

Handout Wolfgang Weiser

This handout contains references to the topics spoken about in the interview. Most of references include also a link to the original source for further reading. For clarification the quote from Marjory Barlow, mentioned in the interview, is given her in its correct form:

My goal, and my only one, is to help you adjust your inner tempo, so that you do not lose pace with time. Marjory Barlow, *An Examined Life*, first pages.

And part of the article from the last congress paper in 2018 can be read at the end of the handout.

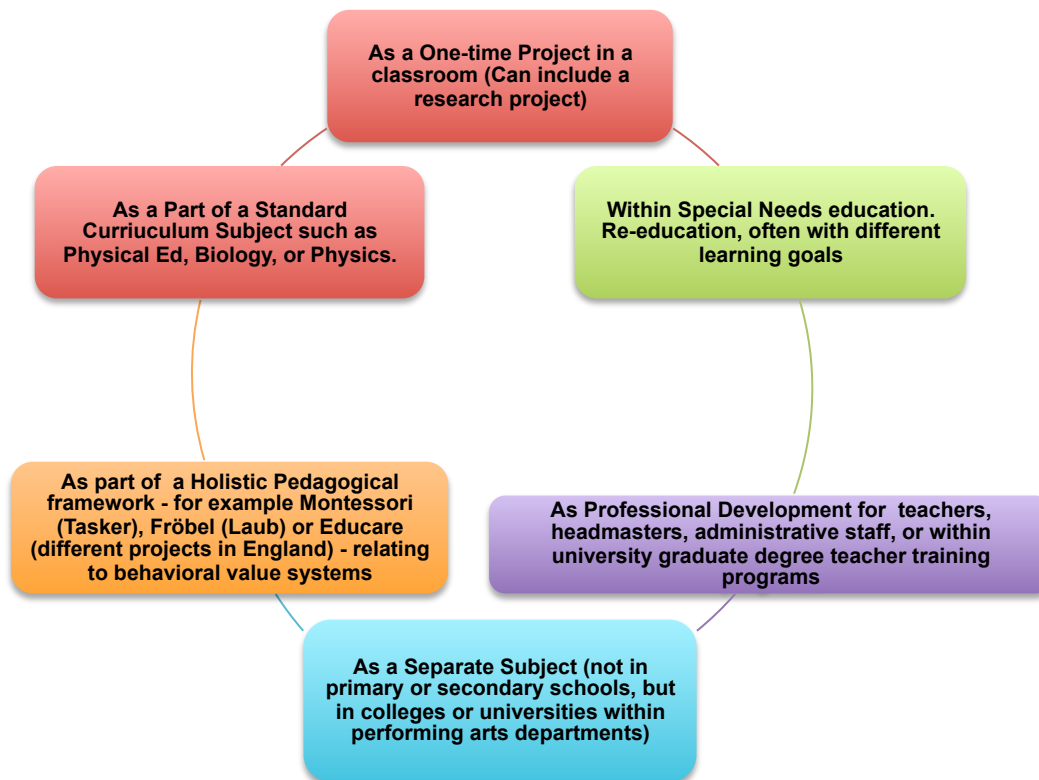
Thank you for your interest, Wolfgang Weiser, Gotland, Sweden July 2021

References to the topics mentioned in the interview

1. Master project in pedagogics “It’s an art to sustain your body in school” GU 2018
Link: <https://gupea.ub.gu.se/handle/2077/56881>
2. Thesis, Master 2 educational science “Embodied”, LIU 2018 (available only in Swedish)
Link: <file://localhost/urn/nbn/se/liu/diva-154356>
3. Article: Alexander Technique in Education: A Blueprint for the Future, Congress paper 2018, Chicago (enclosed at the end)
4. Article: ”Embodied Learning of Sensing Balance by Walking a Line” Congress Papers: Empowering Humanity Inspiring Science, 10th International Congress 2015, Limerick, STAT Book
5. Thesis, Master 1 educational science “Present poise in momentum”, LIU 2015
Link: <file://localhost/urn/nbn/se/liu/diva-123563>
6. Article: ”The Alexander Technique in the Context of Education and Balance”, Congress Papers: Learning from Each Other. 9th International Congress 2011, Lugano, STAT Book

Part of the Article: Alexander Technique in Education: A Blueprint for the Future, Congress paper 2018, Chicago

...**Wolfgang Weiser** then presented from his perspective as an educational professional with university graduate degrees in education in addition to his AT certification. Alexander technique (AT) teachers have over the years found different ways of working within schools. Wolfgang divided these into six approaches.



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Fig. 1. Six Approaches for Alexander Technique in School Settings

The first approach is as a specific one-time project in the classroom. Two documented examples are provided by Michele Arsenault's book *Moving to Learn - A Classroom Guide to Understanding and Using Good Body Mechanics* (1998. Revised 2010) and Ann Mathews *Implications for Education in the Work of F. M. Alexander: An Exploratory Project in a Public School Classroom* (1984). The first was a project to develop lesson plans that teach body mechanics to secondary school children, and the second was a research project that studied the effects of teaching AT in a primary school setting.

The second approach for Alexander to become part of standard education is to integrate it into existing school curricula. Even if we can see a clear necessity for AT as its own subject in national primary or secondary schools, as of today it is not part of any standard curriculum at those levels. AT can however be part of how the other standard curriculum subjects are taught in a school. Michele

Arsenault's AT-based lessons are designed to be used as experiential learning to help students with subjects such as physics or biology, and the subject that F.M. Alexander himself was keen on in his own writing: physical education. Here we can see a clear relation to body mapping and use, with the potential education of school children in understanding about inappropriate physical patterns.

Alexander technique as a subject of its own can be found in higher education, at the tertiary level, in many music and drama departments.ⁱ This is the third approach for Alexander teachers to be able to work in schools. As so many Alexander teachers have a background in performance themselves, this is the most common setting for AT in educational institutions today.

As we know from F.M. Alexander's testimony, there are at least two more approaches for bringing AT work into schools that were implemented during his lifetime and that he participated in. An example of a fourth approach would be that of Irene Tasker when she offered individual re-education of school-aged children suffering from "ill-use" or disabilities in the early 1920s. This ultimately became the daily schedule at The Little School that she launched and where she was assisted by Margaret Goldie. This individual approach to working with children was also practiced for years by the Danish teacher, Grethe Laub (*How We are Living our Lives*, Laub, 2006), and we can also read about it in the Israeli teacher Gal Ben-Or's book *Direction for Life*. With this approach, the learning goals can be different from a standard school curriculum. However, this approach can find its place today in standard school settings within the Special Needs educational field for children who have challenges in their general learning skills and concentration. With this approach, there is a real interest in creating a basis for learning that is connected to good use.

In a fifth approach, it can be part of the organisation and teaching within a more holistic alternative school. Schools like The Little School or the school Grethe Laub worked in as an Alexander teacher in Denmark, tend to build their own educational frameworks that can then include the AT principles. In this setting the Alexander teacher can directly contribute to the school's overall pedagogical ideas, as for instance within the educational philosophies of Maria Montessori, Friedrich Fröbel, or the contemporary model of Educare, a school in South London where AT teacher Sue Merry integrated AT into the whole ideology of the schoolⁱⁱ.

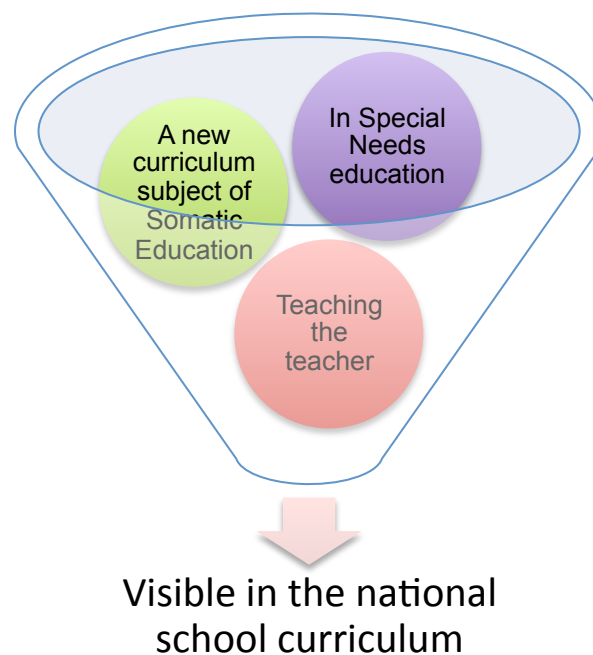
When working with a more holistic pedagogical framework, the schoolteachers, the headmaster, and other educational administrators will also need to develop their understanding of the AT principles. This forms the sixth, and last, approach for Alexander teachers to find work in schools, namely by teaching Alexander principles as professional development to school staff. The school staff then can not only model good use for their pupils, but also inhibition and personal reflection, how to choose and how to change, instead of only employing techniques involving direct discipline and judgment. Between 1999 and 2002, Wolfgang was in an EU project where he was part of the regular classroom teaching in the morning and then gave AT training to the teachers and the headmaster one day a week. It was wonderful to come back after almost ten years and see that the teachers were still applying AT principles in their classrooms! This last approach also has the potential to bring Alexander into university graduate degree teacher training programs. Wolfgang has done this to some extent in Sweden within training courses for movement and health.

Wolfgang finished by making three suggestions that might help the process of implementation as well as the continued development of Alexander in schools, with the goal of making AT a visible part of the national school curriculum.

If we want to work with psychophysical re-education, the Alexander teacher can focus on developing skills as a specialist within the field of Special Needs education, helping pupils with learning disabilities and sensory processing issues. This could bring more awareness and acknowledgement of Alexander as a successful methodological tool for improving learning in school settings.

Another suggestion would be to make Alexander part of a new standard school subject, that of somatic education. Alexander could become one amongst many somatic body/mind methods that could be its own subject with its own curriculum.

A third suggestion would be to develop the role of Alexander in university graduate degree teacher training programs and in post-graduate professional development. By teaching the teachers, Alexander's ideas could not only be more visible and better recognized within school settings, but the teachers would also be continuously practicing the AT principles in their classrooms. By teaching the teacher, Alexander could not only be part of every child's educational development in many schools, it could also become a significant influence over time in the general teaching approach and organisation of all standard schools.



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ⁱ In the UK, Alexander technique has been taught at the Royal College of Music and the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts for many decades now.

ⁱⁱ The model of educare developed parallel with the Alexander Technique in the first half of the twentieth century in England, emphasising the relationship between space and bodily movement. The intention of educare was to create modern schools by understanding the development and growth of the individual through their movement in relation to the material environment required to nurture that growth (Burke and Grosvenor, 2008, Burke & Cunningham, 2011, Kozlovsky, 2010).