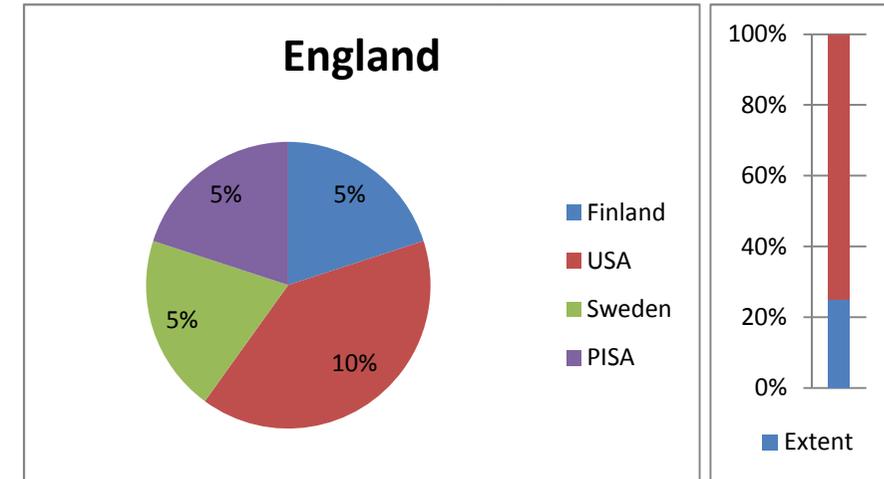
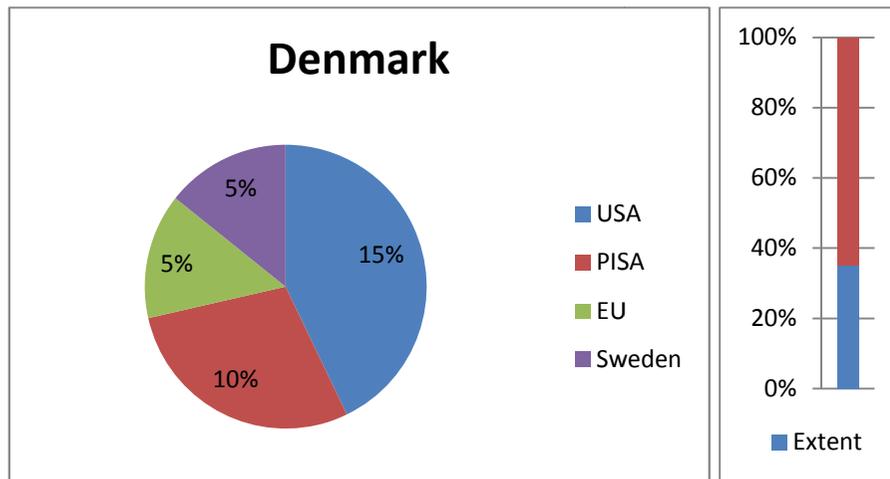
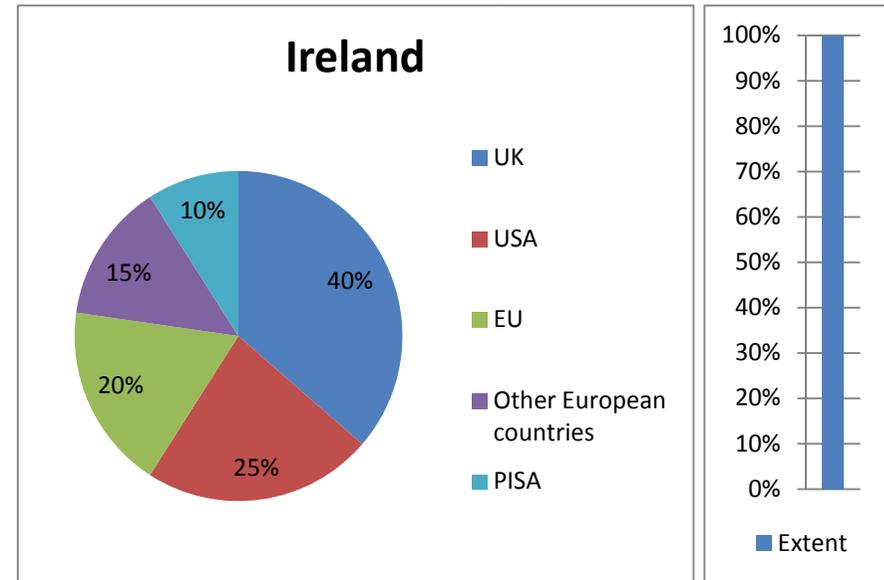
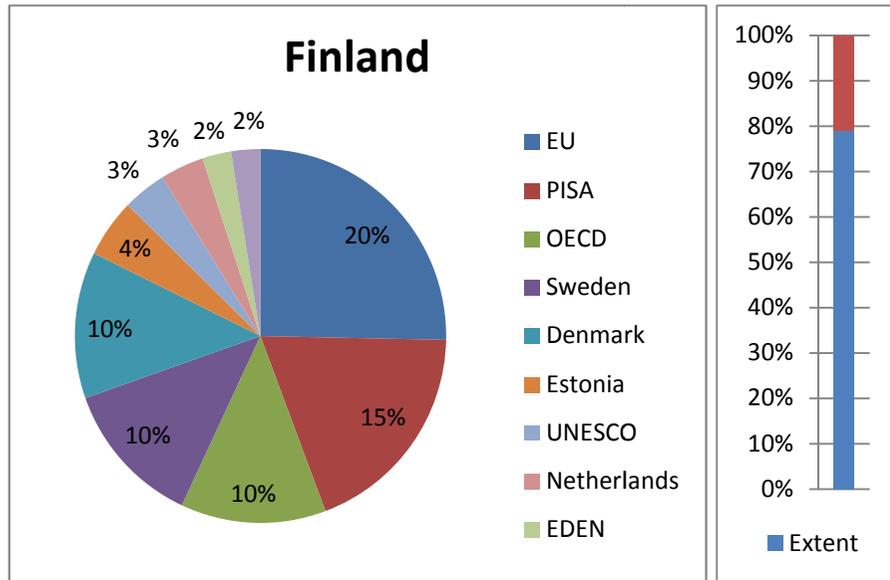
All in all, information was provided for eleven countries with a total of 21 separate influencers which in some cases have been aggregated into regional entities. Breakdown of the data from the influence maps can be found below. This includes an overview of every country, a graphic

representing accumulated influence taking into account the number of mentions and total percentages plus a map with all connections with respective percentages.

3. Summary of data

Figure 1. The charts represent overviews for each of the analysed countries concentrating on two aspects: a) pie charts with relative importance of the influencers and b) bar charts with the extent of total influence. The data is aggregated from the separate influence maps.





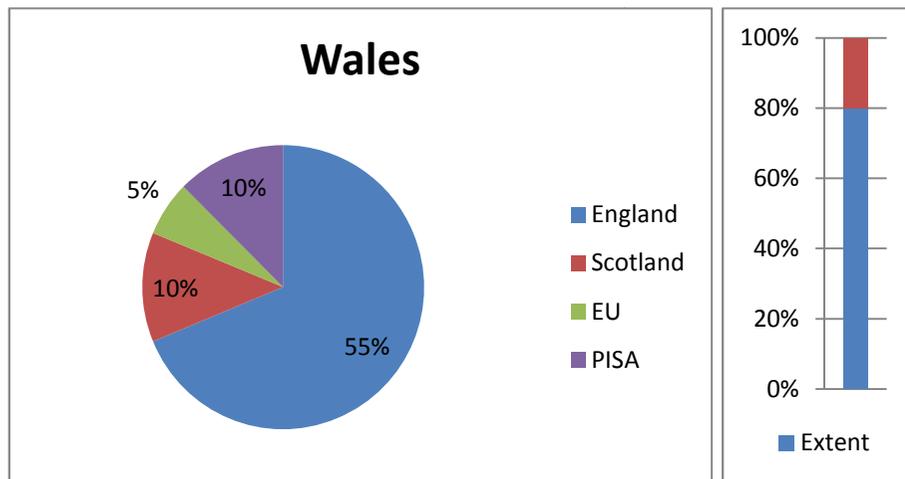
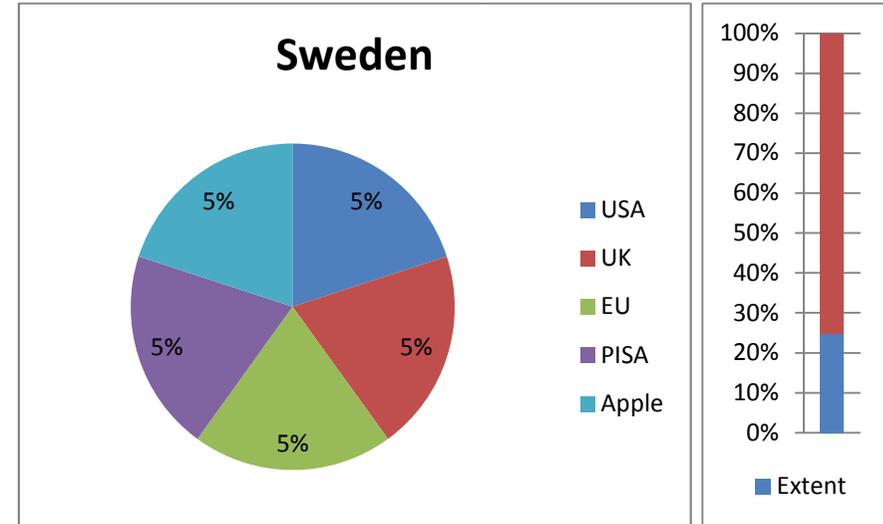
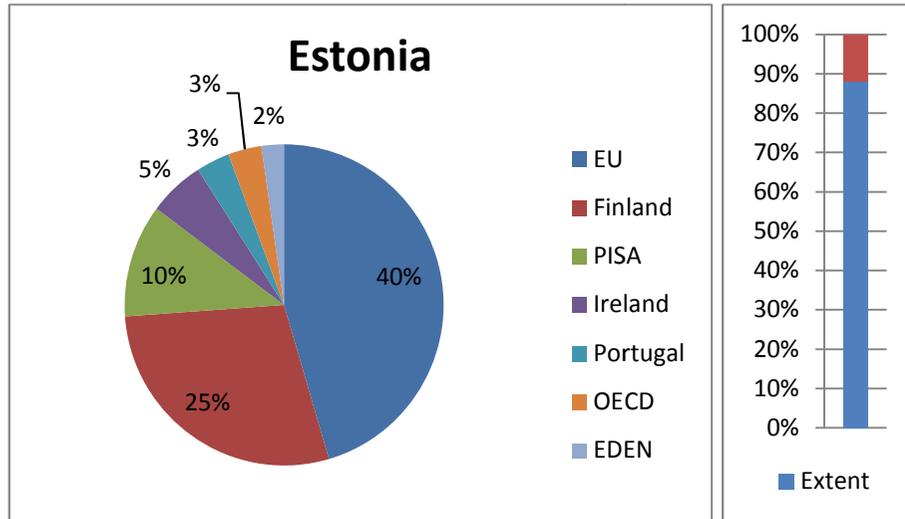


Figure 2. The following chart depicts the accumulated influence from two aspects. Namely, the number of times a particular influencer has been mentioned in all maps in connection to their aggregated percentage assisting in highlighting the relative importance of the influencers.

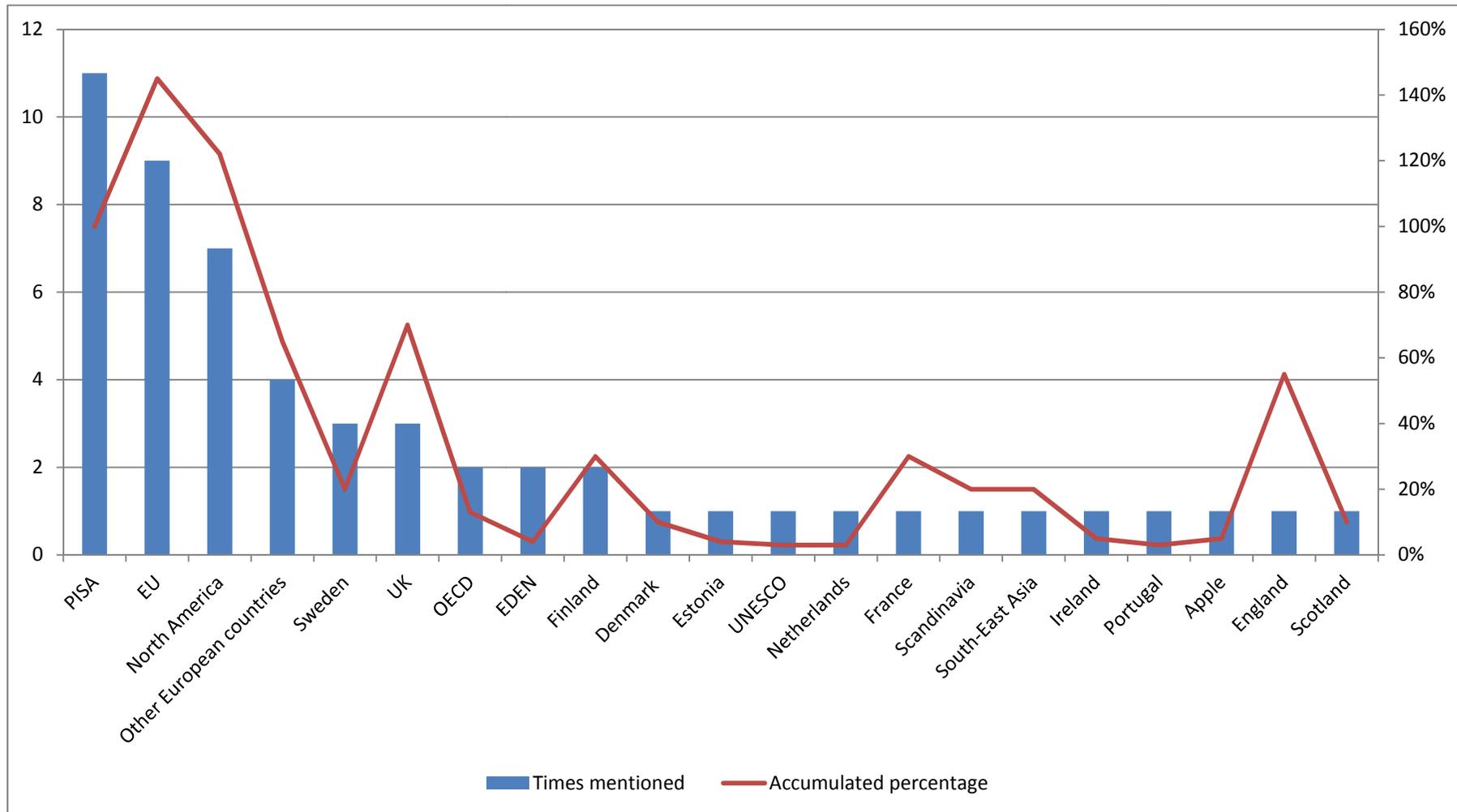
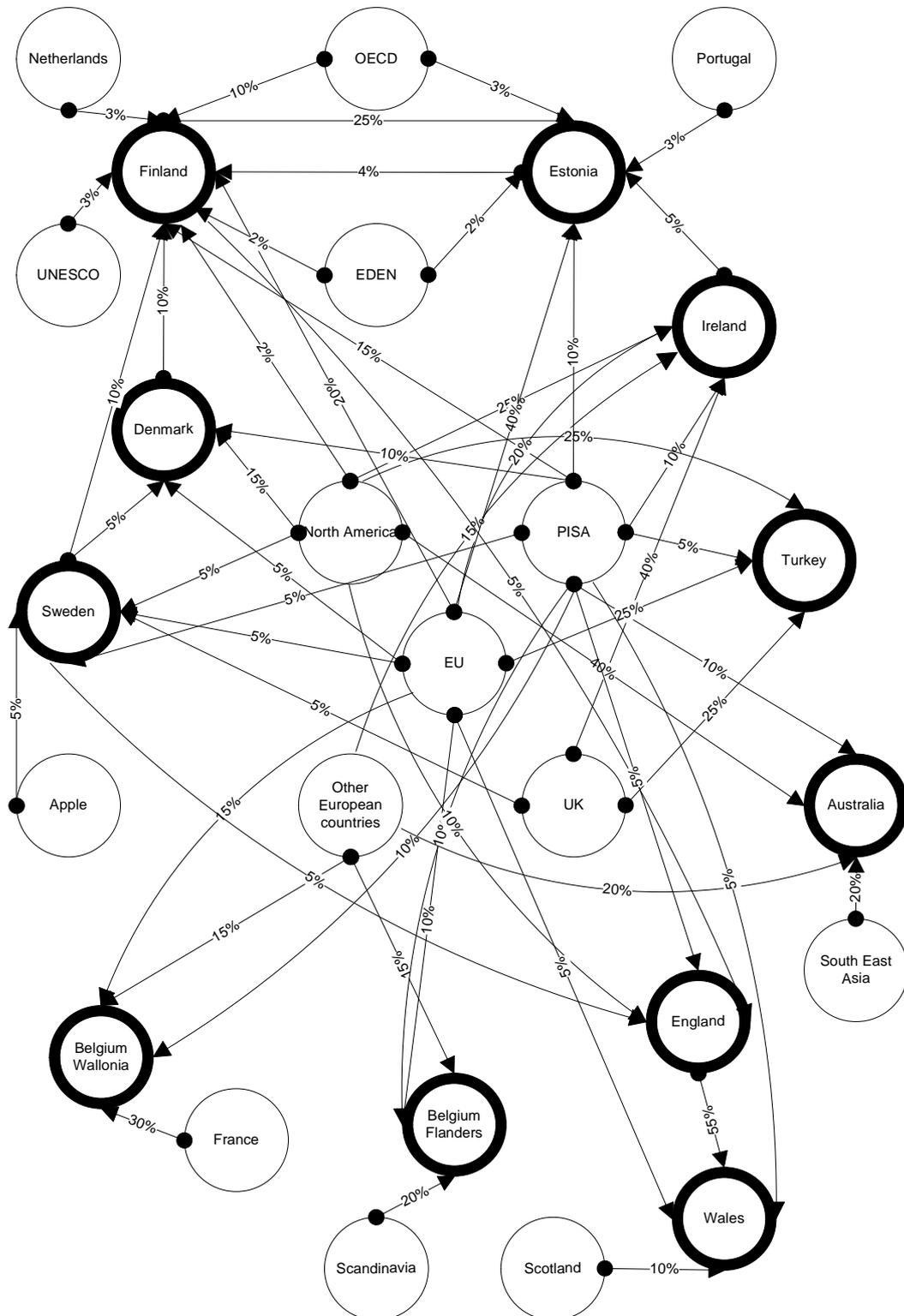


Figure 3. The following map represents all connections with respective percentages from all the influence maps. The analysed countries are drawn with a thicker border.



4. Summaries of individual country narratives

4.1. Belgium (Flanders)

If Flemish organisations are influenced particularly by any specific European countries it is those in Scandinavia – but even there the influence is not very pronounced. The presence of organisations like EUN in Brussels, and the active participation of the ministry in EUN over the years, means that there is a general influence on policy derived from what is happening in other European countries, but it is not strong.

4.2. Belgium (Wallonia)

There is some evidence that experiences and occupations in France play a role in influencing educational policy in Wallonia, language plays a role here with several services in common in the schools sector.

4.3. Australia

Australia has much in common with Canada in terms of federal systems, indigenous populations, clustered and isolated communities and, specifically, traditions of distance learning. There are many tangible links between the two countries in terms of education. Australia has also traditionally been strongly influenced in terms of ICT in Education by both the US and the UK (and to a lesser extent Europe) - the first in terms of vendor support, the second in terms of policy and both in terms of research. However, the home-grown educational-technology community has evolved considerably and the influence of the UK appears to be diminished since the demise of Becta. Pacific Rim countries now probably have at least as much influence (perhaps more) with Australian policy and practice increasingly influenced by emerging countries such as Singapore and South Korea and territories such as Hong Kong and Shanghai. These are seen as exhibiting one or more of; good pedagogy, good results, economic competitiveness, emerging market opportunities.

4.4. Turkey

There is a long history of US based universities and other seats of learning in Turkey. These are associated with high quality education and have consequently had influence on general education policy. Turkey is now looking towards EU membership and the presence of EU agency offices related to education, LLP for example, has meant that European policy and practice is having a growing influence on what is happening in Turkey. In the past, organisations like the British Council have been very strongly represented in Turkey and there is some evidence of a legacy, but this may be declining relative to influences from Europe and the US.

4.5. Finland

Finland's enthusiasm for collaboration and research has resulted in it drawing influences from a wide range of sources and countries - and now being a significant influencer of other countries. Finland is a keen partner in European Schoolnet, works with JISC in the UK, and is involved across EU ICT policy

development. Beyond the EU, Finland is a partner in several research projects with the OECD. In addition to neighbouring countries where partnerships remain strong, Finland has also worked closely with organisations in the US and North America. PISA is important in Finland as is PIAAC.

4.6. Ireland

The influence of the UK has diminished in recent years. However given the proximity, the level of traffic between the two, the common language and the existence of many common services, the influence is still significant. For example, every year, the BETT Conference and Exhibition has drawn a very large number of visitors from Ireland. Whilst not attempting to replicate the US school system, Ireland tends to be influenced by its entrepreneurial spirit and several ICT related school services have been copied or co-developed with US businesses and organisations. Northern Europe and particularly Scandinavian countries have some influence; see the take up of Fronter for example in Irish schools.

4.7. Denmark

Successive Danish governments have been overtly influenced by US politics and cultural values and these have been apparent in the development of an education system where there has been an emphasis on competencies, measurable goals, and benchmarking. The intensive use of digital testing methods has also been investigated. In parallel with these there has been significant importance attached to Denmark's place in the PISA rankings. The new administration (2011) has expressed some scepticism about this direction of travel and suggested a possible refocusing towards the Danish tradition of a 'softer' pedagogical approach. It is likely then that the influence of both the US and PISA may be waning in Denmark although there is a residual impression. The influences of Sweden and the EU remain steady, however, both are relatively small.

4.8. England

England has no national ICT in Education policy, the current administration having devolved responsibility to school chains and individual schools. Generally, this administration has looked favourably on Finland as a high-achiever and attributes this primarily to Finland's recruitment of high-quality teachers. Sweden was initially the focus of attention with a keen interest being shown in the 'free school' system – particularly the Kunskapsskolan model. This now seems to have lessened somewhat. England has also looked to individual states, provinces, school districts and systems in the US and Canada. As with Sweden, this appears to be mainly viewed through the prism of devolving power to schools (and chains). Particular interest has been shown in the Charter and KIPP schools. More recently, the latest PISA scores seem to have inspired an interest in components of the Singapore, Shanghai, Hong Kong and South Korea schools systems. In addition to this interest in PISA England has lately shown a keen interest in the educational research of the McKinsey company.

4.9. Estonia

Estonia is enthusiastic in its adoption of EU legislation and guidelines. Input from research reports, advisory boards, committees etc is widely implemented. Estonia is also keen to contribute to formulating policies at EU level. Finland's highly regarded general education system had, and still

has, a strong influence on national policy, particularly on the use of ICT. Estonia is doing relatively well in PISA and PIAAC rankings and, thus, considers these valuable and important. Estonia has Ministry level links with both Ireland and Portugal.

4.10. Sweden

Sweden has no national ICT in Education policy preferring to devolve responsibility to municipalities and/or individual schools. Influence is drawn from ICT developments in the US in the shape of one-to-one computing and also from industry in the form of Apple – which in turn is perceived to have a keen interest in Sweden. On a more general level the EU is seen as influential in terms of the 8 Key Competencies. Sweden takes seriously its place in the PISA rankings.

4.11. Wales

Education policy was devolved (from the UK Parliament) to the Welsh Parliament more than a decade ago. There remains considerable influence from England both in terms of the legacy of English rule (the 2008 Schools ICT Strategy draws heavily on Becta) and, more recently, a desire to differentiate the Welsh education system from the English. This is reinforced by the ongoing discourse with Scotland and the rejection of the English Academies and Free Schools programmes. Since devolution Wales has become extremely aware of PISA rankings and its place in the 'table'. As with many of the smaller nations Wales also looks to the EU for its influences.

5. Conclusions

All countries and regions (including non EU countries such as Australia and Turkey) - except England - appear to be influenced by either Europe or the EU. The degree of influence is more uneven than that for PISA scores (see below) but in several cases is much greater – varying as it does between 5% and 40%.

PISA scores feature as a significant influence on national policies in all of the countries and regions featured. There is notable agreement concerning the level of influence at between 5% and 15% across all 11 countries and regions. What is not clear is whether policymakers use PISA tables as a means to identify ‘successful’ and ‘innovative’ education systems from which they can apply lessons or whether their own country’s position in the table forces them simply to drive their own systems harder.

It is also possible that there is an element of ‘double counting’ across PISA scores and individual countries. For example, England’s interest in Finland appears to be largely inspired by Finland’s strong performance in the PISA tests. In short, a country’s PISA rankings signposts other countries to investigate.

Combining the number of countries and regions influenced and the percentage of influence it is clear that Europe/the EU and PISA are perceived as the most influential entities across the 11 geographical areas studied.

Six countries are considered to look to North America¹ (sometimes specifically the USA) for a lead on policy. The influence could be even greater since two ‘influencers’ (Sweden and England) are themselves perceived to be influenced by North America or the USA. This ‘trickle-down’ effect would be impossible to quantify and is somewhat speculative but still worthy of consideration.

There is notable ‘clustering’ around what appears to be geographical and/or language connections. Collectively, the Scandinavian and Baltic nations look to each other. The English speaking nations appear to look to other English speaking nations (Australia, Ireland and England all look to North America or the USA). And the nations which comprise the British Isles also look to their immediate neighbours. What is not clear is the extent to which this is due to policymakers making a considered choice to look at countries with they connect in terms of culture, history and tradition (and hence promise greater transferability) or simply falling back on the familiar and convenient.

These estimates are a snap-shot of the current position. As Governments, and/or the individual post holders within them, change then it is likely that they may look elsewhere for their influences. Indeed this may be the case even where the administrations and individuals remain unchanged but

¹ It should be noted that some countries identified specific states or provinces but that for the purpose of this study these have been aggregated as USA and/or North America.

where 'successful' new education paradigms and systems appear. They are also estimates of high-level influences and do not (at this stage) attempt to qualify or quantify whether it is the whole-system or disaggregated elements of that system which are being re-applied.