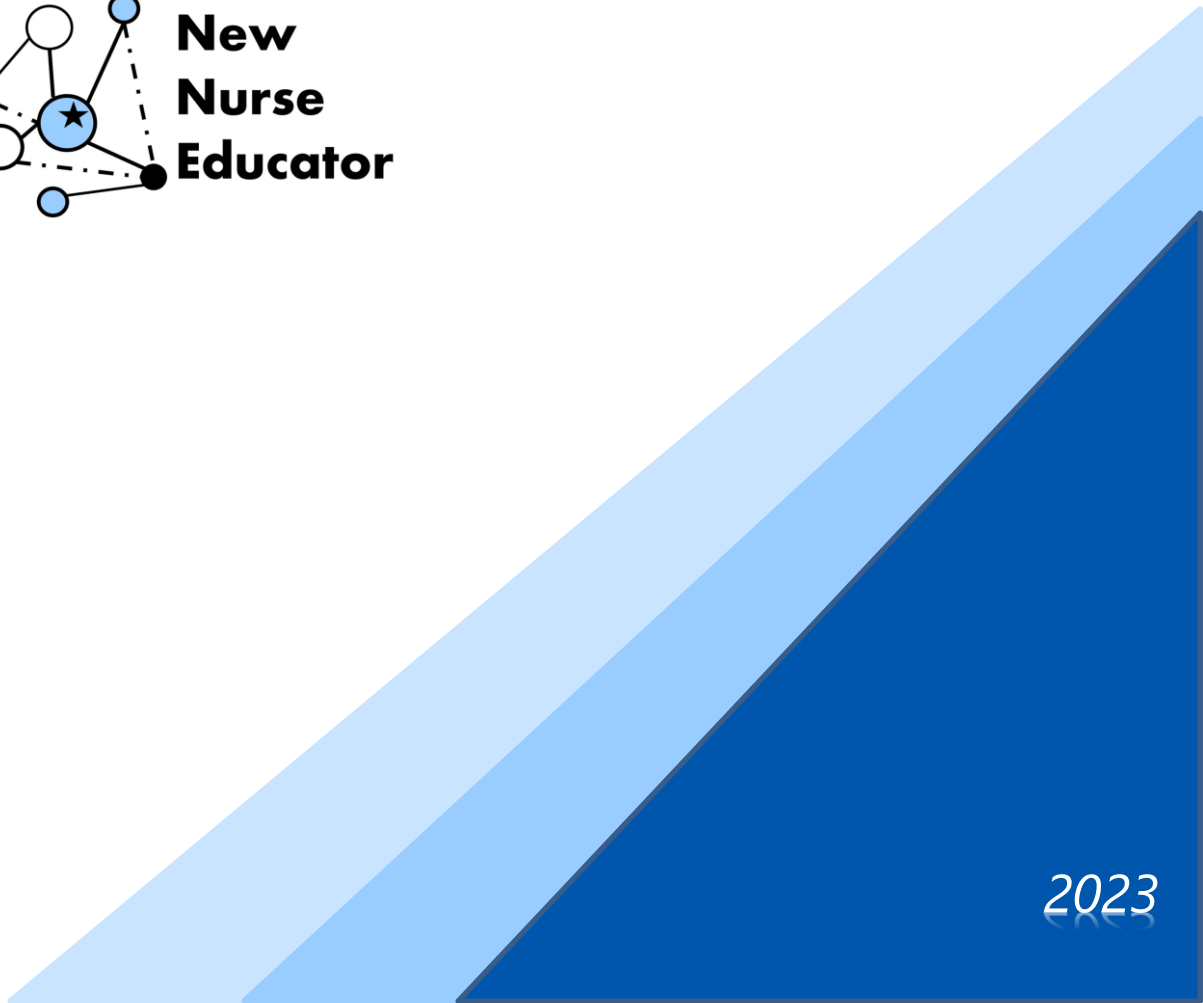
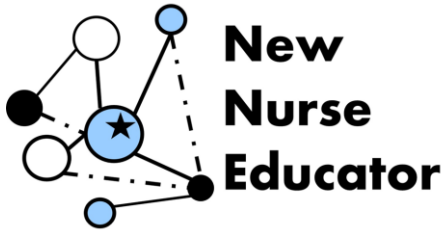


Future Recommendations for Nurse Educators



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THE RECOMMENDATIONS AND THEIR JUSTIFICATIONS

Authors: Leena Salminen, Maria Cassar, Michelle Camilleri, Laia Wennberg Capellades, Leandra Martin Delgado, Imane Elonen, Elaine Haycock-Stuart, Susanne Kean, Sanna Koskinen, Pilar Fuster Linares, Juha Pajari, Luboslava Pavelová, Terhi Saaranen, Andrea Solgajová, Tomáš Sollár, Anneli Vauhkonen, Heli Virtanen, Heli Virtanen, Anneli Vauhkonen, Dana Zrubcová.

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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THE REVIEW OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

Gathering expert feedback on the recommendations and justifications

In the previous section “The recommendations for nurse educators’ qualifications, competence and continuous professional development” are presented. The recommendations are based on our project results and research undertaken during the project. The recommendations have been prepared in collaboration with all partners involved in the project. The draft recommendations were reviewed by 12 experts in health care education from seven different countries, and also by FINE-organization (European Federation Educators in Nursing Science), altogether 13 reviews. The feedback was gathered via online survey.

The reviewers were asked to assess the following aspects of the recommendations with a 5-point scale (1 very poor 2 poor 3 adequate 4 good 5 very good):

- The length of the recommendation
- The understandability of the recommendation
- The justification of the recommendation
- The presentation of the recommendation and justification
- The urgency of the recommendation
- The link between the theory / evidence and the recommendation/ recommended action
- The logic of recommendation
- The logic of the justification
- The usefulness of the recommendation
- The applicability of the recommendation
- The evidence and knowledge supporting the recommendation

At the end of the survey there was one open-ended question seeking the reviewers overall feedback and their comments about the recommendations and justifications. All thirteen reviewers supplied feedback.

The reviewers assessed the recommendations at the good and very good level. The total means for each recommendation varied between 4.38–4.56. The recommendations and their justification were assessed as very adequate, important, clear and timely. Some recommendations and justifications needed clarification and we took the reviewers comments into consideration when clarifying the wording for chapter 8.

The reviewers comments on the recommendations and justifications

The first recommendation describes setting a common European level qualification and competence requirements for nurse educators. Reviewers assessed that there is a need to have a clear knowledge of the meaning and validity of the certification. The suggestion that educators should be of doctoral

level in the university was seen difficult to achieve because there is lack of doctoral level nurses. Also, critics queried on what basis the doctoral level education is recommended. There is a need for more evidence about doctoral preparation for enhancing educator competence. The length of health pedagogical studies, 30 ECTS, was seen adequate. The extension of the studies to 60 ECTS was also recommended in view of the demanding work of nurse educators and the need of high-level nursing and pedagogical competence.

Moreover, some of the reviewers suggested that more emphasis should be put on clinical teaching and recommendation should state a minimum clinical experience required, however, this argument is not substantiated by the data gathered for this programme evaluation.

The second recommendation describes the development of international continuing education opportunities. This recommendation has been assessed very appropriate. The suggestion of mentoring for new nurse educators is seen pertinent and valuable. All in all, the benefits of CPD is seen manifold. Our evaluation suggests maintaining and enhancing professional competence is important for career development and it is linked to occupational well-being. A strong emphasis should be placed on the importance of continuing education. More knowledge of implementing a mentoring model for CPD is required.

The third recommendation describes promoting occupational well-being in nurse educators. This recommendation was considered very timely and valuable for managing change and work life balance. The reviewers emphasise the importance self-management skills for nurse educators. In addition, the knowledge and skills to effectively carry out the role of nurse educator resulting in educators experiencing high job-satisfaction and personal well-being need to be enhanced. Occupational well-being has been identified as very important in the evaluation of the nurse educator education programme.

The fourth recommendation describes establishing an Observatory for Nurse Educators (ONE) was assessed as very relevant and that it would really promote collaborations between different countries and individual educators. ONE can play a critical role in disseminating evidence-based best practices in nursing education. This dissemination of knowledge will contribute to continuous improvement in nursing education, fostering a culture of innovation and excellence among nurse educators. ONE can be strategically designed and operated to meet the specific needs and challenges faced by nurse educators and contribute to the development and enhancement of nurse educators' quality and effectiveness across Europe.

The fifth recommendation suggested is to establish a European Academy for Nurse Educator education. This is the first step towards the creation of new networks and new standards, knowledge and education requirements in Europe. This might standardize the educators' training. The proposal for a European Academy for Nurse Educator Education addresses significant challenges faced by nurse educators and offers promising solutions for improvement. By bringing together educators and experts from various countries, the academy can facilitate the exchange of innovative ideas and

best practices, ultimately leading to the enhancement of nurse educator education across Europe. Critique of this recommendation is also presented. There needed to be greater clarity as to what is the "nature" of the European Academy of Nurse Educators and this recommendation is currently insufficiently linked to implementation at an international level.

Feedback for refining the recommendations

After receiving the comments and feedback from the expert reviewers we analysed the comments and discussed the feedback in our management board meeting. In accordance with the feedback we further clarified some recommendations and justifications. We wish to emphasise that our recommendations are based on our project evaluation results and that there is a need for more research concerning the competence qualifications for nurse educators and how they should be implemented across Europe.

Summary

To summarise, the educational expert panel thought the recommendations were very well written and very well justified. The content of recommendations was just what is needed to guarantee the high-quality competence and well-being of educators. There seems to be a need for enhanced collaboration between educators in Europe.

We want to thank all the expert reviewers for their time when assessing the recommendations and for providing us with valuable written feedback and comments. Eleven of the thirteen reviewers gave us permissions to publish their names for us to acknowledge their contribution to the review process and these are listed below.

Expert Reviewers:

Raúl Quintana Alonso, Dr, Associate Dean, Spain

Rosario Caruso, PhD, Researcher, Italy

Joanna Depares, Dr, Lecturer, Malta

Cecile Dury, President of FINE (representative of the FINE organization), Belgium

Lucia Filomeno, Dr, Nursing Assistant Professor, Italy

Lisa Gomes, Professor, Portugal

Maria Jiménez Herrera, PhD, Associate professor, Spain

Natalja Istomina, Professor, Director of Institute of Health Sciences and Head of Department of Nursing, Lithuania

Elena Chamorro Rebollo, Dean, Spain

Brigita Skela-Savič, Professor, Slovenia

Herdís Sveinsdóttir, Professor, Iceland