

The Sex & Gender Project: a Swiss collaborative effort to integrate these topics into the Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, and Nursing curricula

Virginie Stucki, PhD, OT, (HES-SO/HETSL)

Yuri Maritan, BSc, OT (SUPSI)

WFOT Congress, 12 february 2026

This presentation reports on findings from the project “Sex and gender integration in the bachelor curricula of nursing, physiotherapy and occupational therapy”, conducted by a multi-institutional Swiss project team.

Disclosure: This project was supported by a grant from swissuniversities (Programme P-7: Diversity, Inclusion and Equal Opportunities).

University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Southern Switzerland (SUPSI)
University of Applied Sciences and Arts Western Switzerland (HES-SO)
Haute école de travail social et de la santé Lausanne (HETSL)

**HE
TSL**

Scuola universitaria professionale
della Svizzera italiana

SUPSI

Hes·so

Introduction : The Need for Integration

- Integrating sex and gender perspectives into healthcare education is crucial for equitable, individualized care.
- Curricula in Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, and Nursing in Switzerland do not systematically address these aspects, despite their significant impact on health conditions and treatment outcomes.
- The 'Sex and Gender Project' was developed to bridge this gap by promoting integration into training programs.

Project Aims

1. Raise awareness.
2. Assess current integration.
3. Identify gaps.
4. Develop and share teaching materials to enhance curricula across Swiss Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS).

Methodology: Four-Phase Approach

PHASE 1

Scoping Review of literature and best practices. The review showed a lack of literature on sex and gender health competencies specific to nursing, physiotherapy, and occupational therapy.

PHASE 2

Survey of teaching staff across UAS to analyse the current state and prioritize learning objectives. The estimated response rate was approximately 25%.

PHASE 3

Validation of results, prioritization of **learning goals**, development of **learning material**:

- LGBTQAI+ and health care
- Social Justice and Disparities
- Health and Gender-specific Socialisation
- Sexual Harassment

PHASE 4

Sharing of learning material and dissemination.

gems^{go}

<https://www.gems-platform.ch/en>

Key Results: The Integration Gap

EQUALITY AND EGALITARIANISM:

acquire knowledges to translate them into clinical practice.

DISCREPANCIES:

inclusiveness, diversity and discrimination are recognised as important topic... yet, professionals lack in knowledge and awareness.

SENSITIVITY & CULTURAL COMPETENCES:

recurring use of sensible citations and references during the formative years.

TRAINING FOR EDUCATORS:

58% of respondents do not integrate sex & gender topics into their own teaching.

A comprehensive and coherent training is a critical prerequisite.

FRAGMENTATION:

sex and gender are mostly taught in **isolated lessons rather than coherent modules**. The report clearly describes this as both a strength and a limitation.

Knowledge Gaps Identified

Due to its exploratory nature, the literature review did not allow a comprehensive identification of all existing knowledge gaps.

DISPARITIES
between professions
and their related
literature

**NOTIONS of
"sex & gender":**
lack of conceptual clarity and
imprecise use.

DESIGN NEGLIGENCE:
undetected sex- or gender-
relate differences

GAP
between perceived
importance and actual
integration

INCLUSION:
clinical trials tend to exclude
individuals who do not identify
within the binary "male/female"
model

WOMEN'S HEALTH:
Under-recognition of
women's health condition and
maldistribution of resources

Educational Output: The Co-Developed Teaching Units

- **Repeated transversal integration** across different contexts encourages systematic consideration of sex and gender in reflections on health and care.
- Awareness-raising, understanding, and knowledge acquisition are often not **profession-specific** learning objectives, yet the application of these elements is context- and profession-related.
- Including discrimination, prejudice, disparities, and inequalities across various domains fosters a more **holistic and reflective understanding** of the complex interactions between sex, gender, and clinical health issues.

Educational Input: Learning Goals Proposed by Educators

Learning goals proposed by respondents

- Sex and gender across the life course
- Sensitive communication related to sex and gender
- Gender diversity, inclusion and work
- Social dimensions and intersectionality
- Community-based approaches and advocacy

These inputs provided contextual insights that informed the reflection and prioritisation process.

Pedagogical Strategies for Integration

For effective integration, several factors should be considered:

- Identifying specific content and providing **appropriate teaching resources**.
- Promoting **interprofessional collaboration**, particularly through workshops and small-group activities.
- **Building on existing frameworks** to facilitate integration without requiring a complete overhaul of curricula.
- **Actively involving students**, who can act as allies and play an important role in promoting these topics.
- Ensuring the **sustainability of teaching** by avoiding reliance on a single individual, which could jeopardise continuity.

Significance for Occupational Therapy

Sex and gender shape what people can do, are expected to do, and are allowed to do, therefore they are core to occupational therapy, occupational science and occupational justice.

So...what are WE doing?

VIRGINIE's work at HETSL:

- **Mandatory Bachelor Education (70h)**
 - Transversal integration of sex, gender & intersectionality
 - Focus on occupation, participation & occupational justice
 - Topics: intersectionality, structural gender relation, gender diversity & LGBTQIA+Health, Affirming Gender Diversity and Identity
- Gender, Work and Pay (In)Equalities (4h)

YURI's work at SUPSI:

- Sex and OT (4h lesson)
- OT support within gender-affirming care (4h lesson)
- Palliative Care and the LGBTQI+ community (2h eligible lesson)

Conclusion and Future Outlook

- **EDUCATE THE EDUCATORS:** appears to be a key step, but it requires significant investment. Developing shared materials can help educators avoid starting from scratch and build on a common ground.
- Our findings mirror international trends, showing high recognition of importance but **INSUFFICIENT CURRICULAR INTEGRATION**, particularly in allied health professions.
- This project could be framed not only as “sex and gender integration” but as part of a broader move toward **EQUITY-ORIENTED HEALTH AND OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY EDUCATION.**

Acknowledgements / Project Team

*This presentation is based on the project
“Sex and gender integration in the bachelor curricula of nursing, physiotherapy and occupational therapy”,
conducted by a multi-institutional Swiss project team.*

Principal Investigator:

Tiziana Sala Defilippis

Project team (Work Packages 1–4):

Ursula Meidert · René Schaffert · Véronique Hasler · Marcija Borojevic-Pantic ·
Enrica Massardi · Virginie Stucki · Yuri Maritan
and collaborators from Swiss Universities of Applied Sciences

Funding:

swissuniversities – Programme P-7: Diversity, Inclusion and Equal Opportunities

Bibliography

- Hasler, V., Turcotte, M., Kiszio, B., Juvalta, S., Meidert, U., & Stucki, V. (2024). *Sex and gender dimensions in nursing, physiotherapy and occupational therapy education: A scoping review* (Research report). HESAV, La Source, HETSL, ZHAW. <https://arodes.hes-so.ch/record/14925?v=pdf>
- Meidert, U., Schaffert, R., Juvalta, S., Sala Defilippis, T., Massardi, E., Maritan, Y., Borojevic-Pantic, M., Hasler, V., & Stucki, V. (2023). *Integration of sex and gender in teaching in health professions in Switzerland: Results of a survey among lecturers* (Interim report). Zurich University of Applied Sciences, Institute of Public Health.

Thank you for your attention!

University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Southern Switzerland (SUPSI)
University of Applied Sciences and Arts Western Switzerland (HES-SO)
Haute école de travail social et de la santé Lausanne (HETSL)

HE
TSL

Scuola universitaria professionale
della Svizzera italiana

SUPSI

Hes·so

Haute Ecole Spécialisée
de Suisse occidentale