



WHITE PAPER

# Pathways to Strengthen the Pre-primary Workforce in Low- and Middle-income Countries

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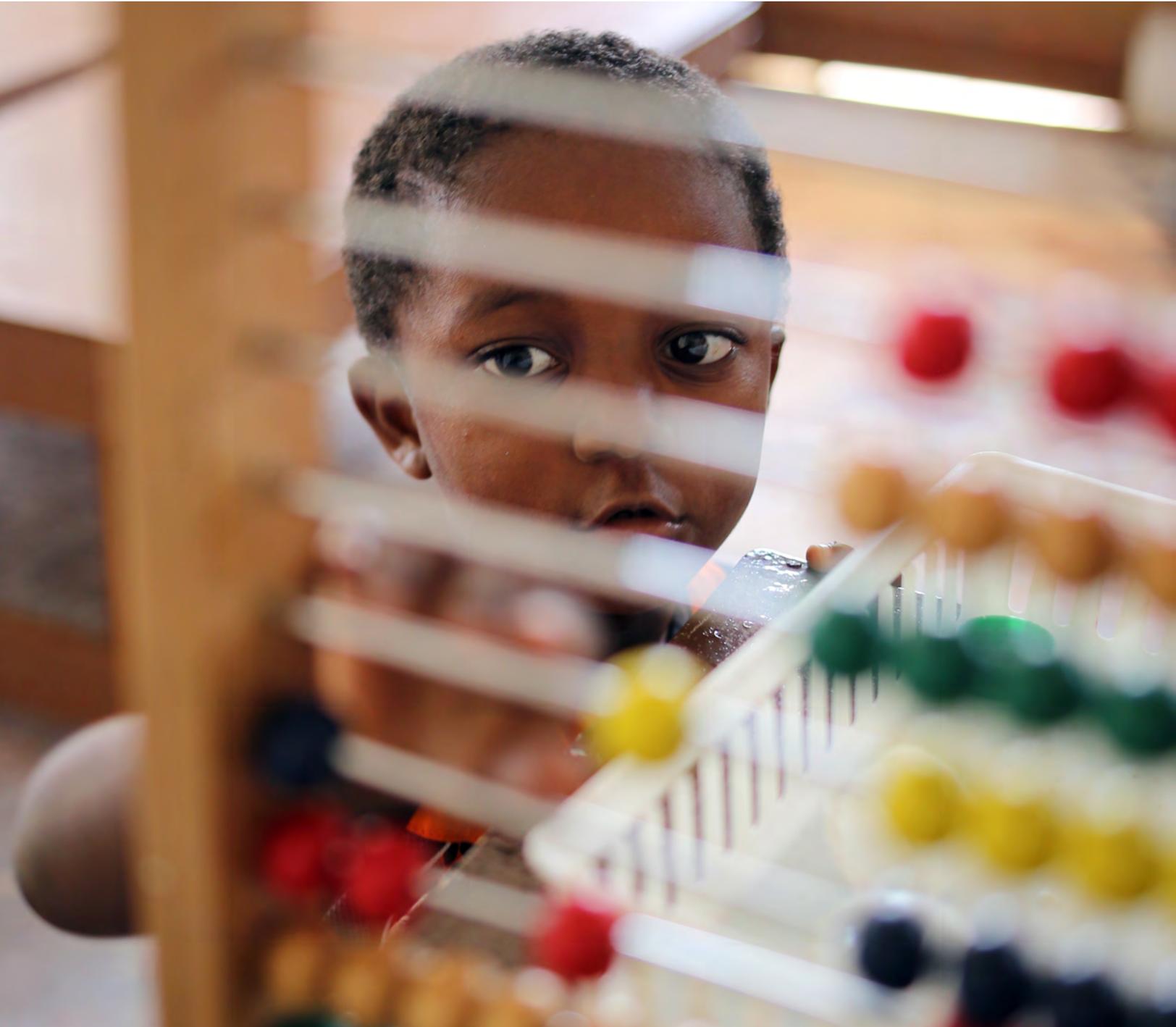
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## 1 | Definitions

## Competences

Competences are associated with the qualities of an individual practitioner, something that can be acquired through training and professional preparation (i.e. the integration of knowledge, skills, attitudes, motivation, etc.) (CoRe, 2011). Competences refer to the requirements and expectations for what professionals should know and be able to do (Putcha, 2018, 12). In general, there are two types of competences: (i) competence for professionals; and (ii) competence for what training and professional development should impart (Putcha, 2018, 12). The first is essentially the “professional competence profile”, while the second is a “training competence profile”.

## Pre-service or initial training

In this paper we use both terms interchangeably to mean the same thing. This refers to the training in which an educator engages prior to beginning a position in ECE. Adapted pathways to qualification can be offered to low qualified workers covering competences that should have been developed through initial training (Peeters, et al, 2017).

## Continuous professional development (CPD) or in-service training

In this paper we use both terms interchangeably to mean the same thing. This refers to in-services courses, team supervision, peer group learning sessions, mentoring, pedagogical guidance, coaching and counselling (Core, 2011).

## Reflective competences

The ability of pre-primary professionals to reflect on their knowledge, skills and values, and to continually build on and improve the latter in order to improve their pedagogical practice.

## Pre-primary teachers' reflective practice

This involves thinking about and analysing their practice to identify what drives children's learning and development. Reflective practice allows early childhood professionals to develop a critical understanding of their own practice, and continually develop the necessary skills, knowledge and approaches to achieve the best outcomes for children.

## Peer learning

Situation where ECE centres' staff share their knowledge about policies and practices with their colleagues.

## Mentoring or coaching pedagogical guidance and counselling

this form of continuous professional development is provided by a mentor or a coach who facilitates practitioners' active participation reflection and it is characterized by a focus on practiced based learning taking place in constant dialogue with colleagues, parents and local communities (Vandenbroeck, et al, 2016,4).



## 2 | Introduction

The aim of this paper is to set the stage for the development of a guidance (loosely defined) that supports the ways countries may go about developing or strengthening their pre-primary workforce. There are multiple pathways to competent and effective workforce that may be relevant to different country context and that may combine different level of qualifications, with training and retention strategies in support of developing adapted career trajectories for pre-primary teachers. The matrix and key options it may provide will be informed by evidence and current practice across countries. The application of such matrix will be informed by many factors in each country that affect workforce development- some of these include differences in enrolment rates between regions and countries, ministerial leadership for pre-primary education, capacity of institutions, such as training institutes for example, at country level, resources available for teacher training and development, among many others. Our focus in this paper is to summarize the background evidence and research available in the area of pre-primary workforce development that can in turn support the outline of options and pathways to be developed further through in the next part of the work.

Our analysis in this paper will be based on evidence and examples from *low- and lower-middle income countries*, and on relevant international research on early childhood workforce development.

In general, we can say that the challenges teachers face in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) are not entirely distinct from the issues within early childhood education (ECE) in OECD countries, but they are often more pronounced in the LMICs contexts (UNESCO, 2015, 11).

For this reason (and because the research on LMICs on workforce issues in ECE is quite limited), we will also, next to the existing reviews of research on LMICs, make use of some European policy research that may provide examples and inspiration for LMICs as they develop their pre-primary workforce:

- the UNESCO Literature review: ECE personnel in Low- and Middle-Income Countries, (2015);
- the Early Childhood Workforce Initiative documents on Strengthening and Supporting the EC Workforce (2018);
- the CoRe research (2011) on Competence Requirements in ECE commissioned by the European Commission;
- the Eurofound research on Continuous Professional Development and working conditions (2015);
- Right beginnings: Early Childhood Education and Educators Report from the International Labour Organisation (2012);
- recently published research from the European Commission Network on Inclusion in Education (NESETII) on the Role of Assistants in ECE (2016) and on Professional Learning Communities (2017);
- the reports written for UNICEF on Quality and Workforce in six CEE/CIS countries (five Balkan countries and Georgia) (2017; 2018);
- European CARE-project on Innovative approaches to in-service continuous professional development (CPD) in ECE policy and practices throughout Europe (2016);
- articles from peer reviewed journals on LMICs.



### 3 | What can we learn from the literature?

## Qualifications matter, but so do people and systems

Competences of practitioners working with children, as well as ongoing support for them, are crucial in promoting ECE quality, and have progressively been acknowledged in the international research and policy debate. As stressed in the research overview conducted by Bennett and Moss *‘Working for inclusion’* (Bennett & Moss, 2011), the early years workforce is central to ECE provision – as it accounts for the greater part of the total cost of early childhood services – and is the major factor affecting children’s learning experiences and outcomes. In recent years, a growing consensus has emerged that the way ECE staff is recruited, trained and treated, is critical for the quality of early childhood services as well as for the educational success of all children (Lazzari et al, 2013).

Such a consensus is grounded in international research evidence showing that a better educated staff is more likely to provide high-quality pedagogy and stimulating learning environments, which in turn, fosters children’s development leading to better learning outcomes (Munton et al., 2002). At the same time, a research overview from OECD shows that staff competence is one of the most salient factors ensuring higher quality in educational interactions (Litjens & Taguma, 2010). Competent educators nurture children’s development by creating rich and stimulating early learning environments, by intentionally sustaining shared thinking and logical reasoning in social interactions and by valuing children’s initiatives for extending their learning opportunities (Pramling & Pramling, 2011; Sylva et al., 2004).

Despite the substantial evidence showing that staff qualifications matter, research also points out that qualifications *per se* are not sufficient to determine the quality of ECE provision (OECD, 2012). The content of the training – as well as the methodologies adopted for its delivery – also play a crucial role in increasing the professional competence of educators. From the CoRe study commissioned by the European Commission (2011), we learned that pre- and in-service training should ensure a balance between theory/practice.

Besides the obvious and essential body of knowledge and the acquisition of specific skills, it is crucial that graduates are offered possibilities to build reflective capacities. Effective pre- and in-service trainings start from theory to reflect on practice in order to improve the quality of the pedagogical practice and therefore reciprocal relationships between theory and practice are essential. Although it is agreed that quality is linked to a competent workforce, the CoRe study (Urban, Vandenbroeck, Peeters, Lazzari & Van Laere, 2011; Vandenbroeck, Urban & Peeters, 2016) commissioned by the European Commission DG Education and Culture points out that individual competences alone are not enough to ensure quality. A ‘competent system’ is needed, which includes collaboration between individuals, teams and institutions, along with competent governance at policy level. Moreover, a competent system is described as one that builds upon staff’s initial training and continuous professional development (CPD), which includes providing staff with regular

opportunities to co-reflect on ideas and practices. In Annex 2, one can find the competence profiles at the different levels of the competent ECE system that were developed on the basis of the analysis of the competence profiles of the fifteen countries that were involved in the CoRe study.

We will discuss in more detail the important policy research on workforce issues in Annex 1. The results show that there is considerable agreement about the core qualifications and competences that are essential for effective pre-primary teaching/leadership. Yet there are challenges in all countries, but especially LMICs, in supporting progress toward acquiring these competences on the individual and on the team level. Countries have attempted to do this in a variety of ways, ranging from required, formal higher education with a balance between theory and practice to a series of community-based trainings, with or without ongoing coaching and other supports.

In some cases, these components of workforce development have been combined—or might be combined—in various ways. Are some of these combinations especially promising and consistent with international research and recommendations? This paper identifies and provides examples of these issues, analyses alternative approaches, and begins to point towards a menu of potentially effective options.

In most countries there is also non-qualified staff working in ECE. The NESETII study provided some inspiring case studies of countries that are establishing career pathways for the nonqualified workforce. Countries like Croatia are setting up specific adapted pathways that give non-qualified workers the possibility of raising their qualification, making it possible to combine working and studying. These adapted courses are attractive for non-qualified workers because they are relating theory to practice during the studies and make it possible to get a qualification in a shorter period of time by recognizing previously acquired competences (Peeters, et al, 2017).

The focus of this White Paper is on the following goals/aspects of pre-primary workforce development:

- 1. pre-primary teacher qualifications, competencies, and profiles;**
- 2. recruitment and retention of pre-primary teachers;**
- 3. training and professional development; and**
- 4. supervision and monitoring of pre-primary professionals.**

These four goals/aspects of workforce development emerge from the UNICEF’s Conceptual Framework for the Pre-primary Subsector (forthcoming). For each of these goals, we first summarize the research and recommendations. Next, we look specifically at the current realities in LMICs, focusing on examples from our research and that of others. Finally, we identify potential pathways toward the goal being discussed, again in light of constraints in LMICs, and we begin to note some of the potential implications of these pathways: for example, are there tradeoffs between high vs low qualifications? Might some pathways toward workforce development have unexpected negative consequences?



4 | Establish appropriate pre-primary job profiles and associated qualification requirements

A clear framework for the entire pre-primary workforce is essential. This includes professional roles, required educational/training qualifications, and quality professional development (pre- and in-service) opportunities.

## 4.1 Qualification requirements

### What is known about education qualification requirements?

- There is some consensus among researchers and international organisations that educated staff members with higher educational qualifications (bachelor's or master level) are more likely to provide high-quality pedagogy and stimulating learning environments, which in turn, foster children's development leading to better learning outcomes (Munton et al., 2002). Indeed, a recent meta-analysis conducted by OECD suggests that higher levels of pre-service qualifications (such as bachelor's degree) contribute to better staff-child relationships which in turn promote quality learning (OECD, 2018). Furthermore, pre-service qualifications show stronger relations with staff-child interactions if the requirements include ECE-specific content, such as child development (OECD, 2018).
- However, pre-service qualifications *per se* may not guarantee better child learning and development (OECD, 2018). In some studies, particularly in Europe, higher staff qualifications (*i.e.*, bachelor's degree) were associated with higher levels of language and literacy, as compared to staff with lower qualifications. On the other hand, studies from the United States demonstrate mixed results, such that there is no consistent association between pre-service qualifications and children's development and learning (OECD, 2018). It is clearly important to consider the quality and relevance of the initial training received by educators. The research shows, however, that participation in in-service training (or professional development) is consistently associated with quality staff-child interactions and also has direct links to child development and learning (OECD, 2018). Still, with in service training, a key factor to consider is the relevance and timing of the in-service training.
- Most international reports from middle and high-income countries recommend that a minimum of 50 to 60% of the workforce should be qualified on bachelor level (OECD, 2006).
- There is virtually no research on the impact of educational qualifications in low income countries.

### What kinds of requirements are currently in place in LMICs?

- Half of the LMICs have no qualification requirements to work in early childhood (UNESCO, 2015). In the other half of the LMICs that require qualifications, there is a wide variation of minimum academic standards for the ECE workforce, with some countries requiring lower secondary qualifications, while others requiring post-secondary or tertiary education (ranging from 2- or 3-year bachelor diplomas, to 4-year master's degrees).
- In many parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, pre-service qualification requirements are minimal, and only a few countries require higher education. For example, Namibia requires a Grade 6 education, complemented by 6 weeks of pre-service training. Tanzania is an example of a LIC where the official requirements to teach pre-primary are the same as the requirements for teaching in primary. ECE pre-service training is available in Tanzania, including certificate and diploma programmes, but there are not enough teachers graduating with this specialization. The 2017 national MELQO study found that only 15% of practicing pre-primary teachers hold pre-primary teaching certificates.
- There are also regions like Latin America and the Caribbean and Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) countries that are requiring tertiary degrees. Requiring high levels of initial education is in some countries an obstacle for an ethnic diverse workforce. Other countries have found inspiring ways for attracting ethnic minority groups in the workforce by organizing adapted pathways to qualification with a focus on coaching in practice. They set up building-bridge courses for people with ethnic minority background and low socio-economic status; (UNESCO, 2015; Peeters, et al., 2017). In a large part of the CEE countries, the level of the initial training is on university level, but there is too much focus on theory and the students have not enough days of practical internship. In the CEE countries, governments and universities need to invest in a rethinking the initial university training.

## 4.2 Professional/training competence profiles

### What is known about professional/training competence profiles?

- Competences refer to the requirements and expectations for what professionals should know and be able to do (Putcha, 2018, 12). At the global level, there is a tendency to describe the expectations/standards for a job and for the initial training in competence profiles. In this perspective, we see being competent at the level of the teacher as a continuous process that comprises

the capability and ability to build on a body of professional knowledge, practice and develop and show professional values (Core, 2011, 21).

- CoRe (2011, 2016) and the Early Workforce Initiative (2018) are recommending that each country should have a common set of competences and standards that can serve as an important foundation for training and professional development for the early childhood workforce and also codify expectations that can support monitoring and mentoring efforts (Putcha, 2018, 8).
- One of the conclusions of the CoRe study is that such a competence profile should not be overly prescriptive and narrow. Broader definitions of 'competence' that point to a body of knowledge and outline more generic skills can provide orientation, but require local, context specific interpretation. Annex 1 provides the broad competence profiles across the system (including individual professionals, institutions and governance) that were developed on the basis of competence profiles of 15 countries that were analysed in the Core study. This kind of broad competence profile facilitates experimentation, participation and professional autonomy and can lead to more appropriate responses to local needs in LMICs.
- In general, there are two types of competences: (i) competence for professionals; and (ii) competence for what training and professional development should impart (Putcha, 2018, 12). The first is essentially the "professional competence profile," while the second is a "training competence profile." In this regard, the CoRe study recommends that each country should also develop a training competence profile for the initial training that leads to a job in pre-primary. The CoRe research also recommended that professional competence profile (competences that the ECE sector needs) and training competence profile (competences that students need to acquire during the initial training) be in alignment with each other. This means that the competences that students are learning in the training institutions are useful for their work in practice. Both competence profiles need also to give space for experimentation, creativity, innovation and knowledge development in the field and also in the initial training (e.g. in universities and training colleges).

### What are typical professional and training competence profiles in LMICs?

- Pre-primary job profiles or professional competence profiles are not widespread in LMICs and where they exist, there is a wide variety in the competences that are mentioned in the professional and training competences profiles of the different countries (UNESCO, 2015). We found very few examples of LMICs that have national professional competence and/or training competence profiles. In the research, we have done in 11 CEE countries, there were only two countries (Croatia and Slovenia) that had a national professional competence

profile and Lithuania was the only country that had both a national professional and a national training competence profile (CoRe, 2011, UNICEF, 2017, 2018).

- In most LMICs, there are no national training requirements for the initial training for ECE. For instance, in most CEE countries, the level of training is on university level, and the Universities often refer to their academic freedom to fill in the content of the training without consulting the ECE sub-sector. Studies in five Balkan countries show that the pre-primary services are not happy with this situation, there is no link between the knowledge and competences that ECE teacher are trained on and the competences that the pre-primary sectors' needs. That leads to a decontextualized form of learning, which makes it difficult for students to develop the necessary competences to be innovative in creating new pedagogical practices (Peeters, 2017, 2018).

## 4.3 What are potential pathways towards establishing appropriate pre-primary job profiles and associated qualifications requirements, and what are their implications?

- **The start of the development of a competent pre-primary workforce system must be the development of a professional competence profile.** This competence profile must be written in collaboration with practitioners (teachers, directors of institutions, researchers and policymakers). The group that develops the competences profile should avoid being overly prescriptive and narrow and use broad definitions of 'competence' that point to a body of knowledge and outline more generic skills, that can be contextualized at the local level.
- **The next step is going from this professional competence profile to the development of training competence profiles that must be the framework for in-service and initial trainings.** The professional and training competence profiles need to be in alignment with each other. This means that the competences that students are acquiring as part of their pre-service training and practitioners are working on in their professional development are relevant and useful for their work in practice.
- **Both the professional competence profile and training competence profile must be used at the national level for all ECE centres (public and private),** and the government must monitor if these profiles are effectively used as frameworks by the institutions and the training centres.
- **These competence profiles and frameworks can serve as the foundation** for establishing qualification requirements, and for informing training initiatives and programs (both



## EXAMPLES

### Pre-Primary Workforce Competence Profiles/ Framework

The CoRe research (2011, 2016) has formulated for all levels of a competent ECE system a broad competence profile on the basis of competences profiles from fifteen countries and scientific evidence for the different levels of the ECE competent system: a competence profile for the teacher, for the institution, for the inter-institutional and inter-agency competences and for the governance (see Annex).

These competence profiles from the CoRe study can be filled in a democratic way in each LMIC by a group of national policymakers and stakeholders and researchers taking into account the specific context of their country.

For individual professionals, such as pre-primary teachers, the competence profile proposes key competences under the interrelated dimensions of knowledge, practice and values in the following areas:

- Holistic child development;
- Theories and strategies of learning (ex. constructive learning; social learning; play-based learning; etc.);
- Interactions with children (ex. positive and responsive communication);
- Working with families and local communities in diverse contexts;
- Early childhood education in the broader local, national and international contexts; and
- Health and care of young children, as well as social protection issues.

The Early Childhood Care and Education Teacher Competency Framework for Southeast Asia (UNESCO, 2018) identifies ECE teacher competencies across four domains: (1) content knowledge, pedagogic practice, and assessment; (2) the learning environment; (3) engagement and collaboration; and (4) professional development. At the heart of these four domains is a set of 7 core or general competencies relating to ECE teachers' general areas of responsibility and supporting or enabling competencies, or specific tasks/knowledge. These core competences include: understanding and facilitate holistic development and learning; establishing a healthy, safe, inclusive and nurturing environment; engaging in continuous professional development; and engaging/collaborating with families and communities, as well as wider ECE networks and stakeholders.



pre-service and in-service), as well as supervision and mentoring activities.

- **Given that most LMICs do not have a core set of competences for the pre-primary workforce, developing a competence profile/framework will help inform standards and qualifications** for pre-primary professionals, enhance the relevance of training and professional development opportunities, elevate the quality of monitoring and mentoring activities, as well as support professionalization of the workforce.

As an example, Serbia started recently with the development of a competence profile that is in alignment with the CoRe competence profiles: reflection on practice, self-evaluation and the capability of creating new pedagogical practices. The new competence profile is based on a list of general and subject-specific competencies developed by an international working group for the field of educational science and the

TUNING (Tuning Educational Structures in Europe) teacher education programme supported by the European Union within the Socrates–Erasmus programme (<http://www.unideusto.org/tuning/>) was adopted and became integral part of Standards for Accreditation of study programmes of the the first and second level of higher education<sup>1</sup>.

- University colleges and faculties in Serbia have developed a list of competence specifications for graduates (Miskelin, 2018). This common training competence profile was the start for processes that must lead to a reform of the initial training. The reform is going in the direction of more focus on the link between theory and supporting the workplace-based learning and also on the development of reflective competences (Peeters, Miskelin, 2018).
- **In addition, it is also important to invest in competences at the team and the interagency level,** as being competent is not the sole responsibility of the

<sup>1</sup> Guidelines for the preparation of documents for accreditation of study programmes of the first and second level of higher education, Commission For Accreditation And Quality Assurance, <https://www.kapk.org/en/home/>

individual teacher but of the whole ECE system. There should therefore be competences for:

- (a) Institutions (ex. ECE institutions, preschools, training institutes), addressing aspects such as organizational approaches to professional development; school leadership; communities of practice;
- (b) Inter-institutional and inter-agency, addressing aspects such as inter-agency cooperation, community development;
- (c) Governance, addressing aspects such as planning and management of resources, supportive policies and legislation, administrative responsibilities.

Detailed examples of competences for these levels are found in Annex 1.

- **Competence profiles and pre-service qualifications should aim for a balance between theory and practice.** As the research demonstrates, higher education qualifications on their own do not guarantee better child outcomes. Educational background should be complemented by relevant practical field engagement through pre-service training. Effective pre- and in-service trainings start from theory to reflect on practice in order to improve the quality of the pedagogical practice and therefore reciprocal relationships between theory and practice are essential.
- **In cases where low qualifications are concerned, it is possible to supplement with systematic coaching and mentoring** to reinforce knowledge, skills and pedagogical practices. For example, the educators of the childcare centres in the city of Ghent (Belgium) and of the ECE in Pistoia (Italy) have a rather low qualification (vocational secondary degree) and yet the quality of those institutions is high (Vandenbroeck, et al.2016), because the teams receive coaching from pedagogical counsellors or coaches. A model of coaching inspired on these coaching experiences was developed (Wanda) and has been implemented in CEE countries (Albania, Slovenia, Croatia, Czech Republic and Hungary) (Sharmahd, et al. 2018). What we learned from the experiences working with Wanda in the five CEE countries is that the coaching model increased the competences of the educators to critically reflect on their practice and to improve their pedagogical practice.
- **LMICs with a high level of qualifications but that are lacking the link between the theoretical courses and the practice** of working with young children and their parents have to focus on developing reflective competences (that is, the ability of pre-primary professionals to reflect on their knowledge, skills and values, and to continually build on and improve the latter) through in-service training. Building on the theory that they've acquired as part of their education program, teachers need to engage in stimulating reflections on their pedagogical practice.

- For the CEE countries with too much focus on theory, Croatia is an interesting country (although it is a higher-middle-income country) (Bouillet, 2017). This former communist country introduced in 2013 the Croatian Qualification Framework Act, a major public, political and legislative framework that opens the door for professional development of ECE teachers and other ECE professions in Croatia. This Act supports the standardization and harmonization of qualification standards for all professions across the education system. A register of the Croatian qualifications is currently being designed with the aim of achieving a better balance between the needs of the training organizations (Universities) and the ECE sector. The Croatian Qualification Framework Act (CQF) aligns the learning outcomes of the training with the concrete needs of the ECE sector.

Several projects have been set up to implement the CQF and to define quality standards for teacher education programs in terms of learning outcomes. Two groups of students and teachers, supervised by the Universities of Rijeka and Zagreb, developed two kinds of standards – they developed what is called a training competence profile for the universities and a professional competence profile for the services.

Croatia requires higher education qualifications for working with children from 6 months to 7 years of age (a 3-year bachelor's degree). Bachelor graduates can continue to follow a postgraduate two-year study for a master's degree in Early and Pre-primary Education. Besides that, there are pedagogues, psychologists, special needs teachers, nurses and assistants (EQF level 4). 61,4% of the workforce has this bachelor teacher training for teaching children 6 months to 7 years. 3% of the teachers have a master's degree, 10,6% of the workforce has no qualification. The bachelor training is focused not only on instrumental competences but also on critical self-reflection and on interpersonal competences. In Annex 2 you will find the Training Competence profile of these training of teachers in Croatia.

- **It is important for competence profiles and qualification requirements to be aligned with the existing workforce and the potential future workforce, otherwise they may be difficult to implement.** If there is no alignment, the competences and requirements may inadvertently force members of the current workforce out of their positions, and undermine objectives in recruitment, such as ensuring diversity (Putcha, 2018)—an example of an unintended negative consequence. Establishing reasonable and feasible qualification requirements is therefore a key strategy to attracting and retaining the pre-primary workforce.



## 5 | Attract and retain a pre-primary workforce

Securing a high-quality supply of pre-primary teachers and keeping them interested in the profession is a major challenge in many countries and requires thoughtful consideration of various strategies and incentives that can be used to build staff morale, enhance teacher recruitment and retention and professionalize the pre-primary teaching field as being one worth of respect.

## What is known about attracting and retaining pre-primary workforce?

- Working conditions in general and the social status of the profession and the salaries of the teachers/educators in particular are seen by international organizations as important tools to make the sector attractive (OECD, 2006). A system of salary increase during the career of the educator is also important.
- We see in OECD countries that a focus on play and outdoor activities and less on formal learning and routine care makes the early childhood profession attractive to those young people that have talents in creative and outdoor activities (in Denmark and Norway, the training of ECE teachers is the most popular field of study with young people); this focus on activities also attracts men.
- Research in Balkan countries and from the UNESCO report (2015) shows that rapid expansion of access to pre-primary opportunities without leaving time to develop a sustainable workforce has a negative effect on professionalization and the quality of the early childhood sector and makes it difficult to attract sufficient qualified personnel (Peeters, 2017; UNESCO, 2015).
- There is some evidence that preschool centers that report depression and burnout are likely to have lower quality programs, specifically in terms of staff-child interactions. In contrast, staff with better well-being seem to demonstrate higher quality staff-child interactions (OECD, 2018). Furthermore, there is evidence showing that preschool centres for children aged 3 to 5 with a better organizational climate (i.e., more team collaboration and cohesion, more supportive working conditions) demonstrate higher quality staff-child interactions (OECD, 2018). These results suggest that working conditions and environment are factors that can affect pre-primary workforce morale and well-being, which in turn influence their willingness to stay in the profession and influence the quality of their interactions with children.

## What is the situation for workforce recruitment and retention in LMICs?

- The gender balance workforce is in most countries (OECD countries and LMICs) highly uneven, with a high proportion of female workers and less than 3% male workers (Peeters, et al, 2015; UNESCO, 2015, 11). Exceptions in LMICs are Namibia with 2/3 of male workers, and Ghana with 32%, and Liberia and Tanzania with more than 50% of males working in ECE.
- This uneven gender balance is dependent on national and traditional, as well as economic factors. There is a positive correlation between per capita GNP and the percentage of female teachers (UNESCO, 2003). In regions in developing countries for example, high unemployment conditions might lead to recruitment of males as teachers (Wallet, 2007).
- According to a study in Kenya (Ngure, 2014), it was observed that out of the 80 pre-school teachers that were selected in Kakuzi and Ruiru divisions, 67 (83,8%) of them were female while 13 (16.2%) were male. Males tend to choose urban settings rather than rural settings to become a preprimary teacher. All male teachers had at least secondary level of education compared to female colleagues who had primary education in general. 75% of teachers state that their profession is low paid, unstable and unpredictable. Almost all of the teachers (including all male teachers) regarded this as a discouragement towards the profession. In addition, willingness to stay in the profession in the following five years is low among all male teachers.
- In most LMICs, the salaries are low, even in countries with qualification requirements. But even with low salaries, some countries succeed in attracting new workers. In some countries with high unemployment, jobs in ECE are attractive because they are seen as secure jobs. From a survey in Georgia, we know that the salaries in ECE are low, but since the unemployment in Georgia is high, the sector succeeded in attracting ECE teachers (Peeters, Hulpia, Janelidze et al. , 2018) . In Tanzania, jobs in pre-primary are seen as secure jobs. The requirements to get into a pre-service training to become a teacher in pre-primary in Jordan are lower than to those to become a primary teacher and this makes the job attractive (Queen Rania Foundation, 2017). This is due to the fact that an ECE teacher needs competences other than education requirements (ie, less academic, more focused on creativity, playful dispositions, etc.).
- Turnover of personnel is a challenge in many LMICs, especially in rural areas and in the private sector (UNESCO, 2015). This is due to low status and low pay (as compared to primary teachers), leading to low satisfaction and high turnover. Factors that positively influence job satisfaction and motivation (and indirectly the quality of staff-child interactions) include high wages, as well as paid vacation time and other benefits.

- The UNICEF Kyrgyzstan-2 study on preschool teachers identified a high turnover among the staff of the ECE institutions. Because of the high turnover, directors often look for teachers who are retired primary school teachers and convince them to work in preschools, since these teachers are less of a flight risk.

## What are pathways toward attracting and retaining pre-primary workforce in LMICs, and what are their implications?

The low status and low pay for pre-primary professionals are a pervasive phenomenon across LMICs, and negatively impact the ability of the pre-primary sub-sector to attract and retain professionals. It is therefore crucial to identify strategies that can make working in pre-primary education an appealing and interesting prospect. To this end, several options/ strategies can be considered:

**(a) Focusing on attractive competences requirements** for working with young children (such as creativity, positive attitude, sports and outdoor activities, energetic disposition etc).

**(b) Enhancing working conditions**, including increases in salaries and other benefits (ex. pensions), as well as creating a supportive working environment (ex. provide support of specialists, opportunities for continuing professional development, etc.). For example, in most ECA countries, the ECE workforce is motivated to stay in the job because they are very well supported in their work by a range of specialists: pedagogues, psychologists, speech therapists, coaches, music teachers and social workers. Having this support gives them child-free hours to reflect on practice in order to improve the quality of the service provided (Peeters, 2017; EC Workforce Initiatives, 2018, UNESCO, 2015, 20). In other LMICs, however, especially in rural settings, few such specialists are available at the workplace. Alternatives to these supports need to be explored; for example, some support can be provided using low-cost technology from a distance.

Other countries like Cambodia are investing in pensions for early childhood workers to make the job attractive (UNESCO, 2015).

**(c) Establishing career pathways for the non-qualified workforce**, that professionalize pre-primary jobs, and that elevate their status, as well as providing upward progression in positions and titles. For example, pathways should be created to show how an initially non-qualified teacher assistant may progress towards being a qualified teacher, and beyond (head teacher, teacher supervisor, etc.). Such career pathways should ideally mirror those for early primary grade teachers. In countries with no qualification requirements alternative initial trainings have to be set up,

which are practice based and which are recognizing earlier acquired competences. This makes it possible for non-qualified workers to obtain a qualification in a short period of time. However, procedures are needed for assessing these earlier acquired competences. At the same time, in-service training, through monitoring and coaching have to be installed, to their implementation, and ultimately linking them to knowledge of specific teaching/learning strategies) ( see NESETII study: Peeters, et al, 2017).

**(d) Generating public interest in and support** for pre-primary education services and jobs by fostering community relationships. The Madrassa Early Childhood Development program sets an example on both including and supporting locals in terms of ECE services. The Madrassa project provides very inspiring examples of efforts to retain the people working in pre-primary settings. The project gives potential pre-primary professionals the opportunity to take part in training and provides support on how to create a supportive learning environment and making use of local resources and materials as learning tools for the children. Mwaura & Mohamed (2008) summarize how the Madrassa project in east Africa attracted and retained the local workforce. It starts with an approximately one-year period to establish relations with the local community. After this period when the link between the school and the community was established, the Madrassa Resource Center (MRC) formalizes the procedures. During this process, the school management committee, teachers and parents go together through a two-year training program. Fostering community relationships and engaging the community in the process proved to be critical to build interest in and support for pre-primary education services and jobs.





## 6 | Implement equitable training and support for pre-primary personnel

Preparing adequately the pre-primary workforce and ensuring strong pedagogical practices benefiting children requires capacity in the pre-primary sub-sector across many levels as well as clear and well financed and supported training and supervision/mentoring plans.

Researchers and international organisations recognise that the quality of ECE services is related to a professional and competent workforce. The latter should be part of a 'competent system' that is capable of linking staff's initial good education to the possibility of constantly reflecting on ideas and practices.

The two main types of training and professional development in the context of pre-primary workforce development are (Mitter & Putcha, 2018, Vandenbroeck, et al, 2016):

- 1. Pre-service or initial preparation or initial training:** This refers to the training in which an individual engages *prior* to beginning a position. Pre-service training is essential to ensure that pre-primary staff members are adequately prepared to serve in a particular role and has to include a combination of coursework and field training. In some countries pre-service preparation occurs in higher education programs, in other countries there are trainings on vocational secondary level. In many HICs and MLICs, there are many alternative approaches for those who have not begun to serve as pre-primary teaching staff. In recent years a growing consensus has emerged that the way ECE staff are trained is critically for the quality of the ECE services as well as for the later educational success of the children.
- 2. Continuous professional development for in-service enhances the competences of the pre-primary professionals who are already working in ECE.** While often optional, in-service training is in many countries required to improve knowledge and skills, to maintain individual licensure or advance to a new level of licensure, to meet employer expectations, or to meet other requirements for early childhood professionals working in the field. Continuous professional development (CPD) is a form of in-service training and is designed to complement existing training pathways for early childhood development professionals. CPD extends beyond the basic accredited training courses required for certification and recertification, where those systems exist. CPD embraces the idea that individuals aim for continuous improvement in their professional skills and knowledge beyond the basic training required to carry out the job.

Research findings also show that continuous professional development initiatives may be equally important as initial professional preparation ('pre-service training' leading to officially recognised qualifications), provided these are of sufficient length and intensity (Fukkink & Lont, 2007).

The next sections describe and analyze recommendations, LMIC situations, and alternative pathways first in the pre-service/initial area and then in the in-service/ongoing area.

## What is known about pre-service/ in-service training?

- Despite the substantial evidence showing that staff qualifications matter, research also points out that qualifications *per se* are not sufficient to determine the quality of ECE provision (OECD, 2012). The content of initial the training, a balance between theory and practice – as well as the methodologies adopted for its delivery (for instance, coaching during work placement) – play a crucial role in increasing the professional competence of educators. From the Core study commissioned by the European Commission (2011, 2016), we learned that pre- and in-service training should balance theory and practice. Effective pre- and in-service trainings start from theory to reflect on practice in order to improve the quality of the pedagogical practice and therefore reciprocal relationships between theory and practice are essential. Indeed, field education and other opportunities to gain practical skills are important components of initial preparation (Mitter & Putcha, 2018).
- A recent meta-analysis conducted by OECD (2018) highlights that participation in in-service training (or continuous professional development) provided these are of sufficient length and intensity (see above) is the most consistent factor of quality staff-child interactions, and also has direct links to child development and learning. Participation in in-service training was positively linked to staff-child interactions when the training included early childhood education content; offered on-site support (such as mentoring, coaching or consultation), or was of an appropriate length. We know from systematic review which forms of CPD (like coaching in practice) can have the same effect as higher initial training (Fukkink, et al, 2007). The Eurofound (2015, Peleman, et al., 2018) study shows that the system of Continuous Professional Development has an impact on increasing the quality of ECE and has an impact on child outcomes when the programs are intensive and are implemented for at least two years. Critical factors for success of CPD are:
  1. the active involvement of practitioners in the transformative process for the improvement of educational practices within ECE settings;
  2. programs are focused on practitioners learning in practice, in dialogue with colleagues and parents;
  3. a mentor or coach is available during non-contact hours;
  4. the program has to be embedded in a coherent pedagogical framework or curriculum that builds upon research and addresses local needs.
- In addition to the essential body of knowledge and the acquisition of specific skills, it is crucial that graduates and practitioners are offered possibilities to build reflective capacities, which involve thinking about and analysing

their practice to identify what drives children's learning and development. Reflective practice allows early childhood professionals to develop a critical understanding of their own practice, and continually develop the necessary skills, knowledge and approaches to achieve the best outcomes for children (Marbina, Church, & Tayler, 2012). Reflective practice is therefore a key feature of high quality early childhood education – pre-primary staff should thus be provided with the opportunity and time to engage in this critical exercise.

Examples of reflective practice opportunities include: professional networks and learning communities for early childhood education professionals that encourage critical reflection; working environments that value and create a culture of reflective practice; mentors who provide resources, skills and guidance to develop reflective practice effectively (Marbina, Church, & Tayler, 2012).

- Pathways to professionalization for unqualified workers or for workers with degrees that have no link with ECE. In many countries (LMICs and OECD), parts of the workforce are represented by low-qualified ECE workers (Peeters, et al, 2016). Those low-qualified workers are in some countries defined as 'invisible workers', meaning that their presence is usually not taken into account in policy documents and that they have far fewer possibilities of qualification and professional development than practitioners trained on bachelor level. The NESETII-study commissioned by the European Commission recommended that adapted pathways should be developed to give those low qualified workers the opportunity to get a qualification. In several countries like Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia there are interesting examples of how this can be put into practice (Peeters, et al, 2016, 2018). The NESETII-research concluded that it is essential to create pathways for the non-qualified workers to the same level of qualification as the core practitioners, paying special attention to:
  1. recognizing their working experience and previously acquired competences;
  2. linking theory and practice by methods of group reflections on practice;
  3. foreseeing pedagogical guidance in the service, for the student and for the whole team;
  4. supporting students with an ethnic minority background and with low socio-economic status.
- Early childhood professional roles are often not clearly defined, which weakens training and professional development, and limits opportunities for career advancement (Mitter & Putcha, 2018). If functions, titles and qualification requirements are not clearly identified, pre-service training risks becoming ineffective in preparing the pre-primary workforce, while in-service training becomes disconnected with the roles that are meant to be carried out. This reaffirms the need to have clearly defined competence profiles and associated training competence profiles (as described above).

## What is the situation in LMICs: Lack of or limited initial training

- In many LMICs, there is limited capacity and resources to train the teachers (for pre-service and as well as for in-service training). In LMICs, the situation of the initial training for ECE is very diverse: some countries have no pre-service training for ECE (like Georgia and Morocco), and other have many different in-service trainings on vocational level or short trainings that do not lead to a certified qualification. In contrast, within CEE countries, like Albania, Serbia and Kosovo, a qualification at university level (bachelor, ISCED 6 or even master ISCED 7), is obligatory and the initial training is provided by universities.
- In many LMICs, the entrance into the profession is not regulated by the government. Georgia is an example of such a country where there are no initial training requirements. (Peeters, Hulpia, et al.,2018). Low qualifications of the workforce or qualifications that have no link with ECE present a major problem in the ECE sector in Georgia. Only a small number of teachers have a bachelor's degree in ECE, and most of them previously worked in primary schools. Some teachers have bachelor's degrees that have nothing to do with ECE. Survey participants unanimously highlight the necessity of pre-service training or at least a preparatory program before entering the profession. The small number of teachers who are qualified mainly graduated from a university 20-25 years ago and have not attended in-service trainings to update their knowledge and familiarize them with the latest developments in the field. As for current university programs, new programs provided by universities in order to prepare future ECE teachers— have been developed by different stakeholders. These programs have not yet been recognized by the government. In this regard, Georgia is now willing to tackle this problem of a lack of initial and continuous training for ECE. The first step is a large survey on the quality of pre-primary teachers in all parts of Georgia (Peeters, Hulpia, 2018).
- Because there are few trained ECE teachers in Pakistan, primary teachers teach preschool classes. In the 'Releasing Confidence and Creativity' early childhood program, primary school teachers are trained to work with the High/Scope approach. After a six-month program, participants receive a qualification. All the trainees are mentored by ECE professionals during their initial field work (four months) and in the monitoring and follow-up phases. After following the RCC training, the teachers are coached by an experienced ECE teacher to improve their practice and share successful pedagogical practices (Juma, 2004).
- Several CEE countries require high education qualifications (university level degrees). This creates many opportunities for the sector in those countries, but there also some challenges (Peeters, 2017, 2018). A weakness of the Initial training in countries such as Serbia, Montenegro, Albania,

Kosovo and Bosnia & Herzegovina is the work placement. The number of practice hours is limited and the ECTS points for practice are low. Sometimes the workforce placements are organised as a separate course which take place outside the regular teaching process. There is also in these countries a lack of formal procedures for evaluating workplace-based learning and there are no special qualification requirements for the mentors that supervise the students. These countries' experiences suggest, again, that high education qualifications are not a cure-all for workforce development; careful attention is needed to provision of workforce placements (link between theory and practice) that are adequate in intensity and appropriately supervised and evaluated.

## What is the situation for in-service training/ Continuous Professional Development in LMICs?

In many LMICs, in-service training is not widely accessible, even though pre-service training is provided to a varying extent. In addition, many of the in-service trainings provided

often fail to link theory and practice. However, there are examples of innovative practices that may have potential for wider implementation:

- The Madrasa Resource Centre preschools in East Africa, supported by the Aga Khan Foundation, provide a two-year training program which includes a one-month orientation, 78 weeks of work-based training, additional in-service training sessions, and ongoing support and mentoring during the first year in the workplace (Sun et al., 2015).
- P.L.A.Y. (South Africa) is an online in-service training program for ECD teachers. PLAY consists of a part for birth to two years, and a part for two to five years and has 20 modules that can be completed at the teacher's own pace between two to six weeks. There is an assessment in the program and it is accredited by the South African Council of Educators, not as a qualification but as credits for professional development provided. Not only teachers but also principals and managers are encouraged to complete the course. Currently it aims to reach 150.000 practitioners and educators. The general approach of the online education is how children's learning can be enhanced through play.

### EXAMPLE

## LMIC without initial pre-service training for pre-primary professionals – Morocco

*"The lack of initial training for ECEC and the pedagogical chaos that is the result of this makes the pre-primary sector fragile and hypothesizes the future of generations of children"* (El Andaloussi, 2017,42). According to the recent study of El Andaloussi, in Morocco the more than 26 000 educators that are working with the 650 000 children have followed no initial training and only a small part have followed some CPD courses within innovation projects led by national and international organizations. In the near future, Morocco needs another 29 000 new educators and for this group a new initial training will be developed.

A new initial training of 700 hours has been developed and tested out by Atfale and different partners, la Fondation Marocaine pour la promotion de l'enseignement préscolaire et la faculté des sciences de l'Éducation.

To follow this training, the students need to be bilingual and have completed secondary education. This new initial training consists of eight modules:

1. knowledge of child development and the basic principles of preschool;
  2. oral and written language;
  3. artistic activities and physical education;
  4. mathematical and scientific activities;
  5. health education, safety and prevention;
  6. professional ethics and values education;
  7. institution Management and Educator Tools;
  8. institutional communication and professional project.
- And three periods of workforce placements focused on the following topics:
1. internship discovery;
  2. application internship;
  3. internship in responsibility.



- In addition to P.L.A.Y., an NGO named Thusanang aimed to build local capacities for ECD practitioners and parents in rural communities in Limpopo province, South Africa. This “Thusanang’s Trust Approach” is not only focusing on the competences of the individual but on the ECE whole system, what the CoRe study called the development of a competent system.). Thusanang’s approach managed to establish a mentoring system for building and expanding the competences of early childhood centres and practitioners. Practitioners are constantly supported through a mentoring system. During their practice, they get advice and feedback for their classroom practice, site visits and materials are provided. Also, this system allows them to share their experiences and needs. Further training is also possible for them in a given ECE centre. In ECE centres, they apply “a peer and a mentor” programme, where peer groups are formed and leaders within these groups are trained as mentors. Then, mentors organize regular meeting to share experiences, ideas or challenges. As a result, it allows the practitioners to
- feel connected and supported, keeps the momentum of improvement and increases sustainability (Roper, 2014).
- The ‘Lively minds’ is a ECE training program in Ghana for people of the local community, that consists of two parts, a teacher training for non-qualified workers and training for mothers that assists the new qualified teachers. This teacher training has positive outcomes in terms of more integrated and a more child-centred approach in the class rooms. After being qualified, the teachers set up training courses for mothers as volunteers. These mothers regularly assist teachers in the class room. Through the involvement of the mothers in the ‘Lively Minds’-program, the home learning environment was improved. The assessments of the Lively Minds program revealed that (based on teacher reports) it improved teachers’ knowledge in ECD, it improved the quality of teaching, more learning materials were used in the class room, it improved class management, and the teachers used a more child-centred approach.

- There are interesting practices in middle-income countries (Albania, Croatia, Slovenia), where a coaching tool (Wanda) that is inspired by the CoRe and Eurofound research is used in continuous professional development (Sharmahd, et al., 2018). The aim of Wanda is to improve the quality of the services through a process of critical reflection on pedagogical practice. Participants grow in their profession as individuals and as a group by reflecting on different aspects of early learning. Increasing and rediscovering appreciation of the work (motivation) and the people involved (children, colleagues. Wanda was used in a team of practitioners/teachers who work together and in a group of 8 to 12 persons made up of people who work in different institutions, have the same role or function and want to reflect on their practices. Each group gathers approximately once every 4–6 weeks for a Wanda session which lasts for approximately two hours and is guided by a ‘facilitator’ (a pedagogical coordinator, a supervisor, a mentor, or a pedagogical coach, etc.)
- The level of qualification of preschool teachers in Albania is quite high, since 60% of the staff holds a university bachelor’s degree (Peeters, 2016). Yet the contents of the teacher training warrants revisions: the approach should be more child-centred and the link between theory and practice should be more elaborated. An additional challenge for the Albanian context is the implementation of a new curriculum, given the tradition of working in a top-down approach to implement new policies in ECE. Working with UNICEF and the Institute of Development of Education (IDE), the Albanian Ministry of Education and Sport (MoES) organised a Training Of Trainers (TOT) focused on using the Wanda coaching instrument to implement the new curriculum. During this TOT, representatives of the Ministry, NGOs, training centres, preschools and local departments were actively involved in a democratic process of critically reflecting on how to implement the pedagogical principles of the new curriculum in the preschool education: how examples of excellent practices can be exchanged; intervision and peer groups can be set up. The Albanian preschool system seems motivated to work in this direction, involving the multiple levels that are needed to create competent systems.
- CPD initiatives in Chile have typically been ‘trainer centred’, and the participants (ie, the practitioners) have a passive role and are not seen as actors of their own learning process. The “Learning Mediation Strategies from the perspective of action research” seeks to give a more active role to the teachers in improving their own practice. This approach provides an interesting two-year CPD program for pre-primary teachers in Chile. The main idea is that teachers are the mediators of learning, taking an active part in the process of their own reflections and identifying areas for continuous improvement of their practice through video feedback. From the Eurofound systematic review, we know that video interaction as coaching is very effective to improve the quality of the pedagogical practice (Eurofound, 2015). The coach films the teacher interacting with the children, and afterwards the teacher reviews the recording to reflect on her pedagogical practices. Then, the coach gives feedback to the teacher. Coaches and teachers also study the reports of external evaluation together. In the period 2012-2015, three cohorts of teachers took part in the action research, that helped teachers to guide their own CPD, taking responsibility to change instead of waiting for top down initiatives. It also improved the didactical tools and gave space for organizational and institutional transformation.
- In many LMICs like Ghana, Namibia and the Philippines the teacher is supported by an assistant or volunteer (UNESCO, 2015, 47). Adapted shorter in-service training of these assistants or auxiliary staff must be set up that lead to qualification (Peeters et al., 2016, 2017).
- In Georgia, in-service training which is a crucial pillar for quality in ECE (Eurofound, 2015), is not available nor accessible for the vast majority of the workforce. A survey showed that the motivation for participation in CPD initiatives is very high among the mostly non-qualified teachers; however, the number of teachers that participate in some form of CPD is very limited since the in-service trainings are not free of charge. The few teachers who attend courses said they gained increased self-confidence and motivation and emphasize that participation in these trainings increases their efficiency. The researchers also conclude that there is a need for peer learning, in which ECE centres’ staff share their knowledge about policies and practices with their colleagues. Most centres can rely on what they call in Georgia a methodologist (a kind of pedagogical coach). Some methodologists see their task as giving instructions to teachers about what they need to do (top down approach), while others try to do some coaching, although there are no specific coaching methods being used in Georgia. Some teachers admit that they receive valuable professional advice from these methodologists provided by the ECE municipal agency. However, methodologists are not available in all ECE centres and they do not use methods of coaching that are scientifically based or have proved to be effective to change practice.

## What are alternative pathways toward improved initial and in-service training, and what are their implications?

Regardless of whether high education qualifications (ex, bachelor’s and master’s level programs) are introduced in the field of ECE, the role of training and professional development is essential, as practice of pedagogy is crucial for the quality of ECE and especially for a workforce with low qualifications.

## Towards effective pre-service training

- Practicum (in the field work) or work placements, as part of the initial training (pre-service training), are essential so that theory and practice can be bridged. As indicated throughout this paper, a balance of theory and practice is critical to ensure that theory can be applied.
- Shorter pre-service training programs can be beneficial to pre-primary staff who are unable to participate in full-time or degree programs. However, training programs that are longer and more intensive enable the development of a greater range of in-depth knowledge and skills.
- Training and professional development programs can be delivered through a range of providers including government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), universities and other post-secondary institutions, vocational education training centres, and private training providers (Mitter & Putcha, 2018).
- There are a variety of forms of in-service training, including: (i) coaching/mentoring; (ii) conferences, workshops, seminars; (iii) peer learning (reflection groups; professional learning communities); (iv) refresher training, subject training, specialized training (Mitter & Putcha, 2018).
- Several CEE countries require high education qualifications (university level degrees). This creates many opportunities for the sector in those countries, but there also some challenges (Peeters, 2017, 2018). A weakness of the initial training in countries such as Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, Kosovo and Bosnia & Herzegovina is the work placement. The number of practice hours is limited and the academic credit points for practice are low. Sometimes the workforce placements are organised as a separate course which take place outside the regular teaching process. There is also in these countries a lack of formal procedures for evaluating workplace-based learning and there are no special qualification requirements for the mentors that supervise the students. These countries' experiences suggest, again, that high education qualifications are not a cure-all for workforce development; careful attention is needed to provision of workforce placements that are adequate in intensity and appropriately supervised and evaluated.

## Addressing lack of or limited initial training

- Given that comprehensive and long-term in-service professional development initiatives can yield beneficial effects equal to those of initial professional preparation, countries that have no initial training requirements or opportunities must focus on intense continuous professional development, ideally with more specific intense forms of coaching during child free hours by specialized pedagogical coaches, that use methods to stimulate critical reflection on pedagogical practices.
- Short-term in-service training courses (e.g. a few days per year), however, are not sufficient. This demands a re-think of existing approaches to continuing professional development towards more sustained and comprehensive approaches based on the active involvement of practitioners in the process of improving educational practice, with a focus on practice-based learning taking place in constant dialogue with colleagues, parents and local communities.
- In cases where pre-primary classes are taught by primary teachers, these teachers often lack the training to work with younger children. As a result, they often teach in ways that may have been appropriate for primary school instruction but are developmentally inappropriate for pre-primary. Therefore, to avoid "schoolification" of pre-primary programs, the primary teachers must be given the appropriate training on child-centred and holistic approaches that are characteristic of pre-primary education.
- It is important to set up alternative pathways for the non-qualified workers (i.e., those who do not meet the minimum education qualifications, such as assistant teachers), with trainings that lead to a qualification and that are adapted to the target group. The focus of these trainings should be on learning from practice. This can happen in several ways a) by creating specific quota systems in which a certain number of places in a bachelor's degree training course are reserved for experienced but currently unqualified workers; b) by creating "building-bridge" courses for workers who may have faced educational difficulties related to poverty or limited opportunities and biases because of ethnic or linguistic minority status; c) by formally recognizing previously acquired competences (e.g., credit for prior learning); d) by repeatedly relating theory to practice during the studies; and e) by supporting the team that the non-qualified worker works with to help them all cope with the change of professional identity that the previously non-qualified worker/student may experience over the course of the training.

## Importance of in-service training/CPD

- At the local or regional level: It is important to invest in a coherent policy towards continuous professional development for the whole workforce that takes into account:
  - organising peer learning groups and learning communities on the common pedagogical goals;
  - implementing new child-centred approaches;
  - trainings for pedagogical coaches;
- annual Pedagogical Conferences for the whole workforce of a city, a region or a large ECE organisation on the strategic planning. In these conferences, practitioners from different services can present innovative projects around the implementation of the strategic planning towards colleagues of other preschool institutions;
- peer learning groups with a focus on exchanging interesting practices among different preschool institutions are highly appreciated by practitioners and are powerful tools in changing pedagogical practices;
- the coaches, NGO's and the universities must get the financial resources needed to develop instruments and ICT applications to use in coaching sessions.
- Critical learning communities composed of practitioners, other specialists (such as social workers, psychologists, pedagogues, etc.) parents, local and national policymakers and academics, can provide support to pre-primary professionals in informing and enhancing their knowledge, practices and values. The communities of practice also provide the space for pre-primary professionals to share difficulties and challenges, and to seek advice and emotional support. This is an important aspect of favourable working conditions that can influence well-being, morale, motivation and passion for the pre-primary teaching profession. The "communities of practice" concept can be powerful within LMICs also, although alternatives to the composition of such communities may need consideration.
- Mentorship and coaching are effective methods of CDP. The presence of a mentor or coach who can facilitate practitioners' reflection and improvements is a factor of an enabling and favourable working environment. Child-free time to engage in mentoring/coaching sessions are thus valuable and are a motivating factor to retaining pre-primary staff. Again, however, in many LMICs the physical presence of such mentors may not be feasible and alternatives such as virtual mentoring, or training of school principals to serve as coaches, may need to be considered.



### EXAMPLE

## Training for Non-Qualified Workers – Pakistan

An interesting case of how the competences of non-qualified assistants can be increased is the 'Releasing Confidence and Creativity (RCC): Building Sound Foundations for Early Learning' program in Pakistan. The Aga Khan Foundation started this program in 2003, which aimed to build and enhance the capacity of local communities by involving mothers and training them to become 'katchi' teachers (pre-primary classes in primary schools) who work together with the preschool teacher (Juma, 2004).



7 | Promote continuous improvement of pre-primary workforce development programmes

The ultimate purpose of monitoring should be to provide support to teachers to address roadblocks and to enable them to more effectively deliver pre-primary services in their classrooms. More broadly, monitoring and quality assurance should attend to a range of factors that potentially result in a well-qualified, motivated workforce capable of promoting children's positive development and learning. If well implemented, monitoring produces information at the relevant local, regional and/or national level to support continuing improvements in the quality of workforce policies, the quality of implementation of policies and training, and the quality of practices.

## What is known or recommended about monitoring of pre-primary workforce programs?

Systematic monitoring of ECE workforce development programs allows for the generation of appropriate information and feedback at the relevant local, regional or national level. This information should support open exchange, review, evaluation and the development of competences at all levels in the system. Furthermore, monitoring is more effective when the information collected at an individual level is aligned with the information collected at the different levels of the competent system: the level of individual ECE centres, the level of training centres/institutions, and the policy level. Monitoring of pre-primary workforce programs must focus on the interest of the child and on staff engagement towards children and families (European Quality Framework in ECEC, 2014), with emphasis on creating conditions for continuous improvement of practices.

## What are the primary mechanisms and modalities used for supervision and monitoring pre-primary workforce in LMICs?

- Qualification and training requirements and other workforce standards are meaningless if they are not monitored and evaluated by governmental organisations. According to 2009 data, nearly one-half of 80 low- and middle-income countries estimated that most pre-primary teachers (90 to 100 percent) met national training requirements. However, almost one-quarter of these 80 countries reported that less than half of teachers met these training requirements (ILO, 2012).
- Monitoring of pre-primary workforce development programs is especially difficult in LMICs in the non-formal and private sector (Peeters, 2017; UNESCO, 2015), where there may be little or no accountability to government monitoring or inspection bodies. We will have to look for inspiring

practices of countries that have found ways to monitor these parts of the ECE sector and to feed data back into the system so as to support quality improvement.

- Accreditation of training centres (including higher education institutions) for initial and in-service training is crucial for quality. In various reports, we find examples of inspiring practices from LMICs on how an accreditation system can help to increase the quality of the initial and in-service training. For instance, in some CEE countries, the accreditation system of the training centres that provide CPD was not working well. The monitoring and evaluation of the accredited training centres that provide CPD was not efficient, some training centres were accredited, and they sold false certifications to teachers that have not followed any CPD (Peeters, 2016). An inspiring example in this matter is the Thusanang project in South-Africa. The early childhood practitioners of that follow accredited trainings for non-qualified workers get nationally recognised certificates. (Roper, 2014).
- Self-evaluation of the teachers is crucial for the professionalization of the workforce. From a recent study in Georgia, we learned that in less of 10% of the municipalities the teachers systematically evaluate their practice (Peeters, Hulpia, Janeledze et al, 2018).

## What are alternative pathways toward improved monitoring of workforce development programs, and what are their implications?

- Together with the school management, the Madrassa Resource Centres (MRC) in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania make regular evaluations of teaching quality. The MRC is also doing evaluations of training centres. Once the centre is certified, further in-service training and courses are offered for teachers as a path toward continuous improvement of practices.
- An interesting model of self-evaluation for the teachers is the Individual Plan for Professional Development from the Philippines. IPPD is a tool that serves as a guide for the professional's continuous learning and development. The IPPD enables that each professional regularly and individually prepares, implements, monitors and updates the CPD plan. It is based on the identified development needs revealed by the Training and Development Needs Assessment (TDNA) appropriate for the specific profession and is consistent with the priority development goals of the school, division and region. The IPPD is accomplished by the professionals, e.g. School Heads and Teachers, to enable them to chart their goals and plan learning activities that enhance their competencies in order for them to work better for the improvement of their school and learners' performance. Developing a structured IPPD allows them to practice individual accountability for professional growth and shared responsibility for the entire organization's development.



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## Annex 1 | Recent policy research on ECE workforce

## CoRe: Competences requirements for teachers in ECE

The CoRe study on competence requirements for the early childhood workforce, commissioned by the European Commission in 2009 to a consortium of the University of East London and Ghent University (Urban et al., 2011) is an interesting study for our Pathways to Develop the Pre-primary Workforce because it is interrogating in case studies complex contexts of public policy and professional practice in seven culturally very different countries. It consisted also of a survey on professional competences profiles for the different early years prof

essions in fifteen countries and it also developed a broad competence profile for working in ECE and is therefore interesting for developing the matrix of our study. We mention here in more detail the recommendations of this study that are of importance for the possible reform of the initial and in-service training in LMICs on how these recent challenges are met in diverse contexts (Urban et al., 2011; Peeters & Vandenbroeck, 2012; Vandenbroeck et al., 2016):

- **Importance of alignment between training competence profile and professional competence profile**

One of the conclusions that is important for our study is that the existence of a competence profile is an advantage for the development of an early childhood education and care system but only if it avoids being overly prescriptive and narrow. Broader definitions of 'competence' that point to a body of knowledge and outline more generic skills provide orientation, but require local, context specific interpretation. In Annex 2, you will find the broad competence profile that was developed on the basis of competence profiles of 15 countries that were analysed in the Core study. This kind of broad competence profile facilitates experimentation, participation and professional autonomy and can lead to more appropriate responses to local needs.

Another conclusion of the CoRe study is that professional and training competence profiles need to be in alignment with each other. This means that the competences that students are learning in the training institutions are useful for their work in practice. This is very important for our Pathways study, since we know from research in CEE countries that this alignment is often lacking. Both competence profiles need also to give space for experimentation, creativity, innovation and knowledge development in the field and also in the initial training (e.g. in universities and training colleges).

- **Ensure in pre- and in-service training a balance between theory/practice**

Besides the obvious and essential body of knowledge and the acquisition of specific skills, it is crucial that graduates are offered possibilities to build reflective capacities. Effective pre- and in-service trainings start from theory to reflect on practice in order to improve the quality of the pedagogical practice and therefore reciprocal relationships between theory and practice are essential.

- **Build leadership capacity**

Effective leadership is seen as a 'major factor in shaping the overall teaching and learning environment, raising aspirations and providing support for children, parents and staff'. Therefore, the training and the professional development of directors is crucial.

- **Rethink professional development**

The quality of services and the competence level of staff depend on, but are not only the result of, individual initial training. CoRe concluded (and this is very important for LMICs, that lack specialised ECE pre-service training) that different pathways to professionalism are possible and there is ample evidence, both from literature and from the case studies, that comprehensive and long-term in-service professional development initiatives can yield beneficial effects equal to those of initial professional preparation. Short-term in-service training courses (e.g. a few days per year), however, are not sufficient. This demands a re-think of existing approaches to continuing professional development towards more sustained and comprehensive approaches based on pedagogical coaching and on learning from practice.

- **Need for Policies that address entire ECE system**

CoRe recommends investing in a competent system because professionalization is multi-layered and being competent is not the sole responsibility of the individual teacher or educator, the whole ECE system need to be competent. To implement the necessary innovations a competent system should be developed within all levels of the ECE system.

The following necessary measures have to be taken to support the process of change:

- **On the level of the individual practitioner/heads of preschool institutions**

At least 60% need to have a qualification for ECE teacher.

All workers of the services are provided with a wide range of courses concerning children, parents, teams and the community. It is important that they can choose between different models: courses for individual workers and peer groups for workers representing their institution.

- **On the team/institution level**

Introduce coaching sessions in the teams so that support the practitioners to improve their pedagogical practice. Organise an introduction course for teams of new preschool institutions. During this course, members of the new team develop a common pedagogical vision based on the curriculum or the strategic goals.

- **On the city level (or regional level)**

It is important to invest in a coherent policy towards professional development for the whole workforce:

- o Organising peer learning groups and learning communities on the goals of the strategic planning;

Implementing new child-centred approaches;

- o Trainings for pedagogical coaches;
- o Annual Pedagogical Conferences for the whole workforce of a city, a region or a large ECE organisation on the strategic planning. In these conferences, practitioners from different services can present innovative projects around the implementation of the strategic planning towards colleagues of other preschool institutions;
- o Peer learning groups with a focus on exchanging interesting practices among different preschool institutions, are highly appreciated by practitioners and are powerful tools in changing pedagogical practices;
- o The coaches, NGO's and the universities must get the financial opportunities to develop instruments and ICT applications to use in coaching sessions.

#### **A competent system on the level of the Government**

- o The government must install democratic advisory groups chaired by respected independent experts. We think of advisory groups on different policy aspects of new strategic goals, but also advisory groups on the development of professional competences profiles and training competences profiles of the ECE worker, on the development of a new curriculum and also the improvement of working conditions.
- o The government must provide financial resources so that the sector can develop a coherent system of in-service training.
- o The government must provide child free hours for team meetings and coaching sessions.

#### **A competent system inspired by International Organisations and Networks and innovation projects**

An active participation in international networks is of major importance to increase the quality of ECE. Participation in international projects, in UNICEF projects and in international networks can give inspiration for implementing the innovations. CoRe recommends: "Systematically encourage, fund and build transnational and multidimensional networks and critical learning communities of practitioners, parents, local and national policymakers and academics."

## **Eurofound Early Childhood Care: working conditions, training and quality**

For the workforce in LMICs, it is important that CoRe learned us that when pedagogical guidance is provided, when child-free hours are scheduled, and when reflection is supported within the team, the quality of the services improved with a direct effect on children and families even when the workforce is not qualified on bachelor level (Peeters, Vandebroek, 2011;

Vandebroek et al., 2016). In this regard, other international research findings also show that continuous professional development initiatives (CPD) may be equally important as initial professional preparation ('pre-service training' leading to officially recognised qualifications), provided these are of sufficient length and intensity (Fukkink & Lont, 2007).

A recent systematic review on effective professional development published by Eurofound (Peeters et al., 2015, Peleman, et al. 2018) underlined that these activities seem to be most effective when they are continuous and of a certain length (two years).

It also lists several critical success factors that enable quality CPD initiatives:

- a coherent pedagogical framework or learning curriculum that builds upon research and addresses local needs;
- the active involvement of practitioners in the process of improving educational practice enacted within their settings;
- a focus on practice-based learning taking place in constant dialogue with colleagues, parents and local communities;
- the provision of enabling working conditions, such as the availability of paid hours for non-contact time and the presence of a mentor or coach who facilitate practitioners' reflection in reference groups.

## **European CARE-project on Innovative approaches to in-service continuous professional development (CPD) in ECE policy and practices throughout Europe. Findings from a comparative review by Jensen and Iannone (2015), Jensen and Rasmussen, (2016), Bove et al., (2016) and Jensen and Iannone (2016).**

The authors of the CARE study conclude that CPD no longer concerns itself with merely practitioners' knowledge and skills. Rather, it encompasses critical thinking, reflexivity and co-creation within and across ECE systems.

Two overall different approaches to innovation in ECE emerged: on the one hand, some countries' CPD can be characterised as highly innovative as they have a long tradition of innovation in ECE, or they have realised that new challenges in a postmodern society set the scene for new forms of CPD in ECE policy, research and practice.

Another approach to innovation in ECE is characterised as developing. In these countries, there is no national definition of innovation related to ECE even though there is a growing awareness of the need to improve quality in ECE.

Finally, three additional insights were identified as crucial aspects of CPD in terms of innovation:

1. critical reflection;
2. communities of practice;
3. an emerging focus on politics addressing vulnerability through ECE

## The NESETII-study: Professionalisation of Childcare Assistants in ECE

This study (Peeters et al., 2016) was set up within the NESETII-network of researchers on Inclusive Education of the European Commission.

In many OECD and LMI countries, part of the workforce is represented by low qualified ECE assistants. These assistants are defined as 'invisible workers', meaning that their presence is usually not taken into account in policy documents, and that they have far fewer possibilities of qualification and of professional development than core practitioners do. Improving the competences of all staff (core practitioners and assistants) would improve the services' quality. Investing in the professionalization of assistants represents a key element for ECE quality improvement, especially since in a many OECD and LMI countries the share of assistants in the services is rapidly growing. This growth needs to be accompanied by a strong investment in competent systems that value the contributions of all staff and involve the whole workforce in continuous professional development.

Otherwise, in response to budget constraints or if reforms are too hurried, assistants may be hired over their more qualified colleagues and this could lead to a 'deprofessionalization' of ECE staff.

Assistants often have low or no qualification and there are few opportunities for them to start a path towards the same qualification as that of a core practitioner. Assistants don't necessarily need to have a specific initial qualification for the job as assistant, but once they are hired, there needs to be a strong investment in competent systems which respect and reward the work of all staff (including assistants). We also suggest that assistants can be given job mobility opportunities by investing in adapted pathways towards qualification.

The NESETII-study show how it can be possible to invest in:

**1)** specific adapted pathways that give assistants the possibility of raising their qualification, making it possible to combine working and studying. This can happen by: a) creating specific quota systems in which a certain number of places on a bachelor training course is reserved for experienced but unqualified workers; b) building-bridge courses for people with ethnic minority background and low socio-economic status; c) recognizing previously acquired competences; d) repeatedly relating theory to practice during the studies; e) supporting the team that the assistant works with to help them all cope with the change of professional identity the assistant-student may experience over the course of the training.

**2)** opportunities of continuous professional development for all staff, including assistants. This requires investment in a) child-free hours for core practitioners and assistants; b) meetings to reflect together on their pedagogical practice; c) a system of pedagogical guidance or coaching; d) a system of monitoring that guarantees that assistants get the opportunity to follow the established CPD.

## The NESETII-study: Transforming ECE services and schools into professional learning communities

This recent study on Professional Learning Communities (Sharmahd et al., 2017) was set up within the NESETII-network of researchers on Inclusive Education (European Commission). The complex multi-diverse societies in which we live, make it impossible today to find standardized solutions for all families/children. Negotiation and reflection are essential competences to be achieved by practitioners/teachers in ECE services and schools in order to contextualize pedagogical practice and adapt it to the diversity of children and families.

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are a valuable answer in this direction. PLCs can be described as 'a group of people sharing and critically interrogating their practice in an on-going, reflective, collaborative, inclusive, learning-oriented, growth-promoting way'. The purpose of PLCs is to support ECE and school staff, both emotionally and professionally, by allowing them to critically reflect on their own teaching and to share concrete ideas on how to improve the wellbeing and the learning experience of children and families.

Building up on the literature review, this study suggests that the following five criteria be used to define a PLC:

- 1. Teachers frequently engage in 'reflective and in-depth dialogues'** with colleagues about educational matters based on their daily practice.
- 2. Teachers move from the classroom doors in a 'deprivatization of practices'**, by observing each other's practices, giving feedback, planning jointly, building relationships with the neighbourhood, and engaging in dialogue with parents.
- 3. There is investment in 'collective responsibility'**, as school improvement is no longer considered to be the sole responsibility of a principal or a single teacher, but rather a collective one.
- 4. There is a focus on reaching a shared vision and set of values**, based on children's rights and respect for diversity. This forms the basis for shared, collective, and ethical decision-making.
5. These four characteristics need a fifth condition to be realized: **the presence of 'leadership'** is a powerful factor in transforming a school's culture.



## Annex 2 | Competence profiles on the different levels of the competent system

## 1 | Individual professional competence profile

At the very core of professional competence lies the constant ability to connect the dimensions of knowledge, practice and values through critical reflection. In the table below (from Urban et al., 2011) we spell out some aspects of those dimensions but it needs to be emphasized that, in real life, they are inseparable. Knowing, doing and being all come together in professional ECE practice. Considering that ECE staff will

increasingly be working in complex and changing contexts of diversity, dealing with unpredictability and reconstructing daily practices become crucial aspects of professional competence. Therefore, becoming a competent practitioner is the result of a continuous learning process: a process through which one's own practices and beliefs are constantly questioned in relation to changing contexts.

Knowledge	Practices	Values
<p>Knowledge of <b>various developmental aspects of children from a holistic perspective</b> (cognitive, social, emotional, creative...)</p>	<p><b>Building</b> strong pedagogical relationships with children, based on sensitive responsiveness</p> <p><b>Observing</b> children in order to identify their developmental needs</p> <p><b>Planning and implementing</b> a wide range of educational projects that respond to children's needs supporting their holistic development</p> <p><b>Documenting</b> children's progress systematically in order to constantly redefine educational practices</p> <p><b>Identifying</b> children with special educational needs and elaborating strategies for their inclusion</p>	<p><b>Taking</b> into account children's needs in order to promote their full potential and their participation in the life of ECEC institutions<sup>1</sup></p> <p><b>Adopting</b> a holistic vision of education that encompasses learning, care and upbringing<sup>2</sup></p> <p><b>Committing</b> to inclusive educational approaches<sup>3</sup></p>
<p>Knowledge of <b>children's different strategies of learning</b> (play-based, social learning, early literacy and numeracy, language acquisition and multilingualism)</p>	<p><b>Creating and organising</b> effective learning environments</p> <p><b>Arranging</b> small-group project work starting from children's interests (inquiry-based learning)</p> <p><b>Encouraging</b> children's personal initiatives</p> <p><b>Supporting</b> children's symbolic play through appropriate provision of structured and unstructured materials</p> <p><b>Generating</b> an appropriate curriculum that stimulates emergent literacy, maths and science skills</p> <p><b>Promoting</b> language acquisition from a multilingual perspective (recognising children's home language and supporting second language acquisition)</p> <p><b>Offering</b> more personalised and individual learning support to children with special educational needs</p>	<p><b>Adopting</b> a child-centred approach that views children as competent, active agents and as protagonists of their own learning<sup>4</sup></p> <p><b>Understanding</b> learning as a co-constructed and open-ended process that ensures children's successful social engagement and encourages further learning<sup>5</sup></p> <p><b>Adopting</b> a cross-disciplinary approach to learning<sup>6</sup></p> <p><b>Adopting</b> a multilingual approach that encourages learning in contexts of diversity<sup>7</sup></p>
<p>Knowledge of <b>communication with children and participation</b></p>	<p><b>Valuing and encouraging</b> children's expression through different languages (painting, dancing, story-telling...)</p> <p><b>Making</b> accessible to children the cultural heritage of local communities as well as the cultural heritage of humankind (arts, drama, music, dance, sports...)</p> <p><b>Encouraging</b> children to engage in cultural production as a way to express themselves</p> <p><b>Involving</b> children in community-based projects (festivals, cultural events,...) and valuing their contributions (through exhibitions, documentaries...)</p> <p><b>Co-constructing</b> pedagogical knowledge together with children</p>	<p><b>Adopting</b> a rights-based approach to ECEC in which children's right to citizenship encompasses their full participation in the social and cultural life of their community<sup>8</sup></p> <p><b>Promoting</b> democracy, solidarity, active citizenship, creativity and personal fulfilment<sup>9</sup></p>

Knowledge	Practices	Values
<p>Knowledge of <b>working with parents and local communities</b> (knowledge about families, poverty and diversity)<sup>10</sup></p>	<p><b>Analysing</b> the needs of local communities to work effectively with parents and disadvantaged groups</p> <p><b>Establishing</b> relationships with parents based on mutual understanding, trust and cooperation</p> <p><b>Enabling</b> open communication and reciprocal dialogue with parents</p> <p><b>Creating</b> systematic opportunities fostering dialogue and exchanges (e.g. documentation, but also welcoming practices...)</p> <p><b>Involving</b> parents in the decision-making processes (collegial bodies, parents-teachers committees,...) and taking their perspectives into account</p> <p><b>Co-constructing</b> pedagogical knowledge together with parents and supporting their parental role</p> <p><b>Organising</b> initiatives involving parents as well as members of local communities (e.g. workshops, debates and open conferences,...)</p> <p><b>Building up</b> support for ECEC services within local communities</p> <p><b>Establishing</b> collaborative relationships with other professionals (e.g. health and social services)</p>	<p><b>Adopting</b> a democratic and inclusive approach to the education of young children and families in order to sustain social cohesion<sup>11</sup></p> <p><b>Recognising</b> the educational responsibility of parents as main educators of their children during the early years<sup>12</sup></p>
<p>Knowledge of <b>team working</b> (interpersonal communication and group-work dynamics)<sup>13</sup></p>	<p><b>Continuously</b> reviewing practices individually and collectively</p> <p><b>Sharing</b> and exchanging expertise with colleagues in team meetings</p> <p><b>Engaging</b> in discussion and learning from disagreement</p> <p><b>Developing</b> educational practices together with colleagues through joint work</p> <p><b>Co-constructing</b> pedagogical knowledge through documentation and collective evaluation of educational practices</p>	<p><b>Adopting</b> a democratic and critically reflective approach to the education of young children<sup>14</sup></p>
<p>Knowledge of <b>working in contexts of diversity</b> (anti-biased approaches, intercultural dialogue, identity...)</p>	<p><b>Developing</b> inclusive practices that facilitate the socialisation of children and families within a plurality of value systems</p> <p><b>Facilitating</b> intercultural dialogue within ECEC services and in the wider community through parents' involvement</p> <p><b>Dealing</b> with unpredictability and uncertainty</p> <p><b>Elaborating</b> a pedagogical framework that sustains inclusive practices within ECEC services</p>	<p><b>Adopting</b> a democratic and inclusive approach that values diversity<sup>15</sup></p>
<p>Knowledge of the <b>situation of ECEC in the broader local, national and international context</b></p>	<p><b>Actively</b> engaging with local communities in promoting children's and families' rights and participation</p> <p><b>Networking</b> with other professionals (e.g. professional associations, trade unions) and engaging in local political consultation</p>	<p><b>Rights-based</b> approach to ECEC that promotes children's and families' active citizenship, solidarity and lifelong learning<sup>16</sup></p>
<p><b>Health and care</b> of young children and basic knowledge of social protection</p>	<p><b>Implementing</b> appropriate practices in relation to children's safety, hygiene and nutrition</p>	<p><b>Commitment</b> to child welfare and well-being<sup>17</sup></p>

- 1** *Communication on ECEC, 2011b; Communication from the Commission 'An EU agenda for the rights of the child', 2011a; UNCRC, 1989.*
- 2** *Caring and learning together (UNESCO, 2010)*
- 3** *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) that has been signed by all Member States and ratified by most.*
- 4** *Working for Inclusion (CiS, 2011); Conclusions on preparing young people for the 21st century, 2008*
- 5** *Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications, 2005; Improving the quality of teacher education, 2007b; Improving competences for the 21st century, 2008b*
- 6** *Council Conclusions on ECEC, 2011; Communication on ECEC, 2011b; Conclusions on preparing young people for the 21st century, 2008; Key competences for Lifelong Learning, 2007c.*
- 7** *Council Conclusions on the education of children with a migrant background, 2009b.*
- 8** *UNCRC, 1989- art. 31, Charter of fundamental Rights of the European Union, 2010 – art. 24.*
- 9** *Communication on ECEC, 2011b; Council Conclusions on the social dimension of education and training, 2010a; Conclusions on preparing young people for the 21st century, 2008; Communication on improving competences for the 21st century, 2008b; Council conclusions on strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training, 2009a.*
- 10** Findings from the case studies point to the importance of building reciprocal relationships with parents in a context of diversity. The survey shows, however, that many formal professional competence profiles and training profiles mainly focus on knowledge and competences about working with children, therefore neglecting the essential work with parents and local communities. In order to address the complex situations of children and families in contexts of social change, it is desirable to integrate practitioners' competences within a coherent framework that embraces all aspects of care, learning and participation.
- 11** *Council conclusions on ECEC, 2011; Communication on ECEC, 2011b; Council Conclusions on the social dimension of education and training, 2010a; Council conclusions on the education of children with a migrant background, 2009b; Council conclusions on strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training, 2009a; Improving the quality of teacher education, 2007b.*
- 12** *Council conclusions on ECEC, 2011; Communication on ECEC, 2011b; Improving the quality of teacher education, 2007b*
- 13** Whereas findings from the case studies emphasise the importance of collegiality and teamwork, the survey shows that many formal professional competence profiles and training profiles focus solely on knowledge and competences about individual practice with children.
- 14** *Communication on ECEC, 2011; CiS Working for Inclusion, 2011; Council conclusions on the professional development of teachers and school leaders, 2009c; Improving the quality of teacher education, 2007b.*
- 15** *Council Conclusions on ECEC, 2011; Communication on ECEC, 2011b; Council Conclusions on the social dimension of education and training, 2010a; Council conclusions on the education of children with a migrant background, 2009b; Conclusions on preparing young people for the 21st century, 2008; Improving the quality of teacher education, 2007b; Council conclusions on strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training, 2009a.*
- 16** *ET 2020, 2010a; UNCRC, 1989; Charter of fundamental Rights of the European Union, 2010 – art. 24.*
- 17** *UNCRC, 1989; Charter of fundamental Rights of the European Union, 2010 – art. 24.*

## 2 | Institutional competence profile

Developing practitioners' competences is also a responsibility of professional teams. Competences in fact evolve constantly from individuals to the group and vice versa, qualifying institutions as a whole. The case studies have shown that alternations between theory and practice are crucial for developing these competences in actual or future early

childhood practitioners. Moreover, the case studies have opened windows into interesting practices that show how this could be realised by illustrating diverse possible pathways for the education and professional development of reflective practitioners. In the table below the elements of competent ECEC and training institutions are explored in further detail.

ECEC institutions		
Knowledge	Practices	Values
<p>Pedagogical knowledge with a focus on <b>early childhood and diversity</b></p> <p>Knowledge of <b>situated learning and community of practices</b> (Lave &amp; Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998)</p> <p>Knowledge of <b>learning organisations and reflective approaches</b> (Argyris &amp; Schön, 1978; Schön, 1983, 1987; Argyris, 1992)</p> <p>Knowledge of <b>school leadership</b> (collaborative management styles and distributed leadership)</p>	<p><b>Elaborating</b> a shared pedagogical framework orienting practitioners' educational work (e.g. ISSA, DECET, 'professional profile of the centre')</p> <p><b>Arrange</b> paid time for all staff to plan, document and review educational work collectively</p> <p><b>Adopting</b> systematic procedures for documenting educational practices and for evaluating the outcomes of pedagogical choices on children's and families' experiences</p> <p><b>Providing</b> opportunities for joint work (inter-vision and supervision)</p> <p><b>Offering</b> ongoing pedagogical guidance to all staff</p> <p><b>Elaborating</b> an organised framework for continuous professional development of practitioners, assistants and centre leaders (induction, in-service professionalising initiatives...)</p> <p><b>Providing</b> continuing professional development programmes strongly rooted in practices and tailored to the needs of practitioners working in local communities</p> <p><b>Offering</b> diversified opportunities for continuing professional development (centre-based initiatives, action-research projects, competence portfolio, inter-generational learning initiatives, networking and mobility exchanges)</p> <p><b>Providing</b> incentives for taking part in continuing professional development activities (credits for career mobility)</p> <p><b>Offering</b> the possibility to combine work with attendance at training institutes/university courses</p> <p><b>Providing</b> opportunities for horizontal career mobility through the diversification of roles and responsibilities</p> <p><b>Providing</b> opportunities for vertical career mobility of low-qualified staff</p> <p><b>Organising</b> regular meetings with colleagues, parents and local communities (open conferences, joint projects,...)</p> <p><b>Providing</b> additional pedagogical support to practitioners working in disadvantaged areas (specific continuing professional development programmes, counselling...)</p> <p><b>Recruiting</b> a diverse workforce that reflects the diversity of the communities in which ECEC institutions are operating</p>	<p><b>Democracy</b> and respect for diversity<sup>18</sup></p> <p><b>Understanding</b> of professional development as a continuous learning process that encompasses personal and professional growth<sup>19</sup></p> <p><b>Conceiving</b> professional learning as a recursive interaction of practising and theorising that needs to be supported coherently across the different stages of a professional career<sup>20</sup></p> <p><b>Conceiving</b> ECEC institutions as critically reflective communities that reciprocally interact with the changing needs of children, parents and the wider society<sup>21</sup></p> <p><b>Conceiving</b> ECEC institutions as a forum for civil engagement that fosters social cohesion<sup>22</sup></p>

Training institutes		
Knowledge	Practices	Values
<p>Pedagogical knowledge <b>with a focus on early childhood and diversity</b></p> <p>Knowledge of <b>adult learning and reflective approaches</b> (Schön, 1987)</p> <p>Knowledge of <b>situated learning and communities of practices</b> (Lave &amp; Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998)</p>	<p><b>Providing programmes</b> that are based on a well- balanced combination of theory (academic research) and practice (practical experiences in ECEC settings)</p> <p><b>Providing</b> programmes aimed at developing cultural awareness and expression (e.g. activity &amp; culture subjects)</p> <p><b>Offering</b> differentiated learning devices: lectures, small- group workshops, project work, work placement...</p> <p><b>Providing</b> individualised support through tutoring activities, both in the training centre and on work placement</p> <p><b>Providing</b> opportunities for sharing reflections on practical experiences within peer groups</p> <p><b>Providing</b> inclusive and flexible professionalising roots that widen access to non-traditional learners and disadvantaged groups</p> <p><b>Elaborating</b> strategies for the validation of non-formal and informal learning</p> <p><b>Encouraging</b> mobility opportunities</p> <p><b>Offering</b> specialised opportunities in inter-cultural education (lectures, small-group workshops, fieldwork,...)</p>	<p><b>Conceiving</b> professionalisation as a process that encompasses social and cultural promotion to enhance LLL and social inclusion<sup>23</sup></p> <p><b>Understanding</b> professionalisation as a continuous learning process that encompasses personal and professional growth<sup>24</sup></p> <p><b>Understanding</b> professionalisation as a learning process that takes place in interaction</p> <p><b>Conceiving</b> professional learning as a recursive interaction of practicing and theorising that needs to be supported coherently across the different stages of professional career<sup>25</sup></p>

<sup>18</sup> Council Conclusions on ECEC, 2011; Communication on ECEC, 2011b; Council Conclusions on the social dimension of education and training, 2010a; Council conclusions on the education of children with a migrant background, 2009b; Conclusions on preparing young people for the 21st century, 2008; Improving the quality of teacher education, 2007b; Council conclusions on strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training, 2009a.

<sup>19</sup> Council conclusions on the professional development of teachers and school leaders, 2009c; Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications, 2005; Improving the quality of teacher education, 2007b.

<sup>20</sup> Joint progress report on the implementation of the Education and Training 2010 work programme, 2010b; Council Conclusions on the professional development of teachers and school leaders, 2009c; Communication 'Improving competences for the 21st century: an agenda for European cooperation on schools ', 2008b.

<sup>21</sup> Council conclusions on the professional development of teachers and school leaders, 2009c.

<sup>22</sup> Joint progress report on the implementation of the Education and Training 2010 work programme, 2010b; Council Conclusions on the social dimension of education and training, 2010a; Council conclusions on the education of children with a migrant background, 2009b; Council conclusions on the professional development of teachers and school leaders, 2009c; Communication 'Improving competences for the 21st century: an agenda for European cooperation on schools ', 2008b.

<sup>23</sup> Joint progress report on the implementation of the Education and Training 2010 work programme, 2010b.

<sup>24</sup> Joint progress report on the implementation of the Education and Training 2010 work programme, 2010b.

<sup>25</sup> Joint progress report on the implementation of the Education and Training 2010 work programme, 2010b; Council Conclusions on the social dimension of education and training, 2010a; Council Conclusions on the professional development of teachers and school leaders, 2009c; Council conclusions on the education of children with a migrant background, 2009b; Communication 'Improving competences for the 21st century: an agenda for European cooperation on schools ', 2008b.

### 3 | Inter-institutional and inter-agency competences

A systemic approach to professionalisation needs to look beyond the walls of the individual institution. This implies putting in place structural measures to foster close collaborations with other provisions that may take different forms, according to the local context and the needs of children and families. The CoRe

case studies provided interesting insights into how this could be realised within the framework of inter-agency cooperation. The table below outlines how a competent relationships among institutions could be developed in order to promote the welfare of children through inter-agency cooperation.

Knowledge	Practices	Values
<p>Knowledge of <b>inter-agency cooperation</b></p> <p>Knowledge of <b>community development</b></p> <p><b>Cross-disciplinary knowledge</b> (health &amp; care, pedagogical and sociological)</p>	<p><b>Promoting</b> networking between ECEC institutions of the same district</p> <p><b>Structuring</b> cross-sectoral approaches to care and education services (health care, child protection, social services)</p> <p><b>Outreaching</b> towards families living in difficult conditions</p> <p><b>Outreaching</b> towards families with special needs children</p> <p><b>Fostering</b> close collaboration between ECEC institutions and primary schools to ensure smooth transition through organised forms of inter-professional collaboration</p> <p><b>Strengthening</b> partnership between ECEC and training institutes</p> <p><b>Promoting</b> cooperation between ECEC institutions and local authorities in charge of educational policy-making through systematic political consultation</p> <p><b>Promoting</b> international cooperation through mobility exchanges and transnational projects</p>	<p><b>Democracy</b> and respect for diversity<sup>26</sup></p> <p><b>Assuming</b> a partnership approach to the education and care of young children in order to foster social cohesion<sup>27</sup></p> <p><b>Conceiving</b> of care and education as integrated in order to meet all children's needs in a holistic way<sup>28</sup></p> <p><b>Adopting</b> inclusive educational approaches<sup>29</sup></p> <p><b>Adopting</b> a cross-disciplinary approach to professional development through partnership<sup>30</sup></p>

<sup>26</sup> Council Conclusions on ECEC, 2011; Communication on ECEC, 2011b; Council Conclusions on the social dimension of education and training, 2010a; Council conclusions on the education of children with a migrant background, 2009b; Conclusions on preparing young people for the 21st century, 2008b; Improving the quality of teacher education, 2007b; Council conclusions on strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training, 2009a.

<sup>27</sup> Council Conclusions on ECEC, 2011; Communication on ECEC, 2011b; Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications, 2005.

<sup>28</sup> Council Conclusions on ECEC, 2011; Communication on ECEC, 2011b; Communication from the Commission 'An EU agenda for the rights of the child', 2011a.

<sup>29</sup> Council Conclusions on ECEC, 2011; Communication on ECEC, 2011b; UN Convention on the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities, 2006.

<sup>30</sup> Joint progress report on the implementation of the Education and Training 2010 work programme, 2010b, Council conclusions on the professional development of teachers and school leaders, 2009c.

## 4 | Competences of governance

Finally, a competent system also includes aspects of general governance. The aspects characterizing competent governance of ECE systems are outlined in the table and further discussed in the paragraphs below

Knowledge	Practices	Values <sup>31</sup>
<p>Knowledge of the situation of <b>ECEC in local, regional, national and international contexts</b></p> <p>Knowledge of <b>children's and families' rights</b></p> <p>Knowledge of <b>cultural diversity and anti-discriminatory practices</b></p> <p>Knowledge of <b>comprehensive strategies for tackling poverty</b> and socio-cultural inequalities</p>	<p><b>Adequately</b> resourcing ECEC in order to provide generalised equitable access to high-quality ECEC in particular for children with a socioeconomically disadvantaged background or with special educational needs</p> <p><b>Designing</b> efficient funding models in the framework of coherent educational public policies</p> <p><b>Adopting</b> an integrated approach to ECEC services at local, regional and national level</p> <p><b>Co-constructing</b> with all stakeholders a coherent pedagogical framework that ensures coordination between:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ECEC curriculum</li> <li>• Qualification framework for professional preparation of ECEC staff</li> <li>• Quality, monitoring and evaluation framework</li> <li>• Governance framework addressing administrative responsibilities(at local, regional and national level)</li> </ul> <p><b>Ensuring</b> cross-sectoral collaboration between different policy sectors (education, culture, social affairs, employment, health and justice)</p> <p><b>Supporting</b> professionalisation of ECEC staff through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• policies that address coherently initial preparation, induction and continuous professional development of all staff (practitioners, assistants, centre leaders)</li> <li>• Investments in various forms of pedagogical guidance</li> <li>• Policies promoting career mobility of low-qualified staff through flexible qualification pathways</li> <li>• Enhancing the prestige of the profession by ensuring favourable working conditions</li> </ul> <p><b>Promoting</b> policies to address the gender gap</p>	<p><b>Children's right</b> to active participation in society</p> <p><b>Children's right</b> to develop their full potential through education and successful learning</p> <p><b>Respect and inclusion</b> of diversity</p> <p><b>Education</b> as a public good</p> <p><b>Democracy</b>, social inclusion and economic development</p>

<sup>31</sup> Council conclusions on ECEC, 2011; Communication from the Commission 'An EU agenda for the rights of the child', 2011a; Joint progress report on the implementation of the Education and Training 2010 work programme, 2010b; Council conclusions on the social dimension of education and training, 2010a; Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, 2010; ET 2020, 2010; Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe: Tackling Social and Cultural Inequalities (Eurydice, 2009); Council conclusions on the professional development of teachers and school leaders, 2009c; Council conclusions on the education of children with a migrant background, 2009b; Conclusions on preparing young people for the 21st century, 2008; Council conclusions on strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training, 2009a; Improving the quality of teacher education, 2007b; UN Convention on the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities, 2006; UNCRC, 1989.



## Annex 3 | Training Competence profile for ECE Teachers in Croatia – Bachelor program

## General competence specifications

Upon completion of a Bachelor program in Early Childhood/ Preschool Education, students are expected to be able to:

**Know and understand** contemporary scientific theories about children's learning in early childhood and about different ways of socialisation and upbringing;

**Demonstrate knowledge** of education-related sciences in order to explain processes, regularities and phenomena in their field of work at both theoretical and practical levels;

**Demonstrate knowledge** of efficient strategies in stimulating children's developmental potential during early childhood;

**Create supportive relationships** with children;

**Create a rich learning environment** appropriate for the group and for each child individually according to their abilities, skills, needs and interests, and on that basis create an integrated educational approach;

**Establish and maintain** a kindergarten environment which promotes children's health, ensures their safety, and provides them with appropriate care and mealtimes;

**Demonstrate knowledge** of monitoring and evaluating a child's activities and abilities as a basis for the creation of an integrated curriculum which takes into account the children's developmental and educational needs;

**Understand ways** of acquiring speech and language and be able to promote a child's creative potential in a holistic way (physical, cognitive, social);

**Independently create,** implement and evaluate an integrated curriculum in different fields (kinesiology, music, art, language and communication and research and cognition);

**Use activities and materials** in accordance with contemporary developmental theories;

**Demonstrate practical competencies,** evaluate and self-evaluate their own implicit pedagogy by questioning its effectiveness in view of constant quality improvement;

**Promote equal opportunities** for all children in kindergarten regardless of their socio-cultural and economic status;

**Establish** close and cooperative partnerships with parents;

**Actively engage** in community networking in the kindergarten neighbourhood.

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