



## To whom it may concern: Somatic Education in academic research

Priscila Rosseto Costa  
Márcia Strazzacappa

Universidade Estadual de Campinas – UNICAMP, Campinas/SP, Brazil

**ABSTRACT – To whom it may concern: Somatic Education in academic research –**

Based on a survey conducted in different bases of academic data such as journal articles, undergraduate final papers, theses, and dissertations, this paper presents a critical analysis of different fields of knowledge in the scientific production on Somatic Education, aiming to support future work. The research was quantitative and documentary and it had as priority sources CAPES site and the Brazilian National Library of Dissertations and Theses (BDTD) site. It was concluded that Somatic Education is multidisciplinary and it has the largest academic representation in the field of Arts, followed by the Health sector, possibly reflecting its origins and applications.

Keywords: **Somatic Education. Scientific Production. Multidisciplinary. Art. Applications.**

**RÉSUMÉ – À qui cela peut Concerner: l'Éducation Somatique dans la recherche**

**universitaire** – Basé sur une enquête menée auprès de différentes bases de données académiques telles que des articles de revues périodiques, des mémoires et des thèses de doctorat, cet article présente une analyse critique des différents domaines dont les productions scientifiques sont appliquées à l'éducation somatique, visant à soutenir les travaux futurs. La recherche a été quantitative et documentaire et a eu comme sources prioritaires les données des sites internet des revues périodiques de la Coordination de Perfectionnement Académique (CAPES) et de la Bibliothèque Nationale Brésilienne de Thèses et Mémoires (BDTD). Il a été conclu que l'éducation somatique est multidisciplinaire, même si elle a une plus grande représentation académique dans le domaine des arts, suivi par le secteur de la santé, confirmant ses origines et ses applications.

Mots-clés: **Éducation Somatique. Productions Scientifiques. Multidisciplinaire. Arts. Applications.**

**RESUMO – A quem possa interessar: a Educação Somática nas pesquisas acadêmicas**

– Fundamentado em um levantamento realizado junto a diferentes bases de dados acadêmicas como artigos de periódicos, trabalhos de conclusão de curso de graduação, teses e dissertações, o presente artigo apresenta uma análise crítica sobre os diferentes campos do conhecimento em que estão sendo realizadas as produções científicas sobre Educação Somática, visando subsidiar trabalhos futuros. A pesquisa foi documental e quantitativa, tendo como fontes prioritárias o site de Periódicos da Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (CAPES) e o site da Biblioteca Nacional Brasileira de Teses e Dissertações (BDTD). Concluiu-se que a Educação Somática é multidisciplinar, embora tenha maior representatividade acadêmica na área de Artes, seguida da área da Saúde, refletindo possivelmente suas origens e aplicações.

Palavras-chave: **Educação Somática. Produções Científicas. Multidisciplinaridade. Arte. Aplicações.**

### Dissemination of the term Somatic Education

Since the first publication in Brazil of a translated version of the article<sup>1</sup> by Sylvie Fortin (1999) defining Somatic education as a set of alternative body practices that aims body awareness, this terminology has been incorporated into the daily activities of teachers, practitioners, and artists (whereas, since the 1970's, there were translations available for Portuguese of the major reference works of such practices). Another article by the same author also contributed to the access to the term in the country, in 1998: the paper entitled '*When dance science and somatics enter the dance technique class*' also had wide circulation in academic and artistic fields. Similarly, concurrent events, that brought at that time the name of Sylvie Fortin to the national scene, contributed to the term Somatic education to become object of study in the national territory; in this case, we remember the first International Meeting of Somatic education<sup>2</sup> in Brazil in 2001. This meeting was a milestone and had the presence of Sylvie Fortin herself delivering the opening keynote, teaching a course, and promoting a final experience with all participants. The meeting lasted a week and brought together the major Brazilian representatives of the different lines of Somatic education present in the country, like Feldenkrais, Alexander, Eutony, Holistic Gymnastics, Body-Mind-Centering, Ideokinesis, amongst others. At the same year, Sylvie Fortin also participated of similar activities in Rio Grande do Sul, promoted by the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS) and by the Cruz Alta University (UNICRUZ), further expanding the factors of for taking over the concept in the country.

This article is based on the results of a research in which a survey was carried out among different academic databases containing journal articles, undergraduate term papers, theses, and dissertations published in Portuguese in order to check in which field of knowledge, in Brazil, the scientific papers on Somatics are being based on: Art, Education or Health.

This research was justified by several factors: its uniqueness, considering that no other survey like this had been done until then; by bringing together in a single document, data on the surveys and their respective fields of knowledge; and, most importantly, by

providing subsidies for a discussion around a dispute between dancers and the Brazilian Physical Education Federal Council referring to the regulations related to the teaching of bodily techniques.

This survey focused on answers for: is Somatic education more studied by the field of Arts, Education or Health? Is it possible that a somatic technique is most studied by one of these fields of knowledge than the others? What are the propositions that explain this data? Such answers help us to comprehend how Somatics, since its origin, has been taken over by different professional fields, allowing us to verify whether the assertion of its multidisciplinary is true or not.

Although apparently quantitative, when identifying which field of knowledge has produced and taken over the concepts related to it, one also identifies the background of those who research it and the scope of their work. Since the participants of the 2001 Meeting were mostly dancers, would Arts still be the field with the most intellectual output?

The databases used for this survey were CAPES's journal website, University of Campinas' (UNICAMP) integrated search engine<sup>3</sup>, as well as Google Scholar site. In order to search for dissertations, theses, and undergraduate term papers, the sites of the main university libraries were consulted, such as University of São Paulo (USP), Julio de Mesquita Filho State University (UNESP), UNICAMP, and other federal universities. We also searched the Brazilian National Library of Dissertations and Theses [Biblioteca Nacional Brasileira de Teses e Dissertações – BDTD], which maintain digitized theses and dissertations from the major universities in Brazil, including some private ones, like Anhembi Morumbi.

This research, in this case, is a documentary and quantitative study. The cutout period was defined as from 2000 to 2010 (ten years), taking into account the whole country, considering that this period corresponds to the dissemination of Somatic education after the publication of Fortin's paper, and the increased number of undergraduate courses of dance in the country, currently 41 courses. The keywords used per subject, in quotation marks<sup>4</sup>, were: Educação Somática [Somatics], Técnica Feldenkrais [Feldenkrais Technique], Eutonia [Eutony], Técnica Alexander ou Mathias Alexander [Alexander Technique or Mathias Alexander], Métodos das Cadeias Musculares e Articulares ou Método G.D.S. ou Godelieve Denys

– Struyf [Muscle and Joint Chains or G.D.S. Method or Godelieve Denys–Struyf], Ginástica Holística ou Dra. L. Ehrenfried Holistic Gymnastics or Dr L. Ehrenfried]; Método Bertazzo ou Ivaldo Bertazzo [Bertazzo Method or Ivaldo Bertazzo]; Técnica Klauss Vianna [Klauss Vianna Technique]; and Método de Reorganização Postural Dinâmica ou José Antonio de Oliveira Lima [Method of Dynamic Postural Reorganization or José Antonio de Oliveira Lima].

The material identified by the search engines were selected, as the abstracts or, in some cases, the full papers were read, in order to make sure that they should be considered as part of the study. As an example, papers that covered concepts like Embriogênese somática [somatic embryogenesis], células somáticas [somatic cells], maturação somática [somatic maturation], crescimento somático [somatic growth], which are beyond the scope of this research<sup>5</sup>, were excluded. A spreadsheet was created<sup>6</sup> with data from the selected papers, such as the paper's title, author, year, journal's name and academic field. The same was done with the theses, dissertations, and term papers. In the tables, the selected materials were classified by technique/method, in separate spreadsheets, in order to gather the number of papers per Somatic education technique or method.

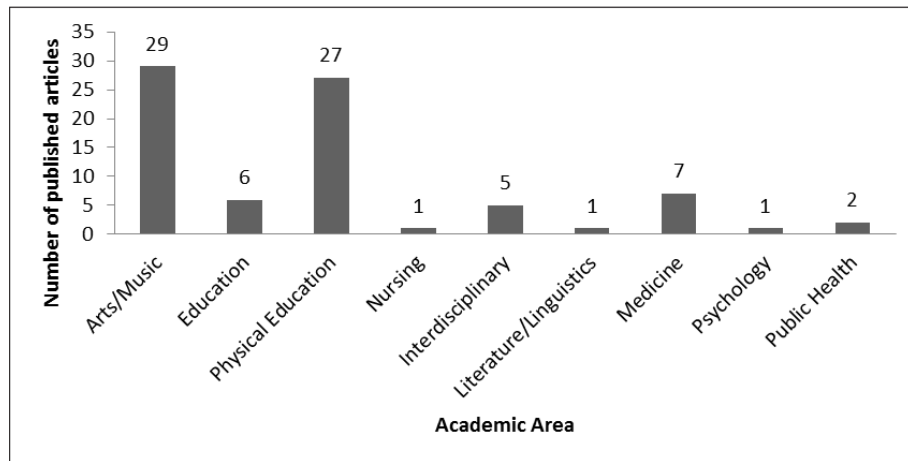
The identification of the academic field of the papers has been done using CAPES WebQualis site<sup>7</sup>. The fields defined by the CAPES site were Arts/Music; Education; Physical Education/Physical Therapy; Nursing; Literature/Linguistics; Medicine (1, 2, and 3); Psychology; Collective Health and Interdisciplinary. Regarding publications not classified by the CAPES site, a survey was conducted directly in the journal or publication site. In regards of term papers, as well as theses and dissertations, we have identified the following academic fields: Arts; Education; Physical Education, Medicine; Communication/Semiotics; Psychology.

For term papers, theses, and dissertations, the obtained degree and the institution where they were presented were verified to categorize the academic field.

### **Surveys in Journal Articles**

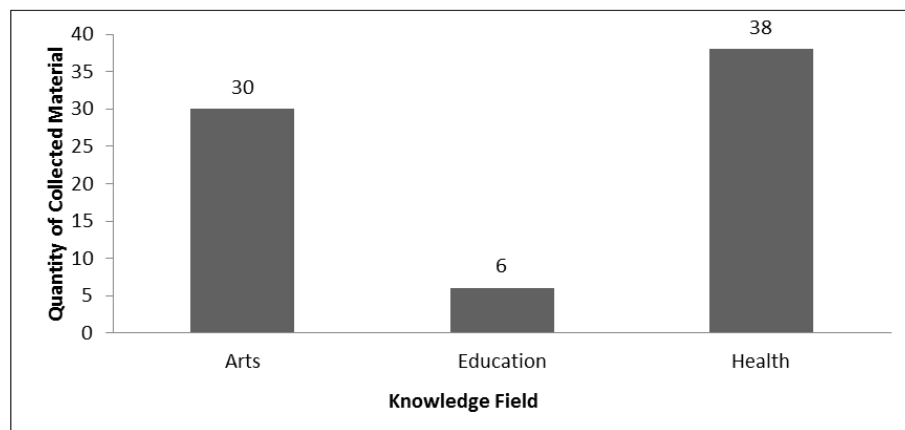
In total, 79 articles were found, of which: 29 are from the Arts/Music field; 6 are from Education; 27 from Physical Education; 1

from Nursing; 5 from Interdisciplinary field; 1 from Literature/Linguistics; 7 from Medicine; 1 from Psychology; and 2 from Collective Health. The following graph presents the proportion of production per academic field:



Graph 1 – Journal articles on the theme Somatic education per academic field.

From the graph above, we observe that most of the articles are from the field of Arts/Music and, secondly, from the field of Physical Education. However, if we classify all articles in only three categories – Arts, Education, and Health – we have:



Graph 2 – Article classification in three knowledge fields.

For this case, we considered for the Arts field: Literature/Linguistics and; Arts/Music (Literature/Linguistic was added to Arts once the analyzed article is closely related to dance, aimed at the Arts field). For the Health field: Nursing, Physical Education, Medicine, Psychology, and Collective Health. And the articles from education to the Education field (these assignments were observed in the CAPES

site). In this case, the articles published in interdisciplinary journals were not added up.

Considering this perspective, we have the Health field as the one with most publications about Somatic education, using CAPES journals classification. This can be explained, on one hand, by the historical circumstances that involved the origin and disseminations of these techniques. As seen, Somatic education originated from individual actions, mainly from artists, with the goal of achieving their own rehabilitation through bodily practices that were alternatives to conventional methods of medical treatment (Strazzacappa, 2012). Let's remember Feldenkrais (1977), who had knee problems, to Mathias Alexander (1992), an actor who lost his voice, or even Mabel Todd (1932), who had paralysis during her adolescence, to name only a few. On the other hand, we should take into account some other aspects. First, the Health field has the highest number of undergraduate programs, which exist for longer and are more established than the field of Arts. Second, it is a field where, traditionally, the dissemination of knowledge is accomplished by means of publication in journals (in the field of Arts and Humanities, the publication of books and book chapters is far more common). Third, if we had conducted even a more thorough search, we would note that some authors who published in journals belonging to the Health field study or work in the field of Arts, as is the case of Débora Bolsanello (2007), who published an article in the magazine *Movimento de Educação Física*, amongst others. Fourth, there are fewer magazines from other fields that propose specific dossiers to address the issue of Somatic Education, such as this Journal.

Even in the cases where the research were conducted within other post-graduation programs, like these in the field of Health, when consulting the authors's curriculum at the Lattes Platform, we identified that the majority of them have as a background, whether basic or supplementary, in the field of Performing Arts, such as Dance, Theater, and Music.

Another aspect accounted for in this research relates to the amount of publication in each technique/method of Somatic education. Is it possible that one technique or method has better affinity with one field than with another one?

When we use the keywords Técnica Feldenkrais [Feldenkrais Technique] and Técnica Klaus Vianna [Klaus Vianna Technique],

the highest amount of articles are from magazines and journals of Arts/Music (CAPES Classification). The keyword Eutony, in relation to other methods and techniques, is the one with most articles related to Medicine. The Muscle and Joint Chains or GDS Method was the one with the most articles related to Physical Education. The Holistic Gymnastics has a mix of articles in the same proportion as the Health field, like Collective Health, Medicine, and Physical Education. For the Alexander Technique it was found the highest number of articles published in Arts/Music journals. The keyword Bertazzo Method, when related to the other methods, had the major number of journal articles related to the Education field, mainly the journals from USP (Communication and Education). No journal articles were found using the keyword Dynamic Postural Reorganization or José Antônio de Oliveira Lima, probably due to its recent disclosure (2010).

Referring to the origins of Somatic Education in Brazil, we questioned which professionals supported its adoption in different Brazilian states. We see, for example, a large number of physical therapists in the dissemination of Holistic Gymnastics, G.D.S. Method, and Eutony, which will indicate, without doubt, a major presence of studies in the Health field. The Alexander Technique, in turn, was more disseminated by instrumental musicians. The dissemination of the Feldenkrais Technique is balanced between artists and physical therapists.

Thus, we observe the table below as a summary of the relationship of the Somatic education technique/method per academic field:

<u>TECHNIQUE/METHOD</u>	<u>ACADEMIC FIELD</u>
<b>Klauss Vianna</b>	Arts/Music
<b>Joints and Muscular Chains</b>	Physical Education/Physical Therapy
<b>Eutony</b>	Medicine
<b>Feldenkrais</b>	Arts/Music
<b>Holistic Gymnastics</b>	Collective Health/Medicine/Physical Education
<b>Method Bertazzo</b>	Education
<b>Method of Dynamic Postural Reorganization</b>	No paper found
<b>Alexander Technique</b>	Interdisciplinary and Arts/Music

Table 1 – Relationship between technique/method of Somatic Education with academic fields in journal articles.

### **Surveys in Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations**

When consulting the site of the main university libraries, like USP, UNESP, UNICAMP, and other federal universities, as well as the site of the Brazilian National Library of Dissertations and Theses (BDTD), we have noticed that there are less term papers than theses and dissertations. In total, there were 6 term papers compared to 30 theses and 20 dissertations with the title/theme/subject on Somatic education.

We have found 3 physical education studies (UNESP and UNICAMP), 2 from Arts (UNESP and UNICAMP), and 1 from Medicine (UNICAMP). The Klaus Vianna theme was the one with the highest frequency in these studies; there were 5 of them for 1 approaching the Joints and Muscular Chains Method. Some of these have already been published as books, like Jussara Miller's thesis (2005).

For term papers, the most common field is physical education. The field of Arts is the one presenting more theses and dissertations. From 30 theses, 25 are from the Arts course, corresponding to 83.33% of the total. From 20 dissertations, 13 are from the Arts field, corresponding to 65% of the total.

The classification of the institutions showed that term papers, theses and dissertations on Somatic Education are originated from the following universities: Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC-SP), Federal University of Bahia (UFBA), Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG), UFRGS, UNESP, UNICAMP, and USP, all of them with tradition in post-graduation programs.

Unlike the review accomplished in journal articles, where we could establish the relationship between academic fields with most of the Somatics Education techniques/methods, when reviewing term papers we could not establish the same relationship, since there were not enough studies found covering all techniques/methods. We were not able to find term papers with themes/subjects on Eutony, Feldenkrais Technique, Mathias Alexander, Holistic Gymnastics, Bertazzo Method, and Dynamic Postural Reorganization Method. We were not able to find Feldenkrais Technique, G.D.S. Method, nor Holistic Gymnastics in theses. We could not find dissertations approaching Mathias Alexander, Joint and Muscular Chains, nor



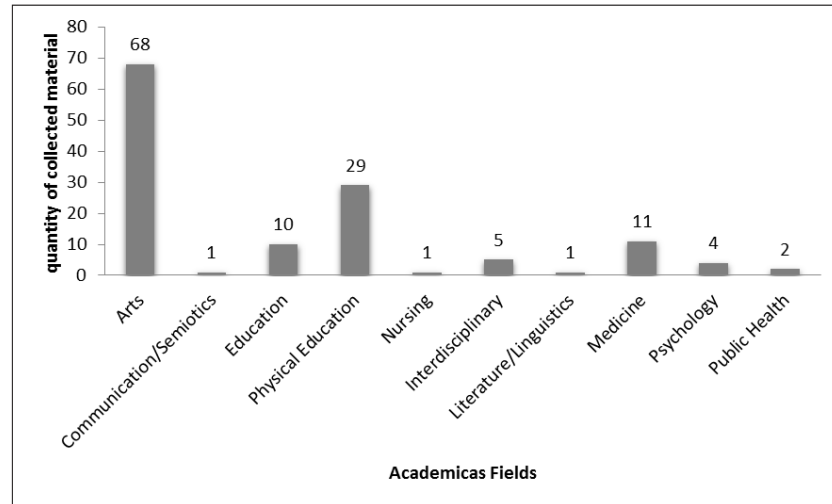
Holistic Gymnastics. Both in theses and dissertations, unlike the results for journal articles, Eutony is more related to Arts, followed by Medicine. It is possible to observe that, both for theses and dissertations, as mentioned before, the academic field of Arts (Dance, Theater, and Music) is the one that is more related with all of the techniques/methods. The following table compares Somatic education techniques and academic fields for term papers, theses, and dissertations:

<b>TECHNIQUE/ METHOD</b>	<b>TERM PAPER</b>	<b>MASTER THESIS</b>	<b>PhD THESIS</b>
<b>Klauss Vianna</b>	Physical Education	Arts	Arts
<b>Muscle and Joint Chains</b>	Physical Education	0	0
<b>Eutony</b>	0	Arts and Medi- cine	Arts
<b>Feldenkrais</b>	0	0	0
<b>Holistic Gymnastics</b>	0	Arts	Arts
<b>Method Bertazzo</b>	0	Arts	0
<b>Method of Dy- namic Postural Reorganization</b>	0	0	Education
<b>Alexander Technique</b>	0	0	Arts

Table 2 – Relationship between technique/method of Somatics with academic fields of term papers, theses, and dissertations.

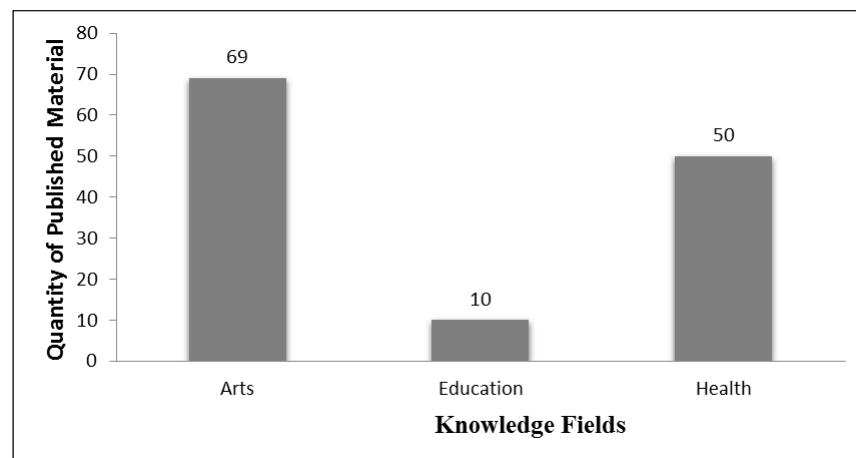
### Global Dimension of the Research

The gathering of all materials researched in this study (journal articles, term papers, theses, and dissertations) points to the field of Arts (Dance, Performing Arts, and Music) as the one that takes over more frequently the concepts of Somatic education, followed by the Health field (Physical Education/Physical Therapy). In order to better understand this relation, see the following graph:



Graph 3 – Relationship of all researched materials with Somatic Educations.

The next graph shows the data categorized according to the three fields (Arts, Education, and Health) (Lima, 2010):



Graph 4 – Relationship of all researched materials to the three knowledge fields: Arts, Education, and Health.

Unlike what we have found when classifying the journal articles in the the categories Arts, Education, and Health, the inclusion of all publications within the same categorization shows that the field of Arts (which includes Arts and Literature/Linguistics) it's the one that most takes over of the knowledge of Somatic education in the academic milieu, followed by the Health field (with materials from physical education, nursing, medicine, psychology, and Collective Health). No less important, the field of Education comes at last, including materials with the theme education only (we have excluded here papers with Interdisciplinary and Communication/Semiotics themes).

We have noted, through a non-systematic search in Google Scholar, the existence of materials like conference proceedings, scans of online posters, articles in non-scientific magazines and informal texts available through the Internet on Somatic Education. The majority of these documents come from the field of Arts, having Dance as their content. An example is the collection *O Avesso do Avesso do Corpo* [The Reverse of the Reverse of the Body], a publication resulting from the Fourth Dance Seminar of Joinville (Wosniack, 2011), containing twenty-four texts from speeches of invited guests and submitted works. In this same direction, there is the collection of the Associação Brasileira de Pesquisa e Pós-graduação em Artes Cênicas [Brazilian Association of Research and Graduate in Performing Arts] (ABRACE), with several materials regarding Somatic education and its techniques. This information strengthens the previous assertion that Arts (Dance, Theater, and Music) is one of the fields that most takes over the field of Somatic Education as knowledge.

We emphasize that texts from the training institutes where the different techniques are taught were not included in our search,<sup>8</sup> although they were also consulted. This decision is due to the fact that these texts are more informative about the techniques and their respective training programs rather than articles resulting from scientific investigation. In some cases, articles with more elaborate discussions are not available to the public, being sold through a registration, like the Somatics magazine site. Had we included these articles, the number of publications from the field of Arts would be even higher.

### Final Considerations

Considering that the theme here approached still is relatively recent in the academic milieu, it is understandable that we have not found a great number of systematized studies. The analysis of the data collected allowed us to verify that the Somatic education is a field of multidisciplinary knowledge that crosses the fields of Arts, Health, and Education, in this order of relevance. The small number of studies and publications could be justified by the fact that post-graduation courses on Arts of the Body are relatively recent. We remember that, like previously mentioned, independent of the post-



graduation program, the background of the researchers, identified by the *Lattes* platform is mostly in the field of Arts.

Through analyzing the dates related to the materials, we identify a correlation between the increase of the number of studies and publications with the increase of the number of the undergraduate programs in Dance. Beyond this factor, we can equally highlight the increase, in the last decade, of the training and/or specialization courses on the different techniques of Somatic Educations, developed by local professionals throughout Brazil. This indicates that the new undergraduate programs, both private and public, in the field of Dance in Brazil has been a strong factor in the dissemination of research on the theme.

In fact, since the beginning, Somatic education has been intimately related to the artistic production e practical experimentation. From the empiricism to the reflection, from experimentation to scientific knowledge, from curative processes to preventive ones – the arts of the body were and continue to be its main objective.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> It is the article *Educação Somática: novo ingrediente na formação prática em dança*, originally published in the Magazine *Nouvelles de Danse* (1996). This article has been translated to Portuguese and published in the *Cadernos do GIPE-CIT* (1999).

<sup>2</sup> I International Meeting in Somatics Education, organized by the Laboratory of Studies in Arts, Body, and Education (*Laborarte*) from the Education Department of the UNICAMP, with partnership with the Social Service of Commerce (SESC) from Campinas (SP) in November 2001.

<sup>3</sup> The Integrated Search is a research tool which aims to facilitate access and retrieval of information on available sources for research of UNICAMP: *acervus* base, digital library, e-books, databases, and electronic publications. In this research, we limited the search to electronic publications (such as newspaper articles, journal articles, scientific articles, and articles in specialized publications).

<sup>4</sup> Performing a search for words in quotes allows the system to locate the expression just like it is presented, namely, the concept itself. For example, in “Body Technique”, the system will search the concept itself and will not locate isolated words like “body” AND “technique”, that will open another field.

<sup>5</sup> It is necessary to indicate that the concept of Somatics Education discussed in this research resulted from the data collection from the authors: Sylvie Fortin, Michele Mangione, Débora Bolsanelo, Marcia Strazzacappa, Thomas Hanna, and José Antônio de Oliveira Lima, which are complementary and do not exclude each other.

<sup>6</sup> The Table (in Excel) is available at the following site: <<http://www.bibliotecadigital.unicamp.br/>>.

<sup>7</sup> Available at: <<http://qualis.capes.gov.br/webqualis>>. Accessed on: 16 Oct. 2012.

<sup>8</sup> Institutions like the Brazilian Association of Eutonye, the Brazilian Association of Alexander Technique, the Association of Practitioners of GDS Method (responsible for the OLHAR Magazine), the Angel Vianna School of Dance, among others.

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Priscila Costa is a graduate in Physical Education (Universidade Estadual de Campinas). She teaches in public schools in Itupeva/SP, conducting interventions in the field of Somatics and other areas of the body culture.

E-mail: [priscilarosseto@gmail.com](mailto:priscilarosseto@gmail.com)

Marcia Strazzacappa has a BA in Elementary Education, a BA in Dance, a Master Degree in Education (Universidade Estadual de Campinas), and a PhD in Arts (Université Paris). She teaches at the Education Department at Universidade Estadual de Campinas. She is a member of the Brazilian Association for Research and Graduate Studies in Performing Arts (ABRACE) and is a Fellow Researcher at the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq).

E-mail: [marciastrazzacappa@yahoo.com.br](mailto:marciastrazzacappa@yahoo.com.br)

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