

## Chapter 7: Sustainability of APN Education and Future Recommendations

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### Introduction

An important part of developing Advanced Practice Nursing and education programmes preparing nurses for APN roles is aiming for sustainability in APN roles, APN care models and education programmes. Thus, APN roles, models of care and education programmes also need to be adaptable to the changing needs of the population's health and healthcare systems. This chapter investigates sustainability in APN education and offers future recommendations for maintaining relevance and promoting continual growth.

### Sustainability of Advanced Practice Nursing Roles and Programmes

The development and implementation of Advanced Practice Nursing roles is intended to provide better coverage and support to users of the health system, take advantage of Advanced Practice Nurses' intellectual capacity and expertise and retain good professionals in the nursing profession. The development of APNs has been seen as crucial for nursing worldwide. (Lopes-Júnior, 2021.) As highlighted in other toolkit chapters, APN roles can offer improved access to care, increased quality and more timely care. However, despite the advantages of APN roles, there are still disparities between European countries when it comes to implementing and sustaining APN roles (Unsworth et al., 2022; De Raeve et al., 2024). Advanced Practice Nursing and APN roles and programmes are already established in many countries across the Nordic and Baltic regions of Europe (Sulosaari et al., 2023). Development is at different stages in different countries with regard to how well APN roles have been integrated into health systems and how well APN education programmes answer the needs of population health and sustainable health care provision.

APN role implementation depends on successful collaboration between health care systems, policymakers, professional bodies, leaders,

managers, practitioners and educators. Roles are developed and implemented through solid stakeholder engagement (De Raeve et al., 2024). Furthermore, education and health care systems are in dynamic development, dependently and independently of each other (Maier & Aiken, 2016). Therefore, the development of regulations, policy and research should go hand in hand with the introduction and implementation of APN roles and education programmes preparing nurses for APN roles. This would also support sustainability in newly implemented APN roles and care models. Thus, the size of the APN workforce depends on several factors, including population health needs, care delivery models and the total number of nurses within each country (Unsworth et al., 2022).

It is important to recognise that the process of integrating APN roles requires time and patience. The implementation process can take 10–20 years (Jokiniemi et al., 2014; Unsworth et al., 2022). This is also the case with introducing new APN programmes; it will take time for programmes to become well-known and attractive and for nurses and their employers to see the potential of the programme to prepare nurses for extended roles in patient care. Recognising the importance of the relationships between nurse directors, service managers and educators is key to the early development of these roles and to establishing sustainability in the newly developed roles and models of care. Moreover, the successful implementation of APN roles requires an extensive and in-depth assessment of the population's health needs and the services required, well-established networks of educators and collaborative bodies composed of practitioners, managers and educators. Nursing leaders, managers and practitioners can work with educators to develop APN roles, implement them, and identify appropriate outcomes to convince hospital management and policymakers of the value of advanced roles (Unsworth et al., 2022).

### **Future recommendations:**

- Ensuring the sustainability of Advanced Practice Nursing and APN programmes requires close cooperation among healthcare systems, policymakers, professional bodies, leaders, managers, practitioners and educators.
- Assessment of health care services and population health needs can provide the foundation for the establishment of new programmes and evaluation of existing programmes.
- Locally advisory groups could be established to ensure APN programmes respond to the health needs of populations and health care services. These groups should include practitioners, manager and educators.

- The Nordic and Baltic countries are in different stages with regard to the development of APN programmes. Therefore, collaboration between higher education institutions and among APN educators is needed.

### **Ongoing professional development from novice APN to expert APN**

For all healthcare practitioners lifelong learning is a binding requirement. Ongoing professional development is needed for safe, ethical and effective evidence-based practice. APN educators should emphasise this during education.

ANP educators should promote the implementation of APN roles in practice (Mackavey & Bryczynski, 2022) by preparing graduates to transition between the orientation, frustration, implementation and integration phases. The gap between what was learned during education and what is needed for successful practice as an ANP may cause a transition shock, described as "disorienting, confusing and doubt-ridden chaos," leading to role dissatisfaction, suboptimal performance and possibly failure in the workplace. (Fitzpatrick and Gripshover, 2016.) Developing strategies to increase competence is a professional responsibility of all APNs.

The following are recommendations for role implementation in each phase:

- Orientation can be supported by a structured orientation plan organised by the employer. APNs can identify a role model or mentor, or network with peers. Joining national and international APN networks and groups is recommended. It is very important to recognise and be aware of one's own expectations and to be self-directed in role implementation.
- Frustration with affective responses may occur in any phase of role implementation. These feelings may arise when moving from expert nurse to novice or advanced beginner ANP. Debriefings with experienced APNs or nurse managers may be helpful. Planning longer patient visit times and time management tips may help solve this problem. Being aware of the gaps between expectations and real-world applications and taking care of one's mental health can support role implementation.
- Role implementation can also be supported by reassessing practice demands and priorities, as well as one's own expectations. This can be achieved in a 6-month evaluation with a supervisor, for example. In addition, collaboration and co-treating patients with colleagues may give an additional boost.

- Integration can be promoted in a 12-month evaluation, which can include planning for role refinement and expansion. Different forms of intra and interprofessional collaboration, debriefing and seeking verification and feedback from colleagues can give added value (Mackavey & Bryczynski, 2022).
- In some countries revalidation of the healthcare practitioner licence is mandatory, most commonly every five years, and ANPs must also demonstrate and provide evidence of continuous development in their area of practice. In some countries the employer might require APNs to undergo a performance evaluation every three to five years to retain their position. If so, the process will be detailed in the career ladder or professional advancement programme. However, lifelong learning is an issue of personal commitment. Below are links to a number of networks APNs should consider joining.

### Tools and Resources:

Organisations and networks:

The International Council of Nurses (ICN) Nurse Practitioner/Advanced Practice Nurse Network (NP/APNN)

<https://icnnpapnnetwork.wildapricot.org/>

The Association of Advanced Practice Educators UK.

<https://aape.org.uk/>

Royal College of Nursing Advanced Nurse Practitioner Forum.

<https://www.rcn.org.uk/Get-Involved/Forums/Advanced-Nurse-Practitioner-Forum>

[NordicAPNedu - Developing advanced practice nursing education \(turkuamk.fi\)](https://nordicapnedu.turkuamk.fi/) <https://nordicapnedu.turkuamk.fi/>

[Kliiniset asiantuntijat YAMK-KLIAS ry](https://www.klias.fi/) <https://www.klias.fi/>

[Avansert klinisk allmennsykepleie \(nsf.no\)](https://www.nsf.no/)

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/det-landsd%C3%A6kkende-netv%C3%A6rk-for-apn-sygeplejersker/>

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