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ARTICLE



## Somaesthetics and yoga

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### ABSTRACT

This study delves into the philosophy, aesthetics, and educational components of somaesthetics to highlight the art of living by practicing body awareness. Specifically, this study focuses on 'education as a practice in somaesthetics' by using yoga as a practical example of this new educational model. This paper reconceptualize education from the perspective of somaesthetics by examining the themes of meliorism, to-and-fro motion, transcendence, and philosophical living as self-cultivation. I also examine the significance of yoga as a conscious process of a bodily experience that results in creating self-style. It analyses twenty-two records of yoga practitioners' experiences and feelings through the method of embodied meta-cognitive verbalisation to illustrate how body awareness plays a critical role in many facets of self-improvement.

**KEYWORDS** Somaesthetics; education; yoga; meta-cognitive verbalisation; meliorism

### Introduction

Somaesthetics is a pragmatist project that focuses on the body to encourage a renewed understanding of the 'body' as the locus of sensory-aesthetic appreciation and creative self-fashioning where experiences are performed. It is a critical, ameliorative study regarding the body, its use, and experience that ambiguously stands on the boundaries of philosophy, aesthetics, and education. Somaesthetics highlights the intrinsic mission of philosophy in the sense of a 'philosophical way of life' and the 'art of living'. Since one of its most distinctive features is 'practice', somaesthetics needs to be 'embodied' in the real world, so education presents a reasonable environment for this to occur. The embodiment of practical somaesthetics in education provides an opportunity to reflect on the current educational system as well. This study aims to propose a renewed perception of education through somaesthetics by utilising my experience with yoga as a practical example of a new educational model that entails somaesthetics.

Somaesthetics is a term based in aesthetics that was coined by Richard Shusterman to overcome the limits of analytical aesthetics and move beyond

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traditional aesthetics, or pragmatist aesthetics. Shusterman began his academic career in analytic aesthetics and used T. S. Eliot's work as his primary theme. He was guided by Eliot's socio-cultural insights and encouraged by his 'struggle with the limits that define this field [aesthetics and philosophy]' (Shusterman 2012, 125). He was also impressed by John Dewey's 'earthy, upbeat, and democratic pragmatism' (Shusterman 2000b, xvii), and consequently, he 'converted' to pragmatism. Pragmatism encourages one to rethink the roles of art and philosophy, so in this tradition, Shusterman argues that philosophy should be closer to real life:

Philosophy should be transformational instead of foundational. Rather than a metascience for grounding our current cognitive and cultural activities, it should be cultural criticism that aims to reconstruct our practices and institutions so as to improve the experienced quality of our lives. Improved experience, not originary truth, is the ultimate philosophical goal and criterion (Shusterman 1997, 157).

Shusterman's pragmatist aesthetics allowed him to approach art and philosophy as a way of life, where the body is an indispensable element 'both as a medium of aesthetic self-fashioning and as a means of aesthetic pleasure' (Shusterman 1997, 30). Shusterman aims to alter the body through somaesthetics, and this idea has been neglected in the literature of philosophy and aesthetics. Shusterman proposes three dimensions of somaesthetics: analytic, pragmatic, and practical. This unique, interdisciplinary field has a solid foundation of theoretical philosophy with an analytic dimension, and it is unique because it contains the practical dimension of *doing*. Somaesthetics can be regarded as education for its meliorism and practicality. Whereas the traditional academic framework tries to analytically identify the body on a discursive dimension, this 'ameliorative study' improves the body (i.e. the somatic self).<sup>1</sup> Improvement necessarily includes the practical dimension as well as the authored, analytic discourse. Therefore, somaesthetics focuses on the art of living, which can be understood from an educational perspective.

'Education' often refers to the educational system, like that of a school, which presents a variety of problems and limitations. Shusterman (2000a, 162–163), for example, has a critical view of the current educational system and agrees with Feldenkrais' criticism that education is a normalising apparatus that neutralises individuals' sense of self. It serves a social function that shapes people, from their bodies and thoughts to their values. There is also the problem of methodically applying practical somaesthetics to the education system (e.g. yoga lessons during PE class), which may eliminate somaesthetics' rich philosophical themes and reduce the meaning of the practice to mere instruction that serves to regulate movement. Therefore, in this paper, the concept of education is not limited to the institutional educational system and its criticisms, but rather, it is understood as

a broader concept that includes relationships and self-cultivation, for example.

Somaesthetics can be utilised to better understand this broad concept of education. It asserts that the body plays a critical role in overcoming limitations and in the process of cultivating the self through enhanced sensibility, control, and consciousness: 'Disciplines of body care provide instead a promising path toward a better public by creating individuals who are healthier and more flexibly open, perceptive, and effective through heightened somatic sensibility and mastery' (Shusterman 2000a, 153). Rather than artificially connecting somaesthetics and education, this paper examines the implications of somaesthetics in education.

### ***Education through the lens of somaesthetics***

#### ***Meliorism***

Somaesthetics is a critical, ameliorative study on the body, and education also shares this sense of meliorism, that is, the belief that humans can change the world for the better. While the essential mission of education is to move toward an improved state, this process has numerous risks in various dimensions, from the essential elements to the daily practices. However, it has been pursued through a variety of levels: searching for truth in scripture, human reason, socially agreed-upon standards (e.g. national curriculum), common sense, and educators' ideas. How meliorism is determined and directed establishes the risks involved, and on a practical level, the idea of improvement may not align with the values of the educator and student. How does somaesthetics deal with these risks regarding its meliorism, namely, the tendency to pursue improvement?

Awareness through body consciousness is a primary principle of meliorism in somaesthetics. Its purpose is to develop one's body consciousness, so it is sharp and sensitive enough to allow introspection through it. Since developing awareness of the current situation is a prerequisite, the meliorism of somaesthetics 'should be distinguished from naïve, utopian optimism' (Shusterman 2010, 64). Somaesthetics understands that the body has continuity with both society and culture, so introspection is not imprisonment within the body. Based on introspection, somaesthetics' meliorism aims to change the current state of the body through action.

It should be noted that any improvement implies norms and values, and somaesthetics is not a project for determining these norms. As Shusterman (2019, 142–144) explains, various types of improvement exist on multiple dimensions, such as an enhanced experiential sense, representational attractiveness, or a superior rank in performance. Somaesthetics is a 'field of inquiry' (141) to reflect upon and explore one's senses, movements, feelings, and even current norms that are unconsciously inhabiting their body. Considering

the prevailing situation, somaesthetics pays greater attention to improving the experiential dimension, such as self-awareness and adjusting the senses; however, it is only one type of a 'philosophical toolbox' that can be used to realise 'the critical, reflective art of living' (151).

### *To-and-fro motion*

Meliorism is carried out by a to-and-fro movement in-between the body's structure and its experience. This infinite to-and-fro motion between primary and secondary experiences is described in Dewey's concept of 'experience', which also leads to the notion of the body in somaesthetics. Experience starts from 'gross, macroscopic, crude subject-matters in primary experience' to arrive at the secondary experience of 'refined, derived objects of reflection' (Dewey 1981, 15). Then, it moves to the primary experience, where repeating the to-and-fro motions guides the practitioner to a new mode of experience. In this way, one can refine and adjust their experience.

The structure of moving back and forth can also be understood regarding the body of somaesthetics, which is in-between a 'background', such as habitual behaviour, and a 'foreground', such as conscious introspection (Shusterman 2012, 47–67). To improve certain physical behaviours or habits, one needs to bring their habitual background into the foreground of their consciousness through explicit reflection. Since emotions, thoughts, and actions entail bodily dimensions, the to-and-fro motion between the body's structures are not limited to the physical dimension but may also extend to the education of the somatic self.

### *Transcendence*

The to-and-fro motion between the body's structures and its experience leads to transcendence. This back and forth introspection of body consciousness guides the practitioner toward a new mode of bodily experience. In this case, transcendence is neither an absolute truth based on foundationalism nor a refusal of the present, limited status:

Transcendence, as the urge to reach beyond oneself, may be basic to human existence and is certainly central to pragmatist meliorism, but it need not be interpreted in supernatural terms. Our very being is a flux of becoming something else, which can be constructively construed in moral terms of self-improvement (Shusterman 2012, 35).

Shusterman (2002) uses the example of a golfer to explain how one should be aware of what they are doing inadequately and possess the swing to correct it. Once a person is cognizant of how the body should feel during a swing, they cannot retreat to their status before transcendence. Rather than defeating the present nature of the limited body, transcendence accepts and even faces its limitations. This condition is not confined to sports players either, as

it also extends beyond the physical to include conceptual dimensions. Somaesthetics is an attempt to transform the boundaries of aesthetics and philosophy, which define art and truth. Transcendence (i.e. transformation) can also be extended to the education system as an essential mission. From the perspective of somaesthetics' transcendence, the current primary conditions of education (e.g. age, subject, place, teacher-student relationship) need to be more flexible.

### ***Philosophical living: self-cultivation***

Somaesthetics pursues philosophical living, which is deeply related to the question of how one should live, sharing this notion with several Asian disciplines of self-cultivation, Emerson's Perfectionism, and Dewey's continual 'growth' concept. These ideas involve the creation process of the self-style,<sup>2</sup> which can be understood as the educational goal. Philosophical living is concerned with one's experience and consciousness by using a to-and-fro movement to reach a state of transcendence and meliorism. It is not a presentation of a completely formed life, but a process of forming a certain style or way of approaching life.

Shusterman highlights Emerson's understanding of style, especially self-stylising, self-creation, and self-culture for creating one's lifestyle. He emphasises that the styles are based on the 'somatic style', which means that they not only involve the basic senses (e.g. visual and auditory) but also action, self-understanding, movement, and empathy. Inspired by Emersonian Perfectionism, Shusterman (1997, 101) defines self-cultivation as 'an individual ethical injunction to strive to be better and do so by being always open to exploring the claims of different ends'. These conclusions are an 'unattained yet attainable self' (101), but attainment is never complete since it happens sequentially. Attractive 'different life-exemplars' (103), rather than conventional living models for improvement, guide philosophical living. Somaesthetics illustrates that creating one's lifestyle involves the aesthetic process.

### ***Somaesthetics through yoga***

From the perspective of somaesthetics, this paper aims to reconceptualise education with four keywords: meliorism, to-and-fro motion, transcendence, and philosophical living as self-cultivation. Education is considered a journey, where individuals may discover somaesthetics to establish a personal way of living, and this journey is called, 'education as a practice in somaesthetics'. It is not bound to the existing educational system that includes a standard school, subjects, and teacher-student relationships, but rather, it can be understood as any bodily experience. However, even though each physical experience can be understood as an educational tool, this does not mean that every daily

action equates to educational experience. With these four keywords, I attempt to demonstrate education as a practice in somaesthetics. Based on my experimental experience, I also examine the significance of 'yoga' and 'embodied meta-cognitive verbalisation'. However, rather than suggesting or recommending yoga as a method to practice somaesthetics, this is merely used as an example.

Originating in ancient India, yoga is a group of widely supported therapies, practices, and disciplines for physical, mental, and spiritual purposes that have undergone incalculable changes throughout the years. B.K.S. Iyengar, Evans, and Abrams (2006) is one of the most important modern yoga masters who introduced yoga to the West. In his work, *Light on Life*, he explains yoga in various, multi-layered ways, based on Indian classical theory. In yoga, the body consists of five layers called, *kosas*, and through this practice, one can reach all five layers: physical, energy, mental, intellectual, and divine. Yoga is seen as an eight-step process that not only entails the well-known *asana* and *pranayama* (pose and breathing) but other disciplines as well, including teachings that involve how to act morally, meditate, and reach enlightenment. The most popular yoga style in modern times is hatha yoga, which has three purposes that can be traced back to literature between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries:

(1) the total purification of the body, (2) the complete balancing of the physical, mental, and energetic fields, and (3) the awakening of purer consciousness through which one ultimately connects with the divine by engaging in practices rooted in the physical body (Stephens 2010, 17).

The multi-layered characteristics of yoga can be empirically justified. Many practitioners not only expect the physical health benefits but also improved mental health or spiritual liberation. So, they position yoga as a meditation to increase self-awareness and learn how to control their emotions and thoughts.

When practising yoga through somaesthetics in this study, the method of 'embodied meta-cognitive verbalisation' was used, which is a technique and model for acquiring 'embodied knowledge' that was claimed by Masaki Suwa, a Japanese cognitive scientist. Nishigaki (2018), a Japanese information scientist, explains that a large obstacle in cognitive science (especially when researching artificial intelligence) is the disagreement between 'absolute theoretical knowledge', which is pursued in traditional science, and 'life knowledge'. It is difficult to clarify the characteristics of life knowledge (e.g. knowledge that is empirical, heuristic, embodied, tacit, and situated) with so-called objective scientific methods, but Suwa is attempting to illustrate embodied knowledge in this way.<sup>3</sup> Suwa (2008) explains that 'it might be impossible to verbalize all our own body

knows and can do' because – regarding embodied knowledge (e.g. skills in playing sports, musical instruments) – 'It is believed that our body knows more than we can verbalize'. However, even though verbalisation cannot entirely explain embodied knowledge, he asserts that it is essential to express and reflect it through language (i.e. to verbalise it), analyse, and refine it.

Embodied meta-cognitive verbalisation entails acting and reflecting on a performance long-term (six months or more) with regular frequency to acquire embodied knowledge. The performer documents this embodied knowledge, and the accumulation of these records are then analysed. In Suwa's laboratory, he researches embodied knowledge that covers a wide variety of physical experiences, such as athletics, bowling, darts, fashion coordination, walking, tastings, and educational experiences in the classroom. As these bodily experiences are continuously performed, and afterward, the performers reflect on them. Suwa (2008, 142) explains that 'reflecting', in this case, consists of two components: '(1) self-awareness of what we think, what we perceive, and how we move our body, and (2) thereby verbalization of them'. Therefore, embodied meta-cognitive verbalisation, which is a first-person perspective method,<sup>4</sup> is not only used for clarification, but it also helps develop embodied knowledge.

### ***The embodied meta-cognitive verbalisation of yoga: my personal journey***

#### ***Outline***

This journey involves the practice of yoga and its analysis through the method of embodied meta-cognitive verbalisation. I explore yoga's significance as an example of education through somaesthetics by examining its features, meaning, and other facets. For the yoga practice, the *primary series* of *Ashtanga Vinyasa* yoga was performed approximately once or twice a week and included eighty minutes of video instructions (Jois 1996). This style of yoga was chosen because it was a challenging hurdle from my personal experience with yoga. It is also helpful for the analysis to repeat the same practice since it is hard to judge the progress of yoga numerically. This yoga practice was documented using embodied meta-cognitive verbalisation. By referring to Suwa's guidelines (below), the contents mostly included the feelings and thoughts concerning the body:

- what one thinks or thought
- how one moves or moved body parts
- what one perceives from the environment through five senses, and
- the sense of our body through the proprioceptive system (as a result of moving muscles and joints) (Suwa 2008, 142).



In total, there are twenty-two records, which are called, the 'yoga diary'. This period covers approximately four months, from April to August 2019, but this continues to be ongoing.

### *The 'yoga diary'*

The yoga diary's formatting description has no restrictions, as it simply describes the impressions and feelings of the practice, particularly challenging poses, improved poses, bodily sensations, the body's usage in general, and breathing techniques. So far, three main themes have appeared in the twenty-two yoga diaries: posing, bodily sensation, and breathing. I reread the yoga diary and chose sentences that correspond to each theme. The number of sentences for each theme reached 213, 260, and 84 sentences, some of which overlapped among the themes. To grasp the content's outline for interpretation, each sentence was classified by attaching 'point tags'.<sup>5</sup> This does not entail a numerical or mechanical classification, but it is a way to interpret the meaning of the description, its relevance to other depictions, and discover the features of the practice. [Table 1](#) indicates the point tags for each theme.

**Table 1.** Three themes of the 'yoga diary' with point tags.

Posing (The number of relevant sentences)	
Sense of improving on a pose (45)	Sense of achievement through a pose (6)
Sense of the body in a pose (31)	Thoughts on Ashtanga Vinyasa yoga (6)
Using the body in an incorrect pose (30)	Evaluation of another's pose (5)
Incorrect pose (22)	Difficulty improving a pose (4)
Attempts to improve an incorrect pose (16)	Fatigue when posing (4)
Awareness of using the body to improve a pose (12)	Breathing through a pose (4)
Evaluation of overall practice (9)	Joy through a pose (3)
Relationship between pose and breathing (7)	Concentration during practice (2)
	Feeling relaxed during a pose (2)
	Gaze while posing (2)
Bodily sensation	
Overall sense of the body (31)	Sense of weakness that is preventing a pose (12)
Sense of the body when posing (31)	Vision when posing (7)
Having a kinaesthetic sense while posing (29)	Developing a sense of the body (6)
Body part that is difficult to be conscious of (27)	Past bodily experience (5)
Sense of body when improving pose (26)	Connecting awareness and movement (2)
Kinaesthetic sense when attempting to improve a pose (20)	Attempting body awareness (3)
Sense of body by comparing to others (19)	Sense of body after posing (2)
Connecting the breath and body (17)	Sense of body preventing a pose (2)
	Auditory sensation when posing (1)
	Sense of body when breathing (1)
Breathing	
Controlling breathing quality (18)	Changing body awareness through breathing (4)
Awareness of various breathing qualities (15)	Improving poses through breathing (4)
Instructions and breathing (13)	Being out of breath (3)
Awareness of body sensation through breathing (10)	Breathing and vision (2)
Connecting breathing and movement (9)	Relationship between breathing and concentration (2)
Difficulty controlling breathing quality (5)	Posing in a way that is likely to improve breathing awareness (1)

### *The meaning of 'proficiency'*

The yoga diaries show that the practitioner continually wishes for a sense of 'proficiency' in their yoga practice. In this context, 'proficiency' means improving weak poses and enacting a pose skilfully, but it is not easy to understand what a 'good pose' means in yoga since it is not quantified or scored. The goal, however, is to follow the demonstrated pose as closely as possible. In a diary entry on April 23, a practitioner writes: 'I feel that my hips are slightly higher and support the ground only by my arm, compared to the person in the video who makes the body parallel to the ground during *chaturanga dandasana* pose'. Thus, an example of gaining proficiency involves comparing oneself to the model in order to discover one's weakness.

In the diaries, the meaning of proficiency can also be found when delving into the themes of 'posing' and 'bodily sensation', specifically from the point tags 'sense of improving on a pose' and 'awareness of using the body to improve a pose'. The sentences involving these point tags indicate a variety of meanings for what 'proficiency' entails:

... change in the sense of the back, vitality, feeling of using the back, deepening of sensation, lifting easily and lightly, lightness, quietly carrying legs, control, speed control, easy to feel the weight, jump lightly like skipping, supporting weight, arm fatigue, reduced body tremor, stability, weight distribution, height of leg, significant irritation around the pelvis, stretching on the upper body, keeping balance, sharp pain in the left scapula, pain due to relieving the stiffness, stamina remaining ...

Rather than the desire to approach an ideal demonstration, more emphasis is placed on bodily and kinaesthetic senses that practitioners are inwardly conscious of. For example, they discussed pain, fatigue, or other significant irritations when describing proficiency. In yoga, which involves the repetition of stationary poses, the practitioner seeks proficiency through acquiring and refining their bodily senses and movements.

Specifically, the primary meaning of proficiency seems to involve gaining a sense of the body, or the practitioner's 'back'. In the theme, 'bodily sensation', sentences with the point tag, 'body part that is difficult to be conscious of', indicate that the back is often described as one of these regions, as well as the lower abdomen and scapula. The back is depicted in the yoga diary as follows:

... unable to use power, unnecessary flesh, the unknown area where consciousness does not reach, unpleasant feeling, heavy, extra, useless, sense of flesh, uncontrollable, chunks of flesh, hard, vast undeveloped, how to be conscious of it is unknown ...

The back involves uncomfortable feelings, which is part of one's consciousness and sense of control, so yoga attempts to raise awareness of this. The sentences attached to the point tag, 'developing a sense of the body', began

by noticing how consciousness did not reach this part. However, with continual effort, they directed their sensations and movements to control these regions.

Proficiency, as the acquisition and refinement of sensation, may also be observed in the theme, 'breathing'. The initial effort (from April to May) of matching one's breathing with the video's instructions was replaced by gaining awareness of various breathing qualities (from May to August). Some breathing characteristics were expressed in the diaries as follows:

... exaggerated breathing, regular breathing, evenly regulated breathing, breathing out and breathing in rapidly, blocked breath, breathing in a vacuum state, breath out like spitting as the moment of over lifting, breathing like a sigh, breath that makes a noise, breath that rubs the vocal cords, normal transparent breath, breath sucking with the mouth, breath with a constant rhythm, breathing that self-controlled ...

The conscious effort to explore and control these various qualities of the breath has been refined, and other bodily regions described were the stomach, spine, ribs, lower abdomen, throat, torso, and ribcage.

In yoga, the practitioner's meaning of 'proficiency' was examined through their descriptions by using embodied meta-cognition verbalisation. The general thinking on this topic converged toward the question of why they practiced yoga in the first place. Rather than seeing 'proficiency' as approaching the ideal pose, they desired to pursue a greater renewal of their bodily sensations in each practice.

### *Shifting issues*

In the yoga diary, two to eight 'issues' were revealed in each entry, which includes topics related to the practitioner's improvement demands, pondering, and questions. Ten issues were found, which appeared in two or more diary entries. These issues were not established before practice, but rather, they were discovered later in the yoga diary. The ten issues listed below can be further divided into four themes: 'pose', 'body', 'breath', and 'concentration'.

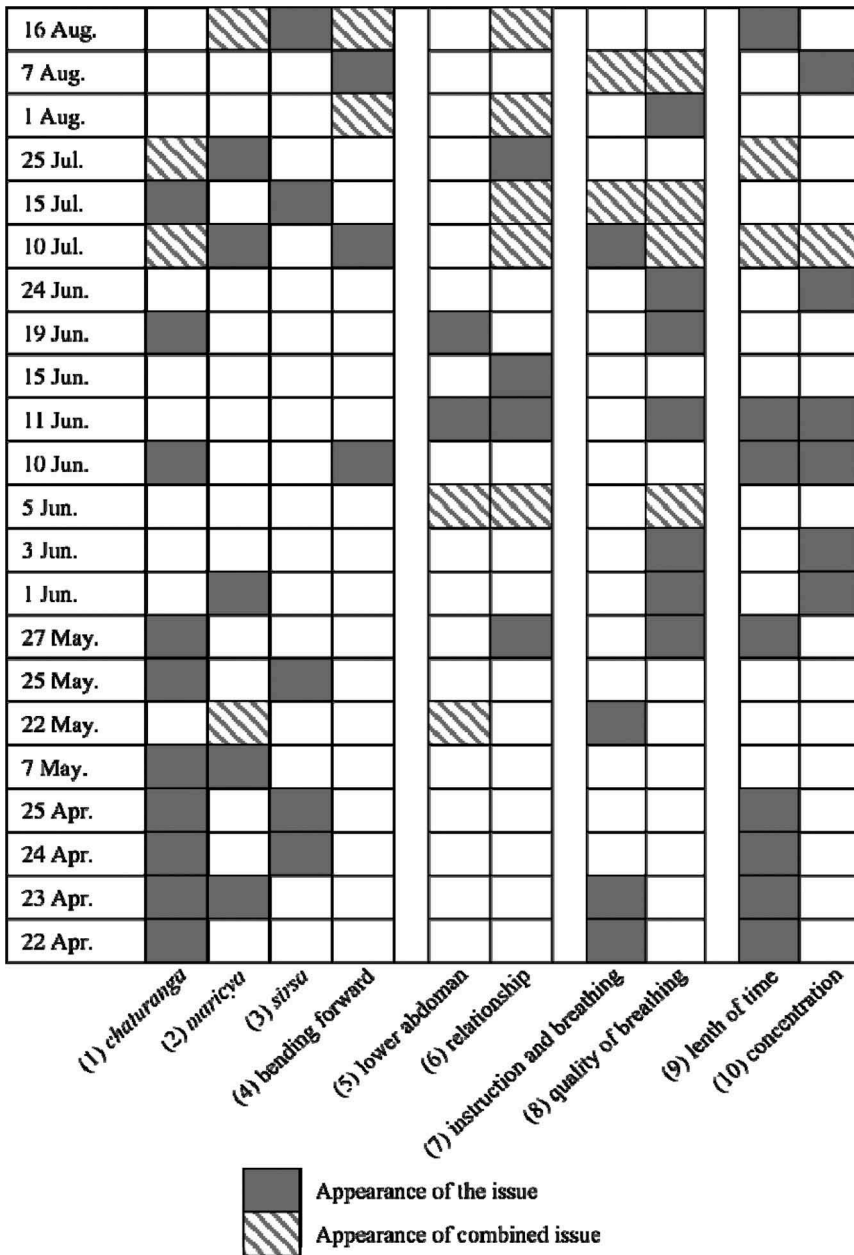
Pose: (1) *chaturanga dandasana*, (2) *maricyasana*, (3) *sirsasana*, (4) bending forward

Bodily sensation: (5) weakness in the lower abdomen, (6) relationship between body consciousness and movement

Breath: (7) instruction and breathing, (8) quality of breathing

Concentration: (9) length of time, (10) concentration

Figure 1 shows how these issues shift over time. For example, the '(9) length of time' issue shifted to the issue of '(10) concentration'. In April,



**Figure 1.** Ten shifting issues in the 'yoga diary'.

descriptions of the eighty-minute class as lengthy and tedious indicates that the practitioners were dealing with the issue of concentration to some extent, but in June, the issue shifted to be explicitly a '(10) concentration' issue. They attempted to detach from emerging distractions in order to focus on body

consciousness. Also, the '(7) instruction and breathing' issue shifted to be a '(8) quality of breathing' problem. In other words, the attempt to align one's breathing with the instructions had changed to involve the improvement of their individual breathing.

Sometimes, issues would also combine, which is what the striped squares on the table represent (i.e. two or more combined issues). On May 22, for example, the issues of '(2) *maricyasana*' and '(5) weakness of the lower abdomen' had combined to create the new issue of '*maricyasana*/lower abdominal weakness'. The practitioner also noticed how a new issue that appeared on this day may provide a solution to the *maricyasana* pose that had been an ongoing issue for the past few weeks.

On July 10, the 'ribcage' problem appeared in terms of the '(6) relationship between body consciousness and movement' issue, which meant that it was difficult to be aware of it. Consequently, these problems combined with the 'breathing' issue, which led to it blending with the long-time '(1) *chaturanga dandasana*' issue. This issue that combined three separate problems was written in the practitioner's yoga diary on July 10:

When I lower the ribcage to the ground, I lower and at the same time push it toward the front as if I am lifting it, the ribcage not the chest, and then connect to *urdhvamukha svanasana* pose. Then, the pose became tightened up and stability increased.

The task of trying to move while being aware of the 'chest' hinted that the issue with the pose involved the 'ribcage instead of the chest'.

To summarise, the practitioner's tasks were continually transferred, combined, and transformed during the practice period, creating to-and-fro movements between the background and foreground of the body. To question an action, generate challenges, and seek improvement implies that one is going beyond the yoga practice and reflecting on both the practice and discipline. Continually repeating the yoga practice and experiencing reflection with the meta-cognitive method may have created a transformation of the practice.

## Final considerations

As a practical example of education through the lens of somaesthetics, yoga practice with an embodied meta-cognition verbalisation technique was examined. This paper presented a broad notion of education as a constant pursuit of change moving towards an improved state in one's life. From the perspective of somaesthetics, improvement is an aesthetic process that involves establishing a lifestyle rather than an ethical norm. In other words, practicing to surpass one's limits and deepen the capacity for self-cultivation are part of education's constant itinerary. In this regard, conceptualizing somaesthetics as a form of education may provide insight into other concepts and events related to education. It

should be possible, therefore, to explore a new perspective of the current education system's typical image. For example, an approach to 'sports education' or 'mathematics' that embodies 'education as a practice in somaesthetics' may be possible. This is a useful idea for a long-term vision of the education system. From the viewpoint of somaesthetics, improvement begins with body awareness, the to-and-fro motion between the body and its experience, transformation, and philosophical living as self-cultivation. These are essential focal points for education, which are called, 'education as a practice in somaesthetics'.

Sport, as a performative somatic experience and educational tool, is a reasonable approach for practicing somaesthetics, as it provides the opportunity to alter one's habits concerning posture and movement. Regarding not only the movements, a reflective sports practice in somaesthetics can be extended to include feelings and affections, such as passion, excitement, pleasure, and depression. Consequently, it can lead to the practice of philosophy, which is questioning 'why am I playing this?' or 'what does it mean to play sports?' This kind of reflection provides us with the ability to stand outside of the sports world and shape our style from a meta-perspective.

In a sense, a sport is already a practice in somaesthetics since the players are endlessly seeking transformation, which mostly occurs during practices rather than in the middle of games. Internal tasks are voluntarily established to obtain improvement in a way that is dynamic and involves practice as well as continuous, circular change. While they train, a person will check their posture, feelings in their body, and have kinaesthetic awareness. Somaesthetics encourages sports players to understand that sports are not unique to the arena, but rather, they are broader and more intertwined with their lives (e.g. weight training, walking on the street, taking video lessons, reading books, discussion, and education). Experiential somaesthetics with slow, static movements (e.g. yoga, *zazen*, the Feldenkrais method) is an appropriate tool for inspiring these tasks.

Although the practice is ongoing, I explored the meaning of the practitioner's experiences of 'proficiency' and their perception of the steadily transforming tasks in their yoga practice within a limited period. The introspection for this paper was intertwined with numerous past events, such as the guidance of my past teachers, yoga books, classes I teach, magazines, and videos. Simply performing yoga may not necessarily lead to 'education as a practice in somaesthetics', but instead, it involves the conscious process of facing one's current bodily experience that consists of past relationships, the endless desire for improvement, and the process of creating a self-style through these efforts.

## Notes

1. Somaesthetics points out that the bodily dimension, which is a critical dimension of self-knowledge and one of the essential concerns of philosophy, has long been excluded from traditional Western philosophy. The somatic self indicates the inevitable nature of the body when considering the self and existence (Shusterman 2012, 68–90).
2. As Shusterman (2012, 321–326) notes, an aesthetic concept of ‘style’ has ambiguous characteristics (e.g. honorific/nonevaluative, generic/personal, conscious/unconscious, voluntary/involuntary, permanent/contextual). By ‘somatic style’, Shusterman is attempting to describe how style is engraved in our bodies (as the etymology of ‘style’ indicates). The main axis supporting style is bodily sensation, and so, to change one’s style is to change oneself.
3. A study that inspired the discussion of this characteristic of knowledge (e.g. embodied knowledge, life knowledge) is *The Tacit Dimension*, by Michael Polanyi (1983). The tacit dimension of knowledge implies that the human act of knowing occurs not only in the explicit dimension but also in the subconscious dimension.
4. A first-person methodology is a research method that is primarily in the field of consciousness studies; it attempts to approach the subconscious dimension of knowledge. The claims of Varela and Shear (1999) first sparked interest due to this methodology. Unlike traditional scientific methods (e.g. large populations, statistical processing, and objectivity), this method adopts subjectivity and is characterised by an individual or small population. Unlike traditional scientific research, typicality and subjectivity are the first-person methodology’s defining characteristics. As with Suwa’s (2016) study, the accumulation of first-person studies may be interpreted to show patterns in either slumps or improvements. However, it aims to deal with experiences that can only be established by subjectivity. In addition to Suwa’s study, the participatory study (*Tojisha Kenkyu*) of a special education support programme was conducted in Japan (Kono 2013).
5. I referred to Kuwayama, Koseki, and Suwa (2018) regarding their instructions for attaching point tags.

## Disclosure statement

There are no conflicts of interest to declare.

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