Strengthening the skills, training, and employment conditions of professionals who work with young children and their families is key to improving the quality of early childhood experiences and provision around the world. Yet, the workforce has received limited attention and support, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. As with the early childhood settings in which they are employed, adults who work with children and families are very diverse. The workforce covers a wide range of roles including: volunteers, home visitors, social workers, community health/nutrition workers, para-professionals/teaching assistants, pedagogues, program directors, master teachers/coaches and teachers. This complexity - which is further magnified within individual countries - makes defining and supporting the profession challenging, but also a very important issue to tackle.

The proposed Early Childhood Network for Quality — Empowering a High Quality Workforce, a partnership among the Bernard van Leer Foundation, ISSA (the International Step by Step Association), and Results for Development Institute, aims to strengthen and support the early childhood workforce at the level of early childhood systems and policies. In order to determine the positioning, scope, and key functions of this network, and to help identify other potential partners and collaborators, it is important to identify and analyze existing initiatives that also focus on supporting the early childhood workforce. The purpose of this document is to inform and guide planning discussions, in particular, those taking place at the first meeting of international advisors on September 28-29, 2015.

This document maps 23 different global and regional initiatives according to their primary function (providing professional tools and resources, policy guidelines and tools, research, leadership development, professional associations and networks, or thematic working groups). The included initiatives are not exhaustive or necessarily representative of all activities that target the workforce at global and regional levels, but help to illustrate some of these efforts. In addition to a brief overview of each initiative, a table following the mapping of initiatives indicates at what level each initiative operates (global or a particular region); whether it is completed or ongoing; and whether or not it addresses four proposed thematic strands of the network. An initial search of more than 35 research institutions, foundations, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and regional

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1 There are a number of relevant initiatives at the national level. In the United States, for example, the National Child Care Staffing Study (1989) explored working conditions in more than 200 child care centers across the country and their effects on the quality of services provided, and a follow-up report addressed improvements and continued inadequacies 25 years later. The Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) is a U.S. grant competition encouraging states to develop and improve early learning systems, including a focus on strengthening the workforce. These national initiatives, while essential to strengthening and supporting the early childhood workforce, are not the focus of this paper.

2 The four proposed thematic strands are: (i) Systems to define required competences for practitioners in early years services; (ii) Systems for training enough qualified practitioners to staff programs and services and for mentoring and support for professional development; (iii) Quality standards and quality assurance systems for monitoring and improving process quality; and (iv) Strengthening the recognition of the profession and promoting ways to give voice to practitioners.
networks for relevant initiatives was conducted. For each of the 22 identified global and regional initiatives, we reviewed key background information online and in published reports. Additional e-mail communication or phone interviews took place for five initiatives.

After the desk review, we present a light analysis that looks at what content areas, main functions, and geographic regions are present in initiatives, and what are the gaps that could be addressed. We also make initial suggestions for proposed potential core functions and activities of this new network.

II. Review of Global and Regional Initiatives

Examples of professional tools & resources

The following six initiatives serve as examples of some of the many training packages, frameworks, and tools that have been developed for early childhood professionals. These initiatives were selected for inclusion to reflect multi-country efforts at the regional level as well as collaboration among international organizations.

- **Care for Child Development Package** – WHO & UNICEF

  The Care for Child Development (CCD) Package contains training materials, advocacy materials, a monitoring and evaluation framework, and recommendations for community health professionals who work with caregivers and young children from birth to age 5. The CCD Package materials and activities train professionals to work with families and promote an understanding around the importance of responsiveness, play, and communication with their children to support healthy growth and psychosocial development. In June 2013, WHO, UNICEF and other partners participated in an Interagency Workshop to prepare for a global scale-up of the CCD intervention by building the capacity of national, regional, and global experts to carry out in-country implementation, and soon after began conducting training workshops to roll out the intervention in priority countries. Originally developed in the 1990s, the CCD Package was updated in 2012 to incorporate more recent research and evidence-based materials. For more information: [http://www.unicef.org/earlychildhood/index_68195.html](http://www.unicef.org/earlychildhood/index_68195.html)

- **The Essential Package (EP)** – CARE, Save the Children, & the Consultative Group on ECCD

  The Essential Package (EP) is a set of tools and materials to help develop and improve holistic early childhood services for vulnerable children, especially those affected by HIV/AIDS. Led by CARE, Save the Children, and the Inter-Agency Task Force on ECD and AIDS within the Consultative Group, the initiative began with a rigorous review of existing programs and materials that serve orphans and vulnerable children (OVC), as well as a review of the effects of HIV and AIDS on young children and their caregivers. The EP is meant to serve as a tool for volunteers, community-based workers, and other service providers working with young children, prenatal to age 8. The EP contains a number of tools, including: a training

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3 Documents and websites for the following institutions and organizations were reviewed for relevant initiatives: Africa Early Childhood Network (AFECN), Aga Khan Foundation, Arab Resource Collective (ARC), ARNEC, Center for Universal Education (CUE) at Brookings Institution, Centre for Early Childhood Education and Care (CECED), ELMA Foundation, Fundación Centro Internacional de Educación y Desarrollo Humano (CINDE), Harvard Center on the Developing Child, Ilifa Labantwana, LEGO Foundation, Inter-Country Quality Node on Early Childhood Development (ICQN-ECD), Open Society Foundations (OSF), Open Society Initiative of Southern Africa (OSISA), Plan International, RTI International, Save the Children, STIR Education, UBS Optimus Foundation.
• Indigenous Early Childhood Care and Education (IECCE) Curriculum Framework for Africa – UNESCO International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA)

The Indigenous Early Childhood Care and Education (IECCE) Curriculum Framework for Africa includes seven training modules for practitioners working with vulnerable children aged 0-8. Findings from a research study conducted in eight countries (Republic of Congo, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Nigeria, South Africa, Mauritius, and Senegal) in 2007 and 2008 identified the need for young, especially vulnerable children to be educated within their local, indigenous context. The UNESCO International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA) then organized a curriculum framework design workshop in October 2011 with policymakers and other experts from more than 10 countries. The curriculum framework was developed with support from UNESCO BREDA, UNICEF Uganda, ADEA Working Group on ECD, African Union/CIEFFA, and the International Task Force on Teachers for EFA. The seven modules address: the importance of cultural values and beliefs for child development, culturally-sensitive inclusive education for children with disabilities, family and community practices in childrearing, children’s rights, play resources and materials, the role of the caregiver, and the use of culturally-appropriate tools to monitor and assess a child’s progress. In December 2013, a training workshop was held to support the pilot of the IECCE Curriculum Framework in Angola, São Tomé and Príncipe, Swaziland, Uganda, Zambia, Burkina Faso, Niger and Senegal, and targeted Ministries of Education and teacher training institutions, among other public and private organizations.

• Quality Principles & Quality Resource Pack – International Step by Step Association (ISSA)

Published in 2010, the Quality Principles build on and update earlier Pedagogical Standards developed by ISSA in 2001. The document defines quality early childhood pedagogical practices in the form of 20 principles and 85 indicators across 7 focus areas: interactions, family and community, inclusion and diversity, assessment and planning, teaching strategies, the learning environment, and professional development. The principles target a wide range of stakeholders including national and international decision makers, training institutions and higher education faculty, advocacy experts, and practitioners. ISSA members also receive access to an accompanying set of tools, known as the Quality Resource Pack, to help establish, monitor, assess, and improve early childhood practitioners by empowering and mentoring practitioners, and establishing professional learning communities. Resources include a guidebook for practitioners, an online video library, an online course for teachers, an assessment tool to evaluate the quality of early learning practices, and advocacy materials. The resources have been translated and are used in more than 20 countries in Central Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia. For more information: [http://www.issa.nl/content/quality-resource-pack](http://www.issa.nl/content/quality-resource-pack)

• Reach Up: An Early Childhood Parenting Programme – University of West Indies, Grand Challenges Canada, Inter-American Development Bank

Based on the successful Jamaica Home Visiting Programme, this evidence-based online package of resources and accompanying technical support was developed for home visitors working with parents of young children aged 0 to 3 to increase parental knowledge, self-confidence, and stress the importance of play. Reach Up, which was launched in September 2015, specifically targets practitioners – such as community health workers, paraprofessionals – who work with disadvantaged mothers in low- and
middle-income countries. The package, designed to improve stimulation and parent-child interactions, includes a training manual and accompanying videos (filmed in Brazil, Jamaica, and Bangladesh) for home visitors, a manual and checklist for supervisors, a toy manual (stressing homemade, culturally-appropriate toys), a planning and adaptation guide, and a weekly curriculum. An initial phase will involve on-the-ground implementation in four countries, with interviews and questionnaires targeting both home visitors and parents to monitor and evaluate the intervention. For more information: http://www.reachupandlearn.com/

- **Science of Early Childhood Development (SECD)** – Red River College, University of Toronto, Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN)

The Science of Early Childhood Development (SECD) is a set of educational resources that shares and makes research around early brain development accessible to a variety of users. Governments, institutions of higher education, community organizations, and individuals utilize SECD for diverse purposes, such as coursework, professional development, and parent education. SECD resources take the form of videos, online textbooks, and interactive exercises, and are broken down into five modules: brain development, coping and competence, communicating and learning, the ecology of childhood, and developmental health. Users must pay a fee to access SECD content. For more information: http://www.scienceofecd.com/

**Policy guidelines & tools**

The following initiatives aim to support the workforce at the policy level, by providing information and tools that can be used by policymakers, or by engaging policymakers directly.

- **Diversity and Social Inclusion: Exploring Competences for Professional Practice in Early Childhood Education and Care** – ISSA & DECET

This joint publication, produced by a working group of representatives from ISSA and DECET (Diversity in Early Childhood Education and Training), helps to define professional competences needed for early childhood practitioners and systems to support diversity, equality, and social justice for children and their communities. ECEC practitioners in a variety of European countries completed a questionnaire and were interviewed to share their experiences, professional practices, and opinions regarding diversity. The document describes and provides accompanying quotes from interviewed practitioners about five key competences: learning from disagreement, critical reflection, open communication and dialogue, working towards social change, and co-constructing practices and knowledge with children, parents, and colleagues. The document additionally supplies working definitions of key concepts and shares examples of good practices across distinct European settings.

- **European Quality Framework** – European Commission

A thematic working group on early childhood education and care (ECEC) supported by the European commission drafted the Proposal for Key Principles of a Quality Framework for ECEC in October 2014. The document highlights five areas for improving the quality of ECEC services: access, workforce, curriculum, monitoring and evaluation, and governance and funding. Within each area, the document summarizes the most recent evidence and research, identifies two broad actions that country governments can take and adapt to local contexts, and provides additional detail from country case studies. Regarding the workforce, Member States are encouraged to take two main actions to improve
the quality of the workforce. The first is to provide common initial training and continuous professional development programs for all personnel (ranging from teachers, to assistants, to daycare workers) with an emphasis on staff working with children from low-income and minority ethnic backgrounds. The second is to strengthen working conditions, particularly around group sizes, compensation, work schedules, and leadership and management. Case studies are included from France, Italy, Norway, and Estonia. The document additionally includes a glossary of key concepts.

- **Policy Guidelines on the Promotion of Decent Work for ECE Personnel – ILO**

The ILO Policy Guidelines on the Promotion of Decent Work for ECE Personnel, which address work conditions financing, curricula, learning practices, professional ethics and governance, serve as a tool to inform the design and implementation of ECE policies. They target policymakers, managers, personnel, training institutions, and parent associations at all levels (international, national, local, program), in public and private, and center- and home-based settings. Among other recommendations, the guidelines push countries to establish fair wages, limit pupil-teacher ratios, and provide sufficient in-service training for teachers. The guidelines were adopted in November 2013 during an ILO Meeting of Experts which included 15 representatives from ILO’s three constituencies: governments (Argentina, Republic of Korea, Latvia, Lebanon and South Africa), the Employers Group, and the Workers Group. The ILO-UNESCO Committee of Experts on the Application of Recommendations Concerning Teaching Personnel (CEART) held a follow-up discussion and released a joint report in 2015 entitled, “The promotion of decent work for early childhood education personnel: The professionalization of a neglected profession.” For more information: [http://www.ilo.org/sector/Resources/codes-of-practice-and-guidelines/WCMS_236528/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/sector/Resources/codes-of-practice-and-guidelines/WCMS_236528/lang--en/index.htm)

- **Pre-primary Teacher Development in Southeast Asia Project – UNESCO Bangkok, SEAMEO, ARNEC**

The Pre-primary Teacher Development in Southeast Asia Project is developing guidelines to strengthen the ECCE workforce in SEAMEO (Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization) Member Countries by informing policies at all levels of government, helping to professionalize the pre-primary workforce, and promoting better working conditions. The project, funded by the Government of Japan, commenced during the 36th SEAMEO High Officials Meeting in Bangkok in February 2014 and held its first workshop in July 2014 where SEAMEO Member Countries discussed achievements, challenges, relevant initiatives, and drafted a framework of regional guidelines. In the early stages of the project, UNESCO Bangkok and SEAMEO implemented a questionnaire targeting ECCE personnel in the region. In collaboration with ARNEC, the questionnaire was revised and implemented in all 11 Member Countries (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao, Malaysia, Burma, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam). The first draft of guidelines was prepared and revised by Member Countries in a second workshop held in March 2015. The draft addresses: recruitment, deployment, and retention; pre-service training and professional development; qualifications, certifications, licensing and accreditation; governance; working conditions; competences and professional ethics; and monitoring and performance appraisal.

- **SABER-ECD – World Bank**

The Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) is an initiative to collect and analyze policy information in order to help governments and partners identify actionable priorities for strengthening education systems. As part of this effort, since 2012, SABER-Early Childhood Development (ECD) has collected, synthesized, and disseminated comprehensive information on education, health, and protection policies and programs for young children in low- and middle-income countries. For each
participating country, a questionnaire assesses progress toward each of three policy goals: (1) Establishing an enabling environment; (2) Implementing widely; and (3) Monitoring and assuring quality. Country reports give a snapshot of the strengths and weaknesses of a country’s existing policies and programs, provide international and regional comparisons, and recommend options for improving ECD policy development. An online tool allows users to access data and conduct cross-national comparisons. SABER-ECD analyses have informed policy development and legislation in diverse countries, including: Bulgaria, Jamaica, Kyrgyz Republic, Russian Federation, and Uganda. With regard to the workforce, data are reported on the qualifications to be a preprimary teacher, access to regular in-service training, compliance with these standards, and working conditions (child-to-staff ratios, staff working hours, and pay). More limited information is collected on health workers and para-professionals in community-based settings. At least 40 countries have completed or are currently participating in SABER-ECD; data are publicly-available for 23 countries: http://saber.worldbank.org/index.cfm?indx=8&tb=6.

- **UNESCO Regional Strategy on Teachers in Latin America and the Caribbean, Phase 3 – UNESCO Santiago**

The third phase of the Regional Strategy on Teachers in Latin America and the Caribbean focuses on early childhood educators to generate critical information and data and improve public policies in the region regarding early childhood training and careers. In January 2015, UNESCO Santiago drafted a working document entitled, “Background Information and Criteria for the Definition of Policies for the Training and Professional Development of Early Childhood Teachers in Latin America and the Caribbean.” A regional meeting in July 2015 in Brazil allowed participants, including representatives from government, training institutions, and civil society, to review and revise the guidelines. The report provides an overview of the situation facing early childhood professionals in seven countries: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, and Trinidad and Tobago. The report addresses early childhood systems in each country, socio-demographic characteristics of personnel, initial education and training, continuous professional development, and working conditions, and suggests criteria to design public policies to strengthen the early childhood workforce in the region.

**Research studies**

*These three research studies represent recent international efforts to fill knowledge gaps and inform policy decisions about the training, development, and status of early childhood professionals.*

- **Competence Requirements in Early Childhood Education and Care (CoRe) – European Commission**

Between January 2010 and May 2011, the CoRe research study for the European Commission identified required competences for ECEC staff (including assistants, but not “child minders”), developed competence profiles, and looked at diverse approaches to professionalizing the workforce in Europe. The main components of the study included a review of international policy documents and academic literature, a survey of experts in 15 countries, and 7 case studies (in France, Italy, Denmark, Belgium, England, Slovenia, and Poland). CoRe uniquely focused on competences of systems in addition to those required for the practitioner. The project proposed essential individual and institutional competences necessary to achieve quality ECEC services as well as made national and regional policy recommendations. For more information: [http://www.vbjk.be/en/node/3559](http://www.vbjk.be/en/node/3559)

- **International Survey of Staff in Early Childhood Education and Care – OECD**
The OECD is currently developing a survey to sample early childhood staff, including managers, in early childhood centers across member and partner countries to improve the availability and quality of internationally comparable early childhood education and care (ECEC) data. The International Survey of Staff in ECEC will fill international and national data gaps around staff beliefs and attitudes, pedagogical practices, pre- and in-service training, work conditions, job satisfaction, and personnel and center characteristics. Survey instruments will target both staff (including teachers, childcare workers, and auxiliary staff engaged in pedagogical work) and center managers working at the pre-primary (ISCED 0.2) level, with some countries additionally participating in an optional survey for practitioners who work with younger children. The survey will be developed and piloted in 2016, with field testing to occur in 2017, and the main studies taking place at the end of 2017 and 2018. A series of international reports and policy briefs will be published alongside the launch of the survey and initial reporting in 2019.

- **Survey of Teachers in Pre-primary Education (STEPP) Project - UNESCO**

The STEPP Project aims to inform national policies and strengthen capacity of ECCE personnel to improve the access and quality of pre-primary education in low- and middle-income countries. The project is developing a common instrument to survey both educators and center directors working with children ages 3 to 6 to fill data and evidence gaps on the practices and needs of ECCE personnel. The survey will address personnel and setting characteristics, pedagogical beliefs and practices, pre- and in-service training, and working conditions and job satisfaction. The first phase, which began in May 2015 and will run until December 2017, involves developing, field-testing, and piloting the survey instruments in a few to-be-determined priority countries; generating and disseminating cross-national findings; and finalizing the instrument and planning for scale-up and expansion beyond 2017.

**Leadership development**

These initiatives focus on supporting emerging leaders in the early childhood field by providing opportunities for training, coaching/mentoring, and networking across countries.

- **The Early Childhood Development Virtual University (ECDVU) – University of Victoria**

The Early Childhood Development Virtual University (ECDVU) builds the capacity of current and emerging leaders for early childhood development in Africa. During the one-year program, students, who are nominated by their countries, participate in online and face-to-face courses while continuing to work in their home countries. ECDVU encourages the development of in-country and cross-country networks of learners. Graduates receive either a post-graduate certificate or diploma from the University of Victoria, Canada. There are more than 100 alumni from 16 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and 26 graduates from the Middle East and North Africa engaged in policy, research, advocacy and practice. ECDVU is proud that there has been little to no “brain drain”: 95% of students have graduated and 99% have remained in Africa. ECDVU is supported by international organizations, bilateral aid agencies, and private foundations, governments, and the students’ employers. An adapted version of the program was recently launched at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria. For more information: [http://www.ecdvu.org](http://www.ecdvu.org)

- **Global Leaders for Young Children – World Forum Foundation**

Global Leaders for Young Children is an initiative of the World Forum Foundation that aims to develop leaders who can advocate for quality early childhood services and effect change in their respective countries and regions. Since its launch in 2004, the Global Leaders program has supported six cohorts of 190 leaders from 61 countries. During the program, participants receive support from a regional
The next cohort is set to begin in 2016 and will target the following regions: Asia-Pacific (in partnership with ARNEC), the Arab region, Africa (working closely with AFECN, the emerging regional network), Europe (in partnership with ISSA and focusing on leaders from the Roma population), South America, and North America (with a focus on developing leaders from indigenous communities in the US and Canada). As the Global Leaders program evolves, there will be a greater emphasis placed on collaborating with regional networks, in-person trainings and webinars, and online collaboration across countries. For more information: http://www.worldforumfoundation.org/working-groups/global-leaders-for-young-children/

Professional associations & networks

The following organizations and platforms create a community for early childhood professionals to share and collaborate, both in-person and virtually.

- **Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI)**

  The Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI) is a community of educators and advocates that exchanges information and engages in advocacy to support access, equity, quality and the right to education for children 0-18. ACEI developed, in partnership with more than 80 experts from 27 countries, the Global Guidelines on Early Childhood Education and Care in the 21st Century and the accompanying Global Guidelines Assessment (GGA) to help practitioners assess and improve the quality of early childhood program services. The guidelines and assessment include 76 indicators across five areas: environment and physical space, curriculum content and pedagogy, early childhood educators and caregivers, partnerships with families and communities, and young children with special needs. ACEI has been supporting research into the validity and reliability of the tool in more than 20 countries worldwide. ACEI also hosts the Global Summit on Childhood. For more information: http://acei.org/

- **Asociación Mundial de Educadores Infantiles / World Association of Early Childhood Educators (AMEI-WAECE)**

  The World Association of Early Childhood Educators (AMEI-WAECE), headquartered in Spain, is an organization of early childhood professionals working with children under the age of 6. AMEI-WAECE was established in 1992 following the First International Conference on Early Childhood Education to create a space for early childhood teachers around the world to communicate and share experiences. Main activities include organizing meetings and conferences, conducting pedagogical research, and fostering peer learning and exchanges among professionals. WAECE emphasizes values and peace education, has published classroom activities that teachers can use, and sponsors the World Conference on Early Childhood Education for Peace. For more information: http://www.waece.org/ing

- **WoFoNet – World Forum Foundation**

  WoFoNet is an online forum to connect early childhood professionals, and aims to reach participants in 90 countries worldwide. A recent initiative, WoFoNet allows professionals to share individual stories, exchange resources, and participate in discussions and projects with their peers. Participants can also gain access to relevant blogs, tool kits, research, and training and advocacy videos. WoFoNet aims to be
a platform for participants to form their own national and regional early childhood networks. For more information: http://www.worldforumfoundation.org/wofonet/

- **World Organization for Early Childhood Education (OMEP)**

The World Organization for Early Childhood Education (OMEP) is the largest organization focused on early childhood (ages 0-8) in the world, with more than 70 national committees/chapters. OMEP’s main activities include promoting research, organization global and regional conferences, publishing the *International Journal of Early Childhood (IJEC)*, and advocacy around teacher training, family involvement in early childhood education and care, and for major policies – such as inclusion of ECD in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The OMEP Environmental Rating Scale for Sustainable Development in Early Childhood (ERS-SDEC) is a research and assessment tool used by practitioners to measure social and cultural, economic, and environmental sustainability in pedagogical practices. For more information: http://www.worldomep.org/en/

**Working groups**

Task forces and working groups within larger organizations seek to address specific issues and challenges faced by the early childhood workforce.

- **ECE Task Force** – Education International

Education International’s (EI) Executive Board established a task force focused on early childhood education in 2007 to advise EI on ECE policies and practice, including teacher working conditions. The ECE Task Force has organized seminars for EI member organizations, published advocacy materials, and conducted large, global research studies. The Task Force has published reports that include a mapping of ECE policies, systems, and programs in 17 countries and a study of the effect of privatization on ECE access and quality, including on the early childhood workforce. The EI World Congress renewed the Task Force’s mandate in 2011 and again in 2015 and will continue doing research and advocacy, particularly around the implementation of the new SDG target focused on early childhood. EI was instrumental in developing the ILO Guidelines for the Promotion of Decent Work; the ECE Task Force is working to make its members aware of and urge governments to implement these guidelines.

- **Working Forum on Men in ECE** – World Forum Foundation

The Working Forum on Men in Early Childhood Education (WF MECE) brings together men and women to discuss challenges and solutions to achieving gender equality in the early childhood workforce, including the obstacles and benefits for men’s participation. WF MECE has representatives from Asia, Africa, Latin America, Europe, North America, and Oceania. For more information: http://www.worldforumfoundation.org/working-groups/men/

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4 This summary of WoFoNet is based on a preliminary review of information available online. The authors suggest a follow-up consultation with the World Forum Foundation regarding this initiative’s current activities.
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<th>Function</th>
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<th>Strand 2: Training, mentoring, &amp; support for professional development</th>
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III. Gap Analysis

While not exhaustive, this mapping of 23 global and regional initiatives identifies a wide range of rich activities being carried out to support and strengthen the early childhood workforce. For example, there are several online resources that support current and future professionals. These initiatives often take the form of coursework (e.g. ECDVU, SECD), peer-to-peer learning and mentorship (e.g. Global Leaders, WoFoNet), and toolkits or training packages (e.g. Quality Resource Pack, Reach Up, Care for Child Development, the Essential Package). Technology can be used to reduce costs of face-to-face training and to help build professional networks across time zones and borders. In addition, new surveys of ECEC personnel could provide a greater understanding of what is happening on the ground. While limited in scope, these planned research initiatives (e.g. UNESCO STEPP, OECD International Survey of Staff in ECEC) present the potential to collect large-scale, cross-national data about early childhood personnel to inform policy and practice. Others (e.g. CoRe) help to define professional competences of both individual practitioners and the system in which they work. Several different global professional networks (e.g, OMEP, ACEI) and working groups exist for front-line workers, program managers, researchers, and policymakers, and likely many more would be found at the national and sub-national levels.

However, gaps do emerge:

- Fewer efforts target very young children: There seems to be more attention to professionals working with preschool-aged children in educational settings. With some exceptions (e.g., Care for Child Development, Reach Out), there are fewer early childhood workforce efforts that include those working with pregnant women and infants and toddlers (first 1,000 days) in health, nutrition, and social protection sectors. Even fewer initiatives take a lifecycle, cross-sectoral approach.

- Uneven geographical coverage: Although Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Southeast Asia show strong activity, other regions are underrepresented. Specifically, we found fewer regional workforce initiatives in South Asia, Middle East and North Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa. The emerging African Early Childhood Network (AfECN) shows promise for the latter, however. There could be more attention to South-South learning opportunities as well.

- Limited data on professional standards and competences. Of the four thematic strands, “defining professional competences” received the least attention in existing workforce initiatives. Projects focused on individual and systemic competences are concentrated in Europe (e.g. CoRe, ISSA-DE CET publication).

- Insufficient attention to advocacy: While many international organizations, foundations, and networks are engaging in (and funding) research and training, there is relatively less global and regional advocacy underway to support the workforce. In particular the issue of status and working conditions (including pay) has not received much emphasis from advocates.

IV. Implications for the Network

What are the implications of this brief review and analysis for the proposed Network for Quality? We suggest that the new network is uniquely positioned – due to its technical capacity, connections to key stakeholders worldwide, and previous experience in supporting professional and quality initiatives – to take on the following functions and activities:
- **Connecting national, regional, and global efforts:** The network could serve as a link across interesting/useful but isolated regional workforce efforts. This would help raise awareness of existing efforts and disseminate lessons from them and also encourage the alignment of research, advocacy, and policy recommendations. A concerted effort to identify national and sub-national level activities would be needed, perhaps starting with underrepresented regions.

- **Creating a one-stop-shop resource portal for the profession:** There are many training (and curriculum) packages and resources being developed. The network’s online portal could consolidate/house them in an easy-to-search database. Another possibility would be to produce short syntheses of key trends and issues based on the contents of the database.

- **Filling knowledge gaps:** The network could help fill knowledge gaps and strengthen its own activities by commissioning just-in-time, policy-relevant research. In particular, there is a need to document and analyze some of the important elements of professional development systems (including pre-service and in-service training requirements, core competences/standards, career pathways). In addition, to complement some of the survey data, more detailed country case studies would help shed light on how the early childhood profession has been strengthened in diverse country contexts.

- **Supporting advocacy to raise the status of the profession:** There is a major gap in coordinated advocacy efforts around the early childhood workforce. The network could support evidence-based policy action in target countries and develop campaigns with key partners (unions/professional associations, parents, business) to help elevate the status of those working with young children.

- **Strengthen cross-country learning:** Finally, beyond the online engagement, the global network could facilitate opportunities for regional networks and other professional organizations to convene study tours, face-to-face workshops, and other activities to promote south-south learning and exchange.
V. References


