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Chapter 8: Future Recommendations

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CHANGES IN SOCIETY AND WORKING LIFE SET NEW DEMANDS FOR NURSING EDUCATION AND NURSE EDUCATORS

Nurses are the largest category of health care professionals in almost all EU countries. On average, there are 8.3 nurses per 1 000 population in 2020 in EU countries (The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2022). The increase in chronic diseases, an ageing population, global health issues (Shustack, 2020), e.g. pandemics (Lake, 2020), many environmental risks (Alvarez-Nieto et al., 2018) and technological solutions have changed health care, nursing and all working life (European Commission, 2017). The competence of nurses is an important issue in health care; patient safety and the quality of care rely upon nurses' competence in any health system.

Global shortages of health care professionals have caused significant changes in the staffing of health care systems. In Europe, the strategies to tackle nursing shortages in many countries, has been to increase the intake of students into nursing education degree programs and increase international recruitment. In addition, many countries have started to implement more advanced roles for nurses to improve accessibility to quality care, e.g. "nurse practitioner" roles. These advanced practice nurses address certain, specific illnesses and people needing routine follow-up have been found to report improved access to services, reduced waiting times, and to enable doctors time to be spent with more serious patients' care. (OECD, 2022.) All these strategies and changes set new demands on nurse education and educator qualifications and competence requirements.

Professional, organizational, societal, environmental, and occupational changes have necessitated change for nurses and nurse educators. Changes in teaching nursing, nurse educator's work and competence (Salminen et al., 2021) are indicated for securing a nurse workforce fit for contemporary times and moreover to future-proof the health care. The competence of nurse educators is central to high quality and evidence-based nurse

education which may effectively and efficiently enable the development of student nurses' knowledge, skills and attitudes (World Health Organization [WHO], 2021). In addition to competent educators, there is a need for support and guidelines from ministries of health or/and education, and the relevant regulatory bodies of different countries, contexts and regions. Competent nurse educators have different roles, and they should base their teaching on evidence-based knowledge. Nurse educators need knowledge and skills to apply the new subjects and embed them in the nurse education curricula. Moreover, they need modern evidence-based teaching strategies and adaptation to new and evolving teaching and learning methods. Competence in digital pedagogy in nurse education has become a necessity.

A NEW AGENDA FOR NURSE EDUCATORS

The ERASMUS+ project, "A new agenda for nurse educator education in Europe" (2020–2023) sought to address the demands mentioned above. Essentially, the scope of the project was to develop, update and seek to harmonise nurse educator education in Europe. The aim of this project was to harmonize and optimize nurse educator education in Europe by developing and testing a programme for nurse educator education: "Empowering the nurse educators in the changing world" (in total 30 ECTS), across a number of countries. At this moment there is no consensus about the qualification or education requirements of nurse educators in Europe, despite the fact that nurse education is very highly regulated (Campos Silva et al., 2022).

Therefore, the project endeavors to provide recommendations as a consequence of evaluating the 30 ECTS educational programme for nurse educators. The aim of which is the development of education opportunities which meet the current and future global health needs and pedagogical challenges. The recommendations identify the minimum competence requirements for nurse educators and suggestions regarding the development of these competences. The minimum competence requirements draw upon the knowledge and skills of health educators advocated by WHO (2016) and the existent evidence in this regard (e.g. van Laar et al., 2017; McAllister & Flynn, 2016; Mikkonen et al., 2019; Ryhtä et al., 2021; Shustack, 2020; Smith et al., 2022; Zlatanovic et al., 2017).

This project was conducted across six universities from five European countries: Finland (two universities), Malta, Scotland, Slovakia and Spain. University of Turku, Department of Nursing Science coordinated the project. The project consisted of three work packages: WP1 Current situation of Nurse Educators' competence and education, WP2 Future Health Care Issues and Pedagogical Solutions, and WP3 Recommendations for a New Agenda for Nurse Educator Education in Europe.

Collectively, the three workpackages comprised the first steps to a common modern and future oriented European nurse educator education across different countries.

EMPOWERING THE NURSE EDUCATORS IN THE CHANGING WORLD – A STUDY PROGRAMME

During the project the transnational education programme “Empowering the nurse educators in the changing world” for nurse educators was designed, developed and delivered in all the participating countries. The aims of this new nurse educator programme was: to increase nurse educators’ competence in the teaching of current and future global health issues; to increase nurse educators’ health pedagogy and digital pedagogical competence, and to increase nurse education collaboration and exchange between participating countries. Moreover, the usability and effect of the program was evaluated. There were altogether 37 participants who completed at least one study unit within the programme and 19 students who completed all the five study units.

The 30 ECTS programme consisted of five modules and was conducted 2021–2022:

- Module 1, Empowering learning environments in nursing education (Elene), 10ects
- Module 2, Global health issues, 5ects
- Module 3, Issues in future nurse education, 5ects
- Module 4, Evidence based teaching, 5ects
- Module 5, Ethics and nurse educators work, 5ects

The study programme was evaluated through a comprehensive mixed methods research evaluation carried out by the project partners. The data gathered in this research strongly suggests that the competence of nurse educators who pursued this new programme increased during the study programme. The motivation to participate in the study program varied, as did their experience as health care professionals and as educators. Some were new nurse teachers, some candidates were learning to become nurse educators, some were experienced nurse educators. The multinationality of the participants was deemed an enriching factor and collaboration and networking were seen as a positive aspect of the study program.

SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS OF THE A NEW AGENDA FOR NURSE EDUCATOR EDUCATION IN EUROPE -PROJECT

The education of nurse educators in Europe is scarcely described in international research articles and the requirements for nurse educator education is heterogeneous. The legal regulation and education requirements of nurse educator education varies. Mostly, it seemed that educators have doctoral level education, but not in all countries. Also, in most but not all countries, the nurse educator must be a registered nurse (RN). The tasks and the working

environments of nurse educators also varies widely across the different countries participating in the project (Campos Silva et al., 2022).

The competence of nurse educators is good according to the educators themselves, their students and the head of the subjects (Elonen et al., 2023). In most countries, nurse educators' self-evaluation revealed high levels of competence in nursing and evidence-based practice and low levels of cultural competence (Vauhkonen et al., 2023). The literature review to-date indicates that the continuing education needs of nurse educators are mainly focused on professional competencies, management and resources, communication and collaboration, and agency. Nurse educators have many roles which, in turn, set different personal and institutional needs consequently, the continuing professional development needs of educators are heterogenous, but certain commonalities were found across different countries (Smith et al., 2022). This is the backdrop against which the educational programme for nurse educators and the recommendations for the future of nurse educator education were built.

THE RECOMMENDATIONS AND THEIR JUSTIFICATIONS

1. The recommendations for nurse educators' qualification and competence requirements

More than ever, teaching nursing to the future student nurses requires excellence. Continuous changes in both society and in working life require the development of evidence-based teaching, both in content and teaching methods. Academic nurse educators must demonstrate high competence in teaching, research, clinical practice, management, communication, and ethics to educate nurses on the needs of the constantly developing field of health care (Salminen et al., 2013; Mikkonen et al., 2018; Zlatanovic et al., 2017). There is a need to model nurse educator competence and base nurse educator education in the best available evidence (WHO, 2016; Quintana et al., 2023).

Table 1. The recommendations for nurse educators' qualification and competence requirements.

Set the common European level qualification and competence requirements for nurse educators	Establish common requirements for the qualifications and competence for nurse educators across the European countries guided by the EU-directives for nurse education
	Align nurse educators' education and competence requirements to the most recent and the best available evidence.
	Hold a doctoral level qualification and evidence of a minimum of 30 ECTS pedagogical studies.

Justification for the qualifications and competence requirements

Nurse educator education varies within Europe (Campos Silva et al., 2022), and there is no consensus about the required qualification and competence requirements for nurse educators (Jackson et al., 2009; Salminen et al., 2021; Campos Silva et al., 2022). It is important to consider all the differences in the nursing education that we find across Europe. Despite these differences we have to reach an agreement of the minimum required competences to be a nurse educator. The appropriate preparation of nurse educators is critical to develop their knowledge, skills, and attitudes. It is important to improve and make equal the quality of nursing education globally and to address disparities in nursing service quality at the international level (Satoh et al., 2020)

The development and innovation of the curriculum for nurse educator education and competences should be based on the best available evidence. This adds equality, quality, transparency, and visibility of nurse educator education. (Alonso et al., 2023)

To have a clear knowledge of the meaning and validity of the certification we have a unit that is well recognised and equally understood in all of Europe, this is ECTS meaning 25 to 30 hours each ECTS. We suggest educators should be of doctoral level in the university and have 30 ECTS of relevant health pedagogical studies.

2. The recommendations for nurse educator continuous professional development

Nurse educators educate our future nursing workforce. Health and social care are continuously evolving and reacting to challenges such as climate change, the recent pandemic or the rise of long-term conditions and requiring nurse educators to commit to and being offered continuing learning opportunities to maintain professionalism in nurse education. Advances in technology equally apply to education and today's educators are required to know of, integrate and use new technologies in their teaching.

Table 2: The recommendation to develop continuous professional development resources

Develop international continuing education opportunities.	Tailor pan European continuing nurse educator education programmes reflecting societal health trends and changes.
	Incorporate structured mentoring within the continuous professional development of nurse educators.
	Foster opportunities for international collaboration for nurse educators in their continuing professional development.
	Direct employees to allow resources including time and money, for nurse educators' continuous professional development at all stages of their careers.

Justifications for the continuous professional development

Whilst continuing professional development (CPD) is a self-directed post-graduate learning process that includes the reflection, identification and development of competencies (Drude et al., 2019) that lasts throughout the duration of an educator's professional life, there is a need for structured education programmes to support this learning process. This ensures that educators can maintain their professional knowledgebase and further develop their competences and expertise (Pool et al., 2015) to meet population needs. Development of a structured mentoring model for new and experienced nurse educators appears to be an effective way of coordinating and providing structure for continuous professional development.

Continuous professional development serves a number of aims: (1) maintaining and/ or developing professional expertise in education, (2) maintaining and/ or developing expert knowledge in an area of interest, (3) ensuring the education and development of a future nursing workforce that is able to meet a population's healthcare needs in any healthcare or community setting, and (4) career development of nurse educators which is also link to their occupational well-being. Therefore, continuing professional development of nurse educators is crucial and highly recommended.

Insights from this project support the view that there is little research on the continuing education needs for nurse educators, hence identifying a knowledge gap in this area and the need for future research (Smith et al., 2022). The needs for continuous education vary, based on the individual educator and country specific contexts, mentoring and international collaborations. However, important factors identified across counties were leadership (and its development), and the need for adequate resources to promote continuous development of professional competencies (Smith et al., 2022).

3. The recommendation to maintain and improve occupational well-being of nurse educators

Based on previous studies, nurse educators suffer from high workloads which is unevenly distribution over the academic year (Arian et al., 2018; Rinne et al., 2022; Saaranen et al., 2020). In addition, they experience mental strain and work-related stress (Singh, 2020). At the same time, the education sector faces a number of challenges, such as the global pandemic and work management (Howard et al., 2022) alongside technological advances such as digitization. In addition, the nurse educator's work is affected by demographic changes across Europe that increase the demand on health care whilst also experiencing a shortage of nurses and nurse educators. The occupational well-being of nurse educators in different European countries is an under researched area and requires further exploration.

Table 3. The recommendation to address the occupational well-being of nurse educators

Promote occupational well-being in nurse educators	Provide strategies to improve personal and occupational well-being of nurse educators.
	Enable nurse educators to manage work pressures and workload.
	Implement manageable workload for nurse educators.

Justifications for the occupational well-being recommendation

The level of occupational well-being and the mental workload of nurse educators varies across Europe (Vauhkonen et al., 2023). Given the strong link between a balanced mental workload and positive occupational well-being. In addition, the competence of nurse educators (e.g. administrative and curriculum competence) were positively related to occupational well-being. Similarly, being able to manage well their own work and their ability to adapt to rapid changes emerged as important factors for educators' occupational well-being (Vauhkonen et al., 2023). Self-management has been recognized as continuing professional development need for nurse educators (Smith et al., 2023). Based on earlier research there is the need to reduce workload including backlogs (Rinne et al., 2022; Singh, 2022) as mental stressors (Singh et al., 2020). Employers should increase occupational well-being through manageable workloads and supportive activities during working hours (Rinne et al., 2021, 2022). Nurse educators need to learn to recognize issues impacting occupational well-being. Nurse educators should enhance their own and the student nurses ability to reflect on occupational well-being throughout their initial education and subsequent continuous education.

Consequently, further national and international including intervention research is needed to find evidence strategies to improve occupational well-being of educators across Europe.

4. The recommendation to establish an observatory body for nurse educators

The education of nurse educators varies greatly in Europe (Campos Silva et al., 2022). Their role and performance is also diverse. In turn, continuing professional development needs vary across countries, contexts, and regions. In parallel to this recognition of variance and its implications, there is a growing body of evidence which suggests significant similarities (Smith et al., 2022; Fuster-Linares et al., 2023).

Table 4. Foundation of an observatory body for nurse educators

Establish an Observatory for Nurse Educators (ONE)	Foster collaborations and exchanges between universities and organisations to develop nurse educator expertise and experience across different nations.
	Advise global organisations on best practice of nurse educator education.
	Create opportunities for the development and sharing of resources to support a sustainable nurse educator work force.

Justification for an observatory body for nurse educators

The establishment of an Observatory for Nurse Educators is recommended to advance the quality development of nurse educators across Europe. The documented successful legacy of CEDEFOP's (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training) observatories supports and guides this recommendation. The governance and operations of the Observatory should be carried out by an Executive Council which will operate according to a statute. The Observatory will seek the patronage of international bodies such as the European Commission, Council of Europe, World Health Organisation or the International Council of Nurses.

One of the main functions of the observatory will be to foster collaborations between entities in different countries as well as collaborations between individual educators. It will actively increase possibilities for professional international collaboration in a structured and systematic manner to enhance unified and harmonised education for nurse educators across Europe. The internationalisation element was a strong factor that attracted novice and experienced educators to the programme signalling the need for increased formal and structured support for international opportunities. The observatory will operate as a strategic hub facilitating such international opportunities for educators.

The observatory will serve as a body for the assimilation, review, and evaluation of research studies in view of dissemination of evidence and best practice in line with continuous improvement in education (OECD, 2022). Finally, the observatory will serve as a repository for resources that facilitate teaching and learning for nurse educators. The resources will be co-created by educators or teams of educators and shared across nations, to support the sustainability of the nurse educator workforce.

5. The recommendation to establish a European Academy for nurse educator education

Nurse educators have varying needs for continuous professional development (CPD) to maintain and build their competence in the constantly evolving field of nursing and health care (Smith et al., 2022). Lack of resources is often stated as a hindering factor for CPD (Smith

et al., 2022; Koskimäki et al., 2021. Hence, the academy would enable institutions to collaborate across national, regional and international borders by enabling the sharing and exchange of staff and resources.

Table 5. Recommendations for the establishment of a European Academy

Establish a European Academy for Nurse Educator education	Create a formal network of educational entities that function as a collaborative entity in the design and delivery of international educator education programmes.
	Undertake research to advance global nurse educator practice and development.

Justification for a European academy for nurse educator education

The sharing of knowledge and expertise between the partner entities has provided a rich space for the learning and development of early career as well as experienced nurse educators. Wastage and inefficiency, arising from fragmentation of investments and duplication of initiatives, coupled with the limited predictability of the future are widely recognised as two of the main challenges which nurse educators are currently experiencing (Kalanlar, 2022; Leaver et al., 2022). Hence, international collaborations are viewed as real sustainable solutions to address identified gaps in programme design and delivery. The academy will consolidate expertise, resources, initiatives and investments across different countries.

The European Academy of Nurse Educators will provide a formal working arena for research. This research activity is necessary as it provides the evidence that informs policies and practices that ensures the quality of programmes, as well as teaching and learning processes. The research function of the Academy will address the need for research evidence of good practice through facilitating the sharing and pooling of resources and expertise.

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