

**The Perceptions of Alexander Technique in
UK Higher Education Music Institutions**

**Alexander Technique Teachers,
Instrumental/Vocal Teachers, and Music
Students**

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Abstract

Alexander Technique (AT), despite not being originally developed for musicians, is a psychophysical educational practice promoted in many UK Higher Education (HE) music specialist institutions (i.e. music conservatoires and independent HE music institutions) and some university music departments in order to help musicians deal with playing-related challenges. While a growing body of medical and health care research investigates the effectiveness of AT in the treatment of several medical conditions, fewer studies have evaluated the efficacy of AT in relation to music performance anxiety, performance, and muscle tension. Lee (2019) explored the integration of AT in five HE music institutions in the USA, Canada and the UK from the perspective of five AT teachers; however, there is scope to extend this through investigating the perceptions of additional stakeholders: students and instrumental/vocal teachers.

This thesis extends Lee's (2019) research by investigating the perceptions of AT among AT teachers, instrumental/vocal teachers, and music students in UK HE music institutions. Qualitative data were collected through two interview studies (19 AT teachers and 11 instrumental/vocal teachers) and one survey study (133 students); these uncovered views on institutional and pedagogical aspects concerning AT. Findings demonstrate that AT is largely seen as a valuable tool for musicians; benefits extend beyond physical outcomes and include educational aspects relating to self-awareness and thinking processes. A collaborative institutional environment could be necessary for AT teachers to develop their work; however, the communication of the characteristics of AT might need to be enhanced to improve further understanding of AT and, potentially, its recognition within HE and beyond. This research has implications for the role and funding of AT in UK HE music institutions, the professionalisation of AT teachers, modes of delivery of AT, and collaboration between AT teachers and instrumental/vocal teachers.

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List of Abbreviations

Alexander Technique (AT)

Higher Education (HE)

Independent Higher Education Music Institution (IHEMI)

Instrumental/Vocal (I/V)

Instrumental/Vocal teacher (IVT)

Instrumental/Vocal teachers (IVTs)

Music Conservatoire (MC)

Professional Association of Alexander Teachers (PAAT)

The Interactive Teaching Method (ITM)

The Society of Teachers of the Alexander Technique (STAT)

United Kingdom (UK)

University Music Department (UMD)

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Author's Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work, has been written by me and has not been submitted for any previous degree. Due references have been provided on all supporting literatures and resources.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background: The health and well-being of professional musicians and Higher Education music students

Professional musicians undergo a great amount of physical and mental stress to achieve high standards of musical expertise (Watson, 2009). This dedication can lead to the development of psychophysical issues affecting their lives both as performers and human beings (Rosset i Llobet & Odam, 2007). In the last decades, many research studies have been conducted to investigate the incidence and the nature of these problems; the results of these studies reveal that a large number of musicians suffer for their art and develop a diverse range of psychophysical disorders, such as injuries to the musculoskeletal system, performance-related issues of neurological origin (e.g. musicians' focal dystonia), vocal impairments, music performance anxiety, sleeping disorders and insomnia (Cammarota et al., 2007; Cruder et al., 2018; Détári & Egermann, 2022; Kenny et al., 2014; Kok et al., 2016; Steinmetz et al., 2015; Zaza, 1998).

A number of psychological, physical and social factors have been considered to influence playing-related musculoskeletal disorders. For example, the number of playing hours, the biomechanics of playing, posture, an abrupt increase in the playing load, and stress are considered to contribute to the development of those issues (Baadjou et al., 2016; Jacukowicz, 2016; Rousseau et al., 2021; Rousseau et al., 2023; Wu, 2007). Similarly, music performance anxiety is reported to be affected by intertwined factors, such as musicians' individual characteristics, the performance environment, and the level of preparation (Kenny, 2011; Matei & Ginsborg, 2017; Papageorgi et al., 2007).

Literature suggests that professional musicians may develop other types of conditions that are not directly related to the act of playing/singing. Instead, these are a consequence of the challenges that musicians face during their professional lives, such as building a music career, which can affect their mental health and well-being. A study commissioned by Help Musicians UK revealed that a huge number of musicians suffer from depression, with a high percentage affected by panic attacks and/or high levels of anxiety (Gross & Musgrave, 2016). These findings are corroborated by other

studies investigating psychological well-being among musicians working in diverse musical contexts (see Ackermann et al., 2012, in relation to professional orchestral musicians).

The incidence of psychophysical problems among professional musicians aligns with that among Higher Education (HE) music students (Baadjou et al., 2016). A high number of HE music students have been found to experience playing-related musculoskeletal disorders (Steinmetz et al., 2012; Williamon & Thompson, 2006), high levels of fatigue, stress, depression (Hildebrandt et al., 2012) and severe music performance anxiety (Robson & Kenny, 2017; Williamon & Thompson, 2006). In addition, recent investigations revealed poorer general health conditions among HE music students. Excessive focus on music performance has been stated to inhibit healthy behaviours such as 'physical activity, nutrition education or stress management training' in comparison with amateur musicians (Antonini Philippe et al., 2019, p. 6); likewise, musical practice and learning have been reported to be a barrier to preserving music students' healthy lifestyles (Perkins et al., 2017).

However, Matei (2019) advocated for a careful interpretation of the findings on musicians' health and well-being, which often result in 'sensationalist claims' that can generate 'unnecessary stress' (p. 16). According to the author, 'many of the authors of the studies ... use terms that are only loosely defined, make assumptions and report methodologically flawed investigations' (Matei, 2019, p. 15). For example, the variances of definitions through which pain or playing-related symptoms have been assessed made it difficult to conduct systematic reviews (Rotter et al., 2020; Silva et al., 2015). Nonetheless, a careful interpretation of the findings does not equate to overlooking the potential high prevalence of the issues but instead points towards improving the quality of future research studies investigating health and well-being matters among musicians.

1.2 Health support in HE music institutions: The Alexander Technique

Health support for HE music students has received increasing attention due to the incidence of health-related problems among musicians (Zander et al., 2010). A few

documented health education¹ programmes have been developed to raise awareness among conservatoire music students about the importance of establishing and maintaining habits for good health while pursuing musical excellence (e.g. Baadjou et al., 2018). These, however, were considered to be poorly designed and assessed (Matei & Ginsborg, 2021). In 2015, the international network ‘Healthy Conservatoires’ was established (Healthy Conservatoires, n. d.), but most health education programmes in the UK at the time of Norton (2016) seemed to occur in the music conservatoire sector. The study by Matei et al. (2018) was conducted to design and evaluate a health education programme for first-year undergraduate music students at a British conservatoire: even though the programme did not have the expected impact on improving musicians’ health, the study resulted in positive primary outcomes, such as increasing students’ awareness of health-related issues. Interestingly, recent information shows that UK university music departments (UMDs) might also offer health and well-being modules (for example, see the undergraduate module at the University of York on ‘Musicians’ Health & Wellness’²); yet, to the best of my knowledge, these are not documented in peer-reviewed articles and thus it is not clear how many UMDs are offering these modules.

In addition, music students are offered the opportunity to deal with their issues through health support services. A number of UK HE music conservatoires (MCs), independent HE music institutions³ (IHEMIs), and UMDs have been providing music

¹ Since the terms *health promotion* and *health education* are often used interchangeably (Raingruber, 2014), it is worth providing a clarification of the two terms. *Health education* refers to providing individuals with health-related information and thus stimulating behavioural-change approaches; in contrast, *health promotion* is as a complex socio-political process that implies both developing health education and addressing health factors to reform social structures (Matei et al., 2018). All this aims at building an environment in which all individuals are empowered to improve their quality of life (Whitehead, 2018). According to Matei et al. (2018), health education is more applicable to the context of HE music curricula due to the complexity of the health promotion process.

² The webpage on the module ‘Musicians’ Health & Wellness’ at the University of York can be retrieved at <https://www.york.ac.uk/students/studying/manage/programmes/module-catalogue/module/MUS00153C/2021-22>

³ The term *independent HE music institutions* will be used to define institutions that are not part of the 11 UK Conservatoires but that are music specialist institutions and provide HE music degrees, such as the Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts or the Institute of Contemporary Music Performance in London. I have decided to use this definition because the Institute of Contemporary Music Performance, for example, is defined as ‘an independent provider of modern music education’ (Institute of Contemporary Music Performance, 2023a, n. p.)

students with the opportunity to take part in somatic/psychophysical⁴ techniques; the Alexander Technique is one of these (The Institute of Contemporary Music Performance [ICMP], 2023a; The Society of Teachers of the Alexander Technique [STAT], 2023i; Valentine, 2004; Valentine et al., 2022). Before examining the Alexander Technique (AT) in the context of my research, a brief introduction to it will be provided (a detailed examination of what the AT entails will be discussed in Chapter 2).

1.3 The AT in brief: Its origins and the legacy of its founder

The AT originated from the personal experimentations of the Tasmanian-born actor Frederick Mathias Alexander (1869-1955), who is often referred to as F. M. Alexander. The life of F. M. Alexander has been illustrated extensively by a number of biographical works (Bloch, 2004; Murray, 2019; Staring, 2005). In particular, the doctoral thesis by Staring (2005) claimed to provide a historical analysis of F. M. Alexander's life and a demythologisation of his figure and work for 'further steps in Alexander Technique professionalization' (p. 14). Staring's doctoral thesis was later criticised by Fisher (2020)⁵ but it may help us reflect on sceptical perceptions of the AT in academic contexts with a strong research tradition, such as universities (this will be examined subsequently within this thesis). However, since my thesis does not aim to provide an historical evaluation of the AT but instead focuses on the perceptions of the AT in HE music contexts, it is recommended to consult the above-mentioned sources for more detailed information about F. M. Alexander's life. The following collates the essential information gathered from reading these and other sources, such as the doctoral thesis by Fitzgerald (2007).

F. M. Alexander, after failing to heal his throat and vocal fold troubles through normal stages of healing (e.g. vocal rest; medical treatments of that time), managed to cure himself by creating his own system: as Fitzgerald (2007) stated, 'without recourse to medical treatment, he developed a systematic way to improve and maintain his

⁴ For clarity, the term *somatic/psychophysical techniques* will be used to include all those disciplines that are reported to have physical and/or psychological benefits. This classification seems a grey area and open to debate (Rosenberg, 2008). The AT is often classified as a Complementary Alternative Medicine (CAM), but as Norton (2016) claimed, 'there is some confusion as to what should be considered as CAM' (p. 15).

⁵ Fisher (2020), for example, stated: 'Staring attacks the Alexander Technique community for presenting "obstacles to professionalisation", which is assuming that the Alexander Technique is not professional. Staring does not define what professionalisation means' (p. 38).

coordination and thereby solve and prevent further problems' (p. 8). Through his life, F. M. Alexander disseminated his ideas not only through his teaching but also his writing; for example, a self-account of the origin of the so-called AT is detailed in F. M. Alexander's third book, *The use of the self* (1932/1990).

F. M. Alexander moved to London in April 1904 and continued promoting his system. After a brief period in the United States of America (1914 to 1922), he returned to London where he established the first training course for people wanting to become AT teachers (February, 1931). F. M. Alexander died in 1955, and his legacy was kept alive by the number of AT teachers who have been training throughout the years, such as Irene Tasker, Marjory Barlow, and Patrick Macdonald to name a few (McCann, 2023).

To become a qualified Alexander Technique teacher in the UK, one must complete a three-year training course offered by accredited organisations such as the Society of Teachers of the Alexander Technique (STAT, 2023a), Interactive Teaching Method Association (ITM, 2018), Professional Association of Alexander Teachers (PAAT, 2022a) and Alexander Technique International (ATI, 2022). At present, 'there aren't currently any laws or regulations stating what training someone must have to teach the Alexander technique' (NHS, 2021). The accredited AT organisations, however, encourage their AT teachers to register voluntarily with the Complementary and Natural Healthcare Council (CNHC).⁶

In his last book, F. M. Alexander (1941/2015) stated the AT was 'primarily a technique for the development of the control of human reaction' (p. 129). However, Cole (2022) claimed that 'there is considerable confusion about its aims, principles and value' (xix). This directly points to the issues that my thesis examines.

1.4 Research aims

Recent peer-reviewed literature on the AT has examined the effectiveness of the AT in different areas, such as health research (Little et al., 2008; MacPherson et al., 2015) and biomechanics (Cacciatore et al., 2011); more recently, Cacciatore et al. (2020)

⁶ 'CNHC is the UK voluntary regulator for complementary healthcare practitioners that was set up with government support to protect the public by providing a UK voluntary register of complementary practitioners. CNHC's register has been approved as an Accredited Register by the Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care. This means CNHC has met the Professional Standards Authority's demanding standards' (PAAT, 2022c, n. p.).

provided a preliminary model explaining the mechanisms of the AT, whereas Kinsey et al. (2021) explained the ways in which the 'long-term application of the AT' can result in outcomes of non-physical nature, such as 'self-acceptance, positive relationships, and personal growth' (p. 8). In the music field, there is limited evidence investigating the effectiveness of the AT in relation to reducing tension, improving music performance, and reducing performance anxiety (Klein et al., 2014; Valentine et al., 1995; Valentine et al., 2022); however, the number of studies has slowly been growing, despite the small scale of the research being conducted and some methodological limitations (see Davies, 2020a; Davies, 2020b; Loo et al., 2015 — an extensive literature review will be provided in Chapter 2).

As mentioned above, a number of HE music institutions in the UK claim to offer music students the possibility to take AT sessions. The websites of institutions such as the Royal Academy of Music (2023), Leeds Conservatoire (2023), Royal Birmingham Conservatoire (2023), Royal Northern College of Music (2023), the music departments at the University of York⁷ and the University of St Andrews (2023), and the Institute of Contemporary Music Performance (2023b) in the UK state that they provide music students with the possibility to take AT sessions or include AT teachers in their lists of approved tutors. However, inclusion of these institutions in research has been limited. The Royal College of Music in London was the only UK institution included in the doctoral thesis by Lee (2019), which compared the provision of the AT in five institutions in three different countries (United States of America, Canada and the UK); in this study, the views of five AT teachers were examined, whereas students' perspectives were reported based on existing course evaluations.

Despite this apparent use of the AT in some UK HE music institutions, Matei et al. (2018) and Matei (2019) stated that research evidence supporting the provision of the AT within UK HE music institutions was still lacking. To substantiate their point, Matei et al. (2018) referred to the review of complementary natural therapies by Baggoley (2015) in Australia, which had concluded that the AT may be beneficial for 'improving pain and disability in the short term (up to 3 months)' but '[f]or all other

⁷ See <https://www.york.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/courses/ba-music/> where there is mention about the AT. The music department at the University of York recently became part of the School of Arts and Creative Technologies (<https://www.york.ac.uk/arts-creative-technologies>); however, since I conducted this research while the music department was still a separate identity, I will continue referring to it using the term *music department*.

clinical conditions, the effectiveness of Alexander technique is uncertain because of insufficient evidence' (p. 33). Therefore, the health and well-being programme that the Matei et al. (2018) trialled at a British conservatoire did not include participation in AT classes (Matei & Ginsborg, 2021; Matei et al., 2018), even though the website of the institution in which the course was possibly tested⁸ currently lists the AT among the approaches offered to support students' health and well-being. The quality of Baggoley's (2015) review, however, was questioned by Wardle (2016) who concluded that the generalisation of the findings should be interpreted with caution and that it 'should serve more as a call for further research [on complementary practices]' (p. 9). Furthermore, Matei (2019) cited Aetna (2016) to support their argument on the lack of or limited research evidence on the AT; it is not possible to retrieve the link to Aetna (2016), but the reliability of Aetna (2022) can be doubted because the reference list includes older investigations on the AT and not more recent robust studies such as Little et al. (2008) and MacPherson et al. (2015). Therefore, Matei et al.'s (2018) scepticism towards the AT points to the need for further research on the AT, which this study contributes to addressing.

This thesis focuses on the perceptions of the AT in UK HE music institutions. The fact that some UK HE music institutions endorse the AT warrants development of Lee (2019) and thereby supports measures to investigate the AT among a larger and more diverse sample of participants: AT teachers, instrumental/vocal teachers (IVTs), and music students working and studying in UK HE music institutions (MCs, IHEMIs, and UMDs). The interdependence of these categories is further supported by positive projects investigating collaborative models between AT teachers, IVTs, and music students in HE music institutions in Norway and USA (Fox & Romaniuk, 2021; Jørgensen, 2015).

In this research I collected qualitative data through two interview studies and one survey study to investigate the views of these three categories of people. AT and instrumental/vocal teachers' views were gathered through interviews, whereas music students responded through a questionnaire. Most of the previous investigations of the AT in the music field were concerned with investigating the effectiveness of the AT; however, I was interested in providing an understanding of the AT in a real-world

⁸ It can be speculated that for ethical concerns, the anonymity of the HE music institution was preserved.

setting since the study by Valentine et al. (1995) had unveiled participants' views of AT sessions in an imposed situation in which participants were purposefully recruited to participate in the research. I aimed to uncover perspectives on the AT in relation to a number of aspects, such as the perception of the nature of the AT, its provision and promotion in HE music institutions, benefits and risks, perceived limitations and potential unhelpful experiences, and aspects relating to the teaching format (one-to-one and group) and mode of delivery (face-to-face and online).

These themes were sparked by my interest in the subject and engagement with AT published materials, my professional background as a classical guitar teacher and performer, and my educational experiences in diverse cultural learning environments: Italy, Sweden, and the UK (an account of this will be given in the next section 1.5). Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic did not allow me to undertake active research; yet, I aimed at providing a comprehensive exploration of the AT from the triangulation of the multiple perspectives of AT teachers, IVTs, and music students with the hope of assisting HE institutions and stakeholders in making informed choices about the AT, shedding light about potential controversial views about it, and its application to music practice, with implications not only for UK HE music institutions but also for AT teacher training courses and other educational settings. When devising the interview and survey questions, I reflected on the different educational pathways and students' career aspirations — which may extend far beyond music performance — and, considering the research studies on the AT within the medical field, the potential place of the AT as a tool for assisting the health of both students and staff. I therefore hoped to provide an understanding of the current situation to extend the body of research of a still under-researched discipline, especially in relation to these diverse institutional contexts.

1.5 The AT and me

I heard about the AT about 10 years ago during my musical training in Italy. At that time, I was a music conservatoire student experiencing some discomfort when playing: stiffness in my shoulder, inconsistent breathing and difficulties with balancing the guitar with my body. These coupled with performance anxiety symptoms that were causing me stress in advance of public performances. My teacher gave me some advice based on his own experience; however, I had never felt at ease in disclosing all my

issues with them because I did not want to be regarded as a weak player, and their advice was appreciated but not particularly relevant to me. Also, the educational environment was rather competitive, especially among peers, and each one of us in the class wanted to be regarded as a good player, if not the best. Therefore, since my institution did not have relevant health support for music students, I turned to the Internet for solutions and found that the AT was one of the strategies musicians used to reduce their health problems. I was immediately intrigued by the philosophy underpinning the technique but, unfortunately, I could not find any practitioner in my region and discarded the idea of taking AT sessions.

When I went to Sweden to study at the Malmö Academy of Music in 2014, I seized the opportunity to take some AT group sessions with a Norwegian teacher. The department subsidised a handful of lessons — I think five of them — and even though I noticed the potential usefulness of the AT in developing body awareness, I felt I did not learn much in a group setting. However, when I came to the UK to undertake a Master's in Music Education at the University of York, I took regular one-to-one lessons with the AT teacher in the institution for several weeks (except for the first taster session, all the other lessons were self-funded) and then, to expand my understanding of the AT, I continued taking AT lessons with another AT teacher working in a private setting. I stopped taking lessons in 2019 before embarking on this PhD.

The two AT teachers had individual ways to approaching their AT lessons, but all of the lessons had a positive impact on my life: I started gaining a better understanding of my body in relation to the environment and, most importantly, I was made aware of the ability of recognising unhelpful habits of movement and thought, pausing before reacting to a stimulus and then making conscious choices. This process in particular inspired an effective practice strategy to change unhelpful habitual movements when playing (e.g. fingerings) or to recognise and change negative self-talk that often occur before playing a difficult passage: a strategy that I have been using in my own playing and that I invite my pupils to try in their guitar practice; interestingly, one of my colleagues was surprised about its effectiveness when they tried it in their teaching. Throughout the years, however, I felt that my understanding of the AT and of the processes involved started making more sense when reading F. M. Alexander's original writings during the first year of my PhD. Reading about the AT seemed to have clarified the embodied experiences that I had gained through the practical sessions. In

fact, I recall arguing with one of the AT teachers because I wanted more explanations; I could have expressed myself with more care, to be fair, but I was eager to change, develop, and understand.

The idea for this PhD thesis grew out of my interest in the AT and the various conversations I had during my Master's study in the UK, echoing what was raised by Cole (2022), which I obviously came across years later: some people had no clue about the AT, others had heard about it but did not know what it was. The AT? What is it? Is it about posture? Is it a relaxation technique? Is it some voodoo-new age-spiritual practice? Some had experienced it and found it useful, others did not want to have anything to do with it. This was quite interesting, and I was motivated to bring all these experiences to the surface and to pursue this research (I address research objectivity through a reflexive section in Chapter 3).

1.6 Overview of the thesis

This chapter established the context of this study and introduced the research aims. An extended review of literature on the AT is presented in Chapter 2, including the emerging overarching research question as well as the ancillary questions that this study investigates. Chapter 3 illustrates the methodology, the data collection methods, the data analysis, and considerations relating to research rigour and ethical concerns. The findings of this study are outlined in Chapters 4-13 and are organised according to the individual categories: AT teachers, IVTs, and music students; each chapter also contains a discussion of the findings. The different ancillary questions are addressed in these separate chapters. The overarching research question is addressed in Chapter 14, which provides a triangulation of the findings and discusses the emerging issues. The final chapter summarises the key findings and implications, with an examination of the limitations of this study and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature review

This chapter discusses the relevant literature on the AT and is made up of four main sections. In the first section, an overview of the sources relating to the AT will be given considering the diversity of the materials available at the time of this research. In the second section, the main research question will be identified drawing from the research literature on Higher Education (HE); the concept of the perception of the AT and its contextualisation within UK HE music institutions will be explored in relation to AT teachers, instrumental/vocal teachers (IVTs), and music students. Following this, the key themes underpinning the main research question will be examined as well as the emerging six groups of ancillary research questions. Specifically, an analysis of the definition, the provision, the promotion and recognition of the AT within UK HE music institutions will be undertaken in the third main section, 2.3, whereas the fourth one, 2.4, will analyse aspects relating to the teaching and practice of the AT (i.e. hands-on guidance, the teaching format, the mode of delivery, and a triadic lesson). The chapter concludes by summarising the research questions that emerge from this literature review.

2.1 Overview of the sources

The review of the literature on the AT reveals different strands of sources. Firstly, one includes F. M. Alexander's four books and original writings: *Man's supreme inheritance: Conscious guidance and control in relation to human evolution in civilization* (1910/1946), *Constructive conscious control of the individual* (1923/1987), *The use of the self: Its conscious direction in relation to diagnosis, functioning and the control of reaction* (1932/1990), *The universal constant in living* (1941/2015), and *The Alexander Technique: The essential writings of F. Matthias Alexander* edited by Maisel (Alexander, 1967/1989). However, Fitzgerald (2007) pointed out that F. M. Alexander's writing style could be problematic and 'many AT teacher educators lack the exegetical skills to critically interpret Alexander, and they necessarily skirt over the complexity of his texts' (p. 103), which hints at the challenges of engaging with F. M. Alexander's style of writing and the content of these texts (see Chapter 1 of Fitzgerald, 2007, for a complete analysis). In light of the complexity of F. M. Alexander's books and the fact

that they were out of print between 1957 and 1985 (Staring, 2005), another strand of sources is represented by educational and self-instruction books on the AT written by the subsequent generations of AT teachers who have sought to communicate the AT through a less erudite writing style, raising questions about the evolution of the AT and its interpretations over time. Among these, there are Barlow (1973/1990), Jones (1976/2019), Gelb (2004), MacDonald (1999), and, in direct application to music, Kleinman and Buckocke (2013), and de Alcantara (2013).

A third strand comprises websites of AT professional organisations, whereas a fourth relates to material with a research output, such as doctoral theses and peer-reviewed sources on the AT. There has been a growing body of medical research investigating the effectiveness of the AT in releasing back and neck pain, improving gait and balance, and supporting people with other medical conditions such as Parkinson's disease (e.g. Becker et al., 2018; Little et al., 2008; MacPherson et al., 2015; O'Neill et al., 2015; Stallibrass et al., 2002; Wenham et al., 2018). Conversely, the research within the music field is relatively sparse. Some studies have evaluated the efficacy of the AT in relation to performance anxiety, muscle tension, music performance, respiratory functions and posture (Davies, 2020a; Davies, 2020b; Klein et al., 2014; Loo et al., 2015; Valentine et al., 1995). Furthermore, there is also a large amount of online material scattered around the web; this may be of varying quality and divergent in the extent to which these sources influence the perceptions of the AT. The website *Alexander Technique Science* (2023) seems to be the only peer-reviewed site dedicated to fostering a scientific understanding of the AT through the works of neuroscientists and physicists such as Tim Cacciatore, Rajal Cohen, and Patrick Johnson. Furthermore, the specialist publisher on the AT, Mouritz (2022a), is involved in promoting a comprehensive understanding of the AT through its rich catalogues. While this thesis does not aim to provide a historical and philosophical evaluation of the AT, acknowledging all of these sources is useful to frame my research and subsequently interpret the views that this study intends to uncover.

2.2 The overarching central research question

Chapter 1 has already illustrated that this thesis intends to address the perceptions of the AT among AT teachers, IVTs, and music students in UK HE music institutions. The following sections will examine the concept of perception in relation to the context of

UK HE music institutions and the three categories of people (AT teachers, IVTs, and music students), providing further justifications for this research focus.

2.2.1 Factors affecting perception: The context

Perception has been defined in *The SAGE encyclopaedia of qualitative research methods* as 'a mode of apprehending reality and experience through the senses, thus enabling discernment of figure, form, language, behavior, and action' (Munhall, 2008, p. 607). It is a complex process involving not only individuals and their senses but also the context in which people experience reality. For example, although perception implies how individuals understand, give a meaning and react to an object or a specific situation, this process is influenced by aspects relating to the embedded context, such as 'contingency, including the temporal, history, customs, traditions, belief systems, and language' (Munhall, 2008, p. 607).

Research into HE music contexts has investigated many important issues concerning HE music institutions. In Jørgensen's (2010) review, studies on health issues were included among those investigations examining institutional human resources such as students and teachers. In a later review (Jørgensen, 2014), studies on performance anxiety, hearing damage and playing-related musculoskeletal disorders were also part of this group. It is not yet clear why Jørgensen (2014) did not mention any study about the AT (e.g. Valentine et al., 1995); however, what makes Jørgensen's (2014) review relevant to this thesis is that it highlights the importance of the context in which studies are conducted. In fact, although HE music institutions have been considered a 'homogenous group of institutions' (Jørgensen, 2014, p. 3), they have specific differences and similarities.

With regard to the AT, the research context is particularly relevant to the outcome of the investigations. Factors such as the institution in which the research has been carried out can deeply influence the results of the research. Papageorgi et al. (2010) stated that university music departments and music conservatoires 'share similarities as they both aim at educating musicians, but, at the same time, they have differences in structure and curriculum foci that can result in different educational and learning experiences for students' (p. 153). Thus, there is scope to consider how these variables associated with each context might influence the perceptions of the AT within different HE music institutions.

2.2.2 AT teachers' and IVTs' perceptions of the AT

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Lee (2019) compared the implementation of the AT in five different institutions in three countries, with the Royal College of Music in London being the only UK institution included in their study. Current research literature on the AT in the UK seems to have neglected to explore extensively AT teachers' views of their role within HE music institutions. No studies have been found investigating how AT teachers perceive themselves and their practice within UK university music departments, music conservatoires and independent HE music institutions. Thus, this present study will address this issue and fill the gap.

IVTs play a vital role in music students' lives, especially for health-related issues. Ranelli et al. (2011) highlighted the need for teachers to enhance their familiarity with injury-prevention strategies. Williamon and Thompson (2006) revealed that IVTs represented students' first source of advice on physical health and physiological well-being matters; despite being undertaken at conservatoire level only, this research showed that students would turn to their principal study teachers for advice on how to treat physical injuries or manage performance anxiety symptoms.

Although the AT has been popular among performing musicians to deal with playing-related health issues (Valentine et al., 2022), the current thesis identifies a gap in the literature concerning IVTs' perception of the AT within UK HE music institutions. Önal (2022) investigated flute instructors' views on the AT in the Turkish HE music sector; this study concluded that since some teachers were not aware of the AT, students were 'not informed about this technique' (p. 73), which suggests the potential role of IVTs in promoting the AT among students. No research to date has been found investigating IVTs' views on a number of aspects relating to the nature of the AT (e.g. what the AT is), IVTs' experiences with the AT, or the integration of AT in their teaching practice. In Norway, the *Collaborative Teaching Project*, documented in Jørgensen (2015) and Pranevičius (2019), examined instrumental teachers' perspectives on the AT through testing a teaching model based on a collaboration between AT teachers, IVTs, and music students. In spite of the positive outcomes resulting from this project, where instrumental teachers for example reported being able to effectively use their knowledge of the AT in their teaching, the general perception of the AT within the Norwegian HE music sector was not explored (this will

be examined in 2.4 in more depth). Therefore, this thesis will provide useful insights into IVTs' perceptions of the AT, investigating it within the UK HE music context.

2.2.3 HE music students' perception of the AT

In 1997, the report of the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education produced a set of recommendations known as the Dearing Report (Dearing, 1997) for UK HE institutions to follow. Following this, students have become the priority of HE institutions and have been located at the 'centre of the process of learning and teaching' (Dearing, 1997, n. p.). In fact, the report recommends that 'all institutions of higher education give high priority to developing and implementing learning and teaching strategies which focus on the promotion of students' learning' (Dearing, 1997, n. p.).

Considering this requirement, research to date has focussed on evaluating the effectiveness of the AT rather than investigating students' views of the AT, which might inform current teaching practices; indeed, much uncertainty still exists concerning AT teaching strategies within HE music institutions, given the fact that there seem to be no regulations defining AT objective teaching criteria in HE music institutions. Lee (2019), who illustrated students' views based on AT teachers' accounts and course evaluation feedback, stated that 'future inquiries are suggested to collect data directly from music students in order to gain firsthand [*sic*] information on how they value Alexander studies as part of the tertiary music training' (p. 136). Thus, there is scope for research to investigate HE music students' perceptions of the AT in order to reveal their current views about the AT (e.g. degree of awareness of the AT among music students) and potentially inform future practices and institutional provision, with implications for instrumental/vocal teaching and AT teacher training courses.

2.2.4 The central research question

The above suggests that the literature on the perceptions of the AT within HE music institutions is limited, if not almost absent, particularly within the UK. As no studies have been found evaluating the general perception of the AT among AT teachers, IVTs, and music students working and studying in UK HE music institutions, the central research question (CRQ) that emerges is:

CRQ - What are the perceptions of the AT in UK HE music institutions among Alexander Technique teachers, instrumental/vocal teachers, and music students?

In consideration of the composite nature of health issues and of HE music contexts, this research question is concerned with investigating the perceptions of the AT within different categories of people in higher music education and encompasses different aspects of the AT, which will be expanded in the next sections: namely, the definition of the AT, the provision and the promotion of the AT in the UK HE music sector, people's experiences with it (e.g. benefits/limitations) and pedagogical factors. Six groups of ancillary research questions will emerge and will be laid out at the end of each relevant section.

2.3 The definition of the AT, institutional aspects, and views on the AT

This section explores five key themes underpinning the central research question: the definition of the AT; the provision, the promotion and the recognition of the AT in UK HE music institutions; and people's views on the AT (e.g. their personal experiences). However, before proceeding with an examination of these five themes, an analysis of the theoretical foundation of the AT will be provided to provide a literature-based understanding of the AT and illustrate recurrent emerging issues at the core of this thesis.

2.3.1 Background: AT theoretical foundation - Overview and emerging issues

Several principles form the theoretical foundation of the AT. These have been unfolded in F. M. Alexander's original texts and in the vast array of educational resources available on the market (e.g. Alexander, 1910/1946; Alexander, 1923/1987; Alexander, 1932/1990; Alexander, 1941/2015; Barlow, 1973/1990; de Alcantara, 1999/2007; Kleinman & Buckocke, 2013). Cohen (2019) examined these concepts from a scientific perspective (e.g. in relation to biomechanics, neuroscience and so forth), showing the existence or the absence of scientific evidence in relation to the different

principles; however, the following does not intend to present a scientific validation of the AT principles but to provide an overview of these concepts and highlight the potential diverse interpretations of these concepts within literature, which may impact the perceptions of and the understanding of the AT in UK HE music institutions.

2.3.1.1 Unity of body and mind

One of the fundamental concepts of the AT is the indissoluble unity of body and mind. According to F. M. Alexander (1941/2015), there is no separation between these two entities and ‘every living human being is a psycho-physical unity’ (p. 35); the word *self* is used to refer to the person in its entirety (Alexander, 1932/1990). Kleinman and Buckocke (2013) analysed this concept in relation to music making, stating that ‘mind and body are continuously affecting each other’ and that the physical abilities to play an instrument are influenced by ‘how you focus your attention and what you are aware of’ (p. 59). This has resemblances with investigations relating to embodied cognition (Cohen, 2019; Van der Schyff et al., 2022). However, what is interesting is that Madden (2018), in their book on teaching the AT, suggested the use of the word *biopsychosocial* instead of *psychophysical* because it is ‘more inclusive’ as encompassing ‘the interaction of biological, psychological and social elements in our coordination’ (p. 29), which illustrates divergence in the terminology used by AT teachers and the variety of interpretations that the AT may undergo.

2.3.1.2 Habit; conscious control

The concept of habit is at the core of the AT. It relates to the habitual use of the mechanisms involved in all of the psychophysical processes characterising human beings — e.g. walking, sitting, standing up, talking. According to F. M. Alexander (1923/1987), a wrong habitual use of the organism can lead to the development of psychophysical issues which may limit the functioning of the human body system in its entirety; gaining a conscious control over the psychophysical processes would solve these issues and ‘bridge the gap between the instinctive and the conscious way of living’ (p. xxv). In music making, Kleinman and Buckocke (2013) explored the concept of habit in relation to the concept of skill. They affirmed that ‘the link between habit and skill is a close one’ and that skills can be refined only if there is a constant review of how they are performed (p. 26); additionally, they stated that habits in daily

activities inform habits while playing musical instruments. Interestingly, Madden (2018) pointed out the need to adopt a different word than habits as ‘many people use the word pejoratively’ (p. 94).

2.3.1.3 Inhibition

The principle of inhibition is directly connected to that of habit. Since the word *inhibition* caused much confusion, F. M. Alexander was forced to redefine it over time (Alexander, 1941/2015). F. M. Alexander (1941/2015) stated that inhibition is the first step to make long-lasting changes as being the ‘*act of refusing to respond* [emphasis in original]’ to a stimulus and thus reaching the plane of conscious control over ‘habitual reflex activity’ (pp. 126-127). Interpreting F. M. Alexander’s ideas, de Alcantara (1999/2007) affirmed that inhibition is ‘constantly giving up ... habits and reactions’ (p. 32). Likewise, Kleinman and Buckocke (2013) paraphrased F. M. Alexander’s thoughts, stating that inhibition is ‘the process of precluding a habit so you can choose what you are doing’ (p. 48); this can be transferred both to solve psychophysical issues that musicians face or to overcome creative difficulties by avoiding ‘predictable responses’ (p. 42).

2.3.1.4 Means whereby versus end-gaining; directions

The concept of *means whereby* has been used in the AT to describe the process through which a desired end is reached; this is in contrast with an end-gaining attitude to human activities, which is focussed on obtaining an end at any cost. According to F. M. Alexander (1923/1987), the process was more important than the actual end, and any act depended on ‘*the principle of thinking out the reasonable means whereby a certain end can be achieved* [emphasis in original]’ (p. 42). To put it simply, the means whereby are those ways through which any psychophysical act can be performed without great effort (Alexander, 1923/1987, p. 163). Kleinman and Buckocke (2013) transferred this concept to a music lesson context in which the AT teacher helps the student to achieve a desired goal through a step-by-step process, without the student directly focussing on the goal.

Direction is the word used to define the ways through which an act can be performed efficiently. Practically, directions are guiding orders accompanying the act itself; de Alcantara (1999/2007) referred to them as messages from the brain that go

to the muscles through the nerves. For example, some of these directions are *relax the neck, head forward and up, widen the back* (Alexander, 1923/1987). Although F. M. Alexander himself stated that these phrases might not always be adequate and might not exactly convey the meaning that only a practical experience can give (see Alexander, 1923/1987, pp. 108-111), they are still adopted in contemporary AT educational resources along with different approaches, such as using visual images (Kleinman & Buckocke, 2013).

2.3.1.5 Primary control

The term *primary control* was defined by F. M. Alexander in their third book *The use of the self*. It is used to ‘emphasise the prime importance of a proper USE of the head and neck [emphasis in original]’ (Barlow, 1973/1990, p. 28). As F. M. Alexander (1932/1990) stated, the *primary control* ‘depends upon a certain use of the head and the neck in relation to the use of the rest of the body’ (p. 65). Although recent investigations have proved the causal relationship between neck muscles and motor control (Loram et al., 2017), the term *primary control* has been a matter of great controversy, probably due to the obscure and almost magical nature of the term (Barlow, 1973/1990; Staring, 2005). For example, Barlow (1973/1990), one of the most devoted AT practitioners, affirmed that ‘few people would find it helpful nowadays to talk about a Primary Control’ (p. 28). Cohen (2019) indeed stated that primary control ‘is challenging to explain scientifically, as it is inconsistently defined within AT literature and is often associated with out-of-date reflex models. Most definitions include a somewhat vague idea that the neck plays a special role in use and functioning’ (p. 6). However, the word seems to be still adopted in modern AT books and chapters about the AT (Kleinman & Buckocke, 2013; Valentine et al., 2022). For example, Kleinman and Buckocke (2013) acknowledged that ‘the term *Primary Control* refers to the relationship between the head and the rest of the body [emphasis in original]’, stressing that ‘if the [head] is not in balance we will experience tension, pressure or heaviness’ (p. 31). This demonstrates that the concept still has contemporary relevance.

2.3.2 AT theoretical foundation: Emerging issues

The above sections have highlighted the theoretical foundation of the AT and the diverse approaches to describing and communicating the principles of the AT within literature. In addition, the fact that F. M. Alexander remarked on the importance of a practical experience to understand the concept of *direction* (see 2.3.1.4) has implications for the teaching of the AT in HE music contexts. All of this serves as a ground for the current study and as clarification of AT terminology, which will be helpful for understanding how the AT might be defined by different categories of people and interpreting their experiences with the AT.

2.3.3 The definition of the AT: First group of ancillary research questions

The definition of the AT is an important theme to discuss since it can be speculated that an inaccurate definition of the AT may result in an incorrect perception of the technique itself by those who may or may not want to experience it. McCann (2023) mentioned that ‘Alexander’s method changed gradually over time’ (n. p.). F. M. Alexander (1932/1990) stated that the technique ‘evolved over a period of years in ... search for a means whereby faulty conditions of use in the human organism could be improved’ (p. 21). In Chapter 1, it has already been mentioned that in their last book F. M. Alexander (1941/2015) defined the AT as ‘a technique for the development of the control of human reaction’ (p. 129). However, according to de Alcantara (1997), ‘in reality the term “Alexander Technique” has come to encompass a wide range of disparate, and at times downright contradicting, practices’ (p. 81), which reveals issues relating to the ways in which the AT could be perceived in UK HE music institutions.

The review of the definitions of the AT reveals a variety of descriptions. A recurrent theme is the self-empowerment aspect of the technique. According to Little et al. (2008), ‘lessons in the Alexander technique offer an individualised approach designed to develop lifelong skills for self care that help people recognise, understand, and avoid poor habits affecting postural tone’ (p. 1). Similarly, Woodman et al. (2018) defined the AT as ‘an embodied reflective practice that enables individuals to improve the way they go about their daily activities, through increased awareness, intentional inhibition of unwanted reaction and unnecessary action, and with more effective direction of thought’ (pp. 64-65). In its application to music making, Kleinman and Buckocke (2013) stated that ‘the technique is based on principles that help you ... to be

able to do what you want to do in the way that you choose' (p. 11). However, as can be seen, there are differences in the extent to which definitions focus on physical and non-physical benefits. The above-mentioned definition by Little et al. (2008) primarily highlights the postural benefits of the AT. Instead, another definition by Klein et al. (2014) describes that the 'AT is a psychophysical method ... [which] uses enhanced kinaesthetic awareness and voluntary inhibition to prevent non-beneficial movement patterns' (pp. 1-2). It is true that this definition mentions the potential psychophysical nature of the AT but it mostly emphasises bodily-related benefits. Saunderson and Woodman (2015), however, explained that 'the AT is an educational process' rather than a 'overtly therapeutic one' (pp. 8-9) and that 'a key strength of the AT is its applicability to all aspects of daily life' (p. 3), which hints at the AT as more than just a postural corrective practice. Nonetheless, the AT is still listed among 'therapeutic disciplines' on the website of the Royal Academy of Music (2023, n. p.)

Considering the primary aim of this thesis, namely, discovering the perceptions of the AT within UK HE music institutions, no research literature exploring how the different categories of people within UK HE music institutions define the AT has been identified. Therefore, there is the potential to uncover differences in understanding of the AT between AT teachers, IVTs, and music students. This thesis aims to bridge this gap and to analyse possible trends and conceptions of the AT within UK HME institutions. The following ancillary questions thus emerge:

1a) How is the AT defined by AT teachers?

1b) How is the AT defined by IVTs working in UK HE music institutions?

1c) How is the AT defined by music students studying in UK HE music institutions?

2.3.4 The provision of the AT: Second group of ancillary research questions

Music research literature addresses the responsibility that HE music institutions have towards students' learning. Institutions have been considered to be an integral part of the student learning process, and their agenda should provide a framework for making decisions regarding students' development (Jørgensen, 2000). According to Jørgensen (2000), 'the institution needs a thorough understanding of its dominant values' which

may need to be explicitly expressed so that the quality of the study experience can 'have optimal conditions to succeed' (p. 75).

Research to date has not comprehensively investigated the provision of the AT in UK HE music institutions. Lee (2019) found that the Royal College of Music in London was an exception in providing both curricular and extracurricular AT activities. The study also concluded that 'one of the challenges of implementing the Alexander Technique is the allocation of available funds' (Lee, 2019, p. 135). Nonetheless, the provision of the AT in UK HE music institutions has not been investigated on a larger scale and from different perspectives, such as those of AT teachers, IVTs, and music students working and studying both in music specialist institutions⁹ and university music departments. The following ancillary questions are then asked:

2a) What are AT teachers' views on the provision of the AT in the UK HE music sector?

2b) What are the views of IVTs working in UK HE music institutions on the provision of the AT in the UK HE music sector?

2c) What are the views of music students studying in UK HE music institutions on the provision of the AT in the UK HE music sector?

2.3.5 The promotion of the AT: Third group of ancillary research questions

In connection with the provision of the AT, it is not yet clear how AT teachers, IVTs, and music students view the promotion of the AT in their HE music institutions. The AT seems to be promoted as enhancement to music students' performance learning but also as tool supporting their whole well-being. The Royal Academy of Music website (2023) claims:

Although FM Alexander wasn't a musician, his technique is seen by many musicians as indispensable. It helps to release tension, correct bad postural

⁹ The generic term specialist music institution will be used to include both music conservatoire and independent HE music institutions with a proportionally higher focus on music performance in contrast to university music departments. In some cases, this term will be used for anonymity concerns given that in this sample of AT teachers, only one of them was working in an independent HE music institution.

habits and keep your body aligned – all vital for getting the best out of your career in music. (n. p.)

In contrast, the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire (2023) describes:

Through the Technique, you can learn not to pull yourself out of shape, and to change the thoughts and reactions which prevent you from developing and realising your full potential. There are opportunities during the classes to improve both the ergonomic aspects of playing your instrument or singing and how you approach practice and performance. Students can also address many other everyday and/or personal issues through the Alexander Technique. (n. p.)

It would thus be relevant to unveil the means through which the AT is promoted, the extent to which music students are familiar with the AT, and the perceptions of AT among the main targets of AT promotion in HE institutions (e.g. music performance students or anyone in the HE institution). These ancillary questions therefore arise:

3a) What are AT teachers' views on the promotion of the AT in their UK HE music institutions?

3b) What are the views of IVTs working in UK HE music institutions on the promotion of the AT in their UK HE music institutions?

3c) What are the views of music students studying in UK HE music institutions on the promotion of the AT in their UK HE music institutions?

2.3.6 The recognition of the AT and AT teachers: Fourth group of ancillary research questions

The provision and the promotion of the AT also raise questions about how the AT and AT teachers are regarded in UK HE music institutions, which current research has not addressed. Cole (2022) stated that the AT 'has had a mixed reputation amongst performers' (p. xix). Valentine et al. (2022) noted that 'the theory [of the AT] has remained on the fringe of science and medicine' (p. 32). Thus, it would be relevant to uncover whether similar perceptions exist in HE music institutions and/or whether the AT and AT teachers are felt to be integrated into UK HE music institutions, also in comparison with other subjects and members of the staff. The ancillary questions that emerge are:

4a) What are AT teachers' views on the recognition of the AT and AT teachers within the UK HE music sector?

4b) What are the views of IVTs working in UK HE music institutions on the recognition of the AT and AT teachers within the UK HE music sector?

4c) What are the views of music students studying in UK HE music institutions on the recognition of the AT and AT teachers within the UK HE music sector?

2.3.7 Views on AT: Fifth group of ancillary research questions

This theme addresses the factors that influence the different categories of people within UK HE music institutions to take part in AT sessions. An in-depth review of the existing research literature on the AT will be provided (see 2.3.7.1 and 2.3.7.2) to analyse the gaps in the research literature relating to the views on the AT within HE music institutions. Although the review of the research literature on the AT highlights a body of research studies spanning music psychology to medical research, investigations on the AT and musicians are scarce, whereas there is a growing body of medical literature.

2.3.7.1 Medical research on the AT

Some studies have been conducted in the UK to assess the efficacy of AT sessions in relieving back pain. One of the largest clinical trials, the ATEAM trial, was conducted in 2008 and aimed to examine the benefits of one-to-one AT lessons in comparison with exercise and massage; the results revealed the long-term benefits of AT treatment, showing that six AT lessons in conjunction with exercise were 'almost as effective as 24 lessons' of AT lessons only (Little et al., 2008, p. 5). These findings were corroborated by a more recent study, the ASPEN study, suggesting that the combined approach of AT and supervised physiotherapy exercise might result in 'improvements in muscle tone, elasticity and thickness and contractile ability', with AT lessons improving patients' proprioception sense (Little et al., 2014, p. xviii). A qualitative investigation following the 2008 ATEAM clinical trial reported positive changes in attitudes towards the AT rather than exercise (Yardley et al., 2010). Although some patients found it difficult to initially apply the AT technique without the aid of a teacher, most of the participants 'felt that they had improved their ability to cope with and prevent back pain in the future' and could put the technique into practice during their daily activities

(Yardley et al., 2010, p. 203). In contrast, few participants noticed improvements in their health conditions from exercising and some patients experienced difficulties in finding an appropriate place to do it.

Other studies investigated the efficacy of AT sessions in releasing neck pain. While the investigations on the effect of AT provision in easing back pain evaluated AT provision in the one-to-one context, research into the efficacy of AT in reducing neck pain was carried out testing AT intervention in both one-to-one and group settings. Specifically, the ATLAS study (MacPherson et al., 2015) aimed at assessing the effect of AT one-to-one lessons and acupuncture sessions among a sample of 517 patients. Both interventions resulted in a significant reduction in self-assessed neck pain and disability, showing the long-term benefits of the two interventions at 12 months. By contrast, the study by Becker et al. (2018) was the first of its kind to examine the effectiveness of AT group sessions for reducing neck pain. In spite of the small sample, the results showed the positive effects of AT group lessons in reducing pain and increasing patients' self-efficacy — described as 'confidence regarding performance of daily activities despite neck pain' (Becker et al., 2018, p. 81).

However, the NHS (2021) emphasised the limited research evidence on the AT, stating that 'supporters of the Alexander technique often claim it can help people with a wide range of health conditions. Some of these claims are supported by scientific evidence, but some have not yet been properly tested' (n. p.), which draws again the attention to the need for further research on the AT and the implications that this might have on people's perceptions of it.

2.3.7.2 Music research on the AT

Music research on the AT was conducted to assess mainly the effectiveness of the AT in reducing performance anxiety and enhancing music performance (Klein et al., 2014; see Valentine et al., 2022). According to the systematic review by Klein et al. (2014), the results on music performance and respiratory function 'remain inconclusive' due to the low number of participants and the lack of appropriate use of well-established study designs (p. 10). The study by Valentine et al. (1995) among a sample of music students in a UK university showed that although there was not support for AT lessons

enhancing peak respiratory flow¹⁰, there may be positive effects on the mental attitude toward the performance and self-rated performance anxiety parameters.

Despite the high incidence of physical problems among musicians and music students, evidence on the effectiveness of AT in reducing physical pain is still limited and results need to be interpreted with caution due to the sample sizes. Valentine et al. (2022) concluded that 'although the evidence is limited and not always consistent, a number of studies have shown beneficial effects of training in the AT on breathing, heart rate and blood pressure, posture and bodily use, quality of musical performance, and mental attitude' (p. 39). Despite not being mentioned in Valentine et al. (2022), a small-scale study by Davies (2020a; 2020b) was conducted to investigate the incidence of playing-related pain among HE music students and evaluate the effectiveness of an AT course specifically designed for instrumentalists in an Australian HE music institution. These results corroborate previous findings on the high incidence of playing-related pain among music students (see Steinmetz et al., 2012; Williamon & Thompson, 2006) and show that AT classes may be beneficial in reducing pain, improving posture and releasing muscle tension, with improvements in music performance and benefits for non-playing related pain, stress and performance anxiety.

2.3.7.3 Fifth group of ancillary research questions

The review of the research literature on the AT has shown that there is no comprehensive study investigating views on the AT in current UK HE music institutions. Contrary to medical research, the music research is more limited, with most of this investigating the effectiveness of the AT in relation to performance anxiety, music performance and muscle tension. This creates a gap in the research as there are no investigations researching the factors that influence individuals in HE music institutions to have AT sessions, their perceptions of the benefits and risks, and their direct experiences with the AT. This may direct future research on the effectiveness of the AT in relation to their needs. Therefore, the following ancillary questions arise and intend to provide a comparison of the views of AT teachers, IVTs, and music students:

¹⁰ 'Peak respiratory flow, a measure of the pressure exerted in forced expiration' (Valentine et al., 1995, p. 130).

5a) According to AT teachers, how is the AT viewed by HE music students studying in the UK?

5b) What are AT teachers' views on the benefits and risks of the AT for HE music students and other musicians?

5c) How is the AT viewed by IVTs working in UK HE music institutions?

5d) According to IVTs working in UK HE music institutions, how might the AT be viewed by HE music students studying in the UK?

5e) How is the AT viewed by music students studying in UK HE music institutions?

The next section will examine elements relating to the teaching and practice of the AT in relation to HE music institutions and will conclude with the presentation of the last group of emerging ancillary research questions.

2.4 The teaching and practice of the AT

The theory underpinning the AT has been analysed in 2.3.1 to provide a theoretical understanding of the AT considering the issues emerging from the existing literature. Elements relating to the teaching and practice of the AT will be analysed in this section, with a focus on AT hands-on guidance, the teaching format (one-to-one and group), the mode of delivery (face-to-face and online), and a triadic lesson.

2.4.1 Hands-on guidance

One of the main elements of the AT is hands-on guidance. To put it simply, through gentle touch and verbal direction, AT teachers guide pupils in their movements and help them recognise unhelpful habitual patterns; meanwhile, pupils are not expected to do anything apart from be aware of the sensory experience and be willing to refuse any instinctive reaction. According to F. M. Alexander (1923/1987),

All that is asked of him [the pupil] is, when he receives a guiding order, to *listen and wait*; to wait, because only by waiting can he be certain of preventing himself from relapsing into his old subconscious habits, and to listen, so that he learns to remember gradually and connect up the guiding orders which are counterpart of the *means-whereby* which the teacher is employing to bring about the desired "end" [emphasis in original]. (p. 98)

Similarly, Kleinman and Buckocke (2013) stated that in this 'non-doing' process, 'the teacher will facilitate a connected easy movement from the student. The student allows something new to take place' (p. 45). Hands-on work seems essential for enabling self-change, which may not be achieved through self-study books; according to de Alcantara (1997), 'the only way of learning [the AT]' is through lessons (p. xii), with AT hands-on work having different aims, such as 'healing, guiding, or goading' (p. 85). However, F. M. Alexander's use of and amount of hands-on work evolved throughout the years (McCann, 2023; Staring, 2005). Some AT teachers have been reported to reject hands-on guidance because it would foster end-gaining attitudes (de Alcantara, 1997), and the amount of hands-on guidance would vary depending on the different traditions of AT training schools and the AT teachers themselves (see Cole, 2022, with regard to Marjorie Barstow's pedagogical approach).

Considering the lack of research examining the perception of hands-on work within UK HE music institutions, there is a clear need to investigate how it is viewed by AT teachers, IVTs, and music students working and studying in HE music institutions. This points to considerations about how hands-on guidance is considered within the broader institutional contexts in relation to safeguarding requirements and the cultural acceptance of touch by different learners (see Thuma & Miranda, 2020; this theme will be discussed further during this thesis).

2.4.2 The teaching format (one-to-one and group) and the mode of delivery (face-to-face and online)

AT sessions are reported to take place usually in a one-to-one format. According to the Society of Teachers of Alexander Technique (STAT, 2023c), 'you learn the Alexander Technique through one-to-one lessons with one of our qualified teachers who will address your individual needs. Some teachers offer introductory group classes and workshops' (n. p.). In HE music institutions, Lee (2019) reported that the 'curricular implementations' at the Royal College of Music were delivered in a small-group setting, whereas the AT as an extracurricular discipline was offered as 'private and semi-private lessons' (p. 108). Mouritz (2022c) stated that there are a variety of approaches to group teaching, however, these have been subject to debate since the 1970s.

Each approach was deemed to have its advantages and disadvantages. F. M. Alexander mainly taught in a one-to-one format, but there are accounts of Alexander engaging in rare group teaching sessions (Mouritz, 2022c). De Alcantara (1997) stated that while in a group it might be easier to learn about ‘your own behaviour by comparison’ with other people, ‘you will accomplish real personal change’ in a one-to-one lesson (p. 88). Lee (2019) noted that the limited hands-on guidance in AT group teaching was thought to be a ‘concern’ by some AT teachers and concluded that ‘it is vital and beneficial to preserve as much hands-on work as possible, particularly in a group setting, in order to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of instruction’ (p. 131). However, the views regarding one-to-one and group teaching formats seem to vary depending on the AT professional organisations and teaching traditions. The Interactive Teaching Method (2018) mainly adopt a group teaching format, and, according to Mouritz (2022b), group teaching ‘has continued as the favourite setting for teaching the Alexander Technique by all teachers trained by – or inspired by – Marjorie Barstow. Teachers by other traditions tend to use group teaching as an alternative or an adjunct to individual lessons’ (n. p.).

Most of the studies on the effectiveness of the AT involve one-to-one teaching (e.g. Little et al., 2008; Valentine et al., 1995). Within empirical research on AT group teaching in the medical field, Little et al. (2022) investigated a mixed model of AT one-to-one and group sessions in relation to lower back pain, concluding that a mixed approach could be a cost-effective solution (this will be examined in more depth in Chapter 14). In the music field, Davies (2020a; 2020b) evaluated the effectiveness of the AT in a group setting, with promising results (see 2.3.7.2). On the other hand, Loo et al. (2015) investigated the effectiveness of the AT in a group format, but it seemed that students mainly received one-to-one sessions: 15 students were reported to receive ‘an intervention of Alexander Technique training in a group class where each session lasted three hours ... A one-to-one session of ten minutes was given to each participant while others observed’ (p. 2414).

In UK HE music institutions, there are no official regulations on how the AT should be provided in a HE music education context. No research has been carried out investigating current views in relation to the teaching format. Given the closed relationship of the one-to-one dynamic, for example, in instrumental/vocal teaching (Bjøntegaard, 2015), it would be relevant to research what the perception of this

teaching format is in relation to the AT, and the possible benefits of a more open teaching situation in which AT teachers and IVTs work with students at the same time (see next section 2.4.3). In addition, it would also be relevant to examine perceptions in relation to AT online teaching, considering the lack of research on it, the limitations presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, and claims stating that ‘the most recent teacher experimentation involves distance learning, such as online lessons, in which traditional hands-on guidance is impossible’ (McCann, 2023, n. p.). Therefore, there is scope to investigate all these aspects and provide guidance for further policies and pedagogical application in HE music institutions.

2.4.3 A triadic lesson

As mentioned in 2.2.2, the *Collaborative Teaching Project* explored a teaching model between AT teachers, IVTs, and music students to increase music students’ understanding of the AT and the application of the AT to music practice (Jørgensen, 2015; Pranevičius, 2019). This model involved one-to-one lessons and group classes: both students and their main IVT participated in one-to-one AT lessons with an AT teacher and, in group sessions, the AT teacher and the instrumental teachers worked with music students cooperatively. The setting yielded positive results in terms of students’ learning as well as IVTs understanding of the AT and its effect on instrumental teaching, such as a holistic approach to music making which considers a deeper understanding of the physicality of playing. This model was replicated by Fox and Romaniuk (2021) in the USA, with participants reporting ‘benefits of learning and practicing AT principles in an integrated environment’ (p. 13). Given the lack of research on this in UK HE music institutions, this study intends to explore the views of AT teachers, IVTs, and music students on the triadic one-to-one lesson since this format might be more practical in comparison to group classes involving a wider number of participants and potentially resulting in timetabling issues (see Fox and Romaniuk, 2021). It intends not only to reveal participants’ experiences with this setting but also their potential feelings towards it, with implications for further empirical research on this teaching model.

2.4.4 The teaching and practice of the AT: Sixth group of ancillary research questions

The review of the literature has shown limited evidence or no studies investigating the views of AT teachers, IVTs, music students on AT hands-on work, the teaching format, the mode of delivery, and a triadic lesson, especially in UK HE music institutions. The sixth group of ancillary research questions that this study thus intends to address are:

6a) What are AT teachers' views on aspects of the teaching and practice of the AT within the UK HE music sector?

6b) What are the views of IVTs working in UK HE music institutions on aspects related to the teaching and practice of the AT within the UK HE music sector?

6c) What are the views of music students studying in UK HE music institutions on aspects related to the teaching and practice of the AT within the UK HE music sector?

These questions will illuminate participants' views on a number of aspects relating to the teaching of the AT in HE music settings, with implications for institutional policies and practice, and AT teacher training courses.

2.5 Conclusion and recapitulation of the research questions

This chapter has discussed the literature underpinning this thesis, with a presentation of the main research questions and six groups of ancillary research questions. These are summarised as follows:

– ***The central research question***

What are the perceptions of the AT in UK HE music institutions among Alexander Technique teachers, instrumental/vocal teachers, and music students?

– ***First group: The definition of the AT***

1a) How is the AT defined by AT teachers?

1b) How is the AT defined by IVTs working in UK HE music institutions?

1c) How is the AT defined by music students studying in UK HE music institutions?

- ***Second group: The provision of the AT***
 - 2a) What are AT teachers' views on the provision of the AT in the UK HE music sector?
 - 2b) What are the views of IVTs working in UK HE music institutions on the provision of the AT in the UK HE music sector?
 - 2c) What are the views of music students studying in UK HE music institutions on the provision of the AT in the UK HE music sector?
- ***Third group: The promotion of the AT***
 - 3a) What are AT teachers' views on the promotion of the AT in their UK HE music institutions?
 - 3b) What are the views of IVTs working in UK HE music institutions on the promotion of the AT in their UK HE music institutions?
 - 3c) What are the views of music students studying in UK HE music institutions on the promotion of the AT in their UK HE music institutions?
- ***Fourth group: The recognition of the AT***
 - 4a) What are AT teachers' views on the recognition of the AT and AT teachers within the UK HE music sector?
 - 4b) What are the views of IVTs working in UK HE music institutions on the recognition of the AT and AT teachers within the UK HE music sector?
 - 4c) What are the views of music students studying in UK HE music institutions on the recognition of the AT and AT teachers within the UK HE music sector?
- ***Fifth group: The views on the AT***
 - 5a) According to AT teachers, how is the AT viewed by HE music students studying in the UK?
 - 5b) What are AT teachers' views on the benefits and risks of the AT for HE music students and other musicians?
 - 5c) How is the AT viewed by IVTs working in UK HE music institutions?
 - 5d) According to IVTs working in UK HE music institutions, how might the AT be viewed by HE music students studying in the UK?
 - 5e) How is the AT viewed by music students studying in UK HE music institutions?
- ***Sixth group: The teaching and practice of the AT***
 - 6a) What are AT teachers' views on aspects of the teaching and practice of the AT within the UK HE music sector?
 - 6b) What are the views of IVTs working in UK HE music institutions on aspects related to the teaching and practice of the AT within the UK HE music sector?

6c) What are the views of music students studying in UK HE music institutions on aspects related to the teaching and practice of the AT within the UK HE music sector?

These ancillary research questions aim at unveiling the complex dynamics underlying the AT in UK HE music institutions. Since this research seeks to investigate institutional elements of the AT, it will have direct impact on future policies in HE music institutions and AT training. Additionally, it will increase the understanding of the AT among IVTs working in HE or in other educational contexts and will inform pedagogical approaches to the AT by exploring music students' perspectives on the AT. The next chapter, Chapter 3, will examine the methodology, the data collection methods, the data analysis method, and aspects related to research rigour.

Chapter 3: Research methodology, data collection methods, data analysis, research rigour and ethical considerations

This chapter examines the methodology and data collection methods of this study. Firstly, it discusses the theoretical framework underpinning this research by establishing the philosophical stance and the paradigm guiding the research design; in addition, it provides the rationale for the methodological approach adopted in this study by examining choices in relation to the purposes of the research. Secondly, a detailed account of the research methodology and data collection methods is given considering the COVID-19 restrictions. A discussion of the data analysis follows as well as considerations about research rigour, reflexivity, and research ethics.

3.1 Research design: Theoretical framework

A research design is intended to make research ‘practicable’ so that the answers to the research questions are supported by robust and appropriate evidence (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 173). This design is informed by a *philosophical standpoint* and a *paradigm*. In addition, it is governed by the principle of ‘fitness for purpose’ (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 173); that is to say, the purposes of the research guide the different steps that need to be undertaken in order to translate a theoretical issue into a ‘practicable and researchable topic’ (p. 174). The following subsections will examine these aspects within the context of my research.

3.1.1 Research philosophy: Humanistic approach

Research philosophy influences the way in which research is conducted. It defines ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions about the researchers’ concepts of social reality and informs the framework within which researchers plan and operate their research. According to Newby (2014), the research philosophy ‘provides a lens through which to identify a research problem or to interpret or understand the implications of research data’ (p. 43); therefore, different philosophical approaches determine different ways of thinking about research.

Two dominant philosophical traditions have influenced the manner in which research has been carried out throughout the years: a scientific approach versus a humanistic one (Newby, 2014; Robson & McCartan, 2016). The scientific approach is based on the ontological assumption that the nature of social reality is independent of individuals, and phenomena exist on their own, whereas the humanist tradition holds the view that reality is the product of individuals who interpret and make sense of their own world (Arthur et al., 2012; Cohen et al., 2018). On an epistemological level, the scientific tradition assumes that knowledge is *objective*, and researchers are therefore required to be objective observers of the phenomenon being investigated. On the contrary, humanistic traditions believe that knowledge is *subjective*, and researchers are expected to be involved with the subjects of their inquiry (Arthur et al., 2012; Cohen et al., 2018).

These differences in relation to the nature of social reality and the way knowledge can be acquired lead to differences in methodological approaches to the social world. According to Waring (2012), 'methodological assumptions are a reflection of the ontological and epistemological assumptions' at the core of the investigation, meaning that the views on social reality and the nature of knowledge are reflected in the logic that governs the procedures through which data is collected (p. 16). While the scientific tradition adopts a *nomothetic* approach aimed at discovering general laws that govern the object of the investigation, the humanistic philosophical standpoint adopts an *idiographic* one, seeking to understand how different individuals explain the reality in which they are living (Cohen et al., 2018).

A humanistic perspective on social reality guides this research. Considering that this study focuses on individuals and their perceptions of the AT within UK Higher Education (HE) music institutions, *individuals* are at the centre of this research: I am interested in their views on the AT to understand this phenomenon on the basis of a collection of individuals' unique experiences. According to Newby (2014), a humanist perspective on social reality 'is a belief in the value of human experience and particularly its significance in creating what is meaningful' (p. 35). In light of this, I have decided to be guided by this humanistic philosophical standpoint not only because it is closer to my vision of social reality but also because it best serves the purpose of my research which aims at *describing* and *understanding* the perceptions of the AT among AT teachers, instrumental/vocal teachers (IVTs), and music students working and

studying in UK HE music institutions (see 3.1.3); while my study intends to describe what these perceptions are, it also seeks to provide an interpretation of why these views might exist.

3.1.2 The paradigm of my research: Interpretive approach

The notion of paradigm was introduced by Kuhn (1970) to define ‘universally recognised scientific achievements that for a time provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners’ (p. viii). Following Kuhn’s seminal work, many other definitions have been proposed by different authors to define the concept of paradigm in a broader sense, not just restricting it to traditional scientific progress. Burrell and Morgan (1979) defined paradigm as a concept ‘which is intended to emphasise the commonality of perspective which binds the work of a group of theorists together in such a way that they can be usefully regarded as approaching social theory within the bounds of the same problematic’ (p. 23). Similarly, Newby (2014) defines it as a ‘way of thinking about a subject and proceeding with research that is accepted by people working in that area’ (p. 46). Considering these definitions, a paradigm can be therefore regarded as a set of shared views about social reality by a community of researchers working in the same discipline (Cohen et al., 2018): while the research philosophy is directly linked to the researcher’s personal views on social reality, a research paradigm is connected to the field in which researchers operate their research and to how issues are investigated by researchers operating in that field.

For the past decades, research has been dominated by two main paradigms: positivism and interpretivism. The positivism paradigm is based on the assumptions that social phenomena are governed by the same set of rules as that of the natural world. Researchers are observers and analysts of the social reality, and the role of research is to discover the universally valid laws guiding society and human behaviours within it (Cohen et al., 2018). In contrast, the interpretivist paradigm assumes that social reality is not as ordered as that of the natural world: social reality is ‘conflicted’ and individuals take actions based on their interpretations of the events, situations and contexts that they experience and in which they live (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 8). The role of the interpretive researchers is to discover these multiple interpretations of the social world and to understand the relationships of these for promoting action.

In music education, researchers have been guided by interpretive paradigms to investigate a broad variety of topics in the last decades (Bresler & Stake, 2012). My research sits among those studies investigating phenomena under an interpretive paradigm. I am interested in uncovering the multiple perceptions and interpretations of the AT among three different categories of people within UK HE music institutions. I do not believe in a social world governed by universally valid laws because each person is unique and offers a personal interpretation of the world which they experience, and each of these interpretations are important to understand current situations and to tackle change inclusively and effectively.

3.1.3 Research design: Fitness for purpose and flexibility

The design of this research is governed by the principle of 'fitness for purpose', meaning that research design and methodological choices are determined by the purpose/s of the research (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 173). Cohen et al. (2018) pointed out that planning every stage of research is essential to make research 'credible, legitimate and practicable' (p. 115); however, Robson and McCartan (2016) argued for a flexible research design that evolves as research develops through different stages, from the outset to data collection, data analysis and reporting of findings.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a severe impact on what I had initially planned in terms of research purposes, research projects and thus research design. The world in which we had been living drastically changed in the blink of an eye and as a consequence, I had to constantly adapt the design of this research to the uncertainties that the pandemic created. For example, the closure of campuses and the interruption of face-to-face teaching in March 2020 affected my research: the AT relies heavily on face-to-face, hands-on interaction and as one of the AT courses from which I had planned to recruit participants was cancelled, I had to reconsider the purposes of my research and adjust the design of my research in view of the challenges that these unprecedented times posed to researchers investigating phenomena in a real-world context.

As mentioned above, the purpose of my research is to describe and understand the perceptions of the AT in UK HE music institutions. These perceptions relate to different aspects of the AT (see Chapter 2). Although many of these purposes and themes developed over the course of the research process, they had been guiding the

research design of this research and had been informing the methodological choices I made. These will be discussed in the sections that follow.

3.2 Multi-method style of research

This study follows a *multi-method* style of research. Throughout the literature, the term *multi-method research* is used to define a style of research — or research approach — that combines different research methods to research projects which form part of the same study (Morse, 2003). Multi-methods ‘are used in a research program when a series of projects are interrelated within a broad topic and designed to solve an overall research problem’, and each research project can be planned independently or sequentially (Morse, 2003, p. 196). It is worth noting that a multi-method style of research should not be confused with a mixed-method research approach. Hunter and Brewer (2016) pointed out that in comparison with mixed method research, a multi-method approach to research ‘is not restricted to combining qualitative and quantitative methods but rather is open to the full variety of possible methodological combinations’ (p. 5).

The rationale of multi-method research is that each research method has its advantages and disadvantages, and the combination of different research methods allows researchers to analyse phenomena from multiple angles as research progresses (Hunter & Brewer, 2016). In planning a research design, researchers have to decide which research methods are combined and how each of these are chosen in relation to one another; however, this research design is not fixed but it is flexible and ‘open to new, innovative, and at times unanticipated techniques’ (Hunter & Brewer, 2016, p. 4). Hunter and Brewer (2016) argue that multi-method research is indeed ‘a combination of science and art, design and serendipity, thoughtful planning and pragmatic opportunism’ (p. 7). In addition, they state that multi-method research design is ‘a combination of some preplanning coupled with judicious emergent decision-making as the research is carried out’ (Hunter & Brewer, 2016, p. 3). This connects with the principle of *fitness for purpose* discussed in 3.1.3 and that of flexibility in the research design proposed by Robson and McCartan (2016).

My research is made up of three different research projects combining two distinct research methods: interview research and survey study. As mentioned previously, the three projects investigate aspects relating to the perceptions of the AT

among AT teachers, IVTs and music students working and studying in UK HE music institutions. While the first project investigates the perceptions of the AT among AT teachers, the second and third research projects explore IVTs' and music students' perspectives on the AT to provide a comparison with the findings emerging from the first project. Data among AT teachers and IVTs were collected through two interview studies, whereas those among music students were gathered through an anonymous online survey. These projects were planned sequentially, with the second and the third projects providing 'a logical extension from the findings of the first study' (Morse, 2003, p. 199). However, these projects can be either considered as separate units — and therefore self-conclusive — or as sequentially planned; indeed, the three projects are bound together by the common theme of the perceptions of the AT within UK HE music institutions (see Figure 3-1 and Figure 3-2 for the visual representations of the projects). The following sub-sections will analyse the research methods adopted for each project and will provide justifications for the choices I made considering also the constrictions the COVID-19 pandemic had posed to my research as mentioned previously in 3.1.3.

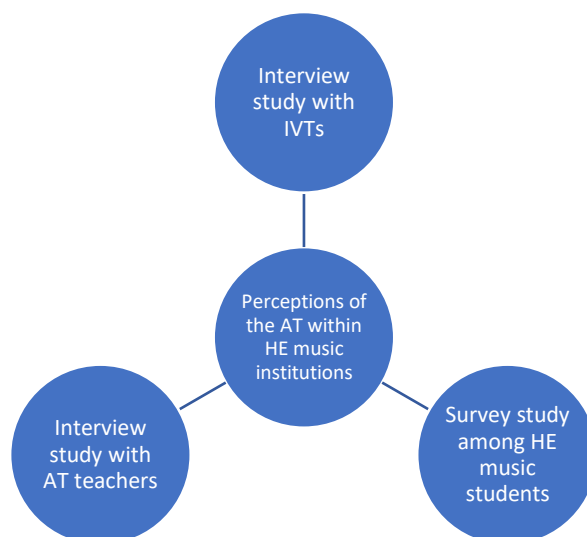


Figure 3-1: Research projects as self-conclusive.

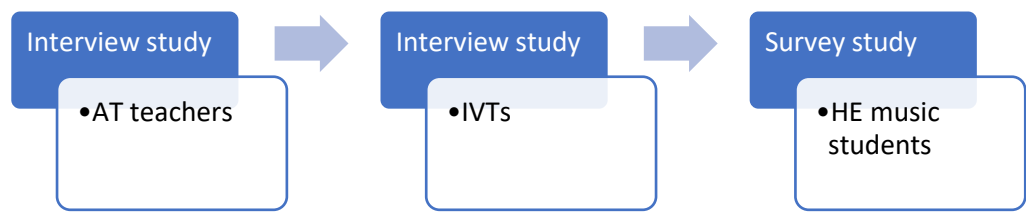


Figure 3-2: Research projects as sequentially planned.

3.3 Interview research

3.3.1 Overview

Interview research is a research method that adopts interviews (e.g. face-to-face, telephone, online) as a method for data collection. Despite probably being the oldest research method in social science (Hamill, 2014), only recently has interview research been regarded as a standardised research method in comparison with others such as survey research or case study, which have widely been established among research communities (Kvale, 2007). Scholarly literature on interview research has appeared only recently, validating an approach that provides ‘unique access to the lived world of the subjects, who in their own words describe their activities, experiences and opinions’ (Kvale, 2007, p. 9). Interviews pose the risk of being biased but usually generate rich data (Bell, 2006). Carey and Grant (2015) chose interview research ‘for its capacity to serve as a platform for in-depth storytelling and reflection, including complex ... institutional issues’ (p. 7). It is for this reason that this research method was particularly suited for the present research, which intends to elicit people’s views on institutional and pedagogical aspects of the AT that have still been under-researched by current investigations at UK university music departments, music conservatoires and independent HE music institutions (see 3.7 on reflexivity concerning the measures I have taken to mitigate potential bias issues).

Both face-to-face and online interviews were conducted to collect data among AT teachers and IVTs. However, recent research practices have progressively been validating forms of interviewing in which researchers collect data through email (Opdenakker, 2006). To overcome the data collection challenges during the pandemic and increase the amount of data collected, I devised a format of Word-document

interviewing based on the principles of email interviewing for one IVT participant who would otherwise not have been able to participate. The specifics of interview research are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

3.3.2 The process of face-to-face/online interviewing

This research followed the interview research procedures described by Kvale (2007).

According to Kvale (2007), the consideration of a step-by-step procedure assists researchers 'through the potential hardships of a chaotic interview journey' and contributes 'to producing interview knowledge of a higher quality' (pp. 37-50).

However, this process is non-linear and researchers may move back and forth between stages as research evolves. As aspects of data analysis and research rigour are shared between different research methods (i.e. survey study), those will be examined in later sections; therefore, in the subsequent paragraphs only the stages that directly relate to interview research are examined in more in-depth.

3.3.2.1 Thematising

Thematising consists of determining the research purposes, the research questions and the theme/s that are explored in a research study. According to Kvale (2007), this is one of the most important stages as it sets the basis for the whole research process: time should be devoted to determining the *why* and *what* of the study before proceeding to the *how*, the data collection itself.

A significant amount of time was spent on establishing the aims and purposes of the whole study and on planning the data collection of the first research project with AT teachers. Kvale (2007) stated that after determining the research purposes, thematising 'involves clarifying the theme of the study – the "what". This involves developing a conceptual and theoretical understanding of the phenomena to be investigated in order to establish the base to which new knowledge will be added and integrated' (p. 39). While the purposes of this research evolved across several years, I devoted some months in extending my understanding and knowledge of the AT by reading Alexander's original texts, AT self-study books and numerous research articles on the AT. This extended my previous knowledge of the AT — which had been based on my personal experiences — and helped me design the interview questions in

relation to both the AT teachers and IVTs, and also informed the subsequent survey study among HE music students.

3.3.2.2 Designing: Semi-structured interviews

The second stage of interview research consists of designing the interview schedule. Cohen et al. (2018) listed five types of interviews: the structured interview, the semi-structured interview, the unstructured interview, the non-directive interview and the focused interview. I decided to use semi-structured interviews because these are both structured and flexible, enabling relevant information to emerge from respondents' answers. Unstructured interviews would have allowed even greater flexibility, but since they require 'a great deal of expertise to control' (Bell, 2006, p. 161), they could have been unfeasible given my initial limited familiarity with interviews. In addition, as Patton (1980) suggested, unstructured interviews are less systematic, and different information may be collected from different respondents because the wording of the questions changes according to the individuality of each interviewee. This lack of systematic approach would also have made data analysis more challenging and time-consuming (Bell, 2006) and may have limited the rigour of the research, and thus I opted for semi-structured interviews, but also used techniques frequently adopted in unstructured and non-directive interviews to 'prompt and probe, pressing for clarification and elucidation' during the interview in case unexpected themes would emerge (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 512).

The interview questions were generated considering the purposes of my research, the themes that emerged through the literature review and my understanding of the AT based on my personal experiences (see Figure 3-3 below).

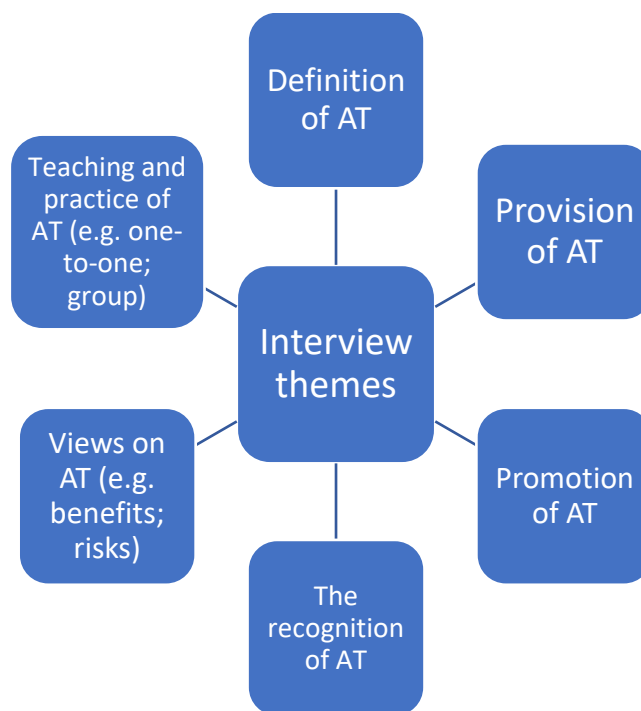


Figure 3-3 Interview themes.

I mainly developed open-ended questions because the range of responses is likely to be wider and there is no fixed limit of the number of possible answers that respondents can give (Given, 2008). These questions were checked with the supervisor of this research to improve their quality in terms of openness and clarity, to consider the logical structure and flow of the interview, and to reduce any bias due to my previous experiences of the AT (see 3.7). According to Arksey and Knight (1999), researchers must pay attention to aspects such as ‘vocabulary, prejudicial questions, imprecision, leading questions, double-barrelled questions, assumptive questions, hypothetical questions, personal and sensitive questions’ when devising interview questions (pp. 93-94). This constant quality-check was an on-going process over the course of the planning and designing stages; however, the quality of the interview questions was refined prior to the data collection period through piloting them and during the data collection period across different interviews (see Appendix C for the samples of the interview schedules for AT teachers, IVTs, and the Word document schedule for the participant who gave written responses).

3.3.2.3 Recruitment of interview participants

Participants were selected mainly through adopting a purposive sampling strategy through which researchers purposively select ‘a particular section of the wider

population to include in or exclude from the sample' (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 214). To be included in this research, each participant had to meet pre-determined criteria and possess specific characteristics.

AT teachers must have had some involvement with UK HE music institutions either at the time of the interview or in the past: they did not necessarily need to be employed by the institutions themselves — they could have been self-employed — and could just have been responsible for delivering occasional workshops or introductory AT sessions. In addition, AT teachers who had previous experience of delivering AT teacher training courses were sought. These participants might or might not have had direct experience of teaching the AT within UK HE music institutions; their participation was deemed to be relevant to increasing the understanding of how the AT is perceived and taught in HE music institutions. Indeed, even though these AT teachers might not have offered a direct experience of AT practices in the HE music sector, they could have provided relevant information about AT teaching practices. AT teacher participants were reached through emails, and contacts were made via professional organisations such as the British Association for Performing Arts Medicine (BAPAM), the Society of Teachers of the Alexander Technique (STAT), and the Professional Association of Alexander Teachers (PAAT).

IVTs from various UK HE music institutions were recruited via institutional emails. Participants needed to work in UK HE music institutions but did not necessarily need to have any experience of the AT as one of the aims of this research was to discover the multiple perceptions different people might have about the AT.

In addition to purposive sampling, snowball sampling was also adopted to reach a larger sample of participants. Snowball sampling involves identifying a small number of key participants that researchers use 'as informants to identify, or put the researchers in touch with, others who qualify for inclusion' (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 220). This strategy was particularly used to recruit a larger number of AT working in HE music settings, especially in university music departments. Heckathorn (2002) pointed out that this strategy may result in biases emerging from the relationships between participants; however, the author also claimed that these can be reduced by trying to include all those who should be selected for investigating a specific issue. To limit these biases, AT practitioners in particular were sought through internet search

engines and, given the limited information about AT teachers working in UK universities, by direct enquiry to HE university music departments.

3.3.2.4 Interviewing: Face-to-face and online interviews with AT teachers and IVTs

Originally, I had planned to conduct face-to-face interviews but the COVID-19 pandemic, the lockdowns, and the resulting limitations on social interactions forced me to switch to online interviews. With regard to the AT teachers, 19 AT teachers participated in this study: only 2 out of 19 interviews among AT teachers were conducted face-to-face as those had taken place before the UK Government enforced lockdown restrictions on 16th March 2020. Regarding the IVTs, 11 teachers agreed to take part in this study, and 10 of them were interviewed online (as mentioned in 3.3.1, one was interviewed through a Word document).

As mentioned previously, potential participants were invited to participate by email, and email invitations stating all of the relevant information about the research were sent (see Appendix A). Once the prospective participant agreed to participate, they were asked to agree on a date and time for the interview and asked to complete a digital consent form in which they provided their consent to take part in the study before the interview took place (this will be discussed in more depth in 3.8 about ethical considerations; see Appendices A-B for the email invitation and information sheet/consent form samples). In addition, all of the participants taking part in online interviews were given the option to choose their preferred platform through which to be interviewed: most of the online interviews were conducted on Zoom, with one interview conducted on Skype, and each participant agreed to turn on their video in order to support a feeling of social interaction. The interviews were audio-recorded using an external audio recorder; a second device was used as a backup in the event that the primary recorder failed.

Conducting online interviews resulted in several advantages in terms of cost and location. Travelling costs were eliminated by being able to reach participants all over the UK without undergoing travel expenses, and there was no need to arrange a suitable location because both the participant and I could comfortably choose our preferred location; this was not the case for the first face-to-face interview, which had posed many challenges in terms of arranging a quiet place in which the interviewee

would feel at ease. However, online interviews presented other challenges, especially in relation to connectivity and audio quality. Cohen et al. (2018) stated that 'online interviewing is susceptible to technological problems ... and these must be explored before the online interview is conducted' (p. 540). Before conducting the interviews, I had explored possible issues and ways in which to respond to these: to solve potential connectivity problems, I had planned to turn off the video to reduce bandwidth usage or to continue interviews over the phone in the event that the Internet connection was interrupted. Luckily, the majority of the interviews went smoothly: I did not experience technological issues that compromised the quality of the interviews. Only during a few interviews was the connection unstable and audio interrupted at times, despite deactivating the video; on one occasion when the Internet went down, the interview continued over the telephone as I had planned.

3.3.2.5 Transcribing

The interviews with the 19 AT teachers lasted between 33 minutes and an hour and 24 minutes, whereas those with the 10 IVTs were between 23 minutes and an hour and 32 minutes. Most of the interviews were transcribed verbatim using a manual transcribing software program: Transcriber (Transcriber, 2008). The transcripts were then exported into a Word document for further analysis. The manual transcribing process was time-consuming but was useful to get acquainted with the data and start seeing recurrent themes (see 3.5 in relation to data analysis). Some of the interviews were transcribed before conducting the subsequent ones – as Mears (2012) had suggested – but this was not always possible due to the research timeline, time constraints and participants' availability (e.g. in many cases, interviews with different participants were conducted in quick succession).

To speed up the transcribing process, some of the latest interviews with both the AT teachers and IVTs were machine-transcribed using the software Panopto (Panopto, 2023). I imported the audio recordings of the interviews into the programme which automatically generated the captions using its embedded caption-generating function. I then reviewed the captions into Panopto and checked these against the audio recordings for accuracy. Similar to the manual transcribing process, I finally exported and edited the captions into a Word document for subsequent analysis. The act of reviewing and editing the captions was useful for becoming familiar

with the data, but I felt that it was less effective than that of manual transcription. Therefore, I ended up reading these transcripts more times to familiarise myself with the data and develop the same level of understanding.

Each transcript was fully anonymised and polished by the removal of interjections and anecdotes that would have been irrelevant for the purposes of this research. In addition, member checking was conducted by sending the transcripts to the corresponding participants (Robson & McCartan, 2016): interviewees were given the chance to check for the accuracy of the content and to add or remove any information at their own discretion (see 3.8 in relation to considerations about research ethics).

3.3.3 Word-document interviewing

As mentioned in 3.3.1, data concerning one of the 11 IVT participants were collected through Word-document interviewing. This was an adaptation of asynchronous email interviewing 'where information is repeatedly exchanged online between researcher and participant within a particular timeframe' (Ratislavová & Ratislav, 2014, p. 452). However, instead of providing questions via emails, I included these in a Word document, which I sent to the participant for them to answer in their own time; the participant, in turn, sent their answers back to me via email attaching the completed document. It can be argued that this process has similarities with that in questionnaires (Flick, 2020) but, as I had the opportunity to ask follow-up questions via further emails, I decided to define it as *interviewing* given its parallels with email interviewing.

The main disadvantage of asynchronous interviewing is the lack of non-verbal communication and interaction with the participant. This could limit bias (Robson & McCartan, 2016) but may also alter the spontaneity of the interview (Kvale, 2007). Ratislavová and Ratislav (2014) stated that 'the fact that the email interview lacks nonverbal and paralinguistic cues is undeniable' and it is for that reason that email interviewing 'should be used for qualitative research only in justified cases and not only as a cheap alternative to face-to-face interviews' (p. 458). This type of data collection was the only option I had to gather data from IVT-P11 in a time where people were experiencing various difficulties due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and I thus felt particularly responsible for accommodating their needs. For example, one of

the AT teacher participants had asked me to keep their online interview short because of having experienced Zoom fatigue in the previous days. For IVT-P11, Word-document interviewing was the only possibility for gathering data from them. Despite this, I collected valuable information, and Word-document interviewing resulted in some advantages, for example the absence of transcription time (Opdenakker, 2006).

3.4 Survey study

3.4.1 Rationale for the online survey study

Although I had originally planned to gather data among music students using another interview study, I finally adopted a survey study to fulfil this aim. Surveys are often considered to be problematic in terms of richness and clarity of the data (e.g. missing information) and low response rate (Cohen et al., 2018). However, surveys have many advantages in relation to ‘cost’, ‘time’, ‘ease of use’ and ‘lack of spatial restrictions’ (Flick, 2020, pp. 241-242). In particular, I wanted to reach as many students as possible all around the UK in the smallest amount of time having had to postpone the data collection among music students by a year due to the COVID-19 pandemic: from the conversations I had had with the AT teachers, I had learnt that the pandemic had heavily affected AT teaching and therefore I had hoped that postponing the data collection would have resulted in more meaningful data in relation to the AT among the primary beneficiaries of the AT (i.e. music students). In addition, according to Robson and McCartan (2016), online surveys ‘allow anonymity which can encourage frankness when sensitive areas are involved’ (p. 248). Anonymity would have been impossible to achieve with interviews and thus this factor seemed particularly relevant in this instance. Indeed, I envisaged that an anonymous online survey would have encouraged music students to articulate openly their views on the AT, especially in relation to any potential unpleasant experiences.

3.4.2 Online questionnaire design

The term *questionnaire* refers to the data collection tool, i.e. the list of questions, for gathering responses (Williamon et al., 2021). To collect responses from UK HE music students with a potential variety of experiences and knowledge of the AT, I designed an anonymous online questionnaire considering two broad categories of HE music students: those with or without knowledge of the AT. However, with regard to

students with potential knowledge of the AT, I considered further variables informing the design of the questionnaire:

- Students with knowledge about the AT but who did not have AT sessions;
- Students with knowledge about the AT who did have AT sessions but stopped having them;
- Students who did have AT sessions and were still receiving them;
- Students who did have AT sessions in their UK HE music institution/s;
- Students who did not have AT sessions in their UK HE music institution/s;
- Students who might have studied in several UK HE music institutions and could compare their experiences in relation to different UK HE music institutions.

In addition to these variables, I developed the questions considering the potential different experiences in relation to the teaching context (one-to-one and group), the mode of delivery (face-to-face and online), the knowledge of resources and experiences with team-teaching situations (i.e. AT teachers, IVTs and music students working in the same room). These experiences might have differed whether the respondent had or had not taken any AT sessions.

I use the software Qualtrics (Qualtrics, 2023) to design a questionnaire based on 69 questions (see Appendix F). These were informed by the literature on the AT, my experiences with the AT, and the interview studies I had undertaken with AT teachers and IVTs. The questions collecting demographics data were the same for all music students; however, after those initial questions, the questionnaire branched out depending on music students' potential experiences and knowledge of the AT. A sample of the survey flow is given in Figure 3-4 below:

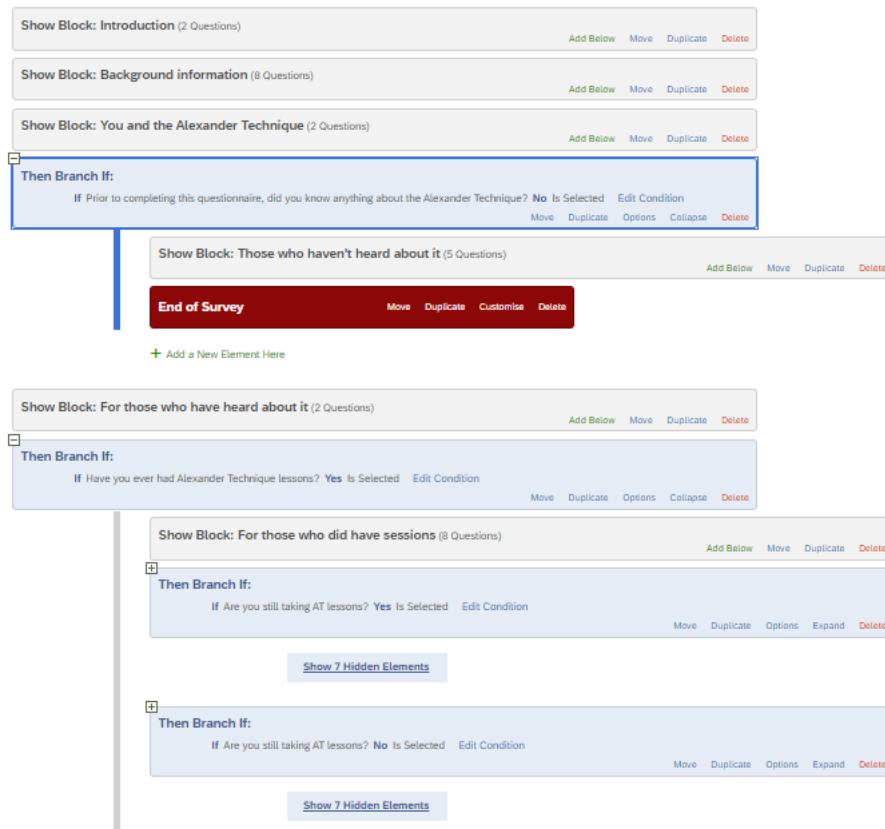


Figure 3-4: Sample of the survey flow.

The questionnaire contained a mix of multiple-choice and open-ended questions to increase the likelihood of completion (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Nonetheless, given the nature of this research, multiple-choice questions were often integrated with open-ended questions to give respondents the chance to expand on their answers. Responses were not mandatory — except for route-directing questions — and respondents were given the option to choose “prefer not to say” to provide their answer to specific multiple-choice questions.

To maximise the data collected among music students without knowledge of the AT, the questionnaire included a question in which respondents were invited to communicate their potential interest in the AT after evaluating two descriptions of the AT. I had extracted these descriptions from the NHS webpage (NHS, 2021) on the AT and the definition provided by the STAT’s webpage on the AT for performers (see Appendix G). I chose these extracts because the definitions revolved around both general and specific applications of the AT. In addition, the last page of the questionnaire branch invited students without knowledge of the AT to describe what

had motivated them to participate in the study in order to elicit valuable responses about students' interest in the AT.

The specific questions for music students with knowledge of the AT could be classified into broader themes: personal experiences with the AT (e.g. benefits, limitations), the knowledge of AT resources, the provision of the AT, the recognition of the AT and AT teachers in HE music institutions, and the definition of the AT. At the end of the questionnaire, students were invited to add further comments on their experiences with the AT to gather further data.

3.4.3 Piloting and distribution of the questionnaire

The questionnaire was piloted with a small group of peers who had limited or extensive knowledge of the AT. Unfortunately, it could not be piloted among a larger group of people because of time constraints due to the distribution having been delayed, but feedback was collected in order to enhance the quality of the final version of the questionnaire.

The distribution of the questionnaire started on 25th April 2021, and the survey was kept open until 31st May 2021. HE music institution administrators were asked to circulate a survey invitation email in which music students were encouraged to participate in the research by clicking on the Qualtrics questionnaire link (see Appendix D). Administrators were also asked to schedule reminders to enhance the response rate (Cohen et al., 2018) and reach out as many respondents as possible.

The email invitation was sent to all of the 79 institutions listed on The Guardian's music ranking league table (The Guardian, 2020) and an independent UK HE music institution which I had come across in my previous search on the AT in UK HE music institutions, but the questionnaire could not be distributed among a few UK conservatoires because of ethical approval challenges¹¹. Institutions were selected based on criteria such as the ranking of the institution, reputation, and access to institutional emails. It is not possible to state the exact number of institutions in which the questionnaire was successfully administered due to lack of follow-up confirmatory emails to the researcher from UK HE music department administrators.

¹¹ To respect the principle of anonymity, the names of the institutions cannot be revealed.

3.5 Data analysis: Reflexive thematic analysis

The data collected through the interview and survey study were analysed through the reflexive thematic analysis discussed by Braun and Clarke (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Braun et al., 2019). The general term *thematic analysis* 'is better understood as an umbrella term, designating sometimes quite different approaches aimed at identifying patterns ("themes") across qualitative datasets' (Braun & Clarke, 2019, p. 844). Reflexive thematic analysis is one of the thematic analysis approaches that give priority to the philosophical values underpinning qualitative paradigms, the 'inevitable subjectivity of data coding' (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 8), and 'the active role of the researcher in the knowledge production process' (Braun et al., 2019, p. 848). In addition, it is concerned with exploring the experiences and the perspectives of research participants in relation to a specific phenomenon (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Thus, this approach suited the philosophical stance and the purpose of my research.

I conducted reflexive thematic analysis following the six steps outlined in Braun et al. (2019): 'familiarisation' with the data; 'generating codes'; 'constructing themes'; 'revising and defining themes'; and 'producing the report' (pp. 852-857). The familiarisation of the data started on paper — I printed out both the interview transcripts and the individual questionnaire responses — but then the subsequent steps were carried out using the data analysis software MAXQDA (VERBI GmbH, 2023) considering the large amount of data collected.

I imported the data of the interview and survey studies into MAXQDA and coded the dataset using an inductive approach. Themes were generated after the individual datasets had been coded. The principle of prevalence guided the selection of the themes but since 'more instances do not necessarily mean the theme itself is more crucial', I was also guided by my 'judgement' to determine what constituted a theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 10). As Braun and Clarke (2022) highlighted, themes 'are conceptualized as *produced* by the researcher through their systematic analytic engagement with the data set, and [by] all they bring to the data in terms of personal positioning and metatheoretical perspectives [emphasis in original]' (p. 9). The construction of themes indeed involved a process of iterative refinement carried out whilst producing the data analysis chapters.

Illustrative quotations were chosen to support the overarching themes in the following chapters (see Chapters 4-13). The quotations were selected according to their clarity in explaining the main points. Furthermore, quasi-statistics and semi-quantification were used to report themes across participants to align with the spirit of and the nuances of qualitative studies (Maxwell, 2010; Neale et al., 2014) and to support robust understanding of the data.

3.6 Validity, triangulation, and reliability

3.6.1 Validity

The concept of validity has been often associated with that of truth (Hammersley, 1992; Silverman, 2010). Validity has indeed been interpreted as the extent to which findings can be regarded as the result of critical evaluation of the data and therefore an accurate representation of the phenomenon being investigated; some authors refers to this as *internal validity* (Brock-Utne, 1996; Cohen et al., 2018). With regard to this concept, Hammersley (1992) claimed that ‘an account is valid or true if it represents accurately those features of the phenomena that it is intended to describe, explain or theorise’ (p. 69). Guba and Lincoln (1989) argued that the term ‘credibility’ ought to be used in the context of interpretive research as it more appropriately describes the role of the researcher to establish correspondence ‘between constructed realities of respondents and the reconstructions attributed to them’ (pp. 236-237). However, Long and Johnson (2000) stated that both terms express the responsibility ‘to match what is reported by the researcher to the phenomenon under investigation’ (p. 32) and therefore, as validity seems to be the most recurrent term across literature, I decided to adopt this word in this thesis.

Newby (2014) stated that three criteria need to be met for an investigation to be regarded as valid and robust: *representativeness*, *completeness*, and *transparency*. Firstly, data should be representative of the issue being researched, which connects to the sampling strategies mentioned in 3.3. To guarantee a higher degree of representativeness, participants were recruited from multiple UK HE music institutions following carefully considered sampling procedures (see 3.3.2.3). Secondly, the criterion of completeness determines that an argument and the evidence supporting it should be complete. I ensured to avoid anecdotalism by applying the ‘refutability

principle' (Silverman, 2010, p. 278): as Silverman (2010) noted, 'one solution to the problem of anecdotalism is simply for qualitative researchers to seek to refute their initial assumptions about their data in order to achieve objectivity' (p. 278). To attain this, I devoted time in 'negative case analysis' to challenge my assumptions and knowledge about the AT, counter my research bias and analyse issues in full and from different perspectives (Robson & McCartan, 2016, p. 172; see 3.7 in relation to reflexivity). Thirdly, Newby (2014) stated that in order for a piece of research to be convincing, research processes should be transparent. I made sure to clarify all the decisions I had made and the rationale justifying my choices in light of all the difficulties with which I dealt during the research timescale. In addition, I kept track of my activities as suggested by Robson and McCartan (2016) in relation to an 'audit trail' (p. 172).

Furthermore, this study is concerned with guaranteeing a certain degree of ecological validity. Ecological validity refers to the extent to which behaviours, in particular policies in relation to education research, observed in one particular context can be transferred to another sharing similar characteristics (Brock-Utne, 1996). Williamson et al. (2021) stated that it 'concerns the situation in which the phenomenon of interest is being investigated, taking into account and trying to retain its "real life" context' (p. 44). To achieve this, researchers need to 'include and address in the research as many as possible of the characteristics and factors of a given situation' (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 264). However, research in UK Higher Music Education must consider the institutional differences among institutions of the same kind (Jørgensen, 2014), which may hinder generalisability. Furthermore, a high degree of detail may result in breaching ethical principles of anonymity and 'non-traceability' (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 264). It is for this reason that to preserve these precepts, data were collected to portray the current situation of the AT in some UK HE music institutions, but details of the institutions are given in consideration of the group of institutions as a whole and not as separate entities within this broader group.

3.6.2 Triangulation

Cohen et al. (2018) defined triangulation as a series of 'techniques [which] attempt to map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint' to demonstrate 'concurrent validity' (p.

265). As Williamon et al. (2021) explained, concurrent validity is guaranteed by ‘cross-referencing data collected from different participants and/or using different [data collection] methods’ (p. 43). In my research, I therefore investigated views on the AT from different perspectives not only by comparing views among participants within the same category but also among the different categories of people (AT teachers, IVTs, and music students). These processes happened both at data-analysis level and writing-up stage (see Chapter 14 for a comparison of the findings of the three groups of participants).

Regarding the use of different data collection methods, data concerning students were collected through a survey study and not an interview study as for AT teachers and IVTs. This further enhanced the degree of concurrent validity of my research, as suggested by Williamon et al. (2021) above. However, echoing the definition of triangulation by Cohen et al. (2018), the concept of triangulation is often based on the assumption of the existence of ‘a single reality’ and thus, in interpretive research such as mine, it needs to be conceived as a tool ‘to open up a more complex, in-depth, but still thoroughly partial, understanding of the issue’ given the complexity of the social world (Tracy, 2010, pp. 843-844).

3.6.3 Reliability

Reliability is a ‘somewhat controversial topic’ in interpretive research (Williamon et al., 2021, p. 45) and has often been considered ‘as being too laden with positivist conceptions from quantitative research’ (Kvale, 2007, p. 122). Cohen et al. (2018) argued that since discussions on reliability between positivist and interpretative research are ‘arid’, it can be concluded that ‘reliability includes fidelity to real life ... authenticity, comprehensiveness, detail, honesty, depth of response and meaningfulness to the respondents’, with ‘some blurring of the edges between validity and reliability in the literature’ (p. 271). Considering this debate, I decided to regard reliability as ‘the consistency of the research process’ (Williamon et al., 2021, p. 45).

With regard to the two interview studies, I have been guided by the tenets described by Kvale (1996) for gathering reliable interview data. In particular, I acquired knowledge about the AT, structured the interviews thoroughly, ensured to be ‘gentle’ and ‘sensitive’ to the participants but remained ‘critical’ to what was said, inviting participants to clarify and extend their responses to maximise the interpretations of

these answers (p. 149). Regarding the survey study, I designed the questionnaire considering the potential multiple experiences of participants (see 3.4), piloted the questionnaire, and guaranteed ‘anonymity and non-traceability’ which could mitigate issues of reliability (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 278). Furthermore, reliability also refers to the consistency of the data analysis (Cohen et al., 2018). Although Kvale (1996) pointed out that interpretive research ‘leads to as many interpretations as there are researchers’ (p. 181), I ensured to analyse data in a systematic manner as rigorously as possible using an iterative process at several stages of my research (see 3.5).

3.7 Reflexivity

Reflexivity refers to the processes in which researchers ‘consider their assumptions about their topic ... and to question how these assumptions have an impact on how data are collected and analyzed’ (Williamson et al., 2021, p. 233). As Sutton and Austin (2015) pointed out:

researchers should not try to simply ignore or avoid their own biases (as this would likely be impossible); instead, reflexivity requires researchers to reflect upon and clearly articulate their position and subjectivities (world view, perspectives, biases), so that readers can better understand the filters through which questions were asked, data were gathered and analyzed, and findings were reported. From this perspective, bias and subjectivity are not inherently negative but they are unavoidable; as a result, it is best that they be articulated up-front in a manner that is clear and coherent for readers. (p. 226)

My successful experience with the AT (see Chapter 1) created a position in which I needed to be careful that my assumptions would not affect an impartial analysis of the AT. I could not deny the fact that the AT might be a valuable tool as it had been for me; however, I was also aware that this might not be the same for other people. As mentioned in Chapter 1, I had heard that some people had negative views on the AT, but this was one of the reasons why I started this research: I wanted to uncover a variety of perspectives and improve the understanding of the AT.

Firstly, in the first year of my PhD I read F. M. Alexander’s original texts, with the purpose of developing a fresher perspective on the AT as if I were a blank canvas, despite my previous experiences with it. Then, I ensured to design the different research projects in a way that contrasting views would emerge. Before undertaking the interviews, I made participants aware that I would not express my personal

opinions on the AT with them to avoid any interference with the research process. I largely relied on open ended questions both in the interview and survey studies to elicit people's experiences with the AT, without making assumptions about their potentially positive and negative views on it, and reported any unhelpful experiences in the writing stages.

In addition, my assumptions as a learner of the AT and as instrumental teacher were mitigated by the conversations with my supervisor, colleagues, and especially with my partner who often challenged my views on somatic/psychophysical techniques and their usefulness to musicians considering her opinions which, in some cases, are diametrically opposed to mine. Ultimately, I did not undertake any AT sessions during the four years of my research and went back to lessons only a few weeks before the PhD final submission when the writing-up of findings and conclusions had been completed. All this contributed to portraying current views on the AT as objectively as possible.

3.8 Ethical considerations

This research was granted ethical approval by the Arts and Humanities Ethics Committee at the University of York on 22nd November 2019¹² and complies with the *Code of practice and principles for good ethical governance* of the University of York (University of York, 2022). Codes of good research practice are designed to protect participants, researchers, and institutions and guarantee that research is conducted in accordance with ethical principles such as honesty, rigour, transparency and open communication, care and respect (Universities UK, 2019).

3.8.1 Honesty

The Concordat to Support Research Integrity (Universities UK, 2019) highlighted that honesty should be upheld:

in all aspects of research, including in the presentation of research goals, intentions and findings; in reporting on research methods and procedures; in gathering data; in using and acknowledging the work of other researchers; and

¹² To collect data in other UK HE music institutions, this research underwent other ethical approval applications; ethical approval was granted, but the names of these institutions cannot be revealed to guarantee anonymity.

in conveying valid interpretations and making justifiable claims based on research findings. (p. 6)

I ensured to explain all the research processes, giving credit to other researchers' work. Data were analysed rigorously, and conclusions were presented based on the data collected (e.g. with the use of direct quotations) and supported by relevant literature wherever it was possible considering the limited research on the AT in the field of music.

3.8.2 Rigour and transparency

Rigour relates to undertaking research 'using appropriate methods' (Universities UK, 2019, p. 6). This principle was maintained by developing good knowledge of well-established research traditions and enhancing it over the course of the different research stages. Transparency and open communication are concerned with openness 'in declaring potential competing interests; in the reporting of research data collection methods; in the analysis and interpretation of data' (p. 6). I undertook this research as an independent researcher and did not receive any funding, such as from AT organisations, which could have created a potential conflict of interest. In addition, I was transparent in declaring my previous experience of the AT and in considering possible bias; I conducted and described the research processes in a transparent manner (as mentioned in 3.8.1), also ensuring to provide a balanced view on the AT by reporting contrasting perspectives on it.

3.8.3 Care and respect

The principles of care and respect refer to factors relating to privacy and confidentiality. The Code of practice at the University of York (2022) stated that 'for research or further activity drawing on research involving humans (including participation, observation and/or data), the default position is that informed written consent is required from those involved and/or their representatives' (n. p.). With regard to privacy, 'particular care should be given to ensuring that human data cannot be linked back to individuals' details unless by authorised persons' (University of York, 2022, n. p.).

Informed consent was obtained by research participants in compliance with this code of conduct. Informed consent refers to the procedures through which participants decide whether to take part in a research study or not after they have

been given all the information they need to take this decision (Diener & Crandall, 1978). For the interview study, an information sheet explaining the object and procedures of this research was given to participants before data collection could take place: participation was voluntary, and participants were able to ask any questions about the research and to withdraw from the study at any time. In conjunction with this, participants were invited to complete a digital consent form in which they gave their consent to participate in the interview study under the conditions outlined in the information sheet (see Appendix B). Regarding the anonymous online survey study, the information sheet was integrated into the initial section of the online survey in which respondents also provided their consent to participate in the survey by ticking the relevant boxes (see Appendix E).

In the interview study, the principle of confidentiality was guaranteed. According to Cohen et al. (2018), confidentiality is defined as 'not disclosing information from a participant in any way that might identify that individual or that might enable the individual to be traced' (p. 130). Interview transcripts were fully anonymised by removing identifiers, using pseudonyms and deleting names of the institutions or the locations; IVTs were referred to and grouped in relation to the family of their musical instrument. Given the low number of AT teachers in UK HE music institutions, much effort was devoted to protecting the identity of these teachers by recruiting participants from various institutions and by reporting findings in ways in which traceability could be limited. Furthermore, interviewees were given the opportunity to review the transcripts of their interview and delete any information they did not want to disclose (see 3.3.2.5 in relation to member checking).

Anonymity could not be guaranteed in the interview process given the nature of the data collection method but, to limit the amount of personal information disclosed in the interview, any reference to the participants' names was avoided when asking questions or when making comments, in order to leave no trace in the audio recording. However, interviews were asked whether they wanted their recorded voice to be altered through sound-processing sampling procedures to avoid potential identification in the event that data would be accessed for further consultation by

other researchers.¹³ On the other hand, the survey study was anonymous, and no personal data were collected, nor were IP addresses logged.

Data were treated in line with the General Data Protection Regulations (Legislation.gov.uk, 2018). They were stored securely in my university password-protected Google Drive account, and any printed materials were stored in a locked cabinet at the University of York, to which I was the only one with access. Participants were carefully informed that data could be shared with my supervisor and the internal/external examiners for degree-related and research purposes.

3.9 Summary of the chapter

Chapter 3 examined the research design, the data collection and data analysis methods as well as aspects relating to research rigour, reflexivity and ethics. A multi-method style of research was adopted to investigate the perceptions of the AT among AT teachers, IVTs, and music students; qualitative data were collected through two interview studies (AT teachers and IVTs) and one survey study (music students). The next chapter will be the first of three chapters examining AT teachers' views on the AT.

¹³ As I want to continue work and publish in this area, I will retain exclusive access to the data sets.

Chapter 4: Perceptions of the Alexander Technique in UK HE music institutions among Alexander Technique teachers (PART I)

This chapter is the first of a group of three chapters and presents Alexander Technique (AT) teachers' views on the AT within UK Higher Education (HE) music institutions. It illustrates findings on the definition of the AT, its recognition and provision in the HE music sector, analysing data gathered through semi-structured interviews with 19 AT teachers. The questions that this chapter answers are:

- How is the AT defined by AT teachers?
- What are AT teachers' views on the recognition of the AT and AT teachers within the UK HE music sector?
- What are AT teachers' views on the provision of the AT in the UK HE music sector?

This chapter will first introduce the characteristics of the AT teachers and will then examine findings following a findings/discussion structure for each main theme. Given the substantial amount of rich data, AT teachers' perspectives on the promotion of the AT in HE music institutions, their views on the reception of the AT among HE music students and on the benefits and risks of the AT for music students and other musicians will be discussed in Chapter 5. Aspects relating to the teaching and practice of the AT in HE music institutions will be examined in Chapter 6. Instrumental/vocal teachers' (IVTs') perspectives on these matters will be discussed in Chapters 7, 8, and 9.

4.1 Demographics of the AT teachers

Section 4.1 provides some contextualising information relating to the AT teachers. Table 4.1 shows the 19 AT teachers grouped in relation to the number of years since their graduation as qualified AT teachers. These numbers are not representative of their years of teaching experience: while some teachers started teaching just after

graduation and have been teaching since then, others started teaching at a later point, but might not have regularly been teaching throughout their career. Despite this, the table provides a visual representation of the number of the participants in support of an analysis that considers the wide range of experiences relating to the AT.

Years since graduation	Number of AT teachers
<1	1
6-10	4
11-15	4
16-20	1
21-25	1
26-30	4
<30	4

Table 4.1: AT teacher demographics: Years since graduation.

In contrast, Table 4.2 represents the 19 AT teachers in relation to each AT teacher's predominant context of teaching practice.

Predominant context of teaching practice	Number of teachers
Conservatoire	11
University Music Department	5
Independent HE music institution	1
Other	1
AT trainee	1

Table 4.2: AT teacher demographics: Teaching context.

The majority of AT teachers (n=11) worked or have been working in UK HE music conservatoires; some of those had been assistants to AT teachers employed by the institutions and may have had limited knowledge of factors relating to the provision of the AT. Fewer AT teachers (n=5) worked or have been working in university music departments. Great effort has been made to find more participants working in university music departments, but information about AT teachers working in this context is scarce. By contacting some AT societies (e.g. The Society of Teachers of the Alexander Technique [STAT]) and UK university music departments, it emerged that the majority of these departments did not provide AT sessions for music students

or had little to no connection with the AT at the time of the data collection for this research.

Additional areas of professional practice	Number of AT teachers
Instrumental/vocal teaching	8
Health-related professions (e.g. counselling, physiotherapy)	4
Non-health-related professions (e.g. instrument making)	7

Table 4.3: AT teacher demographics: Additional areas of professional practice.

Table 4.3 shows the number of AT teachers in relation to other areas of professional practice. Participants came from different backgrounds and have often undertaken portfolio careers combining multiple sources of income to support their lives financially, including music-related professions, such as instrumental/vocal (I/V) teaching and performing, and health-related careers, such as counselling and physiotherapy. These other areas of professional practice may have influenced their views on the AT and its role within HE music institutions, both in relation to the three main areas discussed in this chapter and in the two subsequent chapters dedicated to the analysis of data from these AT teachers. The next section will thus outline findings about the definition of the AT among them. It is worth mentioning that participant-numbers will be signalled with the format “AT-P[number of the participant]”; however, to protect the identity of some participants in light of identification concerns, the format “AT-P*” will be used.

4.2 The definition of the AT: The AT teachers’ perspectives

This section discusses findings in relation to the definition of the AT among AT teachers. Participants were asked to define the AT through an open-ended question at the end of each interview: *According to your knowledge and experience, how would you define the AT?* During the planning stage, I deliberately decided to place this question at the end because I felt that participants would be able to articulate their ideas more easily once we had established a rapport; indeed, although some participants found answering this question challenging, I noticed that they felt at ease to articulate their thoughts from my observation of their body language and facial

expression as well as the fact that the question was often followed by moments of laughter. On a few occasions, I asked this question at a different moment to follow the natural flow of the interview. Reflecting on the richness of the data in response to this question, the responses demonstrated a productive outcome regardless of the positioning of the question.

4.2.1 Multiple definitions

The data analysis reveals that the AT was not uniformly defined amongst these AT-participants. These differences relate both to the denomination of the AT and the focus on which this definition was based according to the different contextual applications of the AT by each teacher. With regard to the nature of the AT, participants referred to it in a variety of ways, such as *a method, a foundation course, a technique, a philosophy, an approach, or a re-education*. While some AT teachers defined the AT by looking at what the AT *is*, others referred to what the AT *does*, so the benefits of the AT rather than its nature. For example, AT-P8 thought the AT 'is a way of working with our thinking and with our awareness', whereas AT-P18 believed that the AT 'is one approach to embodiment'. Regarding the focus of the definition, some AT teachers made explicit the inter-connections between the psychophysical applications of the AT. AT-P2, for example, stated that the AT 'is a *method* of uncovering the hidden habits that we have of tension, of creating over-tension, ... whatever the movement, even [the habits of the] *mental activity* we might be engaging [emphases added]'. Similarly, another AT teacher believed that:

[as humans,] we tangle ourselves up kind of physically, muscularly and we also tangle ourselves up sort of intellectually and we also tangle ourselves up emotionally but, in a way, all those different tangles resemble each other, and they actually can't be separated out. So, the Alexander Technique is a way of undoing those tangles and a way thereby of getting out of one's own way. (AT-P11)

In contrast, a few others made these associations ambiguous and seemed to base their definition on bodily experiences. AT-P3 stated that the AT is 'a foundation course in learning how to use your own *body* in a better way and it gives you the practical tools to be able to apply it to everything in life, including being a musician [emphasis added]'; likewise, AT-P4 said that the AT is 'a technique for learning to live our lives, do all the activities that we do in a more efficient way, learn mechanical

efficiency: ... it's a technique for learning to use ourselves and function in a more efficient way'. These findings thus highlight potential divergent views about how the AT may be defined and promoted.

4.2.2 Variances of definitions and recurrences

Findings show that AT teachers may change their definitions depending on the context and the recipient of the information. Some participants mentioned that they would change their definition depending on to whom they would describe the AT and the recipient's specific area of interest. For example, AT-P6 reported that they 'could probably define it in lots of different ways depending on whom [they were] ... talking to'. Similarly, AT-P10 stated: 'the way I would define it has to change depending on whom I am talking to. So, if I am talking to musicians, the way I would explain it is completely different than if I was talking to a sports person'.

Despite these variances of definitions, data analysis revealed some recurrences in the way participants had defined the AT. Many AT teachers referred to the idea that the AT deals with changing habitual patterns and behaviours, and this theme recurred throughout several interviews. For example, AT-P4 stated that they 'would define [the AT] as a technique for ... learn[ing] awareness of habit and unhelpful tension, learn[ing] to refuse those habits'. This echoes AT-P16 who believed that the AT 'is a method of learning to change habitual behaviour by the exercise of inhibition and direction', which were defined as 'the decision to not do' and 'sending some kind of message along the nerve pathway'. Likewise, AT-P15 said the AT 'offers a safe space for people to become aware of, and understand their fears, and offers them a means to learn, expand, release and change their previously unconscious habits'.

Some of the participants focussed their definition on the applicability of the AT to everyday life. AT-P6 stated:

So, if I've just met somebody and bumped into them on the street and they said 'What's that?', I'd probably say 'It's the best method I know for looking after myself in my daily life'. To me that's probably the simplest definition. Or I could define it as a practical self-care, self-development method.

Similarly, AT-P8 mentioned that 'Alexander work is about ease and choice, in activities and in life', suggesting possible benefits of the AT not only to specific activities but also to general well-being. This connects to AT-P16's view of the AT as 'a

general discipline and you can apply it to anything'. The wide-ranging applicability of the AT was highlighted across multiple interviews by all participants in other segments of their interviews: notably, AT-P7 stated that AT specialists 'teach a way of working to restore an integrated functioning of the human organism; awareness, conscious control of reaction, presence, mindfulness, confidence in dealing with new situations'¹⁴.

4.2.3 Difficulties in defining the AT

Participants who seemed to find defining the AT challenging were asked to reflect on the reasons behind this difficulty; other participants spontaneously commented on this difficulty without being asked to do so. Comparing responses across multiple interviews, it seems that a lack of a universal definition may reside in the necessity of experience to understand the intangible nature of the AT. AT-P19 stated that defining the AT was very challenging because 'you can describe [the AT] in words; however, the understanding of the AT is going to derive from the experience'. On a similar note, AT-P13 revealed that 'it's like until you have done it, you cannot describe it and even when you have done it, you cannot describe it'. This hints at an elusive nature of the AT, which 'purely logical descriptions' may not address, as AT-P19 also reported. Indeed, to define the AT, AT-P13 referred to the parable of blind men trying to understand the form of an elephant: 'That's how I see the [Alexander] Technique; it's a huge elephant but some people think it's a snake, a tree, a brush, and sometimes I might think it's something else again: it evolves'. This lack of uniformity was expressed by AT-P16 who noted that 'even Alexander does not define it exactly in one way all the time', highlighting the absence of a comprehensive definition of the AT by its founder. This ties in with AT-P19's observations of diverse teaching approaches among the AT community: 'there is not exactly unity in what every Alexander [Technique] teacher does; it is quite, quite varied', which again illustrates the potential divergent views about the AT among different AT teachers highlighted in 4.2.1.

¹⁴ Given the relevance of the theme to the applicability of the AT among HE music institutions, this theme will be further examined in Section 4.3 in relation to AT practitioners' views on the general understanding of the AT among individuals within these institutions.

4.2.4 *The definition of the AT: Discussion of the findings*

This study found that the AT is classified in different ways by the AT teacher participants in this research: as a method, a foundation course, a technique, a philosophy, an approach or a re-education. These denominations are not sufficient to provide an exact representation of how the AT may be defined as participants did not refer to the AT uniformly but, in other segments of the interviews, they used other terms such as *skill* and *discipline*. A detailed analysis of the presence of certain words goes beyond the scope of this research, as it does not aim at providing a detailed semantic analysis of the different definitions but reveals the views held by participants and the ways in which they define the AT. Notably, these findings show the challenges, even for AT professionals, in expressing what the AT is, as well as a lack of a universal definition encompassing the multifaceted nature of the AT.

While some AT teachers based their definitions around both physical and physiological characteristics of the AT, a few others appeared to focus their definitions primarily on physical manifestations. These variances align with different sources and pieces of information about the AT. While the website of STAT (2023b) highlights clear psychophysical connections, stating that ‘Alexander Technique lessons stimulate your ability to learn simultaneously on different levels; physically, intellectually and emotionally’ (n. p.), the Merriam-Webster (n. d.) defines the AT as ‘a technique for positioning and moving the body that is believed to reduce tension’ (n. p.).

Furthermore, findings revealed that AT teacher participants tailored their definitions depending on the context and the recipient of the information, showing common themes such as the role of habit and the application of the AT to everyday life. This is again consistent with sources promoting the AT among the general public and performers, such as musicians. For instance, STAT’s (2023a) website home page reports that ‘the Alexander Technique is a skill for self-development teaching you to change long-standing habits that cause unnecessary tension in everything you do’ (n. p.), whereas STAT’s (2023d) webpage segment on performing provides a more specific definition for performers: ‘the Alexander Technique helps us to acquire balance in performance of being both calm and unhurried, and yet full of energy and ready to act responses’ (n. p.). Similarly, a definition aimed at musicians proposes that ‘the Alexander Technique is an educational process which shows you how to release

patterns of tension and habits which stop you from being your best either on stage or in the studio' (The Institute of Contemporary Music Performance, 2023b, n. p.).

In light of both the findings of this study and literature on the AT, it is apparent that AT teachers show versatility in tailoring their definitions to different people and adapting it to different contexts; nonetheless, this lack of uniformity could affect the ways in which the AT is perceived by the different categories of people in HE music institutions and could lead to confusion about the nature of the AT and challenges in considering the connection between the physical and mental aspects of it. This is significant in view of how integrated these are in F. M. Alexander's writings, for example in relation to the concept of *self* which expresses the interconnection and inseparability between body and mind (Alexander, 1932/1990), and thus it has implications for the promotion of the AT by the AT teachers outside this research.

Lastly, this study revealed that some AT teacher participants found it difficult to define the AT because of its experiential and intangible nature, aligning with F. M. Alexander's original writings in which F. M. Alexander (1967/1989) claimed: 'all that I am trying to give you is a new experience' (p. 11), presumably hinting at the paramount importance of a direct hands-on experience. This also mirrors Huxley's (1938) remark on the experiential characteristics of the AT:

No verbal description can do justice to a technique which involves the changing, by a long process of instruction on the part of the teacher and of active co-operation on that of the pupil, of an individual's sensory experiences. (p. 223)

Furthermore, some AT teacher participants also highlighted a lack of unity in the AT world and of a comprehensive definition from the founder of the AT (see Section 4.2.3). This aligns with Mouritz's (2022b) interpretation of F. M. Alexander's last definition of the AT: in his fourth and final book, F. M. Alexander (1941/2015) wrote that the technique was 'primarily a technique for the development of the control of human reaction' (p. 129) but, according to Mouritz (2022b), since F. M. Alexander 'writes "primarily", it is not *only* a technique for the development of the control of human reaction [emphasis added]', suggesting that this definition may not encompass all aspects of the AT. In addition, in the introduction to his fourth and final book, F. M. Alexander (1941/2015) recognised being 'conscious that the knowledge [they had] gained' was 'but a beginning', hoping that their experience could offer

‘unlimited opportunity for fruitful research’ (p. 30). A lack of unity among AT teachers may therefore not be surprising and may be due both to the explorative characteristics of the AT — which have evolved over time — and the personal interpretations that different teachers may have given to F. M. Alexander’s work. Nonetheless, it is true that the current findings indicate that definitions of the AT among AT teachers who had worked or were working in HE music institutions vary, which in turn could affect the ways in which the AT is perceived by those who directly or indirectly may be in contact with it.

4.3 The recognition of the AT: AT teachers’ perspectives

This section examines findings concerning the recognition of the AT within HE music institutions from the perspective of AT teachers, discussing also their experiences of working in HE music settings and their views on how the AT and AT professionals are regarded within different HE music institutions.

4.3.1 Fortunate situations

Overall, many of the AT teachers (n=17) felt that there was a general feeling of respect towards the AT profession within their workplaces, especially those who had worked or were working in music conservatoires and in one independent HE music institution. A small number of them commented that they were working in very supportive and unique environments. For example, AT-P5 said: ‘I think I am very, very fortunate because I work in a [conservatoire] where the work has been in the development for the last 60 years and I think, generally, it is very well-thought of’. They added that they appreciated working in an institution that had been ‘pioneering in its attitude towards the whole person rather than just being a perfect technician’.¹⁵ Similarly, AT-P* remarked on the uniqueness of their institution in providing AT work to their students, noting that their institution was the ‘only modern music [institution]’ to offer the AT in their curriculum and, in doing so, to exceptionally regard it as ‘an essential component of a higher education course’.

¹⁵ This links to recent initiatives within HE music institutions to support the health and well-being of musicians and stem the tide of a high number of musicians suffering from performance-related injuries and mental health issues associated with the music profession (see Chapter 2).

4.3.2 *Music conservatoires: Mixed views*

Some participants who had worked or were working in music conservatoires believed that the appreciation and recognition of the AT within the HE music sector varied. While some AT teachers pointed out that the recognition of the AT varied *among different institutions*, others commented that it depended on the *categories of people* within those institutions. With regard to the differences within institutions, AT-P* said:

I get the impression that perhaps at times the [name of a UK conservatoire] Alexander Department had to sort of fight its corner — although it is very well-established. ... At [another conservatoire] there is less emphasis placed on it and then at [another conservatoire in the UK], then it is very much more established within the curriculum thanks to [the teachers working there]. So, it is quite variable within the three that I have some experience of.

Other teachers thought that the recognition was ‘very, very mixed’, but also that views on this would vary according to whether students, IVTs, academic staff or administrators were asked about the AT within the institution. In particular, one teacher highlighted a lack of interest from administrators in engaging with the AT.

They said:

I have given [the administrator] a copy of [an AT book], I've sent [them] various articles and I've sent to [them] examples of students' work. [They have] never commented on any of the things I have sent. So, I think, if [they were] interested, [they] would at least said that [they] read them and made a comment about them. (AT-P*)

These challenges may apply to other institutions, with potential for differences between music conservatoires and university music departments.

4.3.3 *Music conservatoires and university music departments*

Although many AT teachers felt a sense of respect towards the AT within the UK HE sector, the few participants working in university music departments believed that the AT was more highly regarded in music conservatoires where there was perceived to be a greater emphasis on music performance and where the AT may be funded by the institution. For example, AT-P15, who had worked in an independent HE music institution and was working in a university music department, commented that since music conservatoires ‘are performance-based institutions ... they value [the] Alexander Technique much more than the [University] values’ it. Similarly, AT-P2 stated that although respect for the role of AT professionals was felt within institutions, this was

higher in leading music conservatoires 'where [the institution] is actually providing funding for the teachers to come in and it is not the students [that] have to pay for lessons'.

The fact that the AT may be less established in university music departments could also be reflected in the lack of awareness among a few AT teachers of the provision of the AT in those contexts and consequently, of how it could be regarded in those institutions. For example, AT-P11 expressed that the AT is 'probably [regarded] less' in university music departments and that they were 'always interested when somebody ... says "Oh I had lessons at ... [a] music department"' because they thought 'Oh that's good, they've got a teacher working there'. Likewise, AT-P8 acknowledged that the AT was 'very well known in general in music colleges' but they did not 'know about universities'.

Findings from the interview data with AT teachers working in music conservatoires, however, offer a different perspective on this matter, presented below in Section 4.3.4. In fact, the perception that the AT may be more highly regarded in music conservatoires than university music departments might only be in theory and may not consider the challenges that AT teachers working in music conservatoires, for example, might face within their workplace.

4.3.4 Music conservatoires: Battles and challenges

A few AT teacher participants working in UK music conservatoires spoke of the institutional challenges they had encountered in developing their work and getting recognition for it. AT-P9 referred to the relationships between funding, institutional culture, understanding and recognition of the AT:

I think in education we are constantly fighting a battle with accountants. And then, of course, anybody who comes in as an organiser of the degree, they want to stamp a particular brand on the degree and then as people in charge have taken over, I had to start fighting the battles again; and then exactly that happened with our recent Head of Undergraduate studies ... who unfortunately doesn't understand what the Alexander Technique is about and so I had to fight like hell to maintain what we've got.

With regard to these challenges of negotiating with decision makers, AT-P5 commented on the difficulties in persuading music conservatoire administrators of the perceived value of the AT for music students' musical development:

Well, I think the most crucial battle has been — it sounds like a funny thing to say — helping administration and finance people to open their minds in a way, changing their minds to not seeing [the AT] as some funny little thing but that it is this deep work of self-development.

In particular, a lack of understanding was perceived to be prevalent among administrators who were reported not to have direct experience of the AT. AT-P7 stated that:

[Administrators] think of it as a kind of physiotherapy to improve students' posture but they don't really understand the psychological aspect to it, of how you develop awareness and the control over your reaction in performance. So, I think administrators obviously see students wanting a lesson and go along with it, but they don't really understand how important it can be to developing musicianship.

A similar barrier was echoed by AT-P17 who, with reference to music conservatoire heads of institutions, stated that 'the biggest challenge is to try to convince people that the AT isn't just an add-on'. This was considered to shape the overall value of the AT within the music conservatoire. As AT-P14 reflected:

[The recognition of the AT] definitely depends on the culture of the institution. It depends on who is in a leadership role, you know, who is the overall administrative head of the department or of the whole institution. If they value it, then the whole department will value it, students will value it. If there is not that interest from the top, I think it is very difficult to maintain a high value on the Technique.

Likewise, AT-P10 stated that it seemed to them 'that the personal experience of the people that are in charge of the departments make a massive difference as to whether the AT is either in that department at all or valued or encouraged or expanded'.

In addition to describing the above institutional challenges, AT-P5 commented on the characteristics that are needed to negotiate with decision makers:

There's always a battle, and that's quite hard for Alexander teachers because they are usually quite a gentle bunch and you have to be tough, you have to really fight your space intellectually, as well as have the emotional courage, I think, to say to the institution "No, this is really important and we need this to be part of the degree", so that it is understood in this, how crucial it is.

4.3.5 Sense of disconnection: The role of AT teachers

Some AT teachers argued that their personal commitment played an important role in building a supportive institutional environment, suggesting that AT teachers'

personalities may affect how the AT may be regarded within the different music institutions. AT-P15 asserted that their effort was vital to increase the understanding, and consequently, the value of the AT: 'I started from a place where the [Alexander] Technique was very little known and very little valued, and I worked to try and make it more known and more valued'. This mirrors AT-P5 who mentioned how they and their colleagues had 'devoted [themselves] actually to this: deepening the understanding within the institution and trying to get that message out there'.

Some participants described how they had felt disconnected from the HE music institution. For example, AT-P11 eloquently described this:

I think, for many years I felt like I was a kind of ghost ... I went there, I saw my students, particularly when all the work I was doing was one-to-one lessons. I'd just go in, I'd see my students, I'd go home and sort of nobody knew I was there.

To overcome this sense of disconnection, this AT teacher referred to their effort in building connections, expressing how the situation changed and how they felt more integrated: 'I think we, [as AT teachers], are probably more integrated than we were back then partly because of the networking that I have bothered to do in that time, and I have got more foothold' (AT-P11). Similarly, AT-P15 commented on the difficulties in getting institutional support and its impact on the uptake of the AT among music students:

I actually asked [the head of department] last year, I just said that I needed them to back me up and I didn't feel I was being backed up. When I was being backed up, I had loads of students because if it doesn't need much from the Department or the instrumental teachers or the whatever just to say "This is a good thing, we suggest, we do it" and also it doesn't take much for them to either say nothing or to even imply that it's not valuable for the student to think it's a waste of money ... So, I had to fight for backing.

This echoes the similar challenges expressed by other AT teachers in Section 4.3.4 and suggests complex interrelated issues relating to the institutional recognition of the AT.

4.3.6 A lack of understanding

A recurrent theme was a sense amongst interviewees of a lack of understanding of the nature of the AT within UK HE music institutions. As mentioned in Section 4.3.4, it was reported that the AT was generally regarded as a postural remedy rather than an educational tool. AT-P9 commented that 'most people think it's good for posture and

it's good for being comfortable'; however, 'the understanding that [the AT is] a catalyst in the learning process is not particularly well-understood'. This mirrors AT-P5's view that '[the AT] is a catalyst in the learning process: [this] is where we can always keep growing the work'.

While for AT teacher participants direct experience of the AT seemed to be necessary to understand the nature of the AT (as also detailed in Section 4.2.3 previously), a few interviewees argued that pedagogical approaches to the AT may additionally affect its understanding. In particular, AT-P17 considered that:

Part of the problem of the AT is that it's not very well understood, and it's actually not very well taught, so it's often taught as something that's like an exercise therapy or a relaxation therapy, but it is actually something that you learn and it's not just about the posture and sitting in a chair and standing up and relaxation, it's actually about the way you engage your mechanism, including your brain, in activity.

To highlight this pedagogical conundrum, they continued that:

[This] whole approach is very poorly understood, not just by non-Alexander teachers but sometimes by Alexander [Technique] teachers: some people do teach it as a physical therapy by looking at just posture ... but they don't really understand that it all comes from the brain.

These challenges associated with the teaching of the AT and the resulting understanding of it were remarked on by AT-P15 in relation to the terminology used in the AT sessions:

The language is so archaic and, also, it's so drilled into Alexander teachers that they understand what it means but nobody else in the world does but they don't understand that other people don't understand. So, there's this kind of disconnect between what people are offering and what people are understanding of what they are offering.

This hints at the legacy of F. M. Alexander and the language used in F. M. Alexander's original writings (a detailed examination of this is provided in Chapter 6).

4.3.7 AT as a cult: Issues and improvements

This perceived lack of understanding of the AT connected to a potential scepticism towards the AT and a view of it as a cult amongst different HE music institutions. AT-P12, for example, said: '[this scepticism] is still a kind of heritage we have at [my institution] — I do not know how it is at [other institutions] — but certainly there is a

particular generation of tutors who consider the AT a little cultish'. Similarly, AT-P16, revealed:

Occasionally you get an old member of staff who doesn't agree with [the AT]. There's a particular member of staff [that is] ... absolutely convinced that the AT is a religious cult, and you can't have a rational conversation with him about it.

This ties in with what AT-P14 observed in relation to the mixed views about the AT among IVTs: 'I think certain instrumental teachers really see the value of it, other instrumental teachers do not like the idea of it, some people see it as something strange and quirky and it should not be there'. The perception of the AT being seen as a cult was echoed by AT-P15 who commented on the historical reasons underpinning this:

It was kind of cultish in the past. There was this whole thing of you cannot change a word of what [F. M.] Alexander said, instead of acknowledging the fact that he was a pioneer and things have changed radically in our understanding in neuroscience and all sorts of things.

Thus, a few teachers pointed out the responsibility of the AT community to enhance its credibility and therefore the value of the AT. Firstly, AT-P17 remarked the importance of carrying out more research investigating the AT mechanisms:

I think the thing that is beginning to change is that people, those who are involved in the [AT], are realising [that] if it is to be taken seriously by medical profession and musicians ... and conservatoires, universities and so on ... it needs to be better researched. So, one of the big problems of the [AT] is that there's not enough scientific research that demonstrates its principles and how it works ... [but] it's a difficult thing to do because there is no funding for it.

Secondly, AT-P10 commented on the improvements that an AT society is taking to enhance the outlook of their profession:

I might get a sense that we are not valued as greatly ... But I see that as not just the fault of the establishment, I do see that as the fault of [an AT society] and the teachers as well, that we have taken long time to look more professional ... [but] we are changing quite a lot at the moment. So, there is a lot of stuff going on: the assessment of teachers, and new schools [to train AT teachers] opened up and now having independent assessment before they become teachers which is a slightly different process than the past. We are much more aware of appearing to look professional, making sure that all teachers do continue professional development and there are proper mentoring processes in place for graduates and things like that. I think we have had a disadvantage because

we are a small organisation to get a lot of this done in the past, but I think that is changing quite a lot now.

This has implications for the ways in which AT teachers might be considered in HE music institutions where there might be expectations to act with certain professional dispositions, and for teachers to demonstrate quality assurance through training and maintaining professional knowledge.

4.3.8 The recognition of the AT: Discussion of the findings

Findings showed that it is difficult to depict a generalisable representation of how the AT and AT professionals may be regarded within the UK HE music sector. Although many of these AT teachers perceived a sense of institutional support and respect for the AT, a few participants working in music conservatoires and in an independent HE music institution with a focus on popular music felt themselves to be working in particularly fortunate environments. In fact, data from other AT teachers who had worked or were working in other UK music conservatoires suggest that the appreciation within these, for example, may well depend on the specific characteristics of the institution and the different categories and specific interest of people within them. In addition, findings indicate that the support and respect for the AT might depend on other factors, such as the institutional culture towards the health and well-being of musicians and the musical orientation of the institution in which the AT may or may not be provided (e.g. classical versus popular music).

Furthermore, findings revealed that although AT teachers working in university music departments may perceive more institutional barriers compared with their colleagues working in music specialist institutions, the fortunate situations for a few AT teachers working in music conservatoires and in one independent HE music institution were found not to be exempt from challenges. On the contrary, those situations were the result of continuous negotiations with decision makers to establish and maintain a strong institutional culture supporting the AT work over time. The AT teachers in music conservatoire settings, for example, lamented a lack of interest and understanding of the value and the nature of the AT among administrators and heads of departments, suggesting the need to improve communication between AT teachers and academic policy makers. The fact that administrators in HE music institutions may potentially not be interested in the AT could be in line with perceptions of the AT as being primarily

for performers, despite claims showing the AT itself is intended to be of general application. As STAT (2023a) argued, 'the Alexander Technique teaches you the skills to help you move well and live better, *in all that you do* [emphasis added]' (n. p.). Findings also indicated how crucial AT teachers' attitudes are in developing the credibility of the AT and consequently, how the AT may be viewed within a specific institution and the uptake of AT sessions among students, generating questions concerning to what extent an appreciation of the AT teachers' individual traits correlates with institutional appreciation and popularity of the AT practice itself.

AT teachers lamented a perceived lack of understanding of the educational benefits of the AT within HE music institutions, especially among those who may not have had direct experience of it. In fact, findings revealed that a direct experience of the AT was deemed to be necessary to understand the nature and the applications of the AT which, according to many AT teacher participants, go beyond postural education. Furthermore, another key issue was the correlation between pedagogical approaches to teaching the AT and its understanding within the HE music community: specifically, the extent to which AT teachers' personal interpretations of the AT, ways of teaching it (e.g. archaic terminology), and communicating its value might affect how the different categories of people perceive it and therefore how they might value it. This couples with a historical perception of the AT being seen as a cult whose mechanics are yet to be explained by robust research, impacting in turn the credibility of the AT. This aligns with Fitzgerald (2007) who argued that 'until the AT profession commits to a program of authentic scholarly research, AT teacher education will either continue as a set of habits from the past or drift directionless into the future, buffeted by ideology, anecdote and administrative convenience' (p. 194). Given the numerous AT teaching organisations around the globe and their potential willingness to enhance the credibility of their profession, further research across different AT teacher training schools is thus required to understand any discrepancies amongst pedagogical approaches to training in and teaching the AT. This is paramount considering the challenges of a transmission model of teacher/learner, which raises questions about quality assurance across AT teachers, the interest of AT societies, such as STAT and its affiliated societies, 'to maintain and improve professional standards' and 'prevent abuse and exploitation by untrained people' (STAT, 2023f, n. p.) as well as that of HE

music institutions in relation to the recruitment, ongoing support and professional development of AT teachers.

4.4 Specific institutional provision of the AT

This section illustrates AT teachers' views on specific institutional provision of the AT, examining similarities and differences among different HE music institutions.

4.4.1 Types of teaching provision and funding: Overview

Findings reveal that the provision of the AT varies among HE music institutions (see Table 4.4 below), with differences relating to the study level, the teaching format, the course duration and the funding for AT sessions. Three out of nine institutions where these participants were working partly integrate the AT into the music curriculum, usually at Undergraduate level. Of these three, Institution 1 (INST1) provides the AT as specific AT modules for UG and MA students and also as 'remediate' modules available as elective content (AT-P9). These are entirely paid for by the institution. Module sessions are offered in small groups of five students: at Undergraduate level, the AT is part of the curriculum for Year 1 and 2 and can be chosen as an elective for Year 3 and 4, whereas at Masters level it is offered only as an elective one-year course. The AT 'remediate' modules, on the contrary, are extra-curricular and give students the possibility to explore the AT in a one-to-one or one-to-two setting (one teacher – two students). In Institution 2 (INST2), group classes form part of an Undergraduate module to enhance performance, but one-to-one lessons are provided through an AT student society and students need to pay for those. Institution 3 (INST3), on the other hand, integrates AT group workshops into the course content whilst providing one-to-one lessons at a reduced rate of £25 an hour.

Other institutions give students the possibility to take AT sessions in both group and one-to-one contexts, but AT sessions are not part of the curriculum, and the funding of these varies across institutions. Institution 4 (INST4) provides students with the possibility to take one-to-one and group AT sessions paid for by the institution within a limited budget capacity. Institution 5 (INST5) provides short AT elective group and one-to-one courses funded by the institution, whereas Institutions 6/7/8 (INST6/7/8) offer one-off free introductory group workshops but one-to-one lessons

are usually self-funded by students or by internal or external funding (e.g. Help Musicians UK). Lastly, Institution 9 (INST9) funds one-off group workshops to music students but regular one-to-one AT lessons, despite being optional, are only offered to students participating in a music ensemble.

	TYPE OF INSTITUTION	AT INTEGRATED	GROUP	ONE-TO-ONE
INST1	Specialist music institution	Y	Y	Y
INST2	Specialist music institution	Y	Y	Y
INST3	Specialist music institution	Y	Y	Y
INST4	Specialist music institution	N	Y	Y
INST5	Specialist music institution	N	Y	Y
INST6	Specialist music institution	N	ONE OFF	Y
INST7	University Music Department	N	ONE OFF	Y
INST8	University Music Department	N	ONE OFF	Y
INST9	University Music Department	N	ONE OFF	Y – For students in one ensemble

Table 4.4: Summary of AT provision in relation to the type of institution and teaching formats.

4.4.2 AT in the curriculum

As noted above, findings reveal that three out of nine institutions partly embed the AT into the music curriculum. Although all of the three institutions integrate the AT as group classes (an examination of the different teaching contexts, one-to-one versus group, will be discussed in Chapter 6), only two of them offer it as a separate subject: in INST1 the AT is offered as a course; in INST2 as a series of workshops. With regard to INST1, one participant¹⁶ reported that at Undergraduate level, the AT is ‘a compulsory part of the first-year course and second-year course ... and then it can be chosen as an academic option in the third and fourth year’. Regarding INST2, one participant reported that AT group workshops ‘are a part of [students’] coursework’. Conversely, INST3 does not offer the AT as a separate subject but embeds it in a music performance module. Specifically, it was reported that:

¹⁶ Participant numbers have been omitted to support anonymity.

[The AT is part of a] compulsory module in the modular degree called “Enhancing Performance” and it's kind of all the kind of side-line skills, slightly separate from the music-making. The first years have five one-hour sessions ... in small groups.

Thus, it appears that there are various possibilities for the AT being credit-bearing or not across institutions and therefore affecting the extent to which students' engagement with the AT could contribute to their degree result.

4.4.3 AT as an optional activity

Several participants reported that the AT was generally provided as an optional activity. Data reveals different types of provision, ranging from individual and group lessons to one-off workshops or termly courses, making it difficult to generalise across multiple institutions. For example, AT-P12 summarised the provision of the AT at the institution in which they were working, highlighting the high demand among students and consequently, the necessity of adapting the provision accordingly:

Attendance is voluntary, [and the AT] is not part of the students' curriculum. Students have to apply for lessons, and once they are allocated to a teacher, there are [fewer than 10 teachers] at the moment, they get 20 half an hour lessons during the academic year. Students have to commit to taking the lessons regularly. In the last five, six years, I have introduced five what I call advanced workshops for the students who have had lessons to support their interest in AT work ... In addition, because we have such a huge waiting list for the students, I have also started to introduce 16 one-hour interactive classes a year for the students on the waiting list.

AT-P17, likewise, reported the voluntary aspect of the AT provision and its structure into group and individual sessions throughout the year:

It's teaching students who volunteer to come to classes and [my colleague and I] run classes over a year, it's probably about 10 classes every year ... We generally do maybe five or six [group] classes in the autumn and spring terms and the rest of the time we do individual lessons, so the individual lessons are 15 minutes each.

Similarly, AT-P18 commented on the optionality of the AT and on the provision of individual and group sessions which had been adapted considering students' needs. It is worth noting that in this institution AT sessions were not provided to all music students but only to music and non-music students participating in a specific vocal ensemble:

It is all individual, although occasionally I have managed to timetable small-group sessions but [students] are very, very busy, so that is very difficult to do. Most years, I have had a term or two terms of small-group sessions with three of them, otherwise they are all individual lessons, half-an-hour long paid for by the [institution]. Lessons are optional, [students] do not have to have them but it built up to most of them having lessons last year, that is 14-15 of [those taking part in the vocal ensemble].

A few AT teachers reported that introductory group workshops were offered to students at the start of the year to promote the AT. AT-P7 mentioned that 'at the beginning of the year, all the first-year students get an hour introduction, whether it's a talk, whether it's a demonstration, whether it's a slideshow showing them different aspects of the work'.

However, other teachers, revealed the absence of regular AT provision. For example, AT-P8 reported that they had delivered one-off workshops organised by the HE music institution:

It was kind of following on from work that [name of an AT teacher] had already done because [they] had given two workshops, so in a way to continue that work — and to explore whether there is a possibility of more future workshops, perhaps more regular classes there.

These findings therefore show that in HE institutions there is some ongoing provision as well as one-off sessions.

4.4.4 Views on the provision and funding for the AT

AT teachers expressed their views on the AT provision within the institution in which they were working. While only two teachers were generally happy about it, others offered suggestions about how it could be improved. AT-P11 stated that 'it's a very good set up' and did not really think 'that there's more that [the institution] could do', whereas AT-P5 highlighted how provision has been developed, saying that 'it's pretty full-on and actually the provision is growing and growing'. In contrast, other participants expressed their desire for the AT to be embedded in UG and MA degree courses. AT-P12 stated that they would like:

the Alexander teaching to become part of the core curriculum in the first or in the third year or whenever it would fit in the Undergraduate schedule. In this way every student attending this institution will have received an introduction to the Technique. Also, to find a way of making the AT become a subject for elective studies in the Postgraduates or Master's programs, where students can

choose to do their thesis on AT and music making or whatever format it might take.

Similarly, AT-P* wanted the AT to be included in an UG module about health and well-being for musicians and masters' courses in music education and music performance. They argued that while with regard to music performance, the AT is 'such a key element for long-term well-being and health', and in relation to developing music teaching skills, the AT can be one of the ways to teach student-teachers to 'notice how [pupils] are performing and potentially injuring themselves in their performance'. The lack of inclusion of the AT in UG health and well-being modules was highlighted by AT-P7 who expressed their desire for the AT to be included in those: 'we are missing, and I am hoping next year that in this series of lectures, there'll be at least one lecture from an Alexander [Technique] teacher'.

Other AT teachers lamented an insufficiency of the current provision to provide the AT to all music students. AT-P17 stated that given the limited number of teaching hours, 'there's a lot of students who don't get the chance to have lessons'. Despite the institution paying for the AT, the participant believed that this financial support was insufficient and that contradictions in relation to value arose through institutional promotion: 'it sounds great. [The institution] pays, but they don't actually pay that much. They kind of do lip service: ... "Yeah, we do that, we do AT" but they do, but not enough'. Likewise, AT-P16 expressed their desire for the AT to be provided and paid for by the institution to those students who are interested in it: 'the students who want to have a lesson, every week ... they should be able to receive it'.

A common view amongst these participants was the lack of funding for AT lessons within the institution in which they were working, both in universities and specialist music institutions. Several of them highlighted the limited AT budget and therefore, the burden upon students to find the money for it. AT-P2 described this in detail:

After I had been there a while, I was aware that students sometimes found it difficult to keep up their Alexander lessons because of financial difficulties. So, I asked if I could have some funding to enable students to be given some financial help with their lessons. I got a small amount of funding for this purpose, but it was very small. Only enough to provide some subsidised lessons for a limited number of students on a first-come-first-served basis.

With regard to the limited budget and paying for sessions, AT-P7 said that 'students pay half the lesson fees, so they have to find the extra money to have Alexander lessons'; similarly, AT-P15 commented that 'the students are each allowed one free lesson ... and then their lessons are subsidised, but mostly the majority of the payment is from the students'. However, since funding may be an issue for students wanting AT lessons, AT teachers also commented on the sources of funding for students with health or financial difficulties. For example, AT-P11 said: 'I offer one-to-one lessons — which the students can either pay for, or quite often, there'll be some students who are getting some kind of funding for health reasons, usually from the charity Help Musicians'. Regarding the institutional funding support, AT-P7 observed that their institution was 'very good. Generally speaking, if a student can't afford lessons, they would pay for the lessons from one fund or another'.

Some AT teachers spoke about how provision changed during the years and how funding cuts affected the provision of the AT. AT-P11 gave a specific example:

Until the financial crash of 2008, we had quite a lot of college money for one-to-one lessons for music students in [the music conservatoire]. At that stage, there were five of us, [five Alexander teachers], so actually there was somebody going in every day but with the financial crash in 2008, that pretty much collapsed overnight.

Likewise, AT-P16 said how the number of AT sessions funded by the institution had been reduced: 'it used to be 24 lessons a year, but they cut the hours down'. Furthermore, they provided an explanation: '[the institution] said [that] they wanted the lessons to be available to more people and what that effectively meant was doing some group teaching. So, it moved some of the budget from the individual lessons to group teaching'.

Other AT teachers talked about the reasons behind funding cuts, commenting on how administrative support had affected the provision and funding for the AT over time. AT-P12 illustrated that:

it always depends a little bit on change of leadership. A newly appointed principal, maybe...in the 1990s, tried to get rid of the AT because it was thought of as a waste of time for the students, of money and resources.

Similarly, AT-P15 identified that changes in institutional administration impacted how much they worked:

In the beginning, actually, I got quite a lot of support from a member of the staff who used to give me two workshops a year to introduce it and then that got reduced to one and then became nothing and I had to fight to have it back again. So, that was tricky.

These findings echo those discussed in Section 4.3 about the institutional challenges experienced by some AT teachers.

4.4.5 AT for staff

Data analysis shows that the provision of the AT for institutional staff is marginal in comparison with that for music students. In one institution, teaching and administrative staff have the opportunity and are encouraged to get occasional free AT sessions; new administrative staff, however, are required to have two AT one-to-one lessons to learn about healthy postural habits and gain an understanding of the AT to promote it to students. Specifically, the AT teacher working in this institution reported that:

Staff ... are all able to receive free lessons occasionally from me in the AT ... Most staff have not heard of the AT before and they are required to come to two sessions with me when they first join the [institution] and I give them information on how they can sit at their computer, how they can move around and so on. And if they are involved with the students, I also talk to them about how this will help the students. (AT-P*)

In some other institutions, teaching staff have the opportunity to have AT sessions and receive funding for it as part of their professional development allowance. For instance, AT-P9 said that '[teachers] can come along and have [AT lessons], but they can apply for funding for a series of lessons, so it's called professional development, so various members of staff have been and had some personal one-to-one lessons'. Other teachers, on the other hand, spoke about the resistance among staff towards having AT lessons despite being offered free AT lessons. AT-P2, for example, mentioned the following in relation to the staff (academic, administrative, and IVTs) in their institution:

The staff never came apart from one member of staff and one member of the admin team ... When I first started I offered for everyone to come and have a free lesson with me so they could find out what it was about ... It was a bit disappointing that there were no others.

This raises questions about the acceptance of the AT among staff and the provision of the AT for them in HE music institutions, as well as concerns over their roles in promoting the AT.

4.4.6 Access to space

A few participants commented on access to and quality of the teaching space for AT sessions. AT-P2 emphasised the support that administrative staff provided to access the space for AT sessions: 'People would make sure I could get a room to use for my teaching on the particular day I went in on. Staff would be very helpful in that way'. In a similar manner, AT-P3 said that the institution was supportive in this: 'They also give me a room for free, in which I can do one-to-one sessions if students want to have those'. On the other hand, AT-P15 reported on the difficulties to get an appropriate space:

In terms of space, I had a really good space and then because the Music Tech people wanted that space and, they were deemed much more important, I eventually got thrown out of that space and then had to fight really hard to get a space where I didn't have a nervous breakdown and I could actually work.

A correlation between the teaching space and the credibility of the AT within the institution was highlighted by one participant:

[In two institutions I know of], the AT teaching gets put in a room somewhere in an annexe. That isn't necessarily a bad thing for teaching because the students are kind of coming to a difference space and out of the daily stresses, but at the same time it's not just in the middle of the main building and treated as part of everything. (AT-P8)

This suggests that factors relating to the provision of the AT (e.g. quality and location of the space) might also affect the recognition of the AT within HE music institutions.

4.4.7 The provision of the AT: Discussion of the findings

Findings indicated that although some institutions integrate the AT into the curriculum, this is a partial integration that generally happens at Undergraduate level and may take different forms: as evidenced above, there is not a standardised format of provision since the AT may be incorporated as an individual course, a series of workshops or as part of a larger module. It may be speculated that the AT is considered as a necessary part of students' musical development in those institutions

in which the AT is embedded into the music curriculum, considering also that in a few cases the AT might be credit-bearing and thus the engagement with it may count towards the students' final degree result. However, this higher value of the AT may not be truly representative since in one of these three institutions an AT elective module course is defined by the institution as 'remediate work' (AT-P9), which may indicate a devaluation of the worth of the AT and have negative implications concerning its image and students' self-views relating to it; these may affect student participation. In addition, data showed that financial and organisational challenges might prevent some institutions from integrating the AT in the music curricula. A correlation between the integration of the AT in the curriculum and its value in the institution cannot be easily concluded, but it is possible that if music institutions deemed the AT essential to students' learning, a way to allocate more funding to the AT could potentially be found even where budgeting is tight.

This study found that the provision of the AT varied among UK HE music institutions. Section 4.4.4 has revealed the many challenges that some AT teachers had to face to develop their work within the institution in which they were working, especially in relation to communicating the nature and value of the AT and its role within the music curricula. Although those challenges may impact the provision of the AT within HE music institutions, other reasons were found to affect this provision: notably, many institutions offered the AT as an optional activity, indicating that the provision may be impacted by the demand among students, funding and timetable feasibility.

Data showed that many AT teachers had a strong desire for the AT to be an integral part of the music curricula, both at Undergraduate and Master levels. Despite this, there are questions about whether this may be feasible and realistic, especially in consideration of the budget cuts that many HE music institutions have been facing throughout the years (Weale, 2021). However, it can be hypothesised that institutions may not provide practices that are not backed up by substantial research in light of what AT-P17 said in relation to the need for empirical research investigating the mechanisms of the AT (see Section 4.3.7). This aligns with Matei et al. (2018) who argued that 'justification is needed to include popular practices with little research evidence to support their use, such as the Alexander Technique, in health education courses for musicians' (p. 13). Further empirical research might be needed to support

the provision of the AT in HE music institutions; nonetheless, Chapters 10-13 will shed light on the perceptions of the AT among students who engage with the AT in HE music institutions.

Furthermore, while a few AT teachers were satisfied with the level of funding and institutional support, others commented on possible ways for improvement. Administrative support was considered to play a central role in the provision and funding for the AT in HE music institutions, having an impact on music students who mainly take part in AT sessions in this context. In fact, in institutions where limited funding is available, this was deemed to affect the number of music students who can afford AT sessions. The fact that institutions may subsidise several AT sessions could be helpful for students, but it may not be 'entirely inclusive' (Lee, 2019, p. 135). Considering that in one institution the AT was only offered to some students taking part in a vocal ensemble (see Section 4.4.3), this raises questions about equality of opportunities in a diverse educational environment.

The provision of the AT for academic, administrative, and I/V staff was found to have a marginal place within HE music institutions. An explanation for this might reside in the perception of the nature of the AT within these contexts. The AT, in fact, may only be seen by some as a tool for overcoming injuries or solving performance anxiety challenges of musicians and not as an approach with benefits applicable to different categories of people. For example, considering the research by Little et al. (2014) showing how the AT may be beneficial in reducing back pain (see Chapter 2), the AT could be considered as one of the ways to help academic and administrative staff deal with occupational disorders of sedentary behaviours (Hanna et al., 2019). Furthermore, findings among AT teachers suggest a perceived resistance to the AT by some staff members to experience AT sessions. Despite this, a few participants commented on how administrative staff had been useful in providing free access to space for AT sessions; this aligns with Lee (2019) and the view of one of the AT teachers in their research. On the other hand, AT-P15 revealed the difficulties in accessing a proper and regular space for AT sessions, whereas AT-P8 commented on how a space detached from the main building could be appropriate for the aim of AT lessons, but it could negatively impact the perception of the AT within the institutions. Given the lack of substantial research on these matters, data from IVTs and students will add further clarification (Chapters 7-13).

4.5 Summary of the chapter: Key themes

This chapter identified that the AT was not uniformly defined by the 19 AT teachers in this sample, suggesting that the definition of the AT may vary depending on several factors such as the recipient of the information and their predominant area of interest as well as the explorative and experiential nature of the AT. In addition, some common characteristics of the AT emerged from these definitions: the role of habit and the applicability of the AT to everyday life.

Furthermore, this chapter discussed AT teachers' views on the recognition of the AT and AT teachers within HE music institutions. While there was a sense of general support towards the AT, findings showed that AT teachers had to face several challenges due to limited understanding of the educational value of the AT among institutions resulting from a lack of direct experience of the AT among policy makers, a lack of unity in the AT community and AT teachers' different approaches to teaching. These challenges coupled with an historical heritage of the AT as perceived as a cult and a lack of robust empirical research supporting AT work, which may adversely impact its inclusion into music curricula.

This chapter also examined the provision of the AT in HE music institutions, indicating that the AT was generally a side activity, with a few exceptions concerning the inclusion of the AT into the music curriculum and the provision of the AT for staff. Funding for AT sessions was perceived to be an issue that impacted the uptake of sessions where the AT was partly supported and subsidised, raising questions about inclusion and equality among students and showing how institutional support might be vital to the recognition of the AT within UK HE music institutions. The next chapter will discuss the promotion of the AT in some of these institutions as well as the views on the AT (e.g. the benefits and risks) among music students according to the same sample of AT teachers.

Chapter 5: Perceptions of the Alexander Technique among Alexander Technique teachers in UK HE music institutions (PART II)

This chapter continues to detail AT teachers' perceptions on the AT based on data collected through the semi-structured interviews with the same sample of AT teachers. It examines their views on the promotion of the AT in HE music institutions. In addition, it discusses aspects relating to the views of the AT among HE music students as understood by AT teachers. Lastly, it provides an examination of the general characteristics of the AT (benefits and risks of the AT for music students and other musicians), which paves the way to the next chapter on the teaching and practice of the AT (Chapter 6). The questions that this chapter answers are:

- What are AT teachers' views on the promotion of the AT in their UK HE music institutions?
- According to AT teachers, how is the AT viewed by HE music students studying in the UK?
- What are AT teachers' views on the benefits and risks of the AT for HE music students and other musicians?

A discussion of the findings will follow the presentation of each main theme.

5.1 Promotion of the AT in HE music institutions

This section discusses the promotion of the AT within HE music institutions in relation to the following themes: AT teachers as promoters of the AT, ways to promote the AT, and AT teachers' desire for better promotion.

5.1.1 AT teachers as promoters of the AT: Energy and dedication

AT teacher participants were asked to comment on how the AT was promoted in the institution in which they were working or had been working. A common theme among these interviewees was that AT teachers had invested a great deal of energy and dedication in promoting the AT within the HE music institution, such as by organising

AT group workshops. AT-P2 recalled their effort in promoting the AT through AT workshops to spark interest in individual lessons: 'I'd advertise a workshop and, [for] people new to the technique ... I'd be running a workshop ... to come along and then maybe encourage them to come for one-to-one lessons'. This echoes what AT-P7 said in relation to regular AT workshops at the start of each year for first-year students (see Chapter 4, Section 4.4.3).

Furthermore, networking with instrumental/vocal teachers (IVTs), academic and administrative staff played an important role in increasing the visibility of the AT and the amount of work for AT teachers; this was deemed to positively affect the promotion of the AT in the institution. AT-P11 described this in depth, remarking on their initial feeling of isolation before being proactive in promoting the AT among the different categories of people in the institution:

After a bit, I thought "This is not an ideal situation", so I started deliberately making contact with usually the students' first study teachers, so singing teachers, instrumental teachers, and that actually has been rather good ... I think the general sort of moral support for the AT and that they think of me has been a generally useful resource and a good thing ... but I have done quite a bit of the work of that myself, of... networking within [the HE music institution], of just going, meeting people and talking to them.

Life priorities and challenges, however, were considered to impact the amount of energy and dedication required to successfully promote the AT and attain visibility. According to AT-P5, 'a lot of people in other institutions have worked hard at [promoting the AT] but it's a lot on top of your life — kids — it's a lot of devotion to really grow something, to be visible'. This may potentially contribute to diverse levels of promotion among institutions.

5.1.2 Ways to promote the AT

Some participants talked about the means through which the AT was promoted within the institution. Data analysis shows that the AT was promoted in a variety of ways. One of the most common methods was via departmental emails. For example, AT-P2 stated that they would ask administrators to 'email people with ... information' about AT sessions and this 'was going across to students, so they knew' about the AT. Regarding emails, however, AT-P17 lamented their frustration in promoting their work through these. They described the effectiveness of traditional means of promotion in contrast

with digital ones, indicating the administrative, organisational and communication challenges of promoting the AT among students who may also not necessarily engage with their email account:

So, when I first started, there was a notice board and pigeonholes and you'd put notices up advertising classes and people signed up on them. You'd put notes for people into the pigeonholes ... and as time has gone on, it's become more complicated. There are no notice boards now, there are no pigeonholes ... It is very hard to email everybody because the emails [*sic*] [addresses] are not public knowledge. So, one of the tutors, they email the students on their first-year course who want to take the AT as what they call an elective — in other words, one of these add-on things — and then they pass that list of emails onto me and then I email all the students telling them when the classes are. Then, they have to get in touch with me and sign up, otherwise what can tend to happen is that we can be inundated with sort of 20-25 people in the first class, and then it's hopeless and nobody wants to come because there's too many people. And then it's very hard to get in touch with people individually because students, apparently, do not read emails anymore ... The administrative footprint of teaching for an hour at the [HE music institution] has grown massively! (AT-P17)

In addition to emails, the AT was reported to be promoted through departmental websites. AT-P7, for example, said that there is 'an internal website where you book a lesson' and where there are 'one or two papers ... on the [Alexander] Technique ... for people to read'. Another AT teacher, AT-P12, talked about the transition from traditional to digital promotion but acknowledged a lack of familiarity with the institution's website, probably because the promotion of the AT was undertaken by another member of the staff:

The Head of Department of the AT ... is in charge of [its promotion] ... I have not looked at the website for a while — I should have, really. In the past, we used to have a leaflet that introduced the AT and it went into the students' pigeonholes. It explained exactly how the students should apply, and I think it is the same system on the website now. It has a short description of what the [Alexander] Technique is and what it offers to the students and then how to apply and who the teachers are. All information and communication are now happening online.

Traditional means of promotion, nonetheless, were still considered to be part of the communication strategy of some institutions. For example, AT-P11 said that there was 'a sort of well-being notice board in [the HE music institution] which [had] information about the AT', showing that HE music institutions may rely on different

means of promotion to increase the visibility of the AT within the HE music community.

5.1.3 Desire for better promotion: Internal/external factors affecting it

Some AT teachers expressed a desire to enhance the level of and quality of the promotion of the AT within the institutions in which they were working. Among those, AT-P12 said that one of the ways could be 'to make sure that at least everyone at the institution [was] aware that the AT [was] available' and that, surprisingly, there were 'students going through their entire studies at the institution' who did not know they could 'apply for AT lessons'.

Improving AT website visibility was one of the ways in which the promotion of the AT could be improved according to a few AT teachers. AT-P3 mentioned that although the HE music institution had 'a team of marketing people who [were] responsible for disseminating information' about the AT, this was 'a very small part of their role' and that the AT 'could be better promoted'. AT-P3 revealed that the level of and quality of advertisement affected the uptake of AT workshops, adding the number of people in a group workshop could be 'as few as three or four [students] if [the workshop was] not well publicised'. Even though there were plans for putting information about AT 'on live screen[s] around the school', this participant would have liked 'a better presence of the website'. The same desire was expressed by AT-P11 who said that 'a bit more information on the [HE music institution] website would be a really good thing'.

Enhanced cooperation from course leaders and IVTs was another factor impacting the promotion of the AT. AT-P11 stated that 'it would be nice if ... the person running the Opera MA said: "By the way, we've got an Alexander teacher who is really good at working with singers"'. Indeed, AT-P5 highlighted that IVTs had often been 'incredibly influential in promoting the work within the institution', indicating the pivotal role of recommendations and word of mouth in promoting the AT among people in HE music institutions.

Lastly, external factors were believed to positively influence the promotion of the AT within HE music institutions. These were described only by one participant but, despite their limited prevalence within the data set, seemed to be potentially relevant to examining the promotion of the AT in depth. Specifically, AT-P5 mentioned that

'promoting the work outside the institution' had played an important part in the promotion of the AT. This, coupled with former music students becoming AT teachers, influenced the dissemination of AT work: 'what has been fantastic, actually, is that quite a lot of our students have gone on to train to be Alexander [Technique] teachers ... so in a way that's been quite influential' (AT-P5), highlighting the role of alumni in enhancing the visibility of the AT and how the promotion of the AT in HE music institution might be affected by various factors.

5.1.4 Promotion of the AT: Discussion of the findings

Findings revealed that AT teachers' personalities and their effort in promoting the AT made an important contribution to the promotion of the AT in the institutions they had been or were working. Some AT teachers recalled how they had organised AT group workshops to attract music students to undertake one-to-one lessons and had networked with the different categories of people in HE music institutions to promote their work. In particular, the fact that AT teachers had put effort into networking with other members of the staff was not surprising; this aligns with data presented in Chapter 4 about a few AT teachers' accounts concerning their battles and challenges to enhance the recognition and credibility of the AT in their institutions (see Section 4.3). Furthermore, the promotion of the AT was considered to be energy-consuming, requiring effort and devotion. If institutions intend to provide and offer the AT, these findings suggest that a shared responsibility between AT teachers and professional services staff in the promotion of the AT is required, corroborating Lee's (2019) study in which one of the AT teachers had attributed 'a big part' of the success of their AT programme 'to the administration's strong support' (p. 60). This cooperation, however, may not come solely from administrators but also from academics and IVTs, given their proximity to HE music students (Haddon, 2019; Williamon & Thompson, 2006).

This study found that the promotion of the AT was generally carried out through email. Some participants reported the challenges associated with digital means of promotion in comparison to more traditional ones (e.g., pigeonholes), resulting in laborious and complex communication: in particular, some participants talked about the difficulties in contacting music students who may not necessarily keep their email accounts under control and the increase in administrative tasks

requiring more time than in the past. Given the lack of research on email communication among music students and the criteria through which they operate email filtering, it is not possible to compare these results with those of other research. However, it can be speculated that if emails are sent by members of the staff who are not in direct contact with students, such as AT teachers, these messages could be easily discarded, as those 'sent by tutors are consistently seen as being the most useful and are most likely to be read' (Robson et al., 2016, p. 6123); therefore, considerations about proximity of the sender, relevance of and engagement with email content need to be taken into account. In addition, institutions' webpages were reported to be another means of promotion of the AT among HE music students. This raises questions about how influential webpages might be in validating the AT further if alumni's successful experiences with the AT, for example, are promoted on institutional websites (see AT-P5's view at the end of 5.1.3 in relation to the role of former music students in promoting the AT). Furthermore, considering that one participant (AT-P12, see Section 5.1.2) was not entirely familiar with the content of the webpage about the AT in their institution, this is surprising as it could lead to potential discrepancies about the webpage's content and what AT teachers may promote about their work to music students.

A few AT teachers lamented a lack of promotion about the AT by the institutional marketing staff and expressed a desire for better promotion to increase the uptake of AT workshops, as AT-P3 revealed. Although some improvements had already been planned (e.g. AT promotional content on screens around the building), AT-P3 and AT-P11 requested more visibility on institutional websites. It is surprising that no one mentioned a desire to promote the AT through social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram, which have recently been particularly used among university departments for marketing and targeted promotion (Mogaji et al., 2020). Possible explanations of this may be the extent to which these AT participants adopted these platforms themselves, the existence of institutional social media account pages, AT teachers' familiarity with these pages or, more simply, the fact that they had not thought about it in the interview process. To protect the identity of the AT teacher participants, it is not possible to provide a comparison between these findings and existing evidence (such as institutions' Facebook pages); however, it is suggested that since social media platforms may be potentially effective in promoting

the AT among music students in light of literature about marketing communications in the HE sector, those are taken into account as part of the strategic marketing plan.

External factors, such as the promotion of the AT outside HE, were considered to influence the promotion of the AT within UK HE music institutions. This has implications for smaller urban areas where there may be fewer opportunities to engage with AT-related events, thus resulting in a limited knowledge about the AT. It could be speculated that online promotion may play a bigger role than a physical one nowadays, but if physical events will continue to be happening, more research could be undertaken to map out the number of local events around the country and evaluate the impact that they may have on the perception and the promotion of the AT.

5.2 Views of the AT among music students according to AT teachers

This section examines these 19 AT teachers' perceptions of music students' views on the AT. It provides findings about music students' perceived reasons to have sessions, their feedback on the AT, and potential challenges and barriers to engagement with the AT.

5.2.1 Music students' reasons to have AT sessions

While some AT teachers would undertake some work with staff (as Chapter 4, Section 4.4.5), several of them reported that they would normally organise AT sessions with music students. AT teacher participants were thus asked to illustrate the reasons why students in their institution would take AT sessions. The responses illustrate a variety of reasons, from the perspective of the AT teachers, as to why music students would engage with the AT. These reasons were the same for music specialist institution and university music department students.

According to these AT teacher participants, one of the most common reasons for music students to take AT sessions was to deal with playing-related musculoskeletal disorders. AT-P7 reported that music students often requested AT lessons because of 'physical pain' which affected their ability and desire to practise and their playing:

[Students] come along and they are having problems with their neck and shoulders or their back and this is restricting the amount of practice they can

do and obviously it's taken all the enjoyment out of playing and they worry it's going to get worse.

Likewise, AT-P11 said that they tended 'to get people who are in pain, or have injuries, or chronic fatigue problems, or ... broadly speaking ... physical problems' and that those people tended 'to be the biggest group'. This echoes AT-P16 who commented that music students request AT sessions when 'they've got very serious aches or pain'. On the other hand, AT-P7 felt that the number of people seeking AT sessions due to physical pain was decreasing and that this was happening 'probably because the authorities [were] sending these people for physiotherapy' and 'medical treatment rather than sending them for [AT] lessons'. Despite acknowledging the existence of 'medical problems' among music students, this participant believed that some of the most common problems music students experience were not 'medical' but 'functional' due to incorrect instrumental/vocal technique and, therefore, that those could be solved by learning 'the basics' of human coordination and functioning, which the AT was believed to offer.

According to many of these 19 teachers, performance anxiety was another common reason for HE music students to take AT sessions. AT-P15 reported that 'music students come because of having performance anxiety'; similarly, AT-P7 believed that 'the most common problem [motivating music students to take AT sessions was] ... most likely performance anxiety (or stage fright) at the bottom of it all'. This seemed to be a common factor in universities as well as music specialist institutions: indeed, AT-P5 highlighted that a 'big percentage of the students have stage fright'.

Another reason for HE music students to seek AT sessions was because of previous experiences with the AT. AT-P16, for example, remarked that '[students] come because they have been having [AT sessions] already somewhere else'; similarly, AT-P13 reported that 'all of [the music students in the workshop] had had [AT sessions]' before going on to higher music education. Nonetheless, AT-P16 felt that this 'didn't use to be the case' in the past. This participant indeed believed that over the years, the number of people taking AT sessions because of previous experiences with the AT was increasing. Specifically, AT-P16 commented that '25 years ago, very often people had heard of it, but they didn't really know anything about it at all, whereas nowadays I often get people who have already had lessons for three or four

years', indicating that there may have been a number of factors impacting the take-up of AT sessions among music students over the years.

AT teachers reported that another factor for music students to engage with the AT was recommendation from an IVT, an academic supervisor or a friend. With regard to the recommendation from music staff, AT-P15 argued that 'if their instrumental teacher or their supervisor would recommend the AT, [students] definitely come', suggesting that a favourable perception of the AT among IVTs and academic staff may affect students' perception of the AT. With regard to the recommendation by friends, AT-P7 said that 'their friends are having lessons' and therefore they might be encouraged to try the AT. This mirrors AT-P15 who commented that 'a lot of students come because their mates have gone into AT [and have said]: "It was amazing, you should go"'.

Some of the AT teachers reported that music students would take AT sessions only to find out more about it. For example, AT-P17 said that music students might sign up for AT sessions because 'they are curious'. This curiosity may also be sparked by introductory workshops which can stimulate music students to take one-to-one lessons. AT-P2 specifically said that 'sometimes people [would] take up having lessons from having the workshops' and would enjoy them.

Many AT teachers, on the other hand, reported that students would take AT sessions to solve a particular problem but then they would discover unexpected benefits and would continue to have them because of these benefits. This may be due both to a lack of knowledge or a perception that they might have about the AT. AT-P3 reported that students 'don't really understand the AT and they are not maybe so aware about how the AT can help them', and thus, 'quite often, a student would come for a different reason, but they end up realising that [the AT] has also helped them to overcome performance anxiety', for example. Likewise, AT-P9 believed that 'once we get [students] playing in an Alexander class and they realise the way they use their body affects the sound they make, they get interested [in the AT] for that reason, so it's a sort of supplement to their instrumental technique'. In fact, according to this data set, the reason that music students would take the AT to enhance their stage performance seemed to be less predominant. AT-P11 argued that 'there's a general perception that the AT is, to put it very crudely, a kind of physiotherapy, and people sometimes are surprised if they break through that and find out that there's a lot more

beyond that'. This AT teacher indeed said that it was 'very nice' for them to work with people who came to solve 'no particular medical-type problems' and who were interested in 'using the AT to enhance their musical performance'; however, this was believed to happen 'less often' with those who were 'in pain' or 'injured', who primarily sought treatment for these issues rather than musical performance enhancement.

5.2.2 Music students' feedback on the AT according to AT teachers

Many AT teacher participants, both working in music specialist institutions or university music departments, revealed that music students participating in the AT had generally expressed appreciation for it. For example, AT-P9 said: 'I'd say something like 90% of the students who get involved in any of the work at the [institution] are very positive about it'. In some cases, an appreciation and dedication towards the AT had led some of them to train as AT teachers: 'Even if they don't take it on for their whole life ... I find most students love the work and become quite devoted. I have a lot of students ... go on to train to be Alexander teachers' (AT-P5).

Other AT teachers shared positive feedback that some music students had expressed after undertaking AT sessions. AT-P18, for example, spoke about the challenges of high-demand and competitive environments, revealing how the AT could help music students relieve some pressure and enhance their performance:

[Most of the students] come from a very pressured environment ... [and] they have just been programmed to get through exams and tick the next step and pass the next thing and achieve the next thing ... So, stepping off that trend is difficult ... so I do treat them quite carefully ... and try to always put it back to their experience, so they are exploring something; and once they start singing, the difference is phenomenal, so they come off the table and I just say "Sing while walking around" and they always say "Oh, that is so much easier", so they are always very grateful for that. It is just the proof of the pudding is in the eating, really.

However, this articulation of appreciation may not always be the case, as AT-P18 added:

I think they all know that [they] are under a lot of pressure, they recognise the issues that they have to deal with. So, I think they are very grateful for anything that can help with that, and so most of them are pretty open to it, not quite all, but most of them.

In fact, AT-P12 said that there may be some scepticism towards the AT among music students but this could often be overcome and could lead to enthusiasm:

Well, surprising feedback comes sometimes from the most sceptical students: for example, that “every student should have AT throughout all the four years of their undergraduate studies”. That is surprising because often the students come with a kind of scepticism to the Technique and when they discover how their playing and how their studies can improve, then they realise that it has a big value for them.

Reluctance towards the AT was linked to music students’ previous experiences about and preconceptions of the AT, pointing at what has been examined in Chapter 4 relating to different teaching approaches impacting perceptions of the AT, the AT being a cult and potentially seen as fringe science:

Once a student came to me with some scepticism — I can only tell you from my experience with one of my students — they came from America and had had group lessons there [and] came away with the impression that the AT was rather “new agey” and did not really appreciate what the work could offer to them until they had one-to-one lessons. I think that the experience of lessons in the past is maybe what informs people positively or negatively about the usefulness of the AT. (AT-P12)

Despite this, AT-P16 believed that some students may still lack interest in the AT which may result in poor attendance:

Not all of them [want to have lessons] of course. I mean there are some students who aren't just interested. There are some students who sometimes they are negative or alternatively they are unreliable, and you know, they don't turn up.

This correlation between interest and appreciation of the AT among students was echoed by AT-P11: ‘the students who really get to like it and use it ... [find it] really helpful ... [but] generally speaking ... [the AT] is a sort of side-line but occasionally, it's not’, suggesting that music students’ appreciation towards the AT might depend on their individual interests and may not necessarily depend on the AT itself.

5.2.3 Potential challenges and barriers to engagement with the AT

According to the data among AT teacher participants, one of the challenges that may prevent music students from engaging with the AT concerns financial constraints.

These were considered to prevent some music students from taking AT sessions in the first place or to force them to quit those, especially in those institutions where the AT

receives limited or no funding. For example, AT-P3 believed that 'if a young student doesn't have money, it is challenging to find the money to have the lessons'. Similarly, AT-P15 reported that music students may stop having AT sessions because 'they don't have enough money' to continue having them. AT-P1, drawing upon their own experience as a former music student, reported that considering their own budget, they 'wouldn't have afforded ... the idea of spending more money on AT lessons', even though they were 'working with pain quite a bit'.

Another reason that may prevent music students from having AT sessions was reported to be time. AT-P11, for example, stated that 'one of problems for students is that they have so much to do, they have really full-on timetables', and 'they have to make a real effort to wedge [AT lessons] into overly busy timetables'. This echoes AT-P7 who remarked that 'music students are rushing from one class to another'; 'every moment you have to be in a class'. Since AT sessions in most institutions are optional and do not form part of a course, it is likely that music students may not have the time to engage with the AT; however, music students may decide to engage with other activities that they might consider to be more relevant to them. In fact, AT-P13 argued that younger people do not necessarily have 'any problems yet with playing their instruments, so they are not motivated, they are not getting any discomfort, or irritation, there's nothing to incentivise them to have lessons', again, focusing on AT as a support for those in pain or stress, rather than as an overall enhancement of musical performance.

One reason that may prevent music students from engaging with the AT was reported to be a perceived desire for immediate results. For example, AT-P2 commented that music students 'might want something of a quicker fix'. Nonetheless, there could be several reasons impacting this need. Firstly, this may be the result of the perception that people might have about the nature of the AT. AT-P4 commented as follows:

A very common expectation that people have is that they expect to be in some way fixed or repaired, you know like if you go to the osteopath or if you go to the chiropractor, and I think the AT is at its most effective when people understand that it's not about being fixed or repaired, it's about collaborating with the teacher to acquire a new skill rather like learning a new language.

Secondly, students may have an impatient attitude to achieve their goals. AT-P3 believed that 'it's challenging to try to use the AT right away in your music' and they 'always tell students [that] for that reason it is better to use the AT in everyday life'; however, this was described to be challenging because 'because people want right away: "I want to apply this to my instrument"'. On the other hand, this impatience may be associated with what the music profession might mean for the student. As AT-P6 argued, 'if you want to be a professional musician ... and you want that to stay as part of your life and that has been threatened by whatever the issue is ... maybe there's more at stake ... because it can be the livelihood'. This has implications for how AT teachers negotiate music students' expectations in their AT teaching.

5.2.4 Views of the AT among music students according to AT teachers:

Discussion of the findings

These findings indicated that, according to AT teacher participants, music students would generally voluntarily engage in AT sessions to solve an issue rather to prevent one, such as physical pain and playing-related performance anxiety. This is in line with the types of challenges music students can often face with their playing in HE music contexts, such as music conservatoires (Araújo et al., 2017), and anecdotal evidence illustrated by Lee (2019) who stated that AT sessions have 'effectively helped ... students improve posture and coordination, release unnecessary tension, and increase the level of comfort while playing as well as self-awareness' (p. 116). Interestingly, while for many AT teacher participants in this current study the number of music students requesting AT sessions to solve physical problems represented the largest proportion of AT end-users, for AT-P7 the number of students seeking AT sessions due to physical problems was perceived to have decreased throughout the years (see Section 5.2.1). This was considered to be due to music students being allegedly advised by institutional health services to undertake physiotherapy or other treatment rather than pursuing AT sessions. Possible explanations could reside in held beliefs among health advisors about the AT and its scientific credibility in contrast to mainstream healthcare, such as physiotherapy, and also presumably of a widened awareness of potential treatment types, raising questions about the hierarchical place of the AT within and beyond these institutions. Another explanation could relate to more awareness among younger generations of IVTs about the health and well-being of

musicians, resulting in teachers' increased understanding of healthy playing practices and techniques, which is likely to be informing their teaching and could positively affect the number of music students suffering from playing-related pain. In contrast, this study found that, in comparison with the past, more music students were believed to take AT sessions in HE music institutions because of prior experiences with the AT. This indicates that there may have been several factors impacting the take-up of AT sessions among music students over the years. For example, it can be speculated that there may have been more awareness around the AT thanks to the emergence of the Internet, which may have affected the promotion of the AT, or there may have been more opportunities for people to take AT sessions in selected areas of the UK (echoing what has been discussed in 5.1.4). It could also be that among private sector IVTs there might also be increasing awareness of the importance and connection of physical and mental health to instrumental/vocal playing (Norton, 2016).

The findings of this study show that AT teachers believed that HE music students would engage with the AT as a result of recommendations from academics and IVTs. This again highlights the positive impact that staff may have on the perception of the AT among music students and the place that the AT may have within these institutions. Likewise, peer recommendations could positively affect the uptake of AT sessions and, given the impact of recommendations on people's perceptions, it could be speculated that those recommendations could potentially affect the negative views that people may have about the AT in cases where a negative experience with the AT is communicated amongst peers. Curiosity and AT group workshops were also found to increase an interest in taking one-to-one AT lessons. This has implications for quality assurance of AT group and one-to-one sessions in HE music institutions, considering the importance that group workshops have in promoting the AT within the HE music community. Furthermore, although it was found that music students could discover unexpected benefits of the AT and would continue having sessions due to these, only few students may take AT sessions as a music performance enhancement tool as understood by this sample of AT teachers. This may be due to the perceptions that IVTs may have about the AT and the reasons why they may recommend it to their students (this will be examined in Chapter 7).

According to these 19 AT teachers, the AT gained a generally positive reception from music students. There were accounts of music students being sceptical about the

AT, especially because of previous experiences with the AT impacting on their perceptions of the nature of the AT as a quasi-scientific practice. Despite this, there is evidence suggesting that music students may still lack interest in the AT, echoing Lee's (2019) assertion that 'not everyone needs the Alexander Technique nor is it for everyone' (p. 141). This has implications for the implementation of the AT in the music curricula considering students' real interests and needs. In addition, funding restrictions, lack of time, and a desire for immediate change were considered to be some of the reasons hindering music students' engagement with the AT. In particular, the desire for rapid results may not be in line with health practices that may require time to produce positive results, corroborating Waters' (2019) statement that 'consulting a health professional is unlikely to provide a "quick fix" ... [and that] it is possible for students to pursue their goals if they are prepared to be patient' (p. 239). However, as mentioned above, the financial difficulties impeding students from having several AT sessions might influence their desire to achieve their goal in the shortest time possible to reduce the financial outlay.

5.3 Benefits and risks of the AT for music students and other musicians.

This section examines the perceived benefits and risks of the AT for music students and other musicians. Given the limited research on the AT in the music field, findings will be discussed considering literature in the medical field.

5.3.1 Perceived benefits of the AT

AT teacher participants expressed a number of psychophysical benefits of the AT for both music students and other musicians. The majority of these benefits often overlapped between the two categories and were perceived to pertain to both (and would be likely to have overlap with benefits for others experiencing the AT). It is worth clarifying that, based on the responses, participants seemed to use the term *musician* to refer to *performers* rather than to encompass the broader category of people working in the HE music institutions, such as academics or IVTs, who may not necessarily have an active career as performers but would be perceived as musicians. This clarification is useful to interpret data and further understand the place that the AT may occupy within HE music institutions.

5.3.1.1 Changing unhelpful habits

One of the most prevalent benefits of the AT was that it was perceived as giving learners the ability to recognise and change unhelpful habits that may affect music playing and/or singing. AT-P4 stated that the AT 'can help them to eliminate unnecessary tensions, unnecessary habitual behaviours associated with playing an instrument and therefore help [learners] to progress further as musicians'. These 'tensions' may display as 'aches and pains, the Repetitive Strain Injuries from that way [musicians] have been playing and practising for all those years and years', as described by AT-P6. In relation to recognising and dealing with habits, AT-P17 illustrated this process in greater detail:

By learning to observe [a] pattern of muscular tension, you have actually got a tool through which you can monitor everything that you'll do in your thinking and therefore, you can begin to change your responses in situations. And so, what we do in the AT, really, is teach people to observe ... the way that they move around, the way they sit and stand and so on, and to see why they are responding in certain situations by tensing up, and we teach them to be able to change that response.

According to AT-P2 and other AT teachers, these habits are not only of a physical nature but also of an intellectual one in relation to learners' aspirations:

[the AT] is useful to understand the habitual tensions that might be not recognised by any musician, also the striving ... to become perfect and have excellence in one's playing or singing, and recognising how that affects everything one does in one's practice and playing, and performing. (AT-P2)

This evidence suggests that the AT may extend beyond just being a postural correction technique and may potentially offer other benefits.

5.3.1.2 Performance anxiety

Another perceived benefit of the AT was to help music students and musicians to deal with a specific issue relating to performance: performance anxiety. AT-P17 illustrated how the AT may help students overcome this by learning how to engage in self-monitoring their psychophysical reactions while performing or thinking about a performance and by reframing students' attitude towards it. Specifically, this participant stated that AT teachers 'help people to see what it is that they are reacting to and try and get them to think about the performance differently', describing that if musicians stop seeing a performance 'as something to be frightened of, then the habit

of being frightened is less relevant and so maybe [they] can be less frightened, which means that [they] stiffen and tense up less, which means that [they] play better'. AT-P9, referring to their own personal experience with the AT and how it had solved their performance anxiety issues, recalled how they had 'gone from being paralytically nervous in performance to confident in performance'; the AT 'transformed [their] ability to perform [on stage]'

5.3.1.3 Music performance enhancement: Tension reduction

According to these 19 AT teachers, the AT was deemed to be potentially beneficial in enhancing musicians' performance skills by providing learners with an understanding of the human anatomy. AT-P4 said that 'if you understand your structure and you are able to play with less tension or no tension then you are going to be able to play or sing a lot better'. Similarly, AT-P10 perceived that the AT had 'really helped' students on an AT course to 'understand how they [could] use their bodies with more ease while they were playing and understand their anatomy better'. To enhance students' awareness of their anatomy, some of the AT teachers described how they would use 'models of the spine' or 'a small version of the skeleton' or 'anatomy apps', which may lead to better coordination and reduced tension.

5.3.1.4 Benefits to everyday life

The benefits of the AT, nonetheless, were considered to go beyond the aspect of playing and performing and were perceived to extend to life in general. AT-P5, for example, believed that the benefits of the AT were 'how to think of your life and your practice and your performance as linked'; likewise, AT-P8 pointed out that by taking AT sessions, 'there are a lot of effects on different levels'. For example, AT-P18 remarked that [the AT] 'gives [learners] tools for everyday life as well as singing' and that they would often 'ask them to do things like sitting at a computer or reading stuff with less strain'. This was echoed by other participants, such as AT-P3, who said that 'the AT gives [students] tools which make it a self-help technique, so they go away with information that will help them to change', highlighting the perceived applicability of the AT to the different facets of everyday life.

Indeed, AT participants believed that not only may the AT help musicians deal with performance anxiety, but it can also help those with an anxious approach towards

life. One of the key themes that emerged across the majority of the interviews was that the AT may be beneficial in reducing an end-gaining approach affecting mental well-being. This concept of end-gaining was described by AT-P18 as:

Going after a result ... without any sense of the process of [how you are going to achieve that]. In that process, you will lose a sense of your whole self, you lose what surrounds you, the space surrounding you, and so you may get it right but at great cost to yourself in terms of ease, in terms of enjoyment and in terms of just physical fluency.

In relation to musicians, AT-P6 described that when 'musicians come for lessons and they are having a problem that's related to their performance ... they immediately want to bring in their instrument and start working with that, so you really have to get them not to end-gain', and before a particular problem is solved 'it might take a bit more time' and 'you really have to get everything working better as a whole'. This outcome-driven attitude was believed to be the result of both educational environments, such as music conservatoires, which, according to AT-P7, were considered to be 'very anxiety-producing places', and other external and internal pressures. With regard to these, AT-P2 recalled how they had:

Heard so many music students say: "I've lost my love for what I do by studying this in the way I was studying it with the pressure of the study, and with my desire to be excellent, to please my parents, to please my teachers, to get a good job, to get into the conservatory, to be accepted".

The AT was therefore considered to encourage a less 'pushy' striving attitude in which one does not lose 'a kind of holistic connection to oneself' (AT-P2). By increasing people's awareness of their psychophysical health, AT-P10 indeed felt that the AT has 'a sort of early warning system' through which people can deal with an issue 'earlier on', without 'leaving it until [they] are in a heap on the floor, or in severe pain or injured'. This has implications for the place of the AT in HE music institutions as potentially useful tool for all of the different categories of people in HE.

5.3.2 Risks of the AT

AT teachers reflected on potential risks to learners of receiving AT sessions. The following sub-sections will provide findings about these, discussing both potential health and emotional risks.

5.3.2.1 No risks if the AT teacher is skilful

All AT teachers felt that the AT was a generally safe practice, with no potential physical risks. For example, AT-P3 expressed this in detail:

No, I don't believe there are any risks. I have done this for 15 years; I have never had a student come back and say that the AT has caused them pain. It's a very gentle technique and it's always including the students and therefore I don't believe there are any risks involved whatsoever.

Some participants, however, highlighted the importance of having sessions with a trained and skilful AT teacher who can adequately use their hands-on skills. As AT-P17 said: 'No, not really, I can't see any risks ... unless you had an awful teacher who had terrible hands'. This view was echoed by AT-P6 who argued:

I think if you went to a trained teacher, it's hard to conceive how you might get injured ... AT is actually the opposite of no pain/no gain ... there shouldn't be any risks because if the teacher was pushing you to do something that might cause pain, then that's really bad teaching.

The role of the AT teacher in avoiding physical risks connect to the potential emotional risks that the AT might pose.

5.3.2.2 Emotional risks

Although all of the AT teachers believed that the AT is a safe practice, some of them commented on potential emotional risks resulting from AT work. Firstly, AT-P18 argued that hands-on guidance was a powerful tool, which needed to be used judiciously:

When you are going to unpick something that is very deeply buried in somebody's psycho-psyche-body wholeness, I think it makes them very vulnerable and because we are working with our hands, we can bring about quite substantial change without even meaning to, without even realising what is happening, particularly for someone who is very sensitive, really.

These situations required great sensitivity, as AT-P13 highlighted, raising questions about the boundaries of AT teaching and the extent to which AT teachers are trained to deal with these emotional situations:

Sometimes, even after the first lesson, it can tap into emotional stuff — that's not a bad thing at all — but what happens it can put people off “I don't want to go there” [but] you don't have to go there either.

Secondly, fear to change could be perceived as a risk by potential learners. AT-P1 reflected that 'to really engage with a deeper process of change, you risk losing what you know because that's what changing, letting go of habits is about'. This was echoed by AT-P15: 'dismantling those habits and changing them into different habits involves sometimes, not always, dealing with some difficult stuff and sometimes you have to go down before you go up and sometimes people don't cope with going down', suggesting that it might be important to explain the implications of having AT sessions before people engage in these. With regard more directly to musicians and music students, AT-P2 said that a risk could be that 'someone is seeing changes ... [as] difficult in terms of [how the AT] ... might interfere with how they practise and how they perform and, though it might be good for them, they can't risk the possibility it might not work'; however, this was deemed to be 'very rare'. Thirdly, one participant felt that an emotional reliance on the AT could also be considered as a risk; AT-P6 claimed that 'there can be a risk of an emotional dependency on the teacher, feeling that "Oh, I need to keep going for my lessons otherwise I am not going to be able to get on with this myself"', and it is for this reason that they liked the 'idea that the job of the Alexander teacher is really to make themselves redundant', pointing at the nature of the AT as a potentially ongoing self-help tool.

5.3.2.3 Health risks

A few AT teachers made comments about potential health risks. AT-P7 stressed how vital it is for learners experiencing pain to seek medical help before taking AT sessions, highlighting the type of medical information that AT teachers should ask about in their first lesson with a learner:

The risk can be that people haven't had issues examined by a medic. If you've got a health problem, the first thing you need to do is go to your doctor and make sure that there's no underlying organic issue ... If the doctor says: "I can't find anything wrong with you", it might be something that you are doing rather than ... something that needs medical treatment; then, you need to think about other solutions, such as the AT. [Also], the [AT] teacher must check in the first lesson if a student has some specific medical condition (e.g. hypermobility), or has had surgery such as a spinal fusion.

Dizziness and temporary pain were noticed to happen at times within AT sessions. For example, AT-P15 stated that they 'have quite found that students

particularly get dizzy in their first lessons’ and that ‘occasionally, somebody finds that as they let go of tension, they have more pain in the process of letting go of their tension’. Therefore, AT-P10 emphasised the importance of open communication between the AT teacher and the learner to prevent injuries:

I would say that there is always room for injury because if there is not sufficient communication between a pupil and a teacher, then something might happen. If there is a constant sense of “This is your lesson, and I am meeting you where you are and you are very open and honest with me about what you can and cannot do, what pain you are in, whether you are tired that day”, I would say that there are very minimal risks.

This suggests that it might be the AT teacher’s responsibility to initiate and sustain these repeated conversations.

5.3.3 Benefits and risks of the AT: Discussion of the findings

This study found that the AT was perceived to provide a wide range of benefits for music students and professional musicians, from changing habits affecting playing to supporting music performance anxiety and anxiety in general. AT teachers’ views that the AT may help musicians change habits affecting their postural tone¹⁷ is in line with Loo et al.’s (2015) and Davies’ (2020b) studies. Specifically, Davies (2020b) found that the AT positively affected playing-related pain and tension of a sample of music students: these positive results ‘were most likely attributable to [music student] participants having learnt the ability to inhibit habitual reactions’ while playing and executing everyday movements instead of being taught ‘better posture’ (p. 5). This confirms the views of the AT teachers in the current study that the AT goes beyond being a postural re-education technique and that it could provide learners with self-help tools to improve their overall well-being and performance, aligning with findings in Wenham et al.’s (2018) study which showed that ‘increasing self-awareness allowed some participants to recognise that [behavioural] changes were becoming embedded at both physical and mental levels’ (p. 313). Furthermore, the fact that the AT may help musicians deal with performance anxiety is supported by Klein’s (2014) systematic review, which concluded that ‘AT sessions may improve performance anxiety in

¹⁷ ‘Postural tone is the steady contraction of muscles that are necessary to hold different parts of the skeleton in proper relation to the various and constantly changing attitudes and postures of the body’ (Gurfinkel, 2009, p. 3219).

musicians' (p. 10). However, although the fact that the AT may be beneficial to non-playing-related aspects, such as pain and stress/anxiety, has recently been demonstrated by Davies (2020b), there is still not enough empirical evidence to be conclusive about this.

According to these AT teachers, the AT was viewed as a generally safe practice, aligning with research literature on the AT (Little et al., 2008; NHS, 2021). However, findings showed that AT teachers' competency was a necessary factor to deal with aspects such as hands-on guidance and psychological consequences associated with the release of bodily tensions, raising questions about quality assurance of AT teacher training. The understanding that the AT may pose emotional risks is not corroborated by previous research findings, so further research is needed to investigate these; however, this raises questions about how much these can be perceived as risks, to what extent these risks are experienced by learners in HE music institutions, the impact that these may have on them and the extent to which learners are aware of these prior to the lessons, considering that the Society of Teachers of the Alexander Technique's (STAT, 2023g) code of conduct explicitly states that an AT 'teacher should clearly explain the nature of the work and procedures to be followed during the course of lessons' (n. p). Ultimately, the findings show that health risks may be due to insufficient communication between AT teachers and learners, with implications for HE music institutions concerning the interaction among institutions' health services, AT teachers, staff and music students.

5.4 Summary of the chapter: Key themes

This chapter has discussed AT teachers' views on the promotion of the AT within HE music institutions. It identified the means (physical and digital) through which the AT was promoted in these institutions, highlighting the pivotal role of AT teachers in increasing the visibility of their work by organising AT workshops and networking with IVTs. In addition, music students' views on the AT according to this sample of AT teachers were illustrated, with an examination of music students' reasons to have AT sessions, their feedback on the AT, and barriers to engagement with it.

Lastly, this chapter presented AT teachers' views on the benefits and risks of the AT: the AT could potentially lead to several psychophysical benefits for music students and other musicians; on the other hand, the AT was thought to be a risk-free

practice, but the level of risk also depended on the ability of the AT to perform hands-on guidance on learners. The next and final chapter on AT teachers' perceptions of the AT will examine aspects relating to the teaching and practice of the AT in HE music institutions.

Chapter 6: Perceptions of the Alexander Technique among Alexander Technique teachers in UK HE music institutions (PART III)

This chapter examines AT teachers' perspectives on aspects relating to the teaching and practice of the AT. It investigates the teaching format (one-to-one and group) and the mode of delivery (face-to-face and online) in AT sessions, with a focus on hands-on guidance. Additionally, it examines AT teachers' views on a triadic lesson (an AT teacher, an instrumental/vocal teacher [IVT] and a student working together in the same room), and resources on the AT (e.g., books and videos). The question that this chapter answers is:

- What are AT teachers' views on aspects of the teaching and practice of the AT within the UK HE music sector?

This is the last of three chapters on AT teacher's perceptions of the AT. The next chapter will present and discuss IVTs' views on the AT and their personal experiences with it.

6.1 The teaching format (one-to-one/group) and the mode of delivery (face-to-face/online)

This section examines AT teacher participants' views on one-to-one and group instruction. Themes such as the characteristics and the effectiveness of the AT in the two teaching formats will be explored as well as the impact of hands-on work on the delivery of the AT. The chapter then outlines the findings concerning the perspectives of AT online teaching, followed by a discussion of all of these findings.

6.1.1 Views on the characteristics of one-to-one and group instructions

Findings reveal that many AT teachers taught the AT in both one-to-one and group formats. Data show that AT group classes could take shape in the form of introductory workshops or a course. AT-P2 illustrated that 'there is an introductory [context] when new people find out something about it'; AT-P17 described a series of classes where

the AT teacher would do an 'overview [of the AT] in the first class and then ... focus on different aspects of the Technique in subsequent classes'.

Several participants were in favour of AT teaching in one-to-one and group formats, both of which were considered to offer different and equally valid learning opportunities. AT one-to-one instruction was deemed to be more individualised and tailored to students' needs. AT-P2 stated that 'in the one-to-one [format], [there] would be more specific information relating to what problems [the] pupil may have come with'. In contrast, group instruction was deemed to enable learning through observation and peer learning to spark individual change: 'a really big advantage in a group is that people can share their learning and you learn from other people's learning' (AT-P10). With regard to learning through observation, AT-P3 shared one of their teaching experiences in more depth:

When they are in a large group, I ask them to look very carefully at each other and not to judge, but only to observe, and they seem to learn a lot and I know this, because when I go round the group — where I started at the beginning the students are maybe not knowing very much of how to balance — and as I get to the last student, say in a group of 15, the last student will actually need very much less input from me. And I have found that very interesting because it means they are learning by observation.

In addition to enabling learning through different learning processes, group classes were reported to be suitable for introducing and discussing general principles of the AT. For example, AT-P17 believed that 'classes are good for imparting information to a lot of people all at once'; likewise, AT-P6 said that the group setting is 'a great way of introducing the AT' and presenting it 'with the overview, with the big picture'.

Interestingly, AT-P15 emphasised that in a practical group setting, 'you have got to be really careful with your language and you've got to be really careful that that person is making themselves vulnerable too often to peers, so it's a really tricky situation', which hints at the level of experience of AT teachers with group teaching and the challenges that learners might have.

6.1.2 Reluctance towards group instruction

Hesitancy around AT group teaching was present in three AT teacher participants. AT-P16 reported that 'having group lessons as a substitute for individual lessons ... is a

really bad idea' and that although group AT classes are 'fine as long as the students have had a lot of experience of the Technique already', individual instruction was 'by far the best way of teaching the [Alexander] Technique'. This participant explained that as an AT teacher, 'if you are doing group work, you cannot be focussing entirely on one student' and, as a student, going to a group class without having had individual lessons can be confusing because 'you would not know what is going on', suggesting that the level of the student and their experience with the AT might be a factor to consider when tailoring and organising AT group classes.

This lack of focus on the individual student in a group format and therefore a personal preference for AT one-to-one over group instruction was emphasised by AT-P11 who stated that 'the greatest detail and the greatest impact' were when they were 'working one-to-one'. As they explained, a preference for the one-to-one teaching format was due to both their 'personality' but also to practical time factors rooted to the one-to-one instruction:

I think it's partly the time factor that I can spend half an hour with a singer who is finding it useful working on a single phrase of a Mozart aria, and it doesn't have [a] 100% success rate but as often as not we can actually solve something in that time. And my perception is that level of detail doesn't happen in groups because I feel like I need to be absolutely focused on that particular student for that sort of length of time. (AT-P11)

Whilst many AT teachers felt that learning by observation was a valuable learning opportunity for all students, this AT teacher felt that:

Sometimes you'll get people in groups who actually like watching that process happening in somebody else, but it's a long-drawn-out and detailed and potentially boring for other people process of just working in minute detail with a single person. (AT-P11)

On a similar note, AT-P4 initially expressed that 'the AT can only be taught one-to-one' and that 'you can do a workshop or a lecture and talk about the AT and introduce some of the ideas'; however, when they were asked to expand on the reasons why the AT could be taught only one-to-one, they illustrated as follows:

I think [the AT] is such an individual process of learning that the teacher and the student work together in a pair, you have to work together in a pair. I can imagine a teacher working with say two to three students and giving all of them hands-on teaching. So, you know in a very small group, maybe, but certainly

not in a large group with one teacher in a large group of students; I can't see that working because it's an individual process and it's a hands-on process.

AT-P4's views therefore suggest that group size and the amount of hands-on work may be two important factors to consider for successful and recurrent AT group classes that do not primarily focus on introducing AT concepts but may involve a more direct experience of what the AT entails.

This reluctance towards AT group teaching that some AT teachers may have was highlighted by other participants who, conversely, pointed out similarities between AT group classes and AT teacher training courses. AT-P19 illustrated that 'if you think about it, all the teacher training classes are group work, the teacher spends a few minutes on each one, he gives a [hands-on] turn, and [students] slowly work with each other and the teacher comes around. So, effectively, that is group teaching'. Similarly, AT-P6 reported that 'some teachers are a little bit dismissive of group teaching but given this is the way we train ourselves, I think you can't be entirely dismissive'; however, this participant continued that 'if you are more serious about it and you want to go more in-depth and you are more interested in that personal transformation or you've got a particular health problem ... you need one-to-one lessons as well'.

As mentioned above, these findings also show that a parameter such as group size is an important aspect to consider in a group situation, even though exact numbers were not provided. AT-P4's view emphasised the importance of hands-on work in AT session and how this may be a necessary element for a successful experience of the AT; in a group setting, hands-on may only happen in a smaller group. This correlation between teaching setting and hands-on work recurred in many interviews and, consequently, the next subsection analyses AT teacher participants' views on hands-on guidance in relation to the different teaching settings.

6.1.3 Hands-on work in one-to-one and group format

AT teacher participants commented on how the teaching format may impact the amount of hands-on work and the overall experience of the AT. AT-P3 said that 'the one-to-one has the benefit of more hands-on work'. This, according to AT-P9 and AT-P10 respectively, 'brings up something more intimate, totally 100% appropriate' for the individual, and makes the AT 'more experiential'. In contrast, as previously stated,

a group situation was perceived to limit the amount of hands-on provided and a small group size was thus felt to be preferable for effective AT teaching in a group format. AT-P6 reported that 'because the opportunity for the hands-on work is obviously less in a group ... the smaller the group, the more effective as a whole it is going to be'. With regard to this, AT-P14 reported their positive experience of working in a small group setting where group classes contained a lot of hands-on work because of the small number of students and the availability of AT teacher assistants:

Currently, at [name of conservatoire in the UK], the set-up that they have got is very positive and it works really well ... Sometimes they have volunteer AT teachers who would like to have more training, who come in and they can put hands-on during group lessons. And because the numbers are small, it is really quite possible to manage that and sometimes you have almost a one-to-one lesson within the group lesson.

Other teachers, despite not mentioning the possibility of accessing assistants, highlighted the importance of hands-on work during AT group classes. For example, AT-P3 reported that in their group workshops, they had ensured to 'put hands on every single student ... for maybe two or three minutes each'.

Whilst for many AT teachers the amount of hands-on work was an important element to consider when teaching in a group situation, one participant reflected on how an over-reliance of the AT teacher on hands-on guidance may impact students' learning and perception of the AT in a one-to-one setting. Specifically, AT-P12 queried:

My question is: in the one-to-one teaching, if we are not careful, are we in danger of infantilising the student in a way by just doing too much hands-on work, and not working enough to encourage an independent thinking in the student?

According to this teacher, excessive hands-on work may then result 'in [the AT] becoming just body work' and 'be experienced too much as a physical therapy' rather than a process of 'waking up the [students'] mind'. This idea of empowering students was also described by AT-P15:

I use my hands much less for upright teaching of things like standing, sitting, instrument playing and other tasks or movements than I used to. I find that I can see things without needing to touch, and I also find that it empowers the student to find their own way into things by thinking into action with verbal observations from me. So even when I do put hands-on, it is often only after they have tried to think into the movement for themselves first.

This raises questions about the possibility of teaching the AT also in an online environment where hands-on guidance cannot be provided, detailed in the next subsection.

6.1.4 Sense of surprise about effectiveness of AT online teaching

A variety of perspectives concerning online teaching were expressed by AT teacher participants, especially in response to the coronavirus pandemic. Overall, several teachers were surprised about the potential of the AT in an online environment. AT-P5 reported that 'surprisingly', some of their students 'said that their best Alexander [Technique] lesson they have ever had was online'. The reason for these students' positive experiences was attributed to the familiarity that young people may have with 'focussing on the screen', which can result in 'focussed attention' on what is happening in the lesson. Likewise, AT-P9 noticed that 'for some people [AT online teaching] works really well' and they were 'really pleasantly surprised by how effective [AT online lessons] seemed to be'; in relation to AT online group classes, they stated that 'three or four of the lessons [they] have done seemed to have been absolutely brilliant and as just as good as an in-the-room group lesson'. The potential of AT online sessions was also highlighted by AT-P17 who felt that 'quite a lot of the [AT] stuff ... does lend itself to online lessons' and that despite some practical challenges, such as looking at the camera to establish eye-contact with the student instead of looking at the screen, 'by no means' was AT online a 'waste of time'. AT-P6 said that they 'have been surprised [about] how much one can achieve in the way of practical learning online' and that 'other types of experiential learning', such as observation skills, were 'coming more to the fore'. Although this last view was expressed in relation to AT teacher training and not to sessions with HE students, it emphasises the potential for AT online sessions to develop useful skills and awareness.

6.1.5 Content of AT online sessions

A few participants expanded on the content of AT online sessions that they would regard as appropriate in an online environment. AT-P5 firstly highlighted the importance of establishing a 'connection' with the 'person' and of being able to have 'a conversation that enquires into what's going well and what could develop and grow'; subsequently, they reported that they would include long-established AT activities

such as 'semi-supine work' and other approaches such as the evaluation of performance videos to develop the student's observational skills. AT-P9 described their use of videos in more detail, reporting as follows:

[The student] sent me a video, [they] wrote me an email and said what [they]'d been working on and listed things that [they]'d seen when [they]'d made the video, and [they] sent it over to me for my scrutiny and we've arranged to have a lesson this afternoon. When we'll go online, and I'll get [them] to play and I'll talk about what I am seeing and what I think [they] should be thinking and what [they] should try and then [they]'ll discuss any misunderstanding or sort of lack of clarity with me.

Furthermore, AT-P8 illustrated that they would do activities to guide students 'through how the eyes are leading a movement or what it is initiating a movement' and to teach 'people to use their own awareness' and look 'at their thinking'. For example, AT-P7 mentioned that they would 'talk to people about how they are organising their lives' and help them apply the AT to everyday activities.

6.1.6 Reluctance towards AT online sessions

A few AT teachers, on the other hand, appeared to be reluctant to AT online teaching. While AT-P14 said that 'you can achieve a certain amount online and help people to think well', highlighting the perceived cognitive benefits of the AT, they were 'sceptical about online teaching' because of the lack of hands-on work which was believed to be 'critical for the AT' and 'an essential part of it'. Indeed, they argued that 'if [AT online teaching] is the only way of learning, OK, that is fine, but it is not the AT'. This reluctance against AT online teaching was mirrored by AT-P11 who did not feel it to be appealing given the lack of hands-on and the 'physical connection' that distinguishes a face-to-face context: specifically, AT-P11 illustrated that they 'were interested in helping people to build entirely new neural connections', which they thought were 'only reliably available with hands-on contact as the main way of communicating'. This idea of hands-on work as a form of two-way communication was pointed out by AT-P19 who stated that AT teachers 'are not manipulating in the AT' but they 'are communicating'.

Despite these contrasting perceptions about AT online teaching, a common view amongst the AT teacher participants was that a prior face-to-face experience with the AT may be necessary for successful AT online sessions. AT-P17, despite being in

favour of AT online teaching, stated that ‘they haven't taught anybody [online] that hasn't had a lesson before’ and that they were unsure about teaching ‘somebody right from the very beginning and teach[ing] them only online’. Similarly, P7 believed that ‘if you know the person at the other end of the line ... you can do some useful work’, but ‘you need to have some lessons before’ for ‘talk-throughs’ to be successful. AT-P15 found that ‘if the student has had at least one experience of hands-on, online lessons can be very effective’; however, they remarked that the teacher should be highly qualified and ‘experienced’.

6.1.7 The teaching format and the mode of delivery: Discussion of the findings

Findings indicated that although the one-to-one format may be seen as the optimal AT teaching context because of its inherent higher degree of specificity, group instruction can be viewed as a valid teaching format providing students with different learning experiences, such as observational skills and peer learning. There is no empirical research specifically comparing the effectiveness of AT one-to-one and group sessions in the music field. Yet, these findings corroborate Little et al.'s (2022) study on back pain, in which AT teachers viewed ‘group teaching and individual teaching as each having their own strengths and weaknesses’ (p. 5), and Lee’s (2019) research in which Lee concludes that ‘each approach has its strengths and challenges’ (p. 130). In 6.1.1 it was discussed how there may be different types of AT group classes depending on the aim of the session (theoretical versus experiential). Additionally, the view that in group setting instructional language needs to be particularly adjusted to create a safe environment raises questions about the training and the level of experience of AT teachers (see the end of Section 6.1.1). Further work could be undertaken to investigate the effectiveness of different types of group classes considering the implications for the provision of AT group teaching in HE music institutions and AT teacher training.

This study showed that there might be some hesitancy among AT teachers towards AT group teaching. This aligns with many of the AT teachers in Little et al. (2022)'s investigation who had gone ‘into [the] study with significant reservations about group teaching’ (p. 7). However, AT-P6’s view regarding the comparison between AT group classes and AT teacher training (see the end of Section 6.1.2) raises

questions about AT teachers' reluctance towards the group format. It can be argued that the parallel between AT group classes and AT teacher training courses may not be entirely applicable to group work with novice or inexperienced learners of the AT because of the extra component in teacher training courses of AT trainees performing hands-on work on each other. This may offer a further learning experience that does not happen in AT group sessions with learners who do not undertake AT teacher training courses; nonetheless, it seems that AT trainees are normally allowed to provide hands-on work on their peers, usually after a year (City Alexander Technique School, 2013) and therefore their experience of the AT in the first year of training may be more similar to that of people who are not undertaking AT teacher training, despite some differences such as motivation, frequency of sessions, and previous AT experience. In addition, it could be proposed that since AT trainees may still receive one-to-one instruction while training as AT teachers, group work cannot be considered as an alternative to one-to-one; for example, the City Alexander Technique School (2013) states that 'all trainees have one individual lesson per week alongside the course hours as part of the training' (n. p.). However, assuming that AT trainees may still have one-to-one sessions in their AT training does not deny the potential benefits that group work may bring and thus the parallel between AT group teaching and AT training courses nevertheless suggests that AT teaching in a group setting might be a valuable learning opportunity, considering that it is also a long-established tradition in the AT teaching community. It is possible that group classes may need to be tailored according to learners' previous knowledge of the AT (see AT-P16's view, Section 6.1.2) or that a series of one-to-one lessons is required to avoid confusion. Further research could be undertaken to evaluate the effectiveness of group classes according to the level of the learners (e.g. novices and advanced), the level of experience of the AT teacher, and of a combination of one-to-one and group sessions.

This study found that hands-on work is an essential component of AT teaching practice in both one-to-one and group settings. It is for this reason that, according to some AT teachers' views, group size is an important factor to consider for AT group classes to be successful and where the aim of these is to provide an experiential learning of the AT rather than a theoretical introduction to it. This indicates consideration for the size of group classes, particularly where assistants are not available. A small group size may be suitable for providing hands-on guidance on all

students and could enhance the effectiveness of practical AT group classes, echoing Lee's (2019) statement that 'a small-group setting (five to six students) is a reasonable and practical option that allows for multiple students in a class' (p. 131). However, there are financial restrictions impacting the viability of small-group classes in HE music institutions. It is therefore advocated that further empirical studies investigate the optimal number of students for group classes to be effective based on the aim of the session and the availability of assistants.

Findings show that there may be questions about whether the amount of hands-on guidance could be reconsidered in light of the implications it may have for students' learning experiences. Firstly, excessive hands-on work was thought to hinder students' autonomy potentially and lead to an over-reliance of the student on the AT teacher. The importance of developing students' self-regulated learning during AT sessions is explained by Waterfield (2007) who, in an article about their experiences with the AT, described a correlation between hands-on work and confidence. Waterfield (2007) reported that 'the touch of hands brought immediate change, but that [they] could find little consistency in retaining or recovering [a] sense of ease' which then led to a sense of 'discouragement' (p. 57). For this reason, Waterfield (2007) 'discovered' that they needed to 'articulate' what they experienced in the moment of receiving hands-on work in order to 'digest and learn' from the AT teacher performing it (p. 58), highlighting how a passive attitude towards hands-on work may not be sufficient to maintaining progress and how a student's active involvement with this process would be necessary to develop confidence and self-regulatory skills. Although these points do not underestimate the use of hands-on guidance during AT sessions, they raise some questions about the role of the student during this process, the way that the teaching is framed, and the implications of hands-on guidance for students' learning.

Secondly, hands-on work may be problematic in situations where learners have not appropriately been informed about its purpose and what it involves, resulting in touch being felt as potentially invasive and inappropriate. As Tarr (2011) noted, 'there are restrictions on which areas of the body are touched' by AT teachers (p. 262). Providing information about hands-on work prior to AT sessions may offer some clarity; nonetheless, some learners might still get some benefit from having AT sessions without being touched, as was noted in relation to online provision (see

6.1.4). These findings have thus implications for the AT teaching practice and the development of a standardised code of practice for AT teachers working in HE music institutions, which, to the best of my knowledge, seems to be lacking. Further empirical work could investigate the role and communication of hands-on work in AT sessions considering these implications.

These findings revealed that the perspectives on AT online teaching varied among different AT teacher participants. Despite some practical limitations (e.g. eye-contact in video calls), some AT teachers were in favour of AT online teaching based also on their students' experiences. Semi-supine work, evaluation of performance videos, and activities increasing mindful awareness were deemed to work effectively in an online environment. However, other AT teachers were resistant to AT online teaching given the lack of hands-on work. AT-P11's view (see Section 6.1.6) on hands-on guidance as a form of communication echoes what Cacciatore et al. (2020), referencing Soliman et al. (2015), speculated in relation to the ability of AT teachers 'to understand and communicate tensional patterns and bodily awareness' through touch (p. 11). This obviously cannot be attained in an AT online session, and thus these findings raise questions about whether online sessions may be suitable and effective only after a certain number of AT face-to-face sessions (see AT-P7's perspective, Section 6.1.6). There is a lack of empirical research on the effectiveness of AT online teaching, and further work could be undertaken to evaluate its feasibility in light of the content of the AT sessions, its format (one-to-one/group), the learners' level, and AT teacher's level of experience.

6.2 Views on a triadic lesson

AT teacher participants were asked to provide their views on a triadic lesson, a context involving AT teacher, I/V teacher and student. Themes of AT teachers' personal experiences of this format, potential reasons why it might be useful, willingness to participate in this format, initiators of a triadic lesson, potential challenges and ways to solve these, are discussed below.

6.2.1 Personal experiences: Overview

Nine AT teachers reported to have experienced a triadic lesson but only some commented on their sentiments in this scenario. Three AT teachers expressed

extremely positive feelings toward it: for example, AT-P5 stated that it was 'fantastic', and AT-P15 said that it was 'amazing'. On the other hand, four AT teachers did not find this teaching situation particularly satisfying: for example, while AT-P3 mentioned that they had found it 'confusing', AT-P9 illustrated that it had been 'awkward'.

6.2.2 Initiators of a triadic lesson

The AT teacher participants with experience in this teaching scenario reported on who had initiated this collaboration. Findings reveal that both music students and IVTs promoted this teaching collaboration. AT-P18 mentioned that 'it was the pupil who had requested it'; likewise, AT-P11 reported that 'what tends to happen is that the student will invite [them] or suggest that [they] go to a singing lesson or a cello lesson with them'. With regard to IVTs, AT-P9 revealed that 'the professors have always asked for those joint lessons because they'd been particularly interested in their experience about [the AT] and how it's helped them', indicating that a familiarity of the IVTs with the AT may promote this teaching collaboration and suggesting a long-standing experience of this teaching scenario by AT-P9. On the other hand, AT-P17 felt that 'some [I/V] teachers would be interested to hear what [they] have to say and perhaps think about it in their own playing, whereas other ones, probably, would be closed and not interested', hinting that a resistance of IVTs to the AT may prevent this collaboration from happening.

6.2.3 Reasons for a triadic lesson to be useful

The AT teachers who appreciated being in a triadic lesson explained the reasons for viewing it as successful and useful, providing connections between their experience and that of the IVT and the student. With regard to the benefits to music students, AT-P7 said that this teaching scenario 'allows the student to see how what you are teaching in an Alexander lesson is transferable to all other situations and the situation of playing', creating a link between an AT and instrumental/vocal (I/V) lesson. AT-P5 illustrated that since hands-on work 'is very accepted in the Alexander [Technique] context', AT teachers can give students 'an embodied experience' of what their IVT is saying to them. In relation to singing, AT-P5 stated that 'the wonderful thing about our work is that we can gently put our hands on and so [students] actually sense sometimes the message of their vocal teacher'. AT-P15, similarly, believed that 'for the

student it was very beneficial' and, as an AT teacher, they 'had things to offer in that situation which the instrumental teacher had not seen or heard'. Indeed, in other segments of the dataset, the AT was regarded as a general discipline, and, for example, training for AT teachers wanting to work with musicians was considered to be 'very useful' but not 'absolutely essential' (e.g., AT-P2). AT-P10 stated: '[as AT teachers] we are observing the body and the mind and thinking in whatever someone is doing and so, that is what enables me as a complete non-musician to be able to offer something to a musician'. However, AT-P5 expressly reported how beneficial a triadic lesson model was in terms of mutual learning. They mentioned that they 'have certainly learned absolutely tons from working with' different IVTs and appreciated the fact that it was 'a lovely dialogue'.

6.2.4 Experienced challenges of a triadic lesson

The two AT teacher participants who had not particularly enjoyed being in this teaching scenario reported the challenges they had faced. AT-P3 highlighted that there had been a mismatch between their aim and that of the vocal teacher:

It can be a little bit difficult if you are working with vocal teachers because they don't understand maybe that what I need people to be able to do is to sing something very, very simple ... [since] when you are doing Alexander [Technique] work, you ought to be able to think about your body as well as the actual singing.

AT-P18 lamented a lack of collaboration from a vocal teacher and 'felt under-used really because the teacher was someone who talked a lot and did not really invite [them] to do very much' and so the teaching situation 'was not very collaborative'. In fact, both AT-P3 and AT-P18 acknowledged a lack of collaborative planning ahead of the sessions, which could have been one of the reasons for these difficulties. While AT-P3 mentioned that the sessions in which they experienced these challenges had not been 'planned in advance', AT-P18 stated that in the future 'they would probably set it up more specifically with the singing teacher [and find out] what is expected from [them] in that situation and how [they] interact with the pupil so that it is a little clearer', suggesting that careful planning could have encouraged a more collaborative atmosphere and could have reduced miscommunication.

6.2.5 Willingness to participate in a triadic lesson

One of the AT teachers who had not experienced this teaching scenario expressed interest in it. AT-P3 said that they would have ‘loved’ to be in that situation both because they ‘would learn from how the teacher is teaching their student’ and because, as an AT teacher, they would offer their ‘observation’, ‘knowledge’ and ‘hands-on work’. This echoes what AT-P5 had experienced in the same situation in relation to mutual learning (Section 6.2.3); indeed, AT-P3 remarked that this teaching scenario ‘would be good for the three of us’: the AT teacher, the IVT and the student.

6.2.6 Potential challenges and solutions

A common theme among the AT teachers with or without experience of a triadic lesson was that a real-time collaboration could potentially be problematic. Firstly, it was believed that there might be a clash between the AT philosophy and the I/V teaching. AT-P14 illustrated that:

[As AT teachers], we are looking at the kind of global approach, we are looking at how [students] look after themselves in general terms, so, ... it is a health approach rather than a just musical approach ... whereas the instrumental teacher is looking to create the music, looking for technique, looking for results; we are not always interested in results, we are interested in how students obtain those results and look after themselves at the same time.

For a similar reason, AT-P16 expressed reluctance towards this triadic lesson format, believing that it goes against the philosophy and aims of the AT:

All these attempts to have a specific end of the AT are contrary to what the spirit of the AT is. AT is a general discipline, and you learn the fundamental principles of inhibition, direction and primary control, and the more lessons you have and the more you understand it, the more you are able to apply it yourself.

Furthermore, one participant believed that this lesson could be potentially conflictual because of a lack of flexibility among IVTs in relation to their teaching. AT-P4 stated that:

Quite often instrumental teachers have very specific fixed ideas about how to teach and how to play ... and if an AT teacher comes along and says “Oh, actually, is there a way to do this with less tension”, the instrumental teacher might feel that their teaching has been interfered with.

A conflict between the AT teacher and IVT might arise because of contradictory information: 'if the singing teacher is trying to get the student to do something and the Alexander [Technique] teacher is pulling the student in opposition to that, then you can end up in a conflict' (AT-P11). However, AT-P5 illustrated that 'very often ... you are actually saying the same thing, even though it appears that you aren't' and that 'the challenges all drop away as soon as there is a good relationship', indicating ways in which issues could be resolved.

In fact, although this teaching collaboration was believed to be potentially conflictual, several AT teachers felt that tensions could be resolved. Firstly, advance planning was deemed to limit conflict in the session. AT-P2, for example, stated that:

Before the session, it would be good to get together and just say "how would you envisage that we run this?"; so, you have a kind of ground plan ... where we both would be coming from in terms [of] how we are observing each other's work.

Secondly, openness was believed to be an important trait for differences of opinion to be overcome. AT-P9 thought that issues 'could be resolved just by having a sort of frank interaction and sharing how everybody's feeling about things and how [the interaction]'s going'. This mirrored AT-P13 who thought that conflicts might be resolved 'with plenty of communication and understanding each other', ensuring to 'work together as a team'.

This idea of collegiality and 'frank' cooperation between AT teachers and IVTs was remarked on by other AT teachers as well. AT-P5 highlighted that it was 'very important' to them that AT teachers and IVTs were 'all seen as being on the same team'. Nonetheless, AT-P9 envisaged that 'there are some egos around the music business and sometimes ego gets in the way of collaboration', suggesting that professional self-esteem may play a major role for this collaboration to be successful and for conflicts to be resolved. AT-P15, in fact, pointed out that 'the instrumental teacher has to be very secure in their own teaching and in their abilities', and they admired the teacher with whom they had collaborated because 'if you're being paid to teach a student and somebody else then comes in and then adds value, then it's quite easy for you to worry about whether the student thinks you are good enough'. Indeed, AT-P18 emphasised that since instrumental teachers 'can feel quite threatened as though they think that they should be able to offer what it is that [AT teachers] offer',

it 'would be really useful' for IVTs to have 'some education around that' and to receive information about what the AT encompasses. The value of establishing some knowledge of the AT was also reported by AT-P19 who felt that it was important that 'the Alexander teacher invites and encourages the [I/V] teacher to have some lessons to find out what the Alexander Technique is about'. For all these reasons, it seems that a collaborative atmosphere should be established *before* a joint lesson takes place, but this may not be enough. As AT-P5 highlighted, each party may need to be 'able to live safely with uncertainty, that maybe there are two opinions that are different and that's fine', suggesting that divergent views may still coexist, and the flexibility of mindset and openness to new ideas may be at the heart of successful collaborative work.

6.2.7 A triadic lesson: Discussion of the findings

This study found that nine of the participating AT teachers had taken part in a triadic lesson. According to some of them, both students and IVTs had often requested it, with findings showing that IVTs' familiarity with the AT and their openness to the AT were fundamental to the success of a triadic lesson, as detailed previously. A few AT teachers expressed positive feelings about this teaching scenario, revealing that it had been useful both to provide students with an embodied experience of the IVTs' advice due to AT teachers' hands-on guidance and to offer different insights into I/V playing given the general applicability of the AT. In one case (AT-P5), a triadic lesson was thought to be informative and foster mutual learning. In contrast, other AT teachers found it 'confusing' and 'awkward', potentially due to a lack of advance collaborative planning. Therefore, this has implications for the development of a triadic lesson model in UK HE music institutions and the importance of lesson planning to promote collaborative behaviours. On the other hand, the AT teachers without experience of a triadic lesson showed interest in it because of its potential benefits for AT teachers, IVTs and students. A triadic lesson was thought to bring together the AT and I/V practice, aligning with the 'Oslo model of AT instruction' (Fox & Romaniuk, 2021, p. 5) adopted by the Norwegian Academy of Music (Jørgensen, 2015) that aimed at creating this connection.

Nonetheless, findings showed that a triadic lesson could present some challenges. Firstly, for a few AT teachers a triadic lesson was thought to be against the philosophy of the AT. The AT, as opposed to I/V practice, was believed to be more

concerned with the process through which an activity is achieved rather than the result, echoing F. M. Alexander's principle of avoiding end-gaining (see Chapter 2). Secondly, a triadic lesson was perceived to lead to conflictual information both because of lack of teaching flexibility among IVTs and because of contradictory information between the AT and the I/V teacher. Considering AT-P5's view that 'very often ... you are actually saying the same thing', it is possible that this conflict could be the result of either different terminology or teaching approaches. This corroborates Fox and Romaniuk (2021) who reported on the benefits of developing 'shared AT-related vocabulary' for students and AT and I/V teachers to enhance an integration of the AT into I/V practice (p. 7).

AT teachers, however, thought that challenges could generally be resolved through openness and frank cooperation. These findings corroborate Fox and Romaniuk's (2021) research showing that the success of a triadic interaction was 'marked by an open-mindedness on the part of all involved' (p. 12). Furthermore, the current study found that according to some AT teachers, the avoidance of egocentric behaviours and the familiarity of IVTs with the AT could help reduce arising conflict. This again supports the Oslo model of AT instruction in which IVTs take individual lessons to familiarise themselves with the AT. Nonetheless, according to AT-P5 (see the end of Section 6.2.6), conflict might still persist and therefore this view has implications for the extent to which the different parties are able to negotiate disagreement. Since there is no empirical research on a triadic lesson in UK HE music institutions, further work is warranted to test it in light of the findings uncovered by this research.

6.3 Resources on the AT

AT teachers talked about books and videos on the AT that they would recommend to music students and musicians, or that they would use in their teaching. In addition, they commented on the role of books in contrast to an experiential learning of the AT, providing their opinions on F. M. Alexander's original writings and the relevance of these written works in their current AT practice.

6.3.1 Views on AT books and videos

Many AT teachers provided book titles on the AT that they felt would be suitable for music students and other musicians. These comprised a wide selection of books but, for the purpose of this thesis, only the most prevalent ones will be examined in greater detail. Regarding instructional videos on the AT, only one AT teacher made specific comments on their use in their teaching: AT-P16 said that they did not 'recommend videos particularly' because videos did not 'really convey what [the AT is] about' and thus it was 'almost pointless watching them'.

The most referenced book was *The Alexander Technique for musicians* (Kleinman & Buckocke, 2013). According to AT-P6, this was 'a really nice introductory textbook' on the AT; similarly, AT-P15 noted that it 'has some interesting information'. AT-P17 highlighted that, although this book had not been written by AT teachers who had been 'part of the group [they had] trained with', it was 'good', indicating potential discrepancies among AT training courses and views on the AT. Conversely, AT-P18 said that they owned this book but did not 'use it very much' with HE music students because of not usually setting 'homework' for them.

Another frequently mentioned book was *Indirect procedures: A musician's guide to the Alexander Technique (The integrated musician)* (de Alcantara, 2013). AT-P6 said that this book 'is more directed towards musicians' in comparison to other books and 'is really helpful'. This mirrored AT-P9 who believed that it was a 'good book' and that they 'recommend[ed] that too'. In contrast, AT-P11 argued that they would recommend it only to a certain category of students because of the author's perceived demanding writing style:

If I think a student can take it, then there's also ... *Indirect procedures* [by Pedro de Alcantara] but I think a lot of people find that rather heavy going and, although it is very practical, it can seem very sort of dry and theoretical and inaccessible. So, occasionally, that one might come up if I have got a student who I think will deal with that style of writing.

Other referred books were *What every musicians need to know about the body: The application of body mapping to music* (Conable & Conable, 2000) and *Your body, your voice: The key to natural singing and speaking* (Dimon, 2011). Regarding the former, AT-P13 said that they liked this 'body mapping [book]' which was 'specifically for musicians', adding that they used 'it a lot' in their teaching, as AT-P18 also

remarked. Regarding the text by Dimon (2011), AT-P5 described it as 'absolutely brilliant', and AT-P16 mentioned that this was one of the books that they would recommend to singers. This tied in with AT-P3 who said that it is 'an excellent book for students of the AT' because it shows 'how the voice actually works'.

A few AT teacher participants commented on the fact that the quality of some books could be better than others. *How-to books* were considered to present an inaccurate image of the AT. AT-P6 argued:

In my view, the worst kind of book you can get is ... these dreadful books for the general public where you've got things like pictures of someone brushing their teeth like this and it's got big ticks and yes, that's a "correct" way to do it, and then you've got someone brushing their teeth like this and big crosses and that's "wrong". That's just so not what the AT is about. So, those kinds of books I think are really awful.

Likewise, AT-P17 reported that some books on the AT are 'too wishy-washy and ... they don't say anything, talking jargon, and they are often "How-to-do" books; in other words, this is how you do something with the AT [but the AT] is not about that'.

In fact, although AT teachers reported to recommend and use AT books in their teaching, a common view was that books would only prompt curiosity about the AT but could not provide a deep understanding of the AT or be a substitute for AT sessions. As AT-P6 stated: 'I think with any of these books everyone will say "You can't really learn [the AT] from a book", and that's true, but ... a good book [could be used] alongside lessons ... or to just spark an interest, and then go and have lessons'. This echoes AT-P16 who remarked that 'you can't learn the AT out of a book, but [reading a book] can enhance your lessons'. AT-P11, however, highlighted the nature of the AT as an embodied and experiential practice:

Well, I think the AT is an oral tradition ... It's like reading about opera and going to opera: there's a kind of magic to the performance that you can read about but don't get unless you actually go to the opera. And I think the AT is very much like that too, and I think that's the bit that it's not in the books and it can't be in the books.

AT-P15, on the other hand, claimed that some texts on the AT may be a barrier to understanding the AT because of the language being used, hinting at the historical heritage of Alexander's original writings and the difficulties that these may present:

One of the challenges of most writing on AT is that the basic principles are extraordinarily simple yet profound. Historically, I think that the pressure to conform to Alexander's exact words and writings indoctrinated large numbers of teachers (who will have written these books) into, at best, opaque language that the everyday reader finds hard to follow.

Therefore, the next subsection presents findings concerning AT teacher participants' views on Alexander's books, considering the cultural and historical legacies that these may exert on the contemporary AT community.

6.3.2 Views on F. M. Alexander's original writings

AT teacher participants expressed a variety of opinions about F. M. Alexander's original writings. A few of them said that these were necessary to grasp the nature of the AT. AT-P7 argued that 'you can't really understand the AT in any depth, unless you've looked at one of [Alexander's] books'; this was mirrored by AT-P16 who mentioned that these books 'have the essence of what [the AT] is about'. Books, however, were regarded as necessary for trainee AT teachers but not for music students or other musicians. AT-P17 explained that 'the only people' that they 'would recommend reading Alexander's books' would be 'people who ... [train] to become Alexander teachers ... they must read them'. AT-P3 clarified that they would not recommend Alexander's books to music students, 'unless they ... [were] very interested in and want[ed] to do more in-depth reading of the AT', adding that it was 'not necessary' to read them since there were 'so many other good books out there to explain' the AT. According to both AT-P3 and AT-P19, books such as *The Alexander Technique: The essential writings of F. Matthias Alexander* (Alexander, 1967/1989) and *The authorised summaries of F. M. Alexander's four books* (Brown, 1992) would be valid alternatives to Alexander's authored books.

AT teachers commented on the difficulties associated with F. M. Alexander's writings. Firstly, a common view amongst them was that Alexander's books were challenging to read because of their writing style: '[they] are bloody hard to read' (AT-P10). This was echoed by AT-P4 who stated that the difficulty of Alexander's books resided in 'the difficult prose, long sentences, stylistic ways of writing that are now a bit out-of-date'; likewise, AT-P7 remarked that that 'they are old-fashioned language ... we don't write ... in that style anymore'. Secondly, practical experience of the AT was deemed to be necessary to understand their content, mirroring the views examined in

Section 6.3.1 about the importance of AT experiential learning: 'if you were to pick up his books now and you didn't have any experience [of the AT], ... it wouldn't make a lot of sense' (AT-P6). This connects with AT-P7's statement: 'if you have not had [AT lessons], it's very difficult to know what he's talking about'.

However, many AT teachers thought that F. M. Alexander's writings were still relevant to the current practice of the AT but needed to be contextualised in light of recent progress in neuroscience, biomechanics and psychology, and the evolutionary nature of the AT itself. AT-P10 clarified this:

I think that it is really important for us [AT teachers] to read them, definitely, and they are very, very relevant, still. My feeling is that we should not get stuck there though ... I would love more research [on the AT] to happen, so that we can be informed by the latest research: if things change, then we are allowed to change with it ... You know, other professions, it is an in-live thing, psychotherapists, neuroscience changes, then they have to adapt and change, and I think that the problem with the AT, potentially — although we are becoming more and more relevant as the neuroscience backs us up more — it is that we are not able to evolve and I do think that there needs to be room for that as well as the original teaching.

In relation to the evolving nature of the AT, AT-P19 described as follows:

The span of those four books covers 32 years. Alexander kept evolving and changing over that time, so I think we have to keep that in mind. There was a very well-known teacher, Marjory Barlow¹⁸, and she had an interview quite towards the later years of her life, and she said that many of the procedures that Alexander detailed in his books, he no longer did. So, we have to keep that in mind.

Similarly, AT-P9 illustrated the importance of reading AT books for current practice, highlighting the development of the AT over the years:

If you want to call the thing you are doing something else, that's fine, then you don't have to read Alexander's books, but I think you do have to go to the source. I am not saying that you have to say exactly what he said because he wouldn't still be saying exactly what he said if he was still alive, you know, if he was aiming for 200 years old and still alive, he wouldn't be saying what he said in the first bit because if you read early writing from him, you'll see it's quite different to the later writing that he did. So, if you read what you can of his — which is all the stuff that's existing — and then you imagine that he would have progressed as the world changed and society changed, he would start writing

¹⁸ Marjory Barlow was one of F. M. Alexander's students (Mouritz, 2022d).

differently and that's appropriate but not finding out what he wrote in the first place would be an extraordinary sort of arrogance.

A certain level of critical thinking was thus considered to be necessary to contextualise F. M. Alexander's works in light of outdated ideas about body mechanics and neuroscience, as well as racist statements. AT-P4 said that 'there are many problematic ideas in [Alexander's writings], including racism' but 'if you ... know how to read and think critically it can be useful to study the books ... [to have] a clear picture of his own thinking ... [instead of a] teacher's own angle'. With regard to obsolete theories, AT-P17 mentioned that Alexander 'was writing over a hundred years ago, so lots of things we know now about [how] the body works, how the system works, he didn't. So, you have to take it with a pinch of salt'. AT-P17 further remarked on the relevance of F. M. Alexander's written works, drawing attention to their historical contextualisation:

I think to just dismiss [Alexander's books] would be ... "throwing the baby out of the bath water", so, "Oh, they are racist books, therefore are not appropriate to read", it would be like saying "We are going to remove all the statues in the UK that have got anything to do with slavery". No, that's part of the history. So, if you ditch them, you are actually throwing away a vital part of this country. I think Alexander's books are a bit like that: they are hard work, they are difficult, they say things that are really old-fashioned and out-of-date now, he was obviously racist like every sort of middle class, upper-class person was those days — although F. M. Alexander was the son of a convict!!!¹⁹ — but the information about the AT is good.

All these findings thus suggest a culture of openness amongst many AT teachers, with implications for the image of the AT community within the music profession and more broadly.

6.3.3 Resources on the AT: Discussion of the findings

Findings indicated that AT teachers would recommend AT books in their teaching. Only one AT teacher mentioned that they had never recommended videos on the AT because of their inefficacy in conveying the nature of the AT. Given the lack of research on videos about the AT and their pedagogical usage, further studies are necessary to shed light on this.

¹⁹ The exclamation marks were added by the participant themselves after reviewing the written transcript.

The most frequently mentioned books were those by Kleinman and Buckocke (2013), de Alcantara (2013), Conable and Conable (2000), and Dimon (2011). One teacher would not set homework by recommending AT books to students. This has implications for the use of self-study resources in AT practice and its influence on the effectiveness of the AT. Interestingly, two of those books (i.e. Conable & Conable; de Alcantara) were rated poorly in terms of academic rigour by some health-care professionals in Norton's (2016) research, raising questions about the recognition of the AT across sectors. AT-P11's perspective on de Alcantara's writing style corroborates the comment by a participant in Norton's (2016) study who defined the book as 'approachable' but 'a bit woolly' (p. 381). In addition, the view that one participant would regard Kleinman and Buckocke's (2013) book as a valid resource, despite not being written by AT teachers on the same training course, highlights openness among AT teachers being trained in different AT training schools.

Furthermore, this study found that, according to some AT teachers, some AT "how-to books" were seen to portray an inaccurate perception of the AT. However, books were in general regarded as a supplement to AT learning since a practical experience of the AT was deemed fundamental to develop an understanding of the AT, echoing Tarr's (2011) statement that the AT is an 'embodied practice' (p. 256).

Experiential learning was also considered necessary to understand F. M. Alexander's original writings. F. M. Alexander's written works were deemed essential for AT trainees but not for common learners of the AT. In fact, F. M. Alexander's writing was regarded as difficult to read due to archaic language and complex syntax. This legacy, according to AT-P15, has been preserved in other books communicating AT principles in an obscure manner to align with Alexander's language (see the end of Section 6.3.1). These criticisms of Alexander's writings support those outlined by Fitzgerald (2007) — see their thesis for a full examination of these. However, the current findings showed openness among AT teachers to develop a culture of research while preserving Alexander's principles (see AT-P10, Section 6.3.2): for many AT teachers in the current study Alexander's original writings needed to be historically situated considering current cultural assumptions about society and scientific progress. As The Society of Teachers of the Alexander Technique (STAT, 2023j) stated, 'Alexander's writings are not treated as core texts, but as historical texts read critically for reference' (n. p.). This might have positive implications for the professional image

of the AT within HE music institutions. Considering these and the above findings, it is therefore suggested that the use of books is investigated in empirical research within the music field and that AT resources are developed in consideration the potential users in respect to clear language, academic and scientific rigour, and diverse interpretations of the AT.

6.4 AT and other practices

AT teachers were encouraged to provide comment on the AT in comparison to other somatic/psychophysical practices such as the Feldenkrais Method, yoga, and Tai Chi. Findings show similarities and differences amongst their views.

6.4.1 All practices are potentially good

Several AT teachers felt that other somatic/psychophysical practices would be beneficial for music students, given the diversity of students' interests. AT-P11, for example, stated: 'I think people sensibly gravitate towards what works for them and what they get on with, and how their brains work'. For some AT teachers, these practices were thought to increase both students' body awareness and to support a body/mind connection. While AT-P4 noted that 'all of those [practices] can potentially be helpful' because all of them 'give us greater body awareness', AT-P9 believed that these were useful because 'they get people to connect their mind with their body, so they do some of the stuff that the AT does'. AT-P1, for example, thought that 'yoga practice is also a way of exploring all kinds of musical concepts — rhythm, harmony, melody — ... through the body' and 'it's a really interesting point of entry or point of departure for musicians to explore actually their physical use and how their movements in-and-of themselves are musical'.

An interdisciplinary approach was suggested by some AT teachers. AT-P14 felt that some disciplines such as Tai Chi and Qigong would be beneficial in conjunction to the AT because of their movement-based approach to activities, explaining how long-established traditions concerning the AT may have hindered its practice:

I think one of the problems of the Technique maybe it is its legacy, maybe it is its difficult material that we have to work with — the original books and the training that we have — that sometimes there can be a lack of flow ... and so things like Tai Chi or Qigong can be really good in encouraging a kind of more movement-oriented practice, whereas the AT can sometimes just get a little bit

stuck if you are focussing so much on inhibition, for example. So, I think these disciplines are really useful and to some degree, what Alexander discovered, has been discovered before ... for example, holistic movements and the importance of using the whole body to achieve your ends ... The AT itself is very cerebral, it matters very much what you are thinking and how you are thinking. Some of these other disciplines, I think there is value in learning through imitation and learning through movement rather than having to think your way through every step, so I think a kind of combination of the two can be helpful.

This was echoed by AT-P18 who advocated for an interdisciplinary approach to the health and well-being of music students and musicians in HE music institutions, demonstrating a degree of openness to different practices:

So, to my mind, it should be multi-disciplinary really. Okay, my dream for the future is that all music institutions have a centre for health which includes yoga, Feldenkrais, AT, psychological counselling [for matters] like anxiety, and maybe specialised physio because different people respond to different things and ... I think is really, really important that the AT is seen as part of a fabric of health and not just the only thing that works.

Similarly, AT-P5 questioned:

I include certain amount of movement work ... in all my lessons. I think it's absolutely brilliant to have those things available. I don't think anyone should have the moral high ground of "this is the only thing" because how can that possibly be true?

However, AT-P19 argued that the extent to which these disciplines would be beneficial depended on 'how [these were] taught', hinting at the importance of different teaching approaches concerning those practices.

6.4.2 AT and the Feldenkrais Method

Some AT teachers made direct comparison between the AT and the Feldenkrais Method. AT-P18 argued that Feldenkrais Method pedagogy was more concerned with students' real-time feedback than traditional approaches to the AT, explaining how they, as an AT teacher, adopted Feldenkrais Method principles to their AT teaching:

I use quite a lot what I have learned from Feldenkrais in my teaching ... the idea of referring back to the pupils' experience ... so referring back to the pupil's own sensing, the opposite of maybe a certain old style Alexander's teaching "I give pupil the correct experience", I just do not believe in that, and I know teachers who teach like that, but there is a bit of a strand I think in the Alexander world of "We are showing the right way to do it", and I do not find that in Feldenkrais at all.

Similarly, AT-P8 explained how they sought to inform their AT pedagogy with the perceived more experimental approach of the Feldenkrais Method:

Feldenkrais is more exploratory ... Everything is accepted, and you observe it and seeing how a movement to one path relates to another ... which I think is more and more how I want to teach the AT, that it is within the principles really, to be seeing and accepting how we are, not this like trap of trying to change straight away. So, I have found that attitude from Feldenkrais helpful.

Nonetheless, one teacher would not recommend the Feldenkrais Method to students because of its perceived end-gaining nature and would advise them to take Tai Chi lessons instead:

When people say “what else can I do” and they can't afford [AT] lessons, I do sometimes say “You could always explore Tai Chi” because Tai Chi does seem to have a lot of similarity with aspects of the [Alexander] Technique anyway. It's not the same, but it's definitely got things in common, I would never recommend Feldenkrais. ... I went to a [Feldenkrais] class once and it was just completely end-gaining, so I thought “What's the point?”. (AT-P16)

These findings show divergent views about the AT in relation to the Feldenkrais Method, indicating contrasting approaches to the teaching of the AT and, possibly, of the Feldenkrais Method.

6.4.3 AT as a unique practice for musicians

Although many of these AT teachers were open to different somatic/psychophysical practices, a common view among them was the uniqueness of the AT in providing a basis for other disciplines. AT-P4 explained:

I would also say that the AT isn't in the same category as those [other practices], it's not in the same category as yoga, Feldenkrais, because it's sort of prior to those things. With AT training, we can do yoga well, with AT training, we can do Feldenkrais well and so on. It's a skill that is learnt in a way prior to those other things.

Similarly, AT-P3 believed in the nature of the AT as a primary practice:

I do believe that the AT offers a foundation course in good body use, and everything that you do when you have already had AT lessons will be different. So, your yoga practice can be better, your Feldenkrais will make more sense and be better.

According to AT-P5, the AT was both 'fundamental and complementary', hinting at the specificity of the AT in creating a psychophysical connection: 'learning and connecting to yourself, you know it's like a jigsaw puzzle and at the centre is the role of understanding mind, body, emotion in unity, that's what the AT really gives to people'. The uniqueness of the AT in creating this link was also explained by AT-P15:

I think the USP [Unique Selling Point] of the AT is this thing of very specifically training somebody to have an accurate kinaesthetic sense so that actually when they give themselves a mental instruction to do a specific action or anything like that, the channels between the brain and the body are clear enough for both the instruction to reach that particular part of the body and for the feedback, that is for me the beginning and the end of what's going on that is uniquely Alexandrian.

With regard to musicians, AT-P9 talked about the uniqueness of the AT in being an educational method and a skill adaptive to performance in comparison to yoga and the Feldenkrais Method: 'I'd say learning how to learn is what [the] AT teaches you and I am not sure that yoga and Feldenkrais do'. This was mirrored by AT-P11, who talked about the recognition of the AT in addressing performance skills in comparison to yoga, Pilates and physiotherapy:

I think the thing that's really special about the AT in a performing situation, which yoga can't do, and Pilates can't do, and physiotherapy can't do ... so I mean there's a recognition of this aspect of the AT, that you can quite directly use the AT to say "I am better" as a performer or to perform better as a performer in a way that is only indirect from something like yoga. So, I think you can get people to sound better and then call presence better in quite a direct way with the AT.

AT-P8 also highlighted the application of the AT to music performance, emphasising the paramount importance of teaching the AT in application to music:

I think the AT, especially compared to yoga, even more [has] got the quality of letting go of what you do that gets in the way and also of being so applicable to being in an activity, that it's not something that you practise kind out of life or out of the context of playing. When it's taught in that way and people understand it in that way, then you can really do performance work with people ... I think that's fairly unique to the AT and kind of essential for music college students.

This has implications for research studies directly comparing the AT to other practices which could also increase an understanding of all of these disciplines.

6.4.4 AT and other practices: Discussion of the findings

This study found that AT teachers were generally in favour of other practices such as yoga, the Feldenkrais Method, Tai Chi and Qigong for their perceived psychophysical benefits. Some of the participant AT teachers include movement-based activities in their AT teaching practice and have been inspired by other somatic/psychophysical practices to enhance their work. AT-P18's view on HE health and well-being policies driven by an ethos of interdisciplinary practice in relation to the health of music students and musicians suggests an openness among some AT teachers to strengthen dialogue and cooperation, which may be necessary to enhance health and well-being policies in HE music institutions.

Findings showed that some AT teachers may hold divergent views about the Feldenkrais Method. While a few AT teachers had developed their AT practice through including understandings derived from the Feldenkrais Method, AT-16's opposition to the Feldenkrais Method in favour of Tai Chi shows fundamental divergences among AT teachers. This is interesting because the AT and the Feldenkrais Method have been considered part of the same realm (Schlinder, 2006). However, in the foreword to Lynn's (2016) book, the author stated that 'the Feldenkrais Method is sometimes compared to the Alexander Technique but really these methods live in different worlds' and that 'training in the Feldenkrais Method allowed [Frederick] to shed identification with Alexander orthodoxy and to see the [Alexander] Technique in a new light ... thereby enhancing [their] teaching skills' (p. 17), suggesting the value of wider perspectives. As this current research does not aim to provide a theoretical or practical comparison between the AT and the Feldenkrais Method, further studies could analyse and compare these practices in HE music institutions.

Lastly, findings revealed that although many of the AT teachers were generally open to other practices, the AT was considered to be unique and propaedeutic to other disciplines by some of them. In addition, the AT was thought to offer music students and musicians educational benefits divergent from other disciplines such as the Feldenkrais Method and yoga. Likewise, the AT was believed to offer music students performance skills in contrast to Pilates and physiotherapy, with which the AT is often associated (Nobes, 2020). These findings are thus important in relation to providing further understanding of the AT in and beyond the music field, but empirical

research is warranted to compare the AT to other practices given the lack of studies directly addressing this.

6.5 Summary of the chapter: Key themes

This chapter identified AT teachers' views on the teaching format (one-to-one and group) and the mode of delivery (face-to-face and online). In addition, AT teachers' perspectives on a triadic lesson format were discussed; in particular, IVT's familiarity with the AT might be a prerequisite for its success as well as openness and frank collaboration by all parties involved. This chapter also identified AT teachers' views on physical and digital resources on the AT. Books were believed to spark curiosity about the AT, but the understanding of the AT could only be achieved through direct experience of it. Finally, this chapter examined AT teacher's perspectives on the AT in comparison to other somatic practices. While these were generally believed to be useful, divergent views about these disciplines were unveiled regarding different pedagogical approaches (i.e. the AT and the Feldenkrais Method). Nonetheless, the AT was regarded as offering unique skills given its perceived educational characteristics. The next chapters will present and discuss the findings concerning IVTs; presentation and discussion of the views of students will then follow, with a subsequent discussion of the findings across all participant categories.

Chapter 7: Perceptions of the Alexander Technique among instrumental and vocal teachers in UK HE music institutions (PART I)

This chapter is the first of three chapters discussing the perceptions of 11 instrumental and vocal teachers (IVTs) on the AT considering their personal experiences with it. It illustrates the reception of the AT, its definition and provision from their perspectives as IVTs working in different UK HE music institutions: university music departments and music conservatoires. The research questions that this chapter answers are thus as follows:

- How is the AT viewed by IVTs working in UK HE music institutions?
- How is the AT defined by IVTs working in UK HE music institutions?
- What are the views of IVTs working in UK HE music institutions on the provision of the AT in the UK HE music sector?
- What are the views of IVTs working in UK HE music institutions on the recognition of the AT and AT teachers within the UK HE music sector?

The first section of this chapter provides demographic characteristics of the sample of IVTs. The subsequent sections illustrate the different sets of findings, with a discussion of these at the end of each main section.

7.1 Demographics of the IVTs

11 IVTs participated in this research. Ten participants were interviewed online, using Zoom, whereas one participant requested to respond through a Word document questionnaire (see Chapter 3). Table 7.1 shows the number of IVTs grouped in relation to their teaching specialism: a musical instrument or singing. To protect the identity of the IVTs, musical instrument names have been replaced by instrument families to which an instrument conventionally belongs (e.g. a *woodwind instrument* replaces a *flute*). The categorisation of the instrument families follows a simple taxonomic

classification of bowed, plucked, woodwind, brass, percussion, and keyboard instruments (Adler, 2002)²⁰.

	Bowed strings	Keyboard	Woodwind	Singing
Number of teachers	2	2	3	4

Table 7.1: Number of I/V teachers in relation to their teaching specialism.

As Table 7.1 shows, no percussion, plucked stringed, or brass instrument teachers were interviewed for this research. This was due to the fact that none of the teachers (more than 15) who had been contacted expressed an interest in participating in this research and did not reply to the initial interview invitation email or to subsequent reminders.

Four participants worked solely in one institution and seven worked in more than two institutions. Since a few IVTs were teaching in different types of institutions, the number of IVTs in relation to the type of HE music institution is displayed in Table 7.2 below. A categorisation *one university music department (UMD)/multiple university music departments only/one music conservatoire (MC)/music conservatoire and university music department* was chosen to visually represent this variety of experiences in different teaching contexts.

	One UMD	Multiple UMDs only	One MC	MC and UMD
Number of IVTs	4	3	1	3
Participant numbers	P1; P2; P5; P8	P4; P7; P10	P11	P3; P6; P9

Table 7.2: Number of IVTs in relation to the type of HE music institution.

This table shows that a high proportion of the IVTs interviewed were working in multiple institutions — offering a ground for comparison of aspects relating to the provision and recognition of the AT among those; however, only a small number of participants were working in both types of teaching contexts, suggesting that only a

²⁰ The researcher is aware of historically different taxonomic classifications of family instruments, such as that of Von Hornbostel and Sachs (1961), but decided to adopt the simpler categorisation by Adler which best suits the area of this research.

few of the IVT participants were able to provide a first-hand comparison of the AT in both university music department and music conservatoire settings. However, the multiple experiences that these teachers have had as performers, visiting teachers and/or former music students in UK music conservatoires informed their answers to provide possible comparisons between past and current realities of the AT in different HE music educational settings.

7.2 Views on the AT

This section discusses the reception of the AT among IVTs considering their recollections as former students and IVTs in HE music institutions. In particular, it examines their first contact with the AT, the proportion of IVTs who did not have, had or were having AT sessions, and their views on these, providing findings about experienced benefits and reasons not to have further AT sessions.

7.2.1 IVTs' encounters with the AT

IVTs were asked to answer the following question: *Prior to this interview, have you heard about the AT?* If their answer was yes, they were asked to elaborate on how they had heard about the AT. All 11 participants were familiar with the AT, but there were some differences in the context through which they had encountered it. Although all of them had heard about it during their music training years, just over half (n=6) had heard about it through attending an introductory workshop or short courses while studying at UK junior or tertiary-level music conservatoires while studying at these. Other means of hearing about it included attending an AT introductory workshop at a music summer course in the UK (n=1), through conversations with peers having AT sessions or knowing about the AT (n=2), at university (n=1) or at a European conservatoire (n=1). For example, IVT-P7 said that they were 'introduced to [the AT]' at a UK conservatoire when they 'were a student'; in contrast, IVT-P2 stated that they were 'first introduced to [the] AT' at a 'summer course' in which 'there was a demonstration of the AT by a practitioner'.

7.2.2 IVTs and AT sessions: Proportion of IVTs who had or did not have sessions

All of the IVT participants reported that they had taken part in individual or group sessions. While some participants were having (n=2) or had taken recurrent AT sessions (n=2) over the course of many years, others had only attended an introductory workshop (n=2) or had taken a few AT group classes or individual lessons (n=3) without pursuing these any further. IVT-P2, for example, recalled that they had 'pursued regular sessions of AT and ended up having 10 years' worth of sessions on the Technique', whereas IVT-P10 said that they 'had some AT sessions' as a student at a UK conservatoire. IVT-P6, on the other hand, found it difficult to quantify the number of lessons and said that they had had 'a fair amount of lessons', whereas IVT-P11 did not mention the number of sessions that they had taken, but it could be speculated that they had participated in several sessions as the AT had been 'part' of their music 'training'.

7.2.3 Initial reasons to engage with the AT

IVT participants revealed that they had engaged with the AT in the first place for a variety of reasons. One of the predominant factors was positive feedback of the AT among peer musicians. IVT-P1, for example, illustrated that they had started having AT lessons 'because people were saying how wonderful [the AT] was' and therefore they had 'got to try this!'. On a similar note, IVT-P6 reported that they had decided to take AT lessons because 'other people talked about it and said how useful [the AT] was for them'; likewise, IVT-P9 said that 'people talked about it' and therefore they had felt that they 'needed to look into' it.

Furthermore, curiosity played an important factor in influencing IVTs' choice to engage with the AT. This theme seemed to interconnect with those of self-improvement and of serendipity, or more specifically, those fortuitous circumstances in which participants had ended up attending AT introductory workshops. Indeed, AT introductory sessions represented one of the main factors through which participants had developed an interest in the AT and in taking further individual lessons to overcome playing-related issues. IVT-P10, for example, recalled as follows:

I seem to remember that the [AT] teacher came in and gave a brief introduction about what the [AT] was, and I was having some posture issues at the time with

playing tension and just feeling a bit uncomfortable generally ... so I thought it would be a good idea to try and see if it offered any relief.

This hints at the role of AT group classes to increase the visibility of the AT, as well as to perceptions of its value for playing-related issues.

7.2.4 IVTs' views on AT sessions: Personal recollections

IVT participants talked about their experiences with the AT, providing both vivid recollections of their first AT sessions (both individual and group) and of their general experience with the AT.

7.2.5 Views on the first AT sessions

Several IVT participants had positive memories of the AT and provided rich details of how they felt in those initial sessions. For example, IVT-P2 described their experience of attending their first AT group workshop as follows:

I offered myself as someone who could be used for a demonstration, and I was hugely impressed: the practitioner did just about five minutes of very basic chair work, and I just felt so different after that about five minutes.

Similarly, IVT-P5 recalled one of the first AT workshops, saying:

I do remember going to an open day at one of the music colleges and there was an option to join in ... these workshops, when people asked for volunteers and no one wants to volunteer, but at that one, I instantly put my hand up, I was very keen to volunteer because I knew it was so helpful. It was very gentle and supportive and calm and made me think a lot more about the use of the body and how that worked, how you were using your body, mostly in terms of posture and things like that.

In contrast, a few participants recalled how they had found their first AT session slightly enigmatic, despite it being a positive experience. IVT-P8, in fact, described that:

It was quite ... mystical. You didn't really know what someone was doing exactly, or not doing, of course. It wasn't terribly explained and yet it was slightly unusual. It was very out of body, but it wasn't unpleasant. And it did make everything immediately just somehow click into place and everything felt more free and more vivid. And yes, it was intriguing, but it wasn't ... there was no preamble, no explanation. You know, there was no way of knowing what the AT [was] or what Alexander himself said about his work and his research and his findings.

This lack of explanation could be linked to a lack of understanding expressed by IVT-P7 who, with reference to their first encounter with the AT, said: 'it was just one group session that introduced us to what [the] AT meant. I don't think I quite understood it at the time', suggesting potential barriers to engagement with the AT.

7.2.6 Experienced benefits of the AT

In spite of these last puzzling first impressions, all of the participants seemed to have an overall positive experience of the AT. Many IVTs had found their AT sessions 'useful', 'valuable' and 'helpful', with psychophysical benefits spanning from profession-related activities, such as playing, performing and teaching, to everyday life. IVT-P9, in relation to instrumental playing, stated that the AT had been 'extremely vital' for their 'development' as an instrumentalist. In fact, as IVT-P2 described, the AT had been helpful in bringing awareness of 'how you use your body when you play'. IVT-P6 also expressed that their 'own playing has certainly been impacted by having AT lessons', especially in understanding how the 'weight of the head' can negatively affect 'posture'. Likewise, IVT-P4 said how the AT had helped them in improving their 'sound' and releasing tightness in their 'jaw' and overall 'tension' in addition to benefits to their ability to practise 'looking at the means to an end' rather than at the results, echoing the end-gaining approach discussed in Chapter 5. With regard to teaching, IVT-P4 stressed how the AT improved their observational skills in relation to noticing how 'an action in some part of their [pupil's] body can have an effect on another part of their body' (an examination of a possible incorporation of AT ideas in instrumental/vocal [I/V] teaching will be discussed in Chapter 9).

As mentioned above, participants reported other benefits in relation to their everyday life. IVT-10 mentioned how having AT sessions had had an immediate impact on their bodily lightness:

I loved it, actually. It was kind of quite enlightening ... I found it ... really surprising: I didn't expect that something which was so gentle or hands-off in a way, you know, like not manipulating my body so much, could have such an impact on how I felt. So, I used to leave the room feeling like I was floating, like I was, you know, a foot taller than what I actually was when I walked in there.

On the other hand, IVT-P4 reported on how AT-based procedures, such as the ‘Whispered “Ah”!’²¹, had helped them overcome sleeping problems: ‘I was having a lot of trouble sleeping and I started doing more whispered “Ahs” and suddenly I was sleeping so much better’. Furthermore, IVT-P7 noticed how the AT had positive effects on their anger management, stating: ‘I learnt how to deal with my sort of temper in a much better way’. Interestingly, both participants reported that having AT sessions had helped them deal with anxiety issues: whilst IVT-P4 said that the AT also helped them ‘with calming down when’ they ‘got worked up about something’, IVT-P7 reported that if they had any ‘anxiety’, they would contact their AT teacher and meet with them. The AT, therefore, was believed to affect ‘all corners’ of ‘life’, as IVT-P4 remarked. Similarly, IVT-P7 recalled:

[My AT teacher] taught me how to ride my bike, [they] taught me how to walk without using tension. [They] taught me how to wash dishes without clenching my teeth and grinding my teeth ... There are so many things that [the AT] has helped me with. It's amazing.

However, only some IVTs had undertaken several AT sessions and were able to provide extensive details on their experiences. Other IVTs had only taken a few individual or group sessions (as mentioned in 7.2.2) and, therefore, to provide an understanding of the rationale behind their choices, the next subsections will examine the reasons why some of them had decided to stop taking AT sessions after a few of them.

7.2.7 IVTs’ reasons not to have further AT sessions

Data shows that while three of the 11 IVTs who participated in this study had taken a few individual and/or group sessions, two of them had only attended one-off AT workshops and had not pursued further AT sessions, both in one-to-one or group contexts.

IVTs who had taken a few or some AT sessions expressed a variety of reasons for not having further AT sessions. On the one hand, one participant explained a lack of need for several AT sessions. IVT-P1 said that they had not had a high number of lessons because their AT teacher had felt that they had been ‘using [their] body really well’ and, therefore, that there had been ‘no point of [them] having a huge amount of

²¹ The ‘whispered “Ah”’ is a breathing ‘co-ordination’ exercise ‘to become aware of the way you use yourself and of all the many consequences your use has upon your breathing’ (De Alcantara, 1999/2007, pp. 46-47).

lessons'. On the other hand, two other IVT interviewees illustrated other reasons related to availability, cost, and a retrospective awareness of their immaturity of not understanding the need for it at a young age. For example, IVT-P5 said that the AT had not been 'something that people were doing very much' and, at a junior conservatoire, AT sessions had been 'taster sessions' and the AT had not been 'really on the cards as an option'. Furthermore, they added that 'it might also have been then sort of thinking about cost'. This resonated with IVT-P10 who stated that their HE institution had 'funded so many lessons' and, as a student, they had not had 'much money' and, therefore, they had not continued beyond the provided lesson allowance (it is worth mentioning that, in relation to the number of lessons, IVT-P10 clarified that they had taken 'between four and six lessons ... once a month ... so not a huge amount'). Additionally, IVT-P10 described how, when being a student, they had been more concentrated on fixing health issues rather than preventing these, explaining why they had not pursued further AT sessions:

Well, probably as a student, I was more caught up in how busy I was with my studies. It was kind of in the forefront, and probably slightly immature in that like: if you don't have a problem, you don't go and fix it. So, I felt like I'll take [the lessons] up to the point of relief or feeling more comfortable, that I was fine, you know, as opposed to sort of trying to continue with a preventative approach ... so that would become part of my life.

The reasons why two participants had not pursued further sessions after attending AT workshops intertwined with the views of those participants who had stopped taking AT sessions after a few of them. IVT-P3 explained that they had not had 'time' or had not felt 'the need for it', echoing what other participants said in relation to their experiences as 'busy' music students and having had good body usage. IVT-P8, however, did not clearly express why they had not pursued further lessons, but it could be speculated that it may have been the result of the lack of understanding discussed in 7.2.5. In fact, this participant added that their understanding of the AT had changed later on in their teaching career as a result of conversations with colleagues and AT teachers, highlighting that 'those conversations [had been] incredibly helpful ... [and that the AT had begun] to make an awful lot more sense'. Nonetheless, IVT-P8 made no comments about a renewed desire for exploring AT sessions themselves, despite a change in understanding about what the AT might entail.

7.2.8 IVTs' views on the AT: Discussion of the findings

Findings revealed that all of the 11 IVTs who participated in this study were familiar with the AT and had a generally positive view about it. It is likely that their familiarity with the AT and positivity towards it may have been an incentive to participate in this research study and, therefore, it could be speculated that other IVTs who did not participate in the study did so because of a lack of familiarity with it. However, it is possible that there may have been participants who were familiar with the AT but might have been willing to participate in this study through a different data collection method, such as a survey. In addition, other practical reasons, such as missing email invitations or being busy, may have impacted their participation and, thus, this research cannot be conclusive about the extent to which the AT is regarded among IVTs within HE UK music institutions.

Many of these 11 IVT participants had come across the AT during their university/conservatoire music training years, suggesting the primary role that HE institutions may play in the provision of the AT. This extends to other non-HE contexts, such as summer music schools, which can likely contribute to an awareness of the AT among young musicians given that one participant, IVT-P2, had encountered the AT through that context. This, however, may not be sufficient to create a favourable reception of the AT since other factors need to be taken into account.

Learners' individual characteristics are an important factor to consider in relation to engagement with the AT. In fact, curiosity seemed to be a distinctive trait affecting an initial engagement with it. This, coupled with an intrinsic motivation to solve playing-related issues or to improve one's playing, appeared to be crucial in relation to the extent to which the AT may be received and used by musicians. According to the Behaviour Change Wheel (Michie et al., 2023), motivation is one of the key elements affecting behavioural change; therefore, those who may suffer from playing-related issues and/or may just have a strong motivation to improve their playing could be more likely to seek those practices which claim to provide those benefits in contrast to others who may not be driven by the same level of motivation. Nonetheless, curiosity and an intrinsic motivation to change may contribute to a positive reception of the AT.

Peer recommendations also play a pivotal role in this: while they seemed to stimulate the take-up of the AT, it could also be speculated that these might negatively

impact the views on the AT when a negative perception of it is held. Furthermore, findings show that the reception of the AT might be influenced by the ways in which the AT is communicated to users. Introductory workshops were found to be a good way to foster an interest in the AT. These, however, could be a barrier to further engagement if there is a lack of explanation of what the AT is and what it might entail, especially for those people who might be interested in an experience of the AT which is both intellectually and experientially stimulating.

The positive experiences that these IVTs had about the AT suggest that the AT may be considered as a valuable practice to musicians. Findings revealed that the AT may offer musicians a range of benefits, such as reducing playing tensions. This aligns with previous research on the effects of AT classes (Davies, 2020b). Interestingly, the fact that the AT may be helpful in enhancing performance skills, as evidenced by IVT-P4 and IVT-P9, is in contrast to previous studies on the effectiveness of the AT in improving performance (Klein et al., 2014). An explanation for this may be that in previous research, participants had received a small number of sessions, and it could be likely that for the AT to be effective in enhancing performance, there may be the need for a high number of sessions — as in the case of IVT-P4 and IVT-P9. However, findings regarding the reasons to stop having lessons (see Section 7.2.7) showed that some people may not necessarily need a high number of sessions if there is a good ‘body usage’, as IVT-P1 recalled, indicating that the number of sessions needed may depend on the characteristics of different learners. What is surprising is this focus on the body that is contrary to the AT philosophy on the indivisibility between body and mind (Alexander, 1932/1990). It could therefore be speculated that this inconsistency may be due to several factors, such as a potential lack of unity within the AT community and a change in understanding of the AT over the years, especially given that many of these IVTs had had direct experience of the AT more than 15 years ago. Similarly, benefits extending to everyday life or in reducing anxiety and improving sleep were addressed only by participants with years of experience with the AT. Although most of these benefits have not yet been supported by empirical research (NHS, 2021), this raises questions about the cost of regular AT sessions that may prevent not only people in low-income households from affording these but also institutions from being able to provide AT sessions for music students and staff.

Cost, in fact, had been one of the reasons as to why a number of participants had not decided to carry on with AT sessions. While a study was conducted to investigate an economic valuation of the AT in relation to neck pain (Essex et al., 2017), no research has been conducted investigating the cost-effectiveness of AT one-to-one and group sessions in UK music institutions and thus there is no ground for comparison with existing research. Additionally, time was also deemed to be one of the factors preventing a few IVTs from pursuing further AT sessions during their music training. This was connected to a perception, especially at a young age, of psychophysical educational disciplines as remediate rather than preventative practices. If the AT can be considered as a preventative practice and is presented and promoted as such (NHS, 2021), it is possible that there may be a lower engagement with it among young and healthy musicians who may be less likely to engage in preventive behaviours (Spahn et al., 2017) and only those with underlying health conditions might engage in preventive activities (Spahn et al., 2005) such as the AT. It is therefore advocated that health education programmes are provided to enhance the understanding of preventative approaches in HE music institutions but, as Matei et al. (2018) stated, it is not clear yet 'how music students ... can be convinced that health education is a vital part of their training' (p. 14).

7.3 The definition of the AT

This section will analyse IVTs' definitions of the AT in light of their experiences with the AT. Participants provided a wide range of definitions, the analysis of which showed both similarities and differences among how they defined the AT.

7.3.1 Types of definitions

Nearly all IVT participants referred to the AT as a way to develop body awareness to enhance posture and the physicality of movement in activities. For example, IVT-P6 stated that the AT 'is a tool to find better physical awareness'; similarly, IVT-P11 said that the AT 'promotes understanding of physical well-being and efficiency of movement and speech'. According to IVT-P6, this physical awareness was linked to artistry and creativity; in fact, the participant said that the AT is a 'tool for physical awareness and awareness of the skeletal structure' that feeds 'into the artistic process'.

In contrast, only a few participants provided a definition hinting at a perceived psychophysical nature of the AT with direct effects on both body and mind. It is worth noting that these participants were those who had taken or were having regular sessions for months or years. For example, IVT-P4 described the AT as follows:

I would define it as a tool to develop your use of your body and your mind that you can use in everyday life and to take whatever it is that you do as a profession, to take that to a higher level, and a tool for using the mind in a different way as well.

In a similar manner, IVT-P7 said the following, highlighting how the AT should not be confused with a relaxation technique:

[The AT] frees a person's mind and body to be able to function in a very good way. You can function happily or unhappily, and you can be confident in your response to situations ... And I think the AT is not a relaxation, it's simply a method to allow you to approach situations in every part of your life in a more positive manner.

While these participants remarked on a perceived holistic nature of the AT, one participant provided a definition based on their experiences as a musician, stressing how definitions of the AT might change depending on the context in which an individual may have experienced it. IVT-P5 defined the AT 'as being a way of understanding your body and understanding of how you use your body, particularly within the context of playing an instrument or rather in the context that you have come across'. This suggests that the definitions of the AT may vary according to the area of expertise of the learners.

7.3.2 Difficulty in defining the AT

Several IVTs identified a difficulty in defining the AT and provided a number of reasons for this. One of the most common reasons was that people's outcomes may differ, impacting the way in which they would define the AT. For example, IVT-P1 said that they found defining the AT challenging because 'different people get different things out of it'; in fact, another participant, IVT-P6, remarked that their definition was based on what the AT '[had been] for them'. Furthermore, a few participants highlighted that this difficulty resulted from the fact that a direct experience of the AT was necessary to understand it fully. IVT-P8 felt that the AT 'is a little bit intangible' and 'magical' at the same time, and therefore, 'a physical experience of it is very important'. This was

echoed by IVT-P3 who stated that although this difficulty was perceived to apply not only to the AT but also to ‘anything that has any kind of degree of judgement and subtlety ... a lot of [the AT] is about physical experience and the whole thing about experience is that you have to experience it’. Similarly, IVT-P4 stressed that the intellectual nature of the AT might impede a successful communication and, consequently, a definition of it, pointing at the intangible quality of the AT: ‘people have ideas about [the AT]’ and ‘want to know what you do, why you are doing it, what it is for’ but often the AT ‘is not to do with [a] particular limb’ but ‘it’s just a way of thinking’.

Other IVT participants provided further reasons denoting a difficulty in defining the AT. IVT-P10, for example, found it difficult to define it because they had never felt the need to define it and thus could not indicate ‘what category’ they ‘should give it’. On the other hand, another participant, IVT-P11, linked this difficulty to a lack of unity in the AT teachers’ varied approaches to teaching, affecting the way people perceive and define the AT: the AT ‘is somewhat difficult to be defined because ... AT teachers vary in their methods quite widely’, with implications for the AT community to successfully communicate and promote their work.

7.3.3 The definition of the AT: Discussion of the findings

Findings showed a variety of definitions of the AT among IVTs. These mainly highlighted the physical and postural benefits of the AT, partly in line with the definition provided by the Society of Teachers of the Alexander Technique (STAT, 2023a): ‘the Alexander Technique teaches you the skills to help you move well and live better, in all that you do’ and ‘can help boost your performance in any activity and relieve the pain and stress caused by postural habits, like slouching or rounded shoulders’ (n. p.). In fact, the psychological and emotional benefits of the AT were highlighted only by those participants who had taken regular AT sessions, echoing what has been mentioned above in relation to the perceived benefits of the AT, namely that recurrent AT lessons may result in benefits affecting different aspects of everyday life. It can thus be concluded that definitions of the AT may vary according to the multiple experiences that learners may have of the AT.

These diverse experiences were indeed perceived to make it difficult to define the AT. This combined with the need for a physical experience of the AT, given its

intangible and intellectual nature, as some IVT participants highlighted. Furthermore, the different pedagogical approaches that AT teachers may have were considered to impact how the AT is defined. This is not surprising in light of the multiple AT organisations in the UK, such as ITM, PAAT, STAT²², and the fact that in the UK there 'are not currently any laws or regulations stating what training someone must have to teach the Alexander Technique' (NHS, 2021, n. p.). Therefore, these findings have important implications for AT training and the necessity to provide consistent information about the AT to reduce the likelihood of any resulting confusion.

7.4 The provision and the recognition of the AT within UK HE music institutions

This section analyses IVTs' views on the provision and funding of the AT. In particular, it examines IVTs' awareness of past and present provision of the AT in the institutions at which they were working, making comparisons — when possible — between different UK HE music institutions. In addition, an analysis of the recognition of the AT and AT professionals will be undertaken in light of the correlation that may exist within the provision of the AT in the UK HE music sector.

7.4.1 IVTs' awareness of the provision of the AT in UK HE music institutions

Many IVTs (n=8) were aware of any status of AT provision in the institution/s in which they were working or had been working, whether it was provided or not. Several of them (n=7) had an idea about it in all of the institutions in which they were working (one or multiple), whereas only one participant was aware of this in *one* of the multiple institutions in which they were employed. For example, IVT-P8 said that while in one institution there were different 'options available', in other institutions 'there were AT teachers listed on ... an approved list of teachers'. IVT-P9, on the other hand, said that they were aware of AT provision in only one conservatoire in which they were teaching but were not aware of any provision in the other music departments where they were working. This is in contrast with data from other interviews providing evidence of AT provision in at least one of those institutions.

²² ITM: The Interactive Teaching Method; PAAT: Professional Association of Alexander Teachers; STAT: The Society of Teachers of the Alexander Technique.

On the contrary, a complete lack of awareness of AT provision was reported by other participants (n=3) who were not aware of *any* AT provision in the institutions in which they were working, despite the presence of some AT provision in two cases. IVT-P1 said that they did not know of any AT provision in the university music department in which they were teaching and were quite surprised to know from the researcher about its existence in the previous 10 years. This teacher, indeed, remarked as follows, revealing a perceived lack of awareness among students as well:

No, is [AT session availability] new? Because I recommended the AT to some of my pupils at [name of a university music department]. I guess it might be about 5/6 years ago now, and they said that it wasn't anything available ... [I knew] they turned [a room] into a treatment centre but I thought that was a physio or something.

Similarly, IVT-P3, who was teaching in both music conservatoires and university music departments, said that they were not 'aware of [AT provision in those institutions] at all'. Again, this is in contrast with evidence showing the possibility of taking AT sessions in at least two of the multiple institutions in which the participant was teaching: a university music department and a music conservatoire. On the other hand, IVT-P10 said that they did not 'know of any' AT provision in one music department and, in relation to another one, they believed that there was 'some provision, but it wouldn't be something that [they were] connected to'.

Although many participants were aware of AT provision in all or some of the institutions in which they were working, several of them had only a vague idea of the structure of AT provision. For example, IVT-P5 said: 'I don't know exactly what the provision is'. This view was echoed by IVT-P6 who illustrated: 'I'm not entirely sure how [AT provision] works. Is it that the department subsidises it? I'm not aware of all the details, honestly'. On the other hand, another participant believed in a perceived centrality of AT provision in one conservatoire but was not able to provide detailed information about it: as they noted, 'I don't know how many lessons people are allowed and how much they have to pay'. This was surprising because the AT is, to some extent, embedded in the music curricula and is funded by the specific institution (see Chapter 4).

7.4.2 Factors affecting IVTs' awareness of provision

Data reveals that there may be a series of factors affecting IVTs' awareness of AT provision. Firstly, a sense amongst the IVT participants was that their employment status might have hindered their knowledge of how the AT was provided and offered in the institution in which they were working. For example, IVT-P2 illustrated:

Bear in mind that I'm a part-time tutor ... Under normal circumstances, I might go in for half a day, five or six times a term. So, I'm not very often in the department. It's not like being a full-time teacher or academic staff who is there every single day, and you tend to get to speak to people a lot more and get feedback.

This seemed to connect with the fact that IVTs may teach in their own private studios or may live and work in separate places, resulting in a sense of detachment from the musical life in the institutions they were working at. For example, IVT-P3 said: 'I don't come to [name of a city in the UK], the students come to me, so I probably miss out on what's available for the students themselves'. This was echoed by IVT-P10 who said that students go to them 'privately outside the university'. Similarly, IVT-P9 reported:

I honestly can't say I know about [name of a UK conservatoire] because I'm a visiting tutor and I only go in and do bits and ... and then I go home at the end of the day. At [name of a UK university], I don't know. Again, it's probably the case because I don't live in these places. So, I am not as invested in them.

This highlights the importance of effective communication between HE music institutions and IVTs working in these, as well as challenges for AT teachers working in institutional contexts.

7.4.3 Types of AT provision: IVTs' understanding of it

A lack of detailed awareness of AT provision did not impede IVT participants to provide information about AT provision in some of the institutions in which they were working. Data revealed that in the institutions where many of the participants were teaching, the AT was considered to be a side activity. For example, in two institutions, a conservatoire and a university music department, free introductory workshops were offered to music students. While in the conservatoire those seemed to be a well-established and regular activity, in the university music department these were not: IVT-P11 said that 'an introduction to [the] AT is given in first year of UG and PG' students, whereas IVT-P5 reported that 'there are possibly taster sessions sometimes'.

On the other hand, one-to-one lessons were often paid for by music students, with limited funding available, the amount of which depended on the individual institutions. As IVT-P11 said, in the conservatoire they were working, 'students have opportunity to sign up for AT lessons' which are paid for by the students, but are 'very heavily subsidised'. In contrast, IVT-P5 illustrated that in the music department, 'there was a chance for [music students] to have department funded' sessions which seemed to only be one first individual trial lesson.

In comparison with other institutions, a similar situation was described by IVT-P6, who illustrated that:

There is a limited offer for free in [name of UK conservatoire] but it's taken up very quickly. So, a few students don't have access to it because I guess it's on a first-come-first-serve basis. I'm sure there are other provisions where they have to pay.

In contrast, another institution, a university music department, seemed not to offer AT in any form. As IVT-P4 illustrated: 'as far as I know, there's no provision for it at. I haven't investigated but no one has ever mentioned anything to me about it'. This tied in with what IVT-P7 who worked in the same institution, said: 'It's not offered ... There's nobody there that teaches it'. These comments highlight the variances between institutions.

7.4.4 Views on the provision and funding for the AT

IVTs talked about their views on the provision and funding for the AT in the institutions in which they were working. Many IVTs expressed a desire to expand the provision of the AT in HE music institutions but were all aware of the financial challenges that this might involve. For example, IVT-P4 noted that 'it'd be wonderful if [students] could all have lessons for free but that's not the world we live in'. Likewise, IVT-P11, who was teaching in a conservatoire, remarked: 'if funding were less of an issue in HE institutions, I would include more AT in the curriculum'. Financial constraints, in fact, were deemed to be one of the factors that could prevent institutions from enhancing AT provision. IVT-P7 illustrated the situation in one of the university music departments in which they were teaching, highlighting what the institution had done to support the AT for music students:

The Music Department has done a lot for the AT and for the students, but not possibly enough. But where's the money gonna come from? ... I did feel that the Music Department does the introductory sessions, they find [the teacher] a room. [The AT teacher] is on the list of people within the department. So, I think, for me, they do as much as they can ... to encourage the students at least to experience it.

This resonated with what other participants have expressed; for example, IVT-P8 stated that 'ultimately departments have only a finite amount of resources and they have to make some pretty tough decisions!'

These decisions seemed to correlate both with the reception of the AT among music students and the different educational aims that, for example, university music departments and music conservatoires have. With regard to the former, IVT-P5 described that a limited take-up of AT among music students may affect departmental decisions about the AT provision:

In an ideal world, it would be lovely if there was more funding available for more sessions, but ... I am aware that some students would take that up and some are not, so it would be a difficult thing to provide AT sessions to everyone in the Department; it could actually be something that wasn't really properly used.

In relation to the latter, IVT-P7 noted how different educational outcomes between university music departments and music conservatoires may impact the provision of the AT. This seems to pertain to music conservatoires rather than university music departments, possibly because of a perceived focus of music conservatoires on performance:

You see, a music department is not a conservatoire, they are doing a lot of more things for the students in many more different aspects at the music department than the college is; but the college is doing a lot more in other ways than one student will get at the university. [Students will] go to university and get a wider, broader education ...; [at university], I think we're looking at educating our students in a different way than what the [music] college does. (IVT-P7)

To overcome the financial challenges that music students face to access and afford AT lessons, a few IVTs reported how they had occasionally dealt with this. IVT-P8, for example, described:

If I felt there was a real, real need and there was no other way and there were no other finances, I've actually said "Well, look, I'll allow you to send some of

your [instrumental/vocal lesson] allowance over to have some AT lessons because I can see how relevant and how important it is” ... Occasionally, I do that. Of course, I can't do that all the time ...; it's a tough one.

A similar view was shared by IVT-P7 who had enabled a student to take one of the lessons from their I/V lesson allowance to pay for AT sessions, but this had been possible because, as this teacher noted: ‘I’m in a particularly good [financial] position’. However, this suggests that there may have been a financial model making it possible, regardless of the IVT’s individual financial status.

Institutional recognition of the AT, on the other hand, was deemed to be a fundamental factor affecting the provision and funding for AT sessions. IVT-P2 argued that ‘if [head of departments and financial officers] don't know about the AT and they don't really understand what it's all about, when they are under [financial] pressure they are going to say “Sorry, no time [and money] for that. Out”’. It is for this reason that the next section will examine the recognition of the AT and AT professionals in more depth, examining how this may have changed throughout the years.

7.4.5 Recognition of the AT and AT professionals

IVT participants shared their views on the recognition of the AT within HE music institutions. Although the focus of this research is on tertiary-level education, these perspectives intertwined with those on the recognition of the AT in the music industry²³ in general and, thus, it was chosen to present them as they were a valuable parameter for comparison, increasing the level of understanding of how the AT and AT professionals may be viewed within UK HE music institutions.

The level of recognition of the AT within the HE music sector and the music industry in general was believed to have changed during the years. IVT-P7 reported that ‘along the way, the [Alexander] Technique has begun to be appreciated and to be valued by the staff who may have experienced it themselves and by that, have realised [that] it is useful for students to have access to it’, highlighting how a direct experience of the AT may impact on recognition and provision of this within different institutions.

²³ As most of these IVTs were established names on the classical music scene, the term *music industry* will be used to generally refer to the world of classical music – as the formal music tradition of Western countries is conventionally defined. Any reference to other music genres, such as jazz, will be highlighted.

An increased appreciation for the AT and its popularity was illustrated by IVT-P2, for example, who said:

[In the 70s the AT] was a totally new approach that I'd never come across before and certainly had never encountered at [music] college. So since then, things have moved on. And now we do have most colleges who have a link with a part-time practitioner ... who can be made available when necessary ... So, yeah, things have improved, but there's still a long way to go.

This is in contrast with what IVT-P1 said, highlighting a concern that the level of popularity of the AT might have decreased:

It is dying off ... I guess I am just the edge of the generation where everyone was going "oh this is fantastic, it saved me, so I am going to train and help others", whereas I don't know anyone in my orchestra that's having Alexander lessons, whereas 15 years ago there would have been 30% or something like that, a really large number.

IVT-P3, however, confessed that performers might not necessarily disclose the use and need of practices such as the AT because of a perceived stigma towards these disciplines: as the participant revealed, 'there are a lot of performers who, even if they wouldn't publicly acknowledge it, have been much helped by the AT'.

Furthermore, some of these participants felt that there was still resistance to the AT in the HE music education sector, often because of a lack of knowledge about what the AT might entail. For example, IVT-P9, who taught in one of the most prestigious music conservatoires in the UK, revealed:

I do know there's resistance, for example, at the [conservatoire] where I teach. I know that some of the staff, one teacher, we've got a mutual student, [and] [they] said to the teacher "I've got some tension issues. I'm wondering whether I should go to Alexander lessons" and the teacher, who's a very well-renowned [instrumental teacher] at the institution, said "Oh, that's only for people who can't play" which was a very unhelpful thing to say and very, very closed. So, I'm shocked. That was very recent, and I was really shocked about that.

When the participant was asked to elaborate on what may have been the reason for that, they said that it may have been 'ignorance' or lack of 'empathising' when people 'haven't had any technical issues or suffered pain' themselves and 'find it harder' to relate to others who have, thinking that 'it's a slightly weird thing to try and do because it's not what they know'. In a similar manner, IVT-P2 stated that 'a lot of judgments are based on lack of knowledge'; however, this might not entirely be a

recipient's responsibility, but it may be due to the difficulty in explaining what the AT is about, as the participant revealed: '[People] don't understand the AT, even when you try to explain it. That is one of the stumbling blocks, because when you start to try and explain what the AT is, it's not quite straightforward'.

This lack of knowledge and difficulty in explaining the nature of the AT connect with what a few IVTs illustrated about the AT as not being potentially deemed as a credible and legitimate practice. IVT-P9, for example, observed how the AT may be viewed as an eccentric discipline:

[Some people] have an idea of "Oh, that's a kind of weird, funky thing that people do if they can't play or if they get themselves into trouble" ... So, you'll have a handful of people within any institution that will say: "yeah, it's yeah, it's a bit weird, a bit wacky".

This ties in with what IVT-P1 admitted in relation to the fact that there could be people that may think of the AT as 'a bit voodoo' and others 'who would classify it with homoeopathy'. However, IVT-P4 revealed that this perception could have been the result of preconceptions and, sharing their first impression of the AT teacher in their institution, described:

[In the past], I had a few people saying that [the AT teacher] was a bit [unconventional] and this wasn't because they had had a lesson with [the teacher], but they had just seen them around and [didn't like them] ... So, when I first went for lessons with them, I didn't know what to expect, and I found them refreshingly down-to-earth, straightforward, cultured, intellectual, [and] treated you as an equal.

Despite revealing some feelings of resistance towards the AT, several IVTs felt that the AT was considered as a valuable and respected practice. IVT-10 said that in some institutions, the AT 'has a respectful place'; likewise, IVT-P6 reported that they usually had conversations with the AT teacher in the institution and had talked about the 'very valuable contribution' of the AT to music students. These findings concerning image, knowledge and communication have implications for the place of the AT in UK HE music institutions.

7.4.6 Factors affecting the recognition of the AT and AT professionals

The recognition of the AT and AT professionals within HE music institutions was perceived to depend on various additional factors. Firstly, it could depend on the

extent to which the AT may be seen as a means to enhance the attractiveness of degree programmes. IVT-P4 believed that while some staff think about '[AT teachers] as a useful add-on, "We can tick that box, health and safety, looking after the welfare of the student, we can offer that in our online prospectus"...', others regard it as very important'. Secondly, the recognition could be impacted by AT teachers' personalities. IVT-P4 recalled how one AT teacher had been 'quite an accepting and non-demanding sort of person', ending up teaching in a room which 'smelled' and in which there had been no table. This was perceived to have had a negative impact on the perception that students may have had of the institutional regard for the AT, seeing that it had been confined in an unsuitable and poor space. In contrast, this IVT participant recalled how another AT teacher, who was 'much more "this is gonna be right for me and I will put my views"' type of personality, 'did get a room in which they could put a table, and they could keep their stuff there', resulting in a perceived increased level of recognition within the whole institution because 'if the [AT] teacher says "I am important", then the department moves towards that feeling and because the department [does], so do the students'. The role of AT teachers' personality in building recognition connected with IVT-P8, who highlighted a difficulty of AT teachers 'to build [a] reputation' without having 'the hours of allowance' like other members of staff and, therefore, the necessity to enhance this through 'the strengths of their work, ... [and] the quality and the connections and the meaningfulness it gives to' music students and IVTs/staff who take AT sessions.

7.4.7 The recognition of AT professionals in comparison with other categories of people within the UK HE music sector

IVTs were also invited to comment on how AT professionals could be viewed in comparison to other categories of people in HE music institutions, such as academic staff and IVTs. Many of these interviewees felt that AT teachers were generally valued. For example, IVT-P3 stated that in their 'experience', they thought that AT professionals were 'really well-respected'. Many of these IVT participants also believed that AT teachers also held IVTs in high regard. IVT-P6 had a sense that there was 'a lot of respect from AT professionals to instrumental teachers'; however, while a few teachers did not see any 'hierarchical structure', as IVT-P6 said, others reported that an underlying hierarchy may exist, as IVT-7 expressed:

If you think of the academic staff and what they do and how they get people through their degree and then you come down a level to the instrumental staff who are dealing individually with one unit of the degree, and then underneath that, you've got the AT. Unfortunately, I don't think they are valued as much as they should be.

Nonetheless, another participant, IVT-P4, believed that the same problem was faced by IVTs who 'in many universities' are considered as 'being just an add-on that is expensive and dispensable', highlighting possible differences compared to music conservatoires, in which IVTs may play a more central role within the culture of the institution.

7.4.8 The provision and the recognition of the AT: Discussion of the findings

Findings on the provision of the AT revealed that while a few IVTs were aware of AT in all or some of the institutions in which they were teaching, others were not, despite data confirming AT provision in a few of those. Some factors were found to impact a lack of knowledge of institutional forms of health and well-being support such as the AT. Firstly, the employment status of IVTs as part-time tutors working in several institutions may prevent them from being aware of the life in the institution in which they are working. Similarly, the fact that IVTs may work as self-employed and may teach in their own private studios could affect their knowledge and involvement in what is available in those institutions, echoing what Davis and Pulman (2001) argued in relation to 'the loneliness of the long-distance visiting instrumental tutors' (p. 251). However, considering that IVTs represent for music students one of the first sources of advice regarding physical and mental well-being support (Perkins et al., 2017; Williamon & Thompson, 2006), this lack of knowledge of AT availability is striking in light of the fact that IVTs' awareness of support practices, such as the AT, could be viewed as paramount for fulfilling this role. More attention is therefore needed at institutional level to increase IVTs' awareness of available support services.

Although the aim of this research was not to produce a detailed report of AT provision in the UK — especially due to the ethical considerations to protect participants' identities — the AT appeared to be a side activity, with provision and funding varying across different UK HE music institutions. Introductory group workshops were generally free, whereas one-to-one lessons were largely paid for by

music students. Interestingly, the fact that in a few HE music institutions there was limited funding for AT individual lessons raises some questions in relation to parity among music students. If institutions provide students with the opportunity to experience the AT and several AT sessions may then prove to be beneficial in enhancing performance skills, this could result in a disparity regarding music performance assessments, for example, between those students who are able to afford additional forms of support on a regular basis and those who cannot. In addition, a few IVTs reported that they had moved some of their students' I/V tuition to fund for AT lessons. Although it is positive that institutions may have in place a payment mechanisms to allow it, this again may create disparity with those students whose IVTs may not be willing or able to offer the same opportunity. In fact, many IVTs expressed a desire for more funding towards AT sessions, and budget restrictions were perceived to hinder the provision of AT for music students. In a time where arts courses undergo funding cuts (Weale, 2021), this is not surprising and might indeed affect choices relating to degree programmes and what is on offer within them. This ties in with other factors, such as institutional recognition of the AT, different perceived educational outcomes between university music departments and music conservatories, and the views on the AT among music students which were considered to affect the provision of and funding for the AT in HE music institutions, suggesting that this is a complex matter with several factors to take into account.

The recognition of the AT in HE music institutions was perceived to be mixed. All of the participants held the AT in high regard, possibly giving them a motivation for taking part in this research and feeling confident in talking about the AT, and many of them believed that the popularity of the AT had increased in recent years. Despite this, some of them felt that there was still resistance to the AT due to several factors, such as lack of knowledge of what the AT entails, a difficulty of a few IVTs to empathise with the struggles of music students, and a perceived eccentric nature of the AT. This perception of the AT is corroborated by an increased attention of the AT community to communicate their work in scientific terms and thus enhance its credibility (Alexander Technique Science, 2023). In contrast, IVT-P1 felt that the level of popularity of the AT had been decreasing (see 7.4.5). This may be due to several factors, such as better seating provided whilst playing, better working conditions (e.g. more breaks during rehearsals), and more practices available like yoga and the Feldenkrais Method.

Nonetheless, as IVT-P3 remarked, it is possible that musicians may not disclose the use of psychophysical practices, echoing what Zaza (1998) argued regarding a fear of musicians to disclose information about their health which may undermine their reputation. Therefore, these findings have important implications for the necessity of the AT community to improve the communication of their work and, in turn, IVTs' openness to establish a dialogue concerning issues affecting their own and their students' health and well-being. Furthermore, some factors were believed to affect the reputation of the AT in HE music institutions: on the one hand, the value that institutions may give to psychophysical practices and a resulting increase in the attractiveness of their programmes; on the other hand, the personality of AT teachers in promoting their work. It can therefore be assumed that a combination of both could prove to be successful in enhancing the profile of the AT within HE music institutions.

Lastly, findings on the recognition of AT professionals in comparison with other categories of people in HE, such as IVTs, showed that a hierarchical structure may exist, even though this may not be directly perceived at all levels. One of the issues that emerges from these findings is that this hierarchical structure may not only apply to AT teachers but also to IVTs. It could be argued that the provision of one-to-one AT and I/V lessons, for example, may incur greater financial spending for HE music institutions, which may need to reduce the number of hours throughout the year due to higher hourly rates, affecting also the way both categories are seen within the institutions. In addition, in institutions where IVTs as well as AT teachers might perceive themselves at a lower hierarchical level in comparison to academic staff, this different feeling of recognition may influence the ways in which they not only perceive themselves but also the value of their work. Further research is thus warranted to investigate this with a larger sample of IVTs, illustrating potential comparison among university music departments and music specialist institutions.

7.5 Summary of the chapter: Key themes

This chapter examined IVTs' personal experiences with the AT, such as their initial engagement with the AT, their experienced benefits, and their reasons not to have further AT sessions. In particular, benefits differed according to participants' varied engagement with the AT. This chapter also illustrated IVTs' definitions of the AT: these

mostly focussed on the physical nature of the AT, with findings showing the difficulty of some participants in providing a definition of the AT.

IVTs' views on the provision of the AT in UK HE music institutions were examined. These showed that while a few IVTs were not aware of any AT offer within the institutions they were working, others reported on the provision of the AT as a largely extra-curricular activity, with differences amongst various institutions. Furthermore, findings concerning the recognition of the AT in UK HE music institutions showed that this may vary according to multiple factors (e.g. perceived scientific value of the AT). Similar variances were noted in relation to the recognition of AT professionals and their role in UK HE music institutions. The following chapter will examine IVTs' perspectives on the promotion of the AT in their HE music institutions as well as their opinions on how HE music students might perceive the AT.

Chapter 8: Perceptions of the AT in UK HE music institutions among instrumental and vocal teachers (PART II)

Chapter 8 follows on from the previous chapter and examines IVTs' views on the promotion of the AT in the UK HE music institutions where they were or had been working. In addition, it illustrates their perspectives on how the AT might be viewed by music students studying in UK HE music institutions. The questions that this chapter answers are thus as follows:

- What are the views of IVTs working in UK HE music institutions on the promotion of the AT in their UK HE music institutions?
- According to IVTs working in UK HE music institutions, how might the AT be viewed by HE music students studying in the UK?

8.1 The promotion of the AT in HE music institutions and how the AT might be viewed by HE music students

IVTs' perspectives on the promotion of the AT in UK HE music institutions and on how the AT might be viewed by music students are examined in the same section to offer a clearer understanding of the interdependence between the two themes (for example, potential barriers to engagement with the AT are strongly connected to the extent to which IVTs may promote the AT among music students). The theme of promotion connects with that of provision discussed in Chapter 7: it illuminates further the ways in which the AT is promoted in the institutions where the IVT participants were working or had been working, examining the pivotal role that IVTs play in promoting the AT among music students. IVTs' perspectives on how the AT might be viewed by music students, on the other hand, relate to IVT's understanding of students' reasons to take AT sessions, their views on how students view the effectiveness of the AT, and the potential barriers to students' engagement with the AT.

8.1.1 The promotion of the AT: Various means of promotion

IVTs were invited to talk about the promotion of the AT in the UK HE institutions in which they were or had been working. Those participants (n=3) who had no awareness of AT provision were also unaware of the modes in which the AT could be promoted. This is surprising in light of data from the whole data set among IVTs: for example, IVT-P5, who worked in one of the same institutions, said that all IVTs receive 'circular [emails] ... about what is available, [including the AT]', indicating that all IVTs could have known about the AT and its promotion within that institution. On the other hand, two participants who were aware of AT provision in the institutions in which they were teaching did not provide detailed information about its promotion either, suggesting potential barriers to successful advertisement (these will be discussed in 8.1.3). In contrast, six IVTs were aware of AT promotion in the institutions in which they were working and reported on a number of means of promotion among those institutions.

One of the most prevalent modes to promote the AT was deemed to be word of mouth. IVT-P6 said: 'I guess there are a few different ways to find out [about the AT] ... Word of mouth, I think, is the most common'. This was echoed by IVT-P8, who also made a comparison among the different HE institutions in which they worked (specific comparisons between university music departments and music specialist institutions will be examined in Chapter 12 in relation to music students' views): there is 'a large amount of word of mouth', the AT is 'spoken' and 'known about', and there is generally 'a lot more discussion about it than ... anywhere else that I have ever worked in'. The participant indeed remarked that the physical presence of the AT in the HE institution fostered the promotion of the AT.

Another common way to promote the AT was through departmental communication, such as internal emails. IVT-P4 stated: 'there's information about it ... with all the first-year stuff' that music students receive, adding that a staff member 'sends out details of [AT] workshop sessions as well'. Departmental emails, however, were perceived not to be particularly effective for promoting the AT among students because, as IVT-P4 reflected, students get bombarded by information and, 'unless they really want to do something, it's forgotten by the next day'. Furthermore, the AT was deemed to be promoted through course handbooks and institutional websites. While IVT-P8 mentioned that the AT teacher was 'listed ... in the handbook for the approved teachers', IVT-P6 said that the AT might possibly be advertised on 'the [institution's]

website somewhere' but they were not sure about it. Lastly, poster advertising was another means of promotion of the AT among HE institutions, as IVT-P11 mentioned.

Despite this wide range of modes of promotion, there was a sense that IVTs themselves played a vital role in promoting the AT and AT-related activities among music students. This subtheme will be discussed in greater detail in the next section due to its centrality to the promotion of the AT within HE music institutions.

8.1.2 IVTs as promoters of the AT

Data analysis revealed that IVTs play a fundamental role in promoting both short-term AT workshops/introductory sessions and AT lessons among music students. IVT-P6 believed that 'recommendations ... by tutors' were a common way for music students to learn about the AT, and other participants described how they would promote AT-related activities within the institution in which they were working. For example, IVT-P7 remarked: 'I certainly tell my first years [music students] that there will be a free session on a Tuesday afternoon which will be an introduction to the [AT]'. This tied in with what IVT-P4 reported in relation to emails about departmental activities and AT introductory workshops: 'I encourage [my students] to go to these workshops. I'll flag it up if I see it's on the list when I send out my instrumental lessons timetable'. Furthermore, IVT-P8 described a few situations in which they had introduced students to the AT, inviting 'the AT teacher [to] come in and talk about the AT and do a short kind of workshop demonstration' both at the start of a Master's course in which they were teaching, and at 'open days as well'.

Many IVTs mentioned that not only would they promote departmental AT-related activities but would also recommend the AT to music students to help them deal with arising issues. This data intertwined with that concerning the reasons why music students would typically engage with the AT, and it was not always possible to analyse it separately.

In general, IVTs felt that music students would take AT sessions when they 'encounter a difficulty' (IVT-P8). This was echoed by IVT-P3 who explained that most students 'look for something like the AT as a remedy for a problem. If you have no difficulties and things come easily to you then you don't feel that you need anything to remedy anything'. Posture was one of the most common problems. IVT-P6 said that a few of their students had been struggling with it and thus they had 'recommended

[the AT] to them if they wanted to try it out'. Postural problems were connected with playing tension and unhelpful playing-related habitual behaviour. IVT-P9 reported: 'I do always ask my students ... especially if they've got some tension issues, "Have you been to see [the AT teacher in the institution] and get some Alexander lessons?"'. Similarly, IVT-P4 indicated that the challenges bringing students to take AT sessions were 'tensions in their bodies that become painful and restrict their playing' either due to an 'increase [of] their practice time just before a performance' or 'due to competitive practising when a lot of students are all aiming towards recitals at the same time', or, 'perhaps teachers encouraging over-practising, or not warning students to build their practice up gradually'. In addition, IVT-P1 revealed that they would invite students to consider taking AT sessions 'if they have got ... a habit of doing something':

Raising your left shoulder ... it's really common [when playing my instrument]. It's a terrible thing to do but you can get away with it for years and then really pay for it later ... I think the AT is particularly good for musicians [because] it's all about the awareness of your body usage.

However, while these teachers recommended the AT to solve postural problems and playing-related tensions, one teacher, IVT-P5, felt that they would recommend the AT 'less if there's a problem with posture'. They mentioned that they would 'deal with that [themselves] within the [instrumental] lessons' and would encourage students to take AT lessons if there was 'a specific reason why the AT might help them', such as 'performances coming up' and if students were 'looking for ways of doing everything' that could 'holistically help their performance', suggesting that the AT may be perceived to go beyond a posture correction practice and may be helpful in dealing with performance anxiety. In contrast, IVT-P6 noted that, although they would also approach postural problems in the lessons themselves, they would find it helpful to have an AT's perspective on posture and look at it 'from a different angle as well'.

Data analysis showed that there were reasons why IVTs could be slightly reluctant to recommend the AT to music students. One of those was the cost of AT lessons and the financial commitment from students that this entails. IVT-P4 stated that they could not say 'you must go and have lessons' because there was the 'financial side involved'; similarly, IVT-P5 stated that 'cost' is a factor that they had 'thought about' when they had 'encouraged' students 'to go to any AT things that [were] available within the department and elsewhere'.

In addition to cost, IVT-P8 expressed reasons that concerned the philosophy of the AT itself and of psychophysical practices. IVT-P8 described this in greater detail:

I think if you compel someone to have an AT lesson then you've kind of lost the point before they've even entered the room because by compelling them to do something ... you're potentially setting up barriers that, you know "Oh, I'm going because I've been made to" ... I think to compel people to do it is not really the point.

A few teachers also mentioned specific circumstances in which they would not recommend the AT in the first instance or they would advise students to prioritise additional professional health support. IVT-P1 said: 'If someone's got something more specific ... if it is something I recognise like ... a trapped-nerve type symptom, then I would say "maybe you should see a physio first and then maybe do Alexander [Technique] later"'. This mirrored what IVT-P6 stated in relation to the gravity of the issues that music students may experience and IVTs as one of the first sources of support: 'sometimes if it's something more serious, then obviously I ask them to go further – physiotherapy and things like that'. This highlights the role of IVTs in supporting music students' health, with implications for the support they may need in fulfilling this role by institutional health services (see Chapter 14).

8.1.3 Music students' views on the AT from the perspective of IVTs

IVTs illustrated music students' views on the outcomes of the AT, their feedback on AT lessons, and potential barriers to engagement with the AT.

8.1.3.1 Music students' perceptions of the outcomes of the AT

A few IVTs commented on the expectations that music students may have about the AT. IVT-P4, for example, argued that some students take AT sessions 'expecting physiotherapy' and find 'the fact that they are not told what to do — "you must do this, this, and this and I will heal you" ... a little bit unsettling'. IVT-P4 added that students may want immediate results and that some of them had 'found [that characteristic of the AT of not being told what to do] a little bit difficult' because, as for instrumental lessons, they would have liked the AT teacher to provide an instructional approach such as 'Do this, do that, do the other, and you will become a better [player] doing it like me'. For this reason, IVT-P4 mentioned that, when 'after two lessons, [students] haven't improved [through having AT lessons] and ... thought "am I wasting

my money on this, going to see this person who is very relaxing but it doesn't seem to do anything?\"", they had encouraged students 'to go for a longer time to get the benefits', pointing out that the AT may not be a 'quick fix' — as other IVTs, such as IVT-P1, also emphasised. However, this recommendation was perceived to be problematic because 'it's [students'] money' (IVT-P4) and financial factors may need to be considered. Furthermore, IVT-P1 commented on music students' views about the effectiveness of the AT which was perceived to depend on their motivation and how invested they are in taking AT sessions:

The AT is one of these things where it turns on how committed you are because if you don't really pay attention and you don't really apply it, it's not gonna do you any good, whereas if you actually embrace it and apply it to your playing, it's gonna do you wonders.

8.1.3.2 Music students' feedback on the AT to IVTs

IVTs talked about music students' positive experiences with the AT. In particular, they commented on students' views on their attendance of AT introductory workshops and one-to-one lessons. IVT-P6 said that 'for general well-being and general awareness ... people find [the AT] helpful'. With regard to introductory group workshops, IVT-P5 illustrated that music students attending these found them 'very helpful' and had 'thought about getting some individual lessons and carrying on'. Likewise, IVT-P7 recalled a conversation with one of their students:

If they can go for a group lesson, then they come away able to walk on air for the first time, they're walking properly ... not even thinking about the singing, but actually their general health, they come away and then I say: "How was the session?" [then they reply] "Oh, I feel like I'm walking" ... and I say "It's great. Isn't it?" [and then they continue] "And I feel that my head is so much lighter". I say: "Yes, that's good. That's good. Keep on thinking that". So, they generally come away with very good impressions.

Additional positive comments were also shared by other IVTs. IVT-P1 and IVT-P3 claimed that students were 'fairly open' and had 'become more physically aware'. IVT-P5 mentioned that many students had been pleased 'with the way they [had] worked with [the AT teacher] and one of them [had] said: "I had this problem for years and doctors can't sort it out but [the AT is] really helping"', pointing at the benefits of the AT as complementary support to mainstream healthcare.

Only two teachers commented on students' negative experiences with AT. IVT-P*²⁴ illustrated how different AT teaching approaches may impact people's views on the AT, describing the contrasting experiences of one student with the same AT teacher at different stages of their studies:

[X student] had their free lesson in their first year or second year and they said "[the AT teacher] did not do anything except talk to me about my family and things like that and I don't want to go and have lessons with them again". But they did, they got very tight in their neck and in their throat about a term before their final recital, they went and the AT teacher was wonderful and sorted it out in two lessons. I don't know how they did it.

This was highlighted in another segment of the interview in which the same participant added that a couple of students 'did not want to go to [the AT teacher in the institution] because they'd heard that [the AT teacher] did ... life coaching', indicating the impact that negative recommendations can have on the uptake of AT sessions among students and, again, how AT teachers' approaches to sessions and their varied professional backgrounds may in turn influence the perception of the AT among people in HE music institutions. However, this participant clarified that the AT teacher had 'made an effort' to separate their other occupations from the AT, even though the IVT believed that 'for some students ... [life coaching] was very helpful indeed'. Furthermore, they recalled other few experiences in which students had felt 'uncomfortable' and had not wanted to pursue further AT lessons because of having experienced a feeling of dizziness in group workshops. This was explained in great detail, explaining similarities with instrumental/vocal teaching and the difficulties of dealing with these incidents in group contexts:

[In one of our lessons], I think we'd been working on opening up ... using lots of air before refining [the tone] in the top register, and that nearly always makes people feel dizzy, and [the student] felt dizzy in the lesson with me — and then the next week they felt dizzy in the AT workshop. In fact, years ago, another student did not want to go to Alexander lessons because they felt dizzy in that initial workshop and that sense of losing control, which is something that you have to learn in AT ... it is just this acceptance of being able to lose control in order to gain control, but that feeling of losing control in public ... I am sure the teacher didn't do anything unnecessary or push them too far but the student was young, in their first year, in their first term probably, and they felt very

²⁴ As for AT teachers, the abbreviation IVT-P* is used to protect participants' identity as much as possible.

uncomfortable with this. So, in an individual lesson that can be dealt with very quickly. In a masterclass, or a workshop, or whatever, it's not quite so easy.

Another teacher mentioned that a couple of students had taken part in AT sessions in their institution but 'found it difficult on the religious side', describing how AT teachers' individual characteristics, personalities, and communication strategies affect the views on the AT:

Some people are fundamentalists ... you have to be careful of your use of language ... I think sometimes a language that some people use is not necessarily to do with the AT, it's to do with the person ... I think [my AT teacher] — and my friend — is so gentle in everything that [they do], the gentleness for me is the right way forward ... I'm not always sure that I like the way some [AT teachers] use language. (IVT-P*)

These contrasting views on music students' experiences with the AT, therefore, highlight potential barriers to engagement with it, such as AT teachers' approaches to teaching and music students' unpleasant experiences with the AT; however, IVTs indicated other factors hindering student engagement: these will be analysed in the next subsection.

8.1.3.3 IVTs' views on potential barriers to music students' engagement with the AT

A variety of perspectives were expressed regarding potential barriers to engagement with the AT. These included both factors preventing students from taking AT sessions in the first place and those influencing their choice to stop taking these.

A common view amongst IVTs was that cost affected music students' reasons to start and stop having AT sessions. As IVT-P2 put it:

I think one of the problems with introducing the AT into the equation is that it's not available free. It has to be paid for because it is an extra session, it's not part of the budget for the music department or a budget for a college or university or anything like that. So, it's an extra expense. And given the severe challenges of student financing, it's generally not an option unless it's seen as an absolute necessity and most students will just simply not go with that.

This resonated with IVT-P8's views on students' financial difficulties at university:

[AT sessions] are an added expense. And there are an awful lot of students who actually are quite challenged financially at university ... And to get to university

and to survive at university and to even begin to thrive at university takes away all of that money. So, it is a barrier: an extra charge is a barrier.

Likewise, IVT-P9 referred to the financial commitment that AT lessons involve, suggesting ways to unleash this burden (as highlighted in Chapter 7 as well):

It might be a financial thing, you know, ... all students have got stupid amounts of debt ... unless there's a way that you can actually get that sort of help at a reduced cost or it's part of your learning that you incorporate it.

IVT-P6, in fact, stated that the AT 'could be seen as something of a luxury which with a tight student budget might be difficult to justify'. However, according to IVT-P7, 'it's not always the case of finance with today's students, but sometimes they just ... don't see the reasons at the beginning for the AT', also considering that 'they don't turn up for something that [the AT teacher] offers for free'.

Indeed, another common reason for students not to take AT sessions was deemed to be a lack of interest. IVT-P8, for example, indicated that a barrier to engagement with the AT 'is seeing the relevance of it':

If [music students] think "I haven't got a problem", then maybe the AT is only [seen to be useful] when you've got an issue rather than finding ease with what's already working well or even having your attention drawn to what's working well for you and why that's a good thing to maintain and enjoy and find efficiency with.

IVT-P6 argued that some students 'feel that they don't need it. Some of them don't ... [and not] everybody needs [the AT]. It's not a religion ... and maybe some people don't feel the necessity', suggesting that the AT may not necessarily be relevant to or suitable for everyone.

Another reason for non-engagement was considered to be a lack of commitment. IVT-P1 linked students' engagement with the AT with their level of motivation to pursue a career as music performers, highlighting a perception of the AT as a tool to improve performance-related aspects and not as a practice with potential benefits to the health and well-being of all students:

Some of them just can't be arsed, some aren't committed enough or they don't care, and some of them...I guess it depends on how serious they are about wanting their career. I had just a couple that really wanted to have a playing career and they've gone on to really sort this out and they've been more committed.

This has implications for the provision and promotion of the AT in UK HE music settings where music students may have different ambitions instead of an interest in music performance.

Furthermore, institutions may provide health and well-being modules/courses which could potentially meet the demand of music students for health support. IVT-P11 hypothesised that, in the institution in which they were working, one of the reasons for music students to stop or not to have AT sessions in the first place could be that the institution already 'embed[ded] general physical awareness courses in the curriculum in both UG and PG'.

Lastly, other reasons why students might not engage with the AT related to both time constraints and timing. For example, IVT-P9 said that student may not take AT lessons because they might have 'the pressure to be doing other things' or because the AT 'it doesn't really quite resonate with them at a given time in their life'. This last point was echoed by IVT-P6:

There are some people who possibly just are not in the right place in their lives at that point to take advantage of things, and I have certainly seen people who seemed to find very hard just to keep going on the very basic things, who a couple of years later suddenly they ... are on for it. So, I think it is not specific to the AT, it is just where these students are at the time.

This suggests that there might be a variety of reasons why music students may not engage with the AT in their HE music studies.

8.1.4 The promotion of the AT and how music students might view the AT: Discussion of the findings

Findings among IVTs suggest that the promotion of the AT within HE music institutions may need to be improved. One of the issues that emerges is that some IVTs may not know about the promotion of the AT in the institutions in which they are working, or may be only partially aware of it. This indicates that communication between institutions and IVTs could be further reconsidered in light of evidence showing that IVTs may miss emails about departmental activities and events, such as AT workshops, or may not be familiar with information contained in departmental websites. It is worth noting that IVTs often work across multiple institutions and therefore keeping up with each one's communication and distinctive offerings can be challenging. However, since IVTs represent one of the first sources of support for music students (Williamon &

Thompson, 2006), any lack of knowledge could negatively affect music students' uptake of health and well-being activities organised by HE music institutions and it is thus vital that IVTs are provided support so that they are fully aware of these offerings.

Word of mouth was found to be an essential factor influencing the promotion of the AT within UK HE music institutions. Findings suggest that the AT may be more popular in some institutions than in others because of a perceived higher level of word of mouth — as IVT-P8 explained — and this could potentially influence students' perceptions of the AT within music institutions in the UK. Valentine (2004) claimed that the AT 'is commonly available in music conservatoires and university music departments' (p. 180)²⁵, but this study shows that this may not always be the case.

Departmental emails, course handbooks, and departmental web pages were also found to contribute to the promotion of the AT within institutions, but some considerations need to be made assessing the effectiveness of these in relation to successful promotion of the AT. For example, the fact that departmental emails were deemed to contain too much information could potentially hinder the communication between institutions and students, as well as IVTs. In addition, considering that students may ignore emails related to departmental activities, it may be necessary to investigate the extent to which students engage with emails from their institution. Surprisingly, IVTs made no reference to social media platforms, such as departmental Facebook pages, as potential forms of promotion of the AT or any other health-related information within HE institutions. A possible explanation for this could be the lack of familiarity with these webpages among this sample of IVT teachers and therefore it cannot be concluded that social media should be ruled out as potentially affecting the promotion of the AT in the HE music sector.

Another important finding is that some IVTs may be actively engaged in the promotion of the AT among students and demonstrated an openness to the AT. IVT participants reported that they had encouraged students to attend AT-related departmental activities and, most often, to take AT sessions to solve arising issues relating to postural problems, unhelpful playing-related habits, playing-related pain and, to a lesser degree, performance anxiety. These findings are in line with previous

²⁵ It is worth noting that this information seemed to have been updated, and a different claim has been made in a more recent publication by the same author: '[the AT] is now widely taught in music conservatories all over the world' (Valentine et al., 2022, pp. 24-25).

research on the pivotal role of IVTs in providing health advice (Perkins et al., 2017) and also corroborate those of studies investigating health-related problems among music students and the potential benefits of the AT in reducing the severity of these symptoms (Davies, 2020b). However, these results pose questions about the role of the AT in HE music institutions as a preventative practice. The fact that IVTs may recommend music students to take AT sessions to overcome issues echoes the assertion of Davies and Mangion (2002) that musicians engage in healthy behaviours for 'symptom management than for prevention' (p. 163). Nonetheless, current research in health prevention among music students advocates the urgency of preventive measures affecting music students' health and, therefore, this study supports Davies's (2020b) suggestion that further research is warranted to investigate 'the potential of AT to contribute to' playing-related 'pain prevention programmes' (p. 6). This may in turn have an effect on the promotion of the AT as a preventive measure rather than a rehabilitative one.

This research is the first to provide evidence of the potential factors that may prevent IVTs from recommending the AT to music students in HE music institutions. Results show that providing the AT at an additional cost may be one of these. This has implications for HE music institutions where the AT is an adjunct offering and where there is limited funding available, potentially creating inequalities between those music students who can afford individual AT lessons — with potential higher marks in performance assessments — and those who cannot. Furthermore, the fact that IVT-P8 would not recommend the AT because of a perceived clash with the philosophy of the AT as non-coercive practice seems to be in contrast with HE music institutions embedding the AT in the music curriculum, such as the Royal Conservatoire of Music (Kleinman, 2018). It is true that choice is at the core of AT instruction — drawing on Alexander's story of their desire to change (Alexander, 1932/1990) — but, to the best of my knowledge, in AT literature there is no evidence supporting the notion that compulsory AT instruction may hinder participation in AT sessions. In addition, findings showed that IVTs may not recommend the AT in situations where they thought that mainstream medical treatment would be more appropriate. This is in contrast with claims within the AT community that the AT may reduce 'serious disease and injury' (The Society of Teachers of the AT [STAT], 2023e, n. p.) and further research is needed

to investigate the effectiveness of the AT in dealing with severe health conditions which may impact its perception within HE music institutions.

IVTs reported on music students' views on the expected outcomes of the AT and the perceived effectiveness of it. According to this sample of IVTs, students may expect an exercise-based approach similar to physiotherapy. Little et al. (2014) described that 'lessons [in the AT] are not a form of passive therapy or treatment' (p. 47) and thus these findings suggest that there may be a faulty understanding of the nature of AT lessons among music students, with implications for developing clearer communication about what the AT involves. In addition, results show that students may expect a quick fix. The study by Davies (2020b) showed that 14 classes in the AT proved to be beneficial in reducing playing-related pain; similarly, STAT (2023c) claims that 'a series of 20 to 30 lessons is a good foundation ... to start applying the Alexander Technique in ... daily life' (n. p.), indicating that there may be a misperception of the AT since it may not produce immediate results and regular AT sessions for an extended period of time may be needed. This aligns with the perception of the AT among participants in Jørgensen's (2015) evaluation project of the AT who realised that the AT was not a quick fix. Furthermore, motivation was perceived to be a contributing factor affecting students' perceptions of the effectiveness of the AT. As the AT deals with habits (STAT, 2023a) and participants in the study by Shoebridge et al. (2017) 'referred to the challenge of changing long-standing habits' (p. 830), it is thus possible to hypothesise that there may be a direct relationship between motivation and a perceived effectiveness of the AT, one worthy of further investigation.

Results among IVT participants revealed that music students had generally had positive experiences with the AT. Findings showed that teachers considered AT sessions to offer music students a sense of lightness, increased body awareness, and helped them reduce playing-related symptoms which, on one occasion, conventional medical treatments had not been able to successfully address. IVTs participants' descriptions of this sense of lightness align with the Kohnstamm Phenomenon²⁶, and there are several anecdotal accounts in relation to this effect (Johnson, 2019). Perceptions of an increased sense of physical awareness are consistent with the study

²⁶ 'The Kohnstamm phenomenon refers to the observation that if one pushes the arm hard outwards against a fixed surface for about 30 seconds, and then moves away from the surface and relaxes, an involuntary movement of the arm occurs, accompanied by a feeling of lightness' (De Havas et al., 2017, p. 1953).

by Valentine et al. (1995) in which all participants had noticed similar benefits; however, statements that the AT may have been more beneficial than mainstream medical care need to be interpreted with caution both considering the lack of robust empirical research on the effectiveness of the AT in reducing playing-related disorders of musicians and the fact that the findings of this present study are based on representations of students' views according to their teachers.

Findings revealed that AT teachers' different approaches to teaching the AT may deter students from taking AT sessions; these related both to their communication strategies and the content of AT sessions. Although there is evidence suggesting that the input of AT teachers' varied professional occupations (e.g. personal development coach) may be useful for some music students (see 8.1.3.2), AT teachers' approaches could deviate from recognised codes of practice of the AT and might not meet music students' expectations of the AT, conveying in turn an altered perception of it. A note of caution is due here since, as mentioned above, evidence is based on second-hand accounts; however, it is advocated that AT teachers take this into consideration since it may have implications for the AT community as a whole and the perception of the AT in the HE music sector. In addition, negative experiences of the AT showed that music students may be discouraged to take individual AT lessons because of feelings of dizziness experienced in AT group workshops. This is in line with MacPherson et al. (2013) who stated that 'transient dizziness' could be one 'adverse event' in an AT lesson (p. 4). The AT, nonetheless, has overall been considered 'safe', with no potential 'health risks' (NHS, 2021) but these findings have implications for peer-to-peer communication about the AT, student-teacher communication, informed consent policies in HE music institutions and AT teacher training courses in dealing with these situations.

This study found that cost was one of the reasons why IVTs felt reluctant to recommend the AT to students; likewise, it was considered to be one of the barriers to student engagement with AT sessions. Findings revealed that, according to this sample of IVTs, financial constraints may prevent music students from starting AT sessions or continuing with these. Considering that the cost of AT lessons may range from between £35 and £50 an hour (NHS, 2021) and music students may have limited budgets (UCAS, 2023), it is therefore likely that cost could be a barrier to engagement with the AT if funding for AT sessions was not available, especially because several AT

sessions may be needed for long-term benefits (this, however, might depend on the individuals' needs). Additionally, evidence suggested that other reasons, such as students' lack of interest in the AT and time constraints, could potentially hinder their engagement with the AT, along with a perception that only those music students with a strong motivation to excel in music performance would participate in AT sessions. In university music department settings, however, even students who do not specialise in music performance may still benefit from the AT. This is the first study to shed light on several of these issues, and findings among music students will provide a detailed ground for comparison.

8.2 Summary of the chapter: Key themes

This chapter illustrated the second set of findings concerning IVTs' views on the AT: the promotion of the AT and how the AT might be viewed by music students. Findings showed that IVTs played a central role in promoting the AT amongst their students, in particular to solve arising issues. In addition, music students were generally believed to have had positive experiences with the AT, despite some unhelpful ones, for example, due to AT teachers' diverse approaches to teaching. Among the reasons why music students would not engage with the AT, cost was the most prevalent one along with a perceived lack of interest in the AT amongst some students, raising questions about the correlation between students' career aspirations and their engagement with the AT. The next chapter, Chapter 9, discusses the last set of findings concerning IVTs' views on the AT and focuses on aspects relating to its teaching and practice.

Chapter 9: Perceptions of the Alexander Technique among instrumental and vocal teachers in UK HE music institutions (PART III)

This is the last chapter on instrumental/vocal teachers' (IVTs) perceptions of the AT and examines their views on elements relating to the teaching and practice of the AT. It illustrates their perspectives on a triadic lesson (an AT teacher, an IVT, and a music student in the same room), the embedment of AT ideas in instrumental/vocal (I/V) teaching, AT online teaching, resources on the AT, and the AT in comparison to other somatic/psychophysical practices. The question that this chapter answers is:

- What are the views of IVTs working in UK HE music institutions on aspects related to the teaching and practice of the AT within the UK HE music sector?

9.1 IVTs' views on a triadic lesson

IVT participants provided their opinions on a triadic lesson, talking about past experiences in this teaching scenario, the benefits and the challenges associated with this, and the ways to overcome potential arising issues.

9.1.1 A triadic lesson: An overview of the experiences

The majority of the IVTs (8 out of 11) revealed that they had never taken part in a co-teaching situation with an AT teacher and a student in the same room. Only three of them (IVT-P7, IVT-P8, IVT-P11) said that they had been involved in it. Among the 11 IVTs, IVT-P11 clarified that this lesson had happened during a summer course and not in a HE music context, whereas IVT-P4 revealed that the AT teacher in the institution 'had suggested it' but this had not happened yet.

Many IVT participants who had not experienced this teaching scenario expressed positive feelings about it. For example, IVT-P1 and IVT-P3 said that it would be 'fantastic' and 'fabulous'; similarly, IVT-P2 and IVT-P6 mentioned respectively that it would be 'helpful' and they 'would be certainly keen to try that out'. This aligns with the positive comments of those IVTs who had taken part in a triadic lesson. Among

these, IVT-P7 recalled that 'it was brilliant', and IVT-P8 highlighted that it had 'always been a positive experience'.

On the other hand, only two participants, IVT-P4 and IVT-P5, felt slightly reluctant about this teaching scenario. IVT-P5 revealed that it 'would be very interesting to see' from their perspective how the AT would benefit a student but they were not sure whether they would 'feel comfortable working in that situation'. This mirrored IVT-P4 who described: 'I think I might feel constrained in some ways about what I was asking the student to do and certainly if I hadn't had Alexander lessons, I would probably feel judged by the Alexander teacher', suggesting that a lack of familiarity with the AT may discourage IVTs from a potential collaboration; however, this teacher highlighted that in their life there had been circumstances in which they had thought 'Oh, Oh, I feel uncomfortable in this situation', but when they had 'tried them,' it had been 'fine' (an analysis of potential challenges in this situation will be further explored in 9.1.3).

9.1.2 Experienced and perceived benefits of a triadic lesson

The IVTs who had experienced a triadic lesson reported the benefits that they had noticed in this situation. Firstly, a common view was mutual learning. IVT-P11 said that one of the benefits of a triadic lesson was that both professionals would learn 'a lot from each other'. IVT-P8 described this in more detail, saying that both the AT and themselves had 'learnt something differently' and that there had been 'something different about watching each other, observing each other'; they highlighted how they had 'learnt something about a student' and how this co-teaching experience had been 'a great process'. Secondly, another benefit that emerged related to the ability of the AT teacher to help music students in the physicality of their performance as well as the IVT to replicate these results in subsequent one-to-one music lessons. IVT-P7, for example, revealed that in a triadic lesson the music student's voice had been 'set free' and, as a teacher, they had been able to repeat this in subsequent one-to-one lessons with the student:

Because the phrase [the AT teacher] used, the way [they] shone a light on certain aspects of what was happening, I was able to keep that light shining in the next lesson by saying "Can you remember what [the AT teacher] did at that point? Can we try to re-enact that? Can you try to relive that?"

The IVTs who had not experienced this teaching scenario commented on the potential benefits of this teaching situation. Interestingly, mutual learning was also a common theme among them, and IVTs explained what they would potentially learn in a situation of this kind. IVT-P6 mentioned that in this scenario, 'everybody can learn from each other', clarifying how concepts that IVTs try to explain 'in [their] instrumental ways can be endorsed or refined by someone who [is] trained' in a more anatomical way. This was mirrored by IVT-P10 who highlighted the challenges that IVTs with a lack of training in anatomy and pedagogy may face in their teaching:

I think [this teaching scenario] would be very informative for me to see the movements and to be more aware of a student and their physicality as they're playing ... It's a slightly difficult thing, in a way, to teach. You know, I'm not trained in that. I'm trained in [instrument] playing. And so, sometimes, when you're trying to help people with their posture, but they're physically very different to you or they have their own set up, it could be a challenge to explore that thoroughly, so to have somebody who's coaching that and then to be able to support it for somebody, I think it would be fantastic. I think it would be really enlightening. To be honest, yeah. Really, really helpful.

Another teacher, IVT-P2, described similar benefits and the limitations that an IVT may have in dealing with anatomical issues, emphasising the role that an IVT may have in a co-teaching scenario with an AT teacher:

[An AT] practitioner would pick up some of the subtleties that I might miss. You know, this is why someone who, like myself who's got a lot of Alexander sessions for my own personal benefit, still can't be a teacher because you haven't learnt those subtleties. I don't have the anatomical knowledge to be able to pick up some of the finer details. I know if somebody is having problems or somebody is doing something that may in time develop problems, [but] I may not be the best person to observe that. Also, primarily, I'm there to be a music teacher, and this is an important part, but I have to keep my focus on the musical and technical aspects of playing the instrument.

In addition to solving anatomical challenges, a triadic lesson was perceived to be beneficial to the application of the AT to I/V practice and solve potential problems associated with this. As IVT-P10 put it:

I think it's a great idea because I think potentially that would bridge the gap that I felt like I fell into at the time, so the gap between how it feels in that room and what you feel your body's doing and then the actual practical application of it. You know, it's all well and good standing there with the teacher and you're holding your instrument, but that's still hypothetical until you're actually playing a very complex bit of music that's very intensive ... So, I

think maybe somebody who's an onlooker that's aware of your playing and could sort of encourage you to connect what you're doing between the two would probably be really helpful.

This potential need to bridge a gap between the AT and I/V practice was also expressed by IVT-P5 who said that in their music training years they 'would have liked to have done a little bit more [of the AT] to see how that [would] fit the actual playing with the [keyboard instrument]'²⁷.

9.1.3 Challenges of a triadic lesson

The three IVTs who had experienced a triadic lesson were invited to comment on any challenges that they might have encountered in this teaching scenario. All three reported that they had encountered none: for example, IVT-P8 and IVT-P11 respectively said that they 'only had positive experiences' and 'did not find any challenges'. In a similar manner, IVT-P7 said that they had not encountered any issues in this teaching scenario and explained the reasons for this, highlighting how factors relating to their relationship with the AT teacher and the manner of the AT teacher regarding their teaching could positively impact on the teaching cooperation: '[the AT teacher] and I kind of think the same. I like the way [the AT teacher] works. I like the way they approach a student'. Although these three IVTs had not encountered any challenges, a few of them talked about potential issues that may arise in this teaching situation and that may negatively affect a collaborative atmosphere; similar comments were made by those IVT participants who had not been in a triadic lesson; these are presented in the following paragraphs.

One of the most common challenges related to contrasting philosophical viewpoints of the IVTs and the AT teachers which could potentially hinder a collaborative atmosphere. Findings revealed that contrasting teaching aims between IVTs and AT teachers could also potentially influence the effectiveness of this co-teaching scenario. This was expressed in great detail by IVT-P10:

I could see potential tension in terms of somebody that knows AT encouraging a certain type of movement, and a teacher not necessarily, well, either agreeing with it or seeing the benefit to it, so there could be a clash of ideas ... I just wonder if there are different priorities ... So, the [I/V] teacher wants things

²⁷ It is worth noting that both IVT-P5 and IVT-P10 had limited experience themselves with AT lessons.

to work as well as possible and to sound great. But maybe the AT teacher is more concerned with the body of the student being comfortable and that they're not going to have to give up their career in 20 years because of injury.

Similarly, IVT-P2 said that they 'would go along [with the AT teacher], unless what was suggested [by the AT practitioner] [would] get in the way of something that is a necessary part of playing' but if this happened, they 'would talk through that situation with [the AT] practitioner and come to some kind of middle-ground'. This, however, was deemed to be 'quite unlikely' because they personally tended 'to be in tune with [the AT teacher] anyway' and would not, therefore, envisage 'any potential clash', indicating that attunement to the AT teacher and openness to discussion would potentially foster a harmonious relationship. On the other hand, IVT-P6 also argued that 'the obvious challenge' in a triadic lesson would be that 'there might be some contradictions' but these would arise 'wherever you have two or three people discussing the same thing', for example, when there are 'two [instrumental teachers] and one student', suggesting that an interaction between an IVT and an AT teacher could be impacted by factors going beyond the specificity of the subjects and relating to the personal characteristics of the teachers, their conflict-resolution skills and their confidence as teachers. Indeed, IVT-P1 expressed that they were 'really experienced' and could 'look after [themselves]', but they envisaged 'that a less confident [I/V] teacher might find it difficult' to work in a situation with an AT in the same room.

Another challenge concerned pedagogical approaches to teaching that could impact a triadic lesson. IVT-P6 explained that, from a personal point of view, a dialogic style of teaching could be problematic in a situation where a second teacher is involved:

Because of the way I operate in the way I teach ... I am very aware of the dynamics within the lesson, so a lot of the work I'd be doing, I'll be hyper-aware of how the student is responding and what I am saying and what feedback I am getting. So, because I spend a lot of the time in the lessons aware of that and looking for responses — and there's a lot of questioning and a lot of seeing where they are — I think I would find it quite difficult to have a third person within that dynamic and I am not sure how I would operate.

Furthermore, some teachers felt that students may face challenges in this co-teaching scenario. IVT-P4, for example, envisaged that this situation could be overwhelming for a student and, having had no experience with it, drew an analogy between this scenario and another one with two IVTs in the same room working with a

student, explaining that in the latter ‘sometimes the pupil can get a bit overwhelmed by all that information that is coming at them’. Similarly, IVT-P8 explained in great depth how a triadic lesson could lead to an overload of information:

One has to be careful ... So, two very committed professional people and a relatively small space with a student that's not quite sure [about] what's happening, I think there's all sorts of questions one needs to ask as a teacher about finding the right level of engagement and dynamic in that, and honouring their personal space and not feeling that we kind of bombard the student with too many ideas at once because that sense of overwhelm is going to create that kind of physical, static, frozen sort of response — potentially.

The fact that a student may not be sure about the aim of the session and what to expect — as IVT-P8 mentioned above — poses questions about the planning of a triadic lesson and the communication between the student, the AT teacher and the IVT. However, IVT-P8 offered suggestions in which these difficulties could be overcome and remarked on the importance of a collaborative learning environment and appropriate teaching strategies, saying that ‘when [the triadic lesson] worked best, it's always been an invitation to the student: “We could try this. What do you think about that?”’.

Finally, a few IVTs identified other challenges concerning the financial and practical sides of a co-teaching scenario. A triadic lesson was considered expensive, and questions about pay rates, payment arrangements and the funding for a multidisciplinary lesson were raised. For example, IVT-P7 described these financial constraints in-depth and how both the AT teacher and themselves had managed to overcome these by offering the lesson for free:

It's great if you can afford it, but you've got two expensive people in the room together, and that's a very expensive way of using it. It's great, it was a wonderful experience for everybody, but you've got two people on £40 an hour, that's costing £80 an hour for a student. How can that be a viable proposition? It's very difficult, but I have done it with [my AT teacher friend] ... but that was only possible because [the AT teacher] gave their time free and I gave my time free to this student because that student needed it.

Another teacher, IVT-P3, said that they were ‘all for collaboration ... but often, as a self-employed person, those collaborations take time away from your earning capacity and also they halve your earning capacity if you're team teaching’, implying that both the AT and the IVT should be paid at half their hourly standard rate, in contrast with

IVT-P7's arrangements. IVT-P4 also remarked that both teachers 'should be paid as professionals' but added that a solution to the financial constraints of a co-teaching situation was 'difficult' to find and would depend on the available institutional funding and on a case-by-case basis:

If [students] have got a bursary ... it would be quite nice to have both in the room at the same time, one being paid by either their instrumental allowance or a bursary, and the other one, it will vary from student to student.

Although IVT-P4's view implied students' financial involvement and their willingness to pay extra for a teaching collaboration, IVT-P3 highlighted that teachers and institutions 'can't make students pay for collaborative teaching' and that institutions should pay for it if 'they are prepared to do that' and 'see the value of it', emphasising how institutions and their perception of the AT may play a part in the deployment of varied lesson formats.

9.1.4 Factors for a triadic lesson to work

A number of factors might positively affect the success of a triadic lesson and may help to deal with potential challenges. These pertained to IVTs, AT teachers, and students. One factor was deemed to be a certain degree of openness and willingness to learn. IVT-P3, for example, described their approach to their work as a teacher and their receptiveness to different learning opportunities:

I think perhaps as I got older I know what I know but I also just keep my mind open and I know there's such a lot to learn and it's just about keeping your mind open ... That's why I am kind of open to [this teaching scenario].

This openness concerned all the parties involved in this teaching context. IVT-P6 felt that in a triadic lesson it is very important that 'everybody is happy to reflect upon their own views and standpoints rather than being adamant and insisting on that [and] so ... there has to be some sort of preparedness to let go of one's ego', suggesting that both the AT and the IVT may need to demonstrate openness to each other's work. This openness to new situations and approaches was regarded to relate to students as well. In particular, IVT-P9 argued that a triadic lesson 'requires that the student feels very, very comfortable with the idea of being witnessed as they're being worked on. So, it would take a certain type of student, a very open student, not one that [is] really nervous or anxious'; however, this teacher highlighted that 'a nervous and anxious

[student] often needs the AT. So there's a kind of paradox that one would need to consider carefully how to make that a very natural and supportive, trustworthy environment', indicating that both the AT teacher and the IVT could be responsible for creating a supporting learning environment in which students are exposed to new learning opportunities and helped to feel at ease in these.

Another characteristic underpinning successful co-teaching was perceived to be mutual trust. IVT-P3 said that 'it is best to collaborate with people you trust' and, highlighting the importance of planning and frank communication between the AT and the IVT, added that it is necessary 'to establish that trust before you can work effectively with a student'. Furthermore, the I/V and the AT teachers were not only deemed responsible for developing a trusting relationship with each other but also with the student in that scenario. IVT-P9 commented that a co-teaching teaching context 'requires an enormous amount of trust' and if both the AT teacher and the IVT do not 'get inside the body of that student well enough to empathise with the issues' that the student is having, this can result in a student 'not very happy about [this experience] and not very receptive'. As evidenced above, empathy was thus perceived to help build trust and potentially affect students' engagement in a positive manner.

Furthermore, the level of the student could be an important factor to consider in a situation involving three parties. IVT-P6, for example, reflected on the fact that a student's level of comfort may also depend on their 'maturity and where they are in their development as an instrumental player and whether they can see that as an interesting dialogue, discussion and collaboration ... rather than sort of expecting to be guided through every step', indicating that both the AT teacher and the IVT may then need to take into account not only the level of the student but also their expectations and attitude in the event of planning a potential teaching collaboration.

9.1.5 A triadic lesson: Discussion of the findings

Findings revealed that many IVTs had never taught a joint lesson with an AT teacher and the student in the same room. Three of them had but only two had experienced this in a HE music context. While those who had been in a co-teaching situation expressed positive feelings, those who had not were generally interested in trying it. Only a couple of participants were slightly resistant to it: one teacher would not feel comfortable because of concerns about relational dynamics; another lacked familiarity

with the teaching scenario and therefore felt apprehensive but did not rule out the possibility of trying it and appreciating it in the future.

Findings showed that experienced and potential benefits of a triadic lesson were deemed to be mutual learning (with benefits for I/V lessons), detection of tension by AT teachers due to their specialism, anatomic clarification of I/V techniques, and bridging the gap between the AT and I/V teaching. Notably, the fact that AT teachers were considered by some of these IVTs to explain concepts in a more anatomical way and that this would be beneficial for students is in contrast with evidence in Jørgensen's (2015) evaluation project. In fact, one of the students in Jørgensen's research had said how 'the AT teacher had the ideas, and [the] instrumental teacher repackaged them slightly with more practical instructions' (p. 37); however, there is evidence showing that students benefited from an anatomical understanding of their body (Jørgensen, 2015) and thus this discrepancy may be due to a lack of familiarity of the student with AT terminology hindering the communication of ideas. Nonetheless, IVTs' feeling of a lack of training in anatomy has implications for music/music pedagogy courses which could potentially provide this. On a similar note, the need to bridge the gap between the AT and I/V teaching poses questions about the content of AT sessions with musicians and the need to provide AT content specifically tailored to music students — as Davies (2020b) also emphasised — and therefore the training of the AT teachers. This may be controversial and may not be in line with divergent opinions on the nature of the AT among different AT teachers (a discussion of this will be provided in Chapter 14, with an examination of literature).

On the other hand, findings showed that challenges of a triadic lesson related to different pedagogical and philosophical approaches to teaching between AT and I/V teachers, the possibility of students being overwhelmed by information, and financial issues. These perceived shortcomings were considered to be resolved with characteristics such as openness, planning, appropriate teaching strategies and considerations about students' level of playing and willingness to participate in a lesson of this kind (this will be expanded in Chapter 14 with reference to Haddon, 2011, for example). A familiarity of the IVTs with the AT was perceived to be desirable, and this echoes Jørgensen's (2015) assertion that one of the requirements for successful implementation of the AT in I/V lessons is that IVTs 'also receive tuition in body use based on AT' (p. 40). Financial challenges, however, were considered to be

more difficult to overcome considering budgetary constraints and the perceived high cost of a joint lesson, which may affect IVTs' income depending on how institutional pay is distributed among professionals, and on the outcome of financial negotiation between IVT, AT teacher and student for this mode of working.

Despite these challenges, the general positive reactions towards a triadic lesson have important implications for its effectiveness, appreciation and resulting implementation in UK HE music institutions. In evaluation of a teaching interaction among AT teachers, IVTs, and students, Jørgensen (2015) concluded that the perceived usefulness of the AT could have been the result of the openness and receptiveness of teachers. As this current study revealed, scepticism could be a barrier to initiate a potential co-teaching collaboration but, as Jørgensen (2015) noted, 'sceptical participants could conceivably change their minds. Some of the students also [had] started off being sceptical but ended up feeling positive' (p. 40). It is true that most of the IVTs in Jørgensen's (2015) evaluation project had participated in AT group classes, which could have a different relationship dynamics than in a one-to-one setting; however, one of the student-participants in Jørgensen's (2015) evaluation project had mentioned that the only one-to-one lesson in which their IVT was participating was a 'breakthrough' in term of increased level of understanding of playing-related issues (p. 37). Therefore, further empirical research is warranted investigating the feasibility of a triadic lesson in UK HE music institutions, with an analysis of its cost-effectiveness in light of the potential benefits and challenges elucidated above.

9.2 Embedment of AT ideas in I/V teaching

Many of the IVTs revealed that their teaching had been influenced by AT principles and ideas. IVT-P3 said that 'the AT has influenced [their own teaching] definitely' and, even if they did not consider themselves 'particularly knowledgeable about it', they believed that 'undoubtedly its principles have affected the way that [they thought] about [their] work'. However, while a few teachers gave examples of how they would incorporate AT-based approaches in their teaching, others mentioned that they would not embed these and would only be inspired by AT ideas at a conscious or unconscious level.

IVT-P4 explained that there were 'all sorts of ways that possibly the AT' had been 'influencing [their teaching]' and described how they would use their AT

knowledge and terminology to help students overcome physical tensions associated with playing:

[Thanks to AT lessons], now I am well aware that ... [A particular] area of your body, way away from the so-called “problem area”, can be having [a detrimental] effect [on other areas], so when I am teaching, for instance, if someone is having trouble with producing different registers, rather than working on producing the different registers, I might work on relaxing the fingers because relaxing the fingers stops you pressing so much on the jaw with the instrument ... Also, the idea of thinking about something rather than trying to do it ... [In addition,] I just use basic terms like “thinking up”, which, once someone has been guided to do this by an AT teacher over the course of several lessons, triggers certain micro-movements and changes in the body that help with everything else.

Other examples were given by IVT-P9 who revealed that they would think about AT-based strategies in relation to ‘the use of the spine’, ‘how you balance yourself on your feet’ and ‘being in contact with [the] sitting bones’ when sitting. Conversely, IVT-P11 said that they would ‘not specifically’ embed AT ideas in their teaching but they would incorporate ‘its influence’, such as ‘how to stand, move (both on and off stage), [and the] ability to discern habits relating to breathing and [body] alignment’. IVT-P10 was instead unsure about whether their teaching had been influenced by AT sessions because of a limited experience with the AT:

I don't think I [incorporate AT ideas in my teaching]. That's not to say that I shouldn't, but I probably don't. I think it's not something I have really done. I think I try and encourage awareness of the body, so perhaps it's kind of infiltrated into my consciousness ... but I wouldn't be experienced enough with it to feel like I could introduce it in any real sense, you know, my experience is relatively limited.

This hints at the barriers to incorporating AT ideas in I/V lessons.

9.2.1 Difficulties in incorporating AT ideas in I/V teaching

Interestingly, a few teachers noted difficulties in incorporating AT ideas in their I/V teaching. Firstly, some issues may need to be dealt with by professional AT teachers with specialist expertise. IVT-P2 highlighted that in one-off group music workshops they had tried to bring in AT ideas to correct students’ ‘horribly unhealthy’ playing postures but correcting these had been ineffective because ‘it needs to be done over a longer period. It needs to be done in all the lessons with the [AT] teacher’. This tied in with IVT-P4 explaining that they had ‘always been very wary about trying to be an

Alexander teacher in a lesson' because they were 'not trained' to be one. IVT-P5, on the other hand, despite emphasising appreciation towards the AT and recognising the benefits that the awareness of the AT may give to IVTs, expressed doubts about the ways in which the AT could be embedded in I/V teaching:

The reservation I have about the AT is not to do with the technique itself or with everything that's been done — which is absolutely fantastic — but to do with how you could incorporate that on a holistic level in teaching, because I sort of feel as if it might be helpful for teachers to be aware of all of this in their teaching as instrumental teachers rather than it being something that is sort of by the side, done slightly separately ... I think I personally would love to have some kind of professional development course on using AT because I think it would be something extremely helpful ... I think there's a slight danger of the "should we do this for everyone?" that it becomes "oh yes, we should all be teaching like this" when of course it's not quite like that: we are all doing slightly different things, and I think also some people incorporate different things as part of their teaching anyway.

This illustrates the potential usefulness and challenges of providing professional development courses on the AT for IVTs, echoing the concerns about bridging the gap between the AT and I/V teaching discussed in 9.1.2.

9.2.2 Embedment of AT ideas in I/V teaching: Discussion of the findings

Several IVTs commented that their teaching had generally been influenced by AT ideas. A few of them said that they would embed AT approaches in their teaching, such as strategies to solve playing issues considering the interdependence of the different body areas, and of *thinking up, non-doing*, and the use of the spine. A similar integration of AT principles is discussed by Cotik (2019) in relation to violin teaching and aligns with the findings of this present study. Other IVTs described the challenges of using AT ideas in their I/V lessons; these issues related both to a perceived lack of expertise among IVTs in addressing engrained habitual postural problems in music students and a confusion about the way in which they could implement AT principles into their teaching without undertaking any professional development course on the AT. Therefore, not only may this study help us to understand potential barriers for an incorporation of AT ideas in I/V teaching but, considering that the AT is a distinct discipline involving a three-year course training course for practitioners, it also raises questions about whether IVTs could be trained to apply the AT into their teaching. Further work could investigate the viability, the content and the effectiveness of a

professional development course on AT-based approaches for IVTs with no training in the AT, also in light of the diverse teaching approaches among IVTs to which IVT-P5 referred.

9.3 Views on AT online teaching: Feasibility and challenges, with a focus on hands-on guidance

Some IVTs provided comments on AT online teaching. None of the IVTs had taken AT online sessions and could only make assumptions about how these would work in this teaching setting. IVT-P8 remarked that they did not 'really have much to say about online lessons, either positively or less so'.

9.3.1 Reluctance towards AT online teaching

A few IVT participants felt unsure about the feasibility of AT online teaching. One of the most common reasons was a lack of hands-on work, contrasting with the physicality of AT sessions in a face-to-face environment. IVT-P1 said: 'I have never done any [AT] online [lessons]... I can't imagine it working. I have only had continuous lessons with one teacher and there was no speaking, virtually no speaking, so how would that work online?', adding that the AT teacher would 'guide [them] physically with [their] hands'. This lack of the physical experience of AT sessions in an online setting mirrored what IVT-P1 said about the content of face-to-face sessions which could be difficult to transfer to an online environment, highlighting a perceived superiority of face-to-face lessons over online ones:

It cannot be as good [as face-to-face]. I mean, every single Alexander session that I've had has involved chair and floor work. How on earth do you do that online? No, it cannot be as good. You can introduce basic ideas and give a few pointers, but it's always going to be very, very second rate compared to the real thing.

Similarly, IVT-P9, who had been having recurrent AT lessons for years, described the potential difficulties of AT online teaching:

I can't see personally that you could do [AT] online. Because you need somebody to help guide you, you need to be helped out of your seat. You need to have all the help where they work with your arms and your legs. You need to feel that because somebody is directing you. And even if you're an experienced student of Alexander Technique, I can't see that it would be anything like the same.

To express their resistance to AT online and a personal preference for AT face-to-face, IVT-P9 provided a comparison between I/V teaching and AT online sessions, describing how the quality of online teaching may depend on the familiarity of students with a teacher's approach to teaching and the students' level of expertise on the subject:

I'm teaching [my instrument] at a high level on Zoom all the time [due to the pandemic]. And the reason why it's working with the majority of my students, is that we already have a relationship. They already know how I work with them ... So that's kind of OK ... But ... if you have somebody coming for an Alexander lesson for the first time, absolutely, I'd say a definite no [to online lessons]. And even for an experienced [one], it's part of the business ... it's like saying to somebody ... "go and have a deep body shiatsu massage, but do it yourself". You know, if somebody will direct you, you have to do it, it's very different if somebody is doing these things for you. So I would be resistant, myself.

This point resonates with IVT-P3's views on the challenges of online teaching. Drawing upon their extensive experience of vocal teaching, IVT-P3 argued that the quality of an online AT session could depend on the familiarity of the teacher with a student's physicality; this could appear altered in an online environment:

I am teaching singing online but I know for certain that if I know the student I can teach them online more effectively because I already have a kind of 3D idea: I've already watched the way they sit, watched the way they walk, watched the way they hold themselves and these are things my students probably don't even realise that I am aware of but I bring that knowledge to our online lessons. Now, if I haven't seen that in real life, I only have to sort of look at this 2D image and kind of imagine, often without seeing people move much, how they really operate and it's a bit difficult. So, I would imagine that Alexander Technique might also be difficult because [of this].

9.3.2 Openness to AT online teaching but with reservations

In contrast, two participants seemed open to AT online teaching. For example, IVT-P4, who had also years of experience with the AT, would 'be very interested to know how that can work', despite the AT being 'so dependent on hands-on work' and being unsure that 'the technique [could] be taught so effectively without hands-on' guidance. Likewise, IVT-P6 argued that similarly to instrumental music teaching, online sessions could be affected by the adaptability of the student to a different learning environment and, although there may be a lack of hands-on guidance in an AT online environment, this could still offer potential benefits supporting students' learning:

[Online teaching] depends very much on the student and them being adaptive to the situation. And ... Alexander [Technique] lessons are quite different from instrumental lessons where at least I do not touch my students but in Alexander Technique lessons, it's something even necessary at some stage to actually check tension, and it's very helpful to sometimes get physical guidance and obviously, that is not possible in online lessons. So, there's a bit of a limitation there. But I assume one can still have a meaningful session over an online meeting ... you can still communicate ideas and provide verbal guidance.

However, although there is evidence of openness to online teaching, findings suggest that hands-on guidance may still be a fundamental requirement for a successful AT learning experience. IVT-P4 remarked that hands-on work is useful for students 'to do things in a different way, which works with the subconscious, rather than being told what to do (in which case they are likely to follow the instructions by using themselves in the same destructive ways they were using before)' and for AT teachers to gain 'continuous information and feedback via their hands on the student's body'. This pointed towards the appropriateness of touch in a teaching setting. IVT-P4 further added that they had 'no problem with [touch] as long as there is respect and understanding between student and [AT] teacher', mentioning that some measures could be taken to avoid safeguarding issues; for example, that 'the student can say "no touching" in certain areas, and the teacher asks permission for certain particularly sensitive areas and is aware these may be different in different cultures'. All this suggests that although hands-guidance is a relevant component of AT sessions, online teaching could be potentially useful. However, these findings raise further questions about safeguarding issues associated with hands-on work, but increasing awareness of safeguarding requirements could ameliorate those issues (see Chapter 14 for a discussion of this).

9.3.3 Views on AT online teaching: Discussion of the findings

Findings showed a variety of perspectives on AT online teaching among this sample of IVTs. Many of them expressed reservations concerning AT online teaching because of a lack of hands-on guidance, and only two, despite also acknowledging the absence of this, seemed curious about how and whether it could work. Comparisons between I/V and AT teaching were made, with arguments relating to the fact that AT online may potentially work if the student and the AT teacher had already developed a working relationship, and the teacher were aware of the student's manner and habitual body

usage. It can therefore be hypothesised that a combination of face-to-face and online could bring possible benefits, especially in consideration of IVT-P4's views on hands-on guidance but, given the lack of research on AT online teaching, empirical evidence is needed to assess both the effectiveness of AT online teaching and of a combined mode of delivery.

9.4 Resources on the AT

Some teachers commented on books or video resources about the AT that they had encountered. Six of them revealed that they had read or referred to books or videos on the AT. In contrast, other participants, such as IVT-P6, said that they had taken AT 'lessons rather than reading about it', whereas IVT-P2 admitted that they 'were not a great book reader' and that they 'couldn't single out a single book' because they had 'picked up lots of information' from 'different people'. Only one participant said that they had watched instructional videos on the AT. These were perceived to be complementary to AT face-to-face teaching and to magnify students' learning experience. In fact, IVT-P8 revealed that they had come 'across some really lovely exercises with Judith Kleinman [on YouTube]' which they were 'going to explore with' their students, remarking that 'there will be a lot that a person can discover by themselves which may mean the in-person experience is enhanced'. The next sections will discuss IVTs' views on AT books and the impact of these on their understanding of the AT.

9.4.1 AT books

One of the most referenced books about the AT was *Indirect procedures* by de Alcantara (2013). IVT-P4 said that de 'Alcantara's step-by step approach to applying Alexander to playing really got [them] thinking about' their practice; a similar enthusiasm was expressed by IVT-P9 who remarked that de Alcantara's *Indirect procedures* had been their 'Bible for a very long time' and that they had carried it with them 'on all [their] tours and it [had given them] a huge amount of food for thought'. Another popular book was *The Alexander Technique for musicians* by Kleinman and Buckocke (2013). IVT-P7 described the book as 'terrific'; IVT-P8 recalled that 'the distillation of [the AT by these authors] ... made a lot of sense' and they 'could use some of those prompts' in their teaching, highlighting the importance of

communicating ideas effectively and a perceived application of the AT into I/V teaching through the use of printed resources. Other books to which they referred were *Body Learning: An introduction to the Alexander Technique* by Gelb (2004), *What every musician needs to know about the body: The application of body mapping to music* by Conable and Conable (2000) and *The structures and movement of breathing: A primer for choirs and choruses* by Conable (2001).

Three participants mentioned that they had partly read F. M. Alexander's original texts. The only recurring title was *The use of the self* (Alexander, 1932/1990). According to IVT-P4, this book was 'less helpful' than other books on the subject, supposedly because of a lack of specificity to I/V music practice. Similarly, IVT-P8's view of F. M. Alexander's *The use of the self* suggested a lack of appeal: 'I sort of dipped into that ... I must admit, I read a bit of it and then sort of wandered off in my mind about it — if I'm honest'. IVT-P9 also revealed that F. M. Alexander's writing 'takes quite a lot of working out', which suggests a potential difficulty to engage with F. M. Alexander's ideas through their books.

9.4.2 The impact of AT books on the understanding of the AT

A few participants commented on whether reading AT resources may have enhanced their understanding of the AT. IVT-P3 said that reading *Indirect procedures* by de Alcantara (2013), for example, had helped them 'understand' the AT; similarly, IVT-11 revealed that knowing about 'the history of the AT' had changed their 'understanding' of it. However, other participants emphasised that an experiential approach to the AT may be more useful, especially at the beginning of the learning process. IVT-P4 indeed argued that 'introduction-to-the-Alexander-Technique-types of book ... tend to be a series of exercises and unless you have hands-on direction, especially in the initial stages of learning, you're just going to do the "exercises" using your old misuse and get nowhere'. The importance of experiential learning was remarked by IVT-P7 who, despite highlighting the benefits of AT books in promoting the AT, described:

It's impossible to learn the Alexander Technique from reading books or listening to a lecture on the subject. The only way to learn it is to do it. That is the only way. So, although you can find out about the [Alexander] Technique, you can find out about Alexander himself ... I think reading a book can enlighten you to sort of think "I must go and do something about that", but you can't learn the [Alexander] Technique from a book at all.

9.4.3 Resources on the AT: Discussion of the findings

IVTs commented on resources on the AT that may have impacted their understanding of the AT. Some participants reported having read some books on the AT. The two most popular books were *Indirect procedures* by de Alcantara (2013) and *The Alexander Technique for musicians* by Kleinman and Buckoke (2013); both books were thought to be particularly helpful in providing advice on practical applications of the AT to musicians. Other AT self-study books were considered to be potentially misleading without additional practical experience of the AT, whereas videos on the AT and musicians were believed to be useful. Furthermore, a few IVT participants mentioned that they had partly read F. M. Alexander's original writings. Despite being potentially useful to develop an historical understanding of the AT, they were difficult to read; for example, the book *The use of the self* by F. M. Alexander (1932/1990) was considered as not particularly helpful. One of the key findings that emerges from this study, therefore, is that books and AT digital resources on the AT could be supplementary to AT sessions, but a direct experience of the AT is viewed by these IVTs as essential to understanding the AT and benefitting from it.

9.5 The AT in comparison with other practices

IVT-participants expressed a variety of perspectives on the AT in comparison with other somatic/psychophysical practices (e.g. yoga, the Feldenkrais Method).

9.5.1 Views on the benefits, the effectiveness, and the provision of other somatic/psychophysical practices

Generally, these were regarded as beneficial for music students because of a resulting increased awareness 'of posture and [body] alignment which is good for all instruments' (IVT-P11); however, the benefits of these practices were considered to be relevant not only to music students but also to IVTs in relation to their teaching.

According to IVT-P5:

If you have more knowledge of [how you use your body] yourself or myself, talking as a teacher, then I could incorporate more of that in my awareness in how I teach to do with posture and any kind of technical stuff which of course involves using the body.

Despite remarking on the importance of somatic practices, IVT-P6 mentioned that the effectiveness of those practices, nonetheless, may depend on the level of motivation that one may have in applying these in everyday life:

It's all good, like with everything, whether it's AT, whether it's yoga or Pilates or something. It's always important what you make of it, and you have to make it your own. You have to incorporate it into your daily life and into your playing. So, I think that is always the crucial thing. AT as such on its own probably is only helpful in a limited way, but it's then what you make of it and how you incorporate it in your practice.

The provision of these practices in HE music institutions, however, needs to be considered carefully in light of music students' time commitments. As IVT-P2 emphasised:

[Somatic practices need] to be approached in a very practical way because if you start throwing in the AT and yoga and Feldenkrais, people get overloaded [and say]: "So I can't cope with all that. I haven't got time for it. I've got a load of other work to do. Just give me something simple that works".

9.5.2 AT and yoga

In addition to general views on somatic/psychophysical practices, IVTs talked about specific attributes characterising these, which pointed to potential similarities and differences with the AT. Yoga was considered to be particularly beneficial. IVT-P9 stated that 'they would recommend the AT along with yoga'; however, they added that 'it's not just AT' and 'insisted on all [their] students that they [did] yoga' because 'one's got to look after oneself'. Similarly, IVT-P5 thought that yoga was 'also very good on a similar level [to the AT] for the thing of lining up or understanding' the use of the body; these similarities were also expressed by IVT-P8 who could 'see the links with yoga ... [and] how it all combines'. In contrast, IVT-10 highlighted possible differences between these two practices. Even though in their past experiences as a learner they had preferred yoga because of its perceived preventive nature, this teacher remarked that, on reflection, 'yoga is not the same' as the AT and that the AT may be both preventative and corrective in nature compared with yoga:

I think yoga ... just being stronger, being more aware was more preventative for me than correcting anything, whereas ... I suppose Alexander Technique, you could see it is both that you're aligning your body and you feel more in the posture that you should naturally be in, so that is obviously preventative. But I also find that it was very helpful at correcting things that have gone wrong, so, I

would sense as I was having a session that things were misaligned, and I was not lying straight, for instance, and parts of my body were holding on to things differently so that it can function as both. That's my experience anyway. (IVT-P10)

9.5.3 AT and the Feldenkrais Method, physiotherapy and acupuncture

A few IVT participants expressed their views on other practices such as the Feldenkrais Method, physiotherapy and acupuncture. Regarding the Feldenkrais Method, IVT-P5 said that they did not 'know anything about Feldenkrais', whereas IVT-P8 mentioned that, 'on a just purely personal level', they liked the 'the more active nature of Feldenkrais' and felt that there was 'a similarity there with' the AT. In relation to physiotherapy, IVT-P1 said that 'if you are doing something habitual, [physiotherapy] isn't gonna help you' and that the 'Alexander [Technique] is particularly good for musicians'. IVT-P4, on the other hand, had found beneficial acupuncture sessions to relieve pain in conjunction with AT lessons:

This acupuncturist was just miraculous: within one session I could do things that were just hideously painful to even contemplate before, so I had a few sessions with this acupuncturist and it's been absolutely great and only tiny recurrences of it which I have managed to deal with the AT.

Despite the benefits of acupuncture sessions, this participant highlighted the differences in nature between the AT and other practices such as physiotherapy and acupuncture 'where they do [something] to you rather than teaching you a tool to use it for yourself' (IVT-P4), suggesting the perceived self-care and educational benefits of the AT in contrast to other practices.

9.5.4 The teaching and practice of the AT: Discussion of the findings

Findings revealed that IVTs were open to different somatic/psychophysical practices (e.g. yoga and the Feldenkrais Method). These were considered to be beneficial for both students and IVTs; however, the benefits of these practices were considered to depend on the motivation that one has in applying them to their everyday life. In addition, these practices might need to be implemented into the HE music curricula in a practical manner, considering the necessities of music students (see IVT-P2's view in 9.5.1). Furthermore, comparisons between the AT and other practices were made. According to IVT-P10, the AT was considered to be both preventative and rehabilitative in comparison to yoga. IVT-P1 believed that the AT was particularly good for musicians,

possibly because of its direct application to I/V techniques, whereas IVT-P8 preferred the Feldenkrais Method over the AT because of its movement-based nature. Regarding the AT and acupuncture, IVT-P4 reported that they had personally benefited from a combination of acupuncture and AT lessons to overcome pain; nonetheless, the AT was considered to be different from exercise-based practices because of its educational component. This is consistent with findings from Wenham et al. (2018) in which AT lessons contributed to the development of self-care and self-efficacy, defined as 'participants' confidence in their ability to reduce their pain using methods other than medication' (p. 308). Given the differences between these diverse disciplines, further research is warranted to investigate empirically the effectiveness of the different somatic and psychophysical practices among music students and musicians and to outline direct comparisons among those.

9.6 Summary of the chapter: Key themes

This chapter discussed IVTs' views on a triadic lesson. A general interest in this model was shown by many of the participants, in particular, as a way to integrate the AT into I/V playing; however, this format was believed to contain some challenges in relation to teaching dynamics, which could be solved with cooperative behaviours and openness to different viewpoints. Furthermore, IVTs' perspectives on the embedment of AT ideas into I/V teaching were examined: these raised questions about the feasibility of AT-based professional development courses for IVTs wanting to develop their understanding of the AT and its integration into I/V teaching.

This chapter also illustrated IVTs' opinions on AT online teaching. Its effectiveness was questioned due to the lack of hands-on work in an online environment, which raised corresponding issues regarding hands-on guidance and safeguarding requirements in face-to-face sessions in UK HE music institutions. In addition, this chapter examined participants' views on resources about the AT: while these could be useful to spark an interest in the AT, a practical experience of the AT was regarded as a necessary component for understanding the AT. Lastly, a comparison between the AT and other somatic/psychophysical practices was provided. IVTs demonstrated openness towards various practices; however, in one case the AT was perceived to be fundamentally different from practices providing a set of exercises.

The next chapter will be the first of four chapters examining music students' views on the AT (Chapters 10-13). A comparison of AT teachers', IVTs', and music students' perspectives will be provided in Chapter 14.

Chapter 10: Perceptions of the AT among HE music students studying in UK HE music institutions

(PART I)

This chapter examines findings about the perceptions of the AT among HE music students studying in UK HE music institutions. Data were collected through an anonymous online survey that aimed to unveil views about the AT among music students attending university music departments (UMDs), music conservatoires (MCs), and an independent HE music institution (IHEMI). In addition to presenting demographic data from the survey responses²⁸, the question that this chapter answers is:

- How is the AT viewed by music students studying in UK HE music institutions?

10.1 Demographics

A total number of 133 HE music students responded to the anonymous online survey invitation. Figure 10-1 illustrates the number of music student respondents in relation to the institutions they were attending at the time of the questionnaire distribution (April-May 2021).

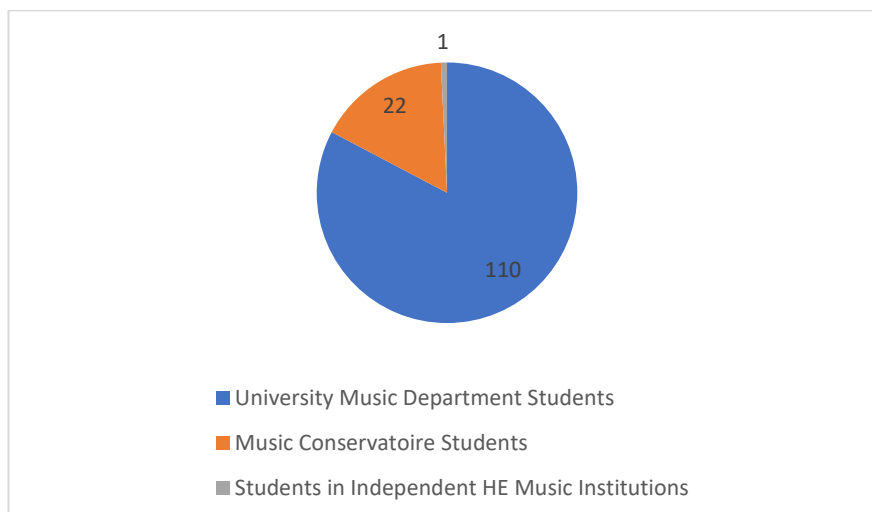


Figure 10-1: Number of respondents in relation to the institutions they were attending.

²⁸ Details about the survey research methodology were examined in Chapter 3.

As can be seen from the pie chart in Figure 10-1, 83% of the survey respondents (110) attended a university music department (UMD), whereas 16.5% (22) attended a music conservatoire (MC) and 0.5% (1) attended an independent HE music institution (IHEMI).

The number of music students in relation to the institution they were attending and the course on which they were enrolled is presented in Figure 10-2.

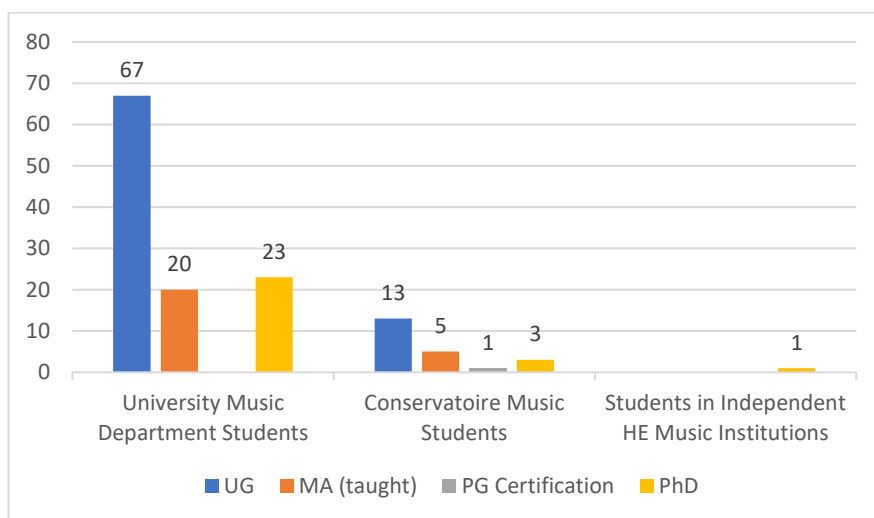


Figure 10-2: Number of respondents in relation the institutions they were attending and the course on which they were enrolled.

The bar graph (Figure 10-2) above shows that 61% of the UMD students (67 out of 110) attended an undergraduate (UG) music course, 18% (20) a taught MA course and 21% (23) a PhD programme. In comparison, 59% of the music conservatoire respondents (13 out of 22) were enrolled on a UG course, 23% (5) on a taught MA course, 4% (1) a PG certification course, and 14% (3) a PhD degree. The only student attending an IHEMI was pursuing doctoral studies.

Figure 10-3 represents the number of respondents in relation to their nationality. The large majority of the UMD students (68%) were UK nationals; 14% (15) reported to come from a European country and 18% (20) from a country outside the European Union (EU). Of the 22 MC students, while 59% (13) reported to be UK nationals, 32% (7) reported to come from a country within the EU and 9% (2) from a country outside the EU. The music student in an IHEMI reported to be a UK national.

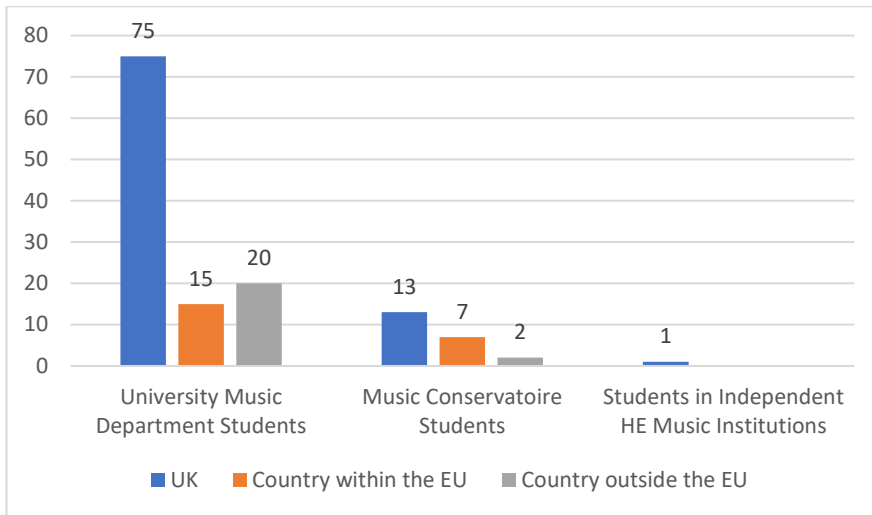


Figure 10-3: Number of respondents in relation to their institution and nationality.

Figure 10-4 below shows the number of respondents in relation to their preferred gender. Of the 110 UMD students, 70% (77) identified as female, while 24% (26) were male, 4% (5) non-binary gender, and 2% (2) preferred not to declare their gender. Conversely, of the 22 MC students, while 55% were female (12), 45% (10) were male. The only music student attending an IHEMI identified as male.

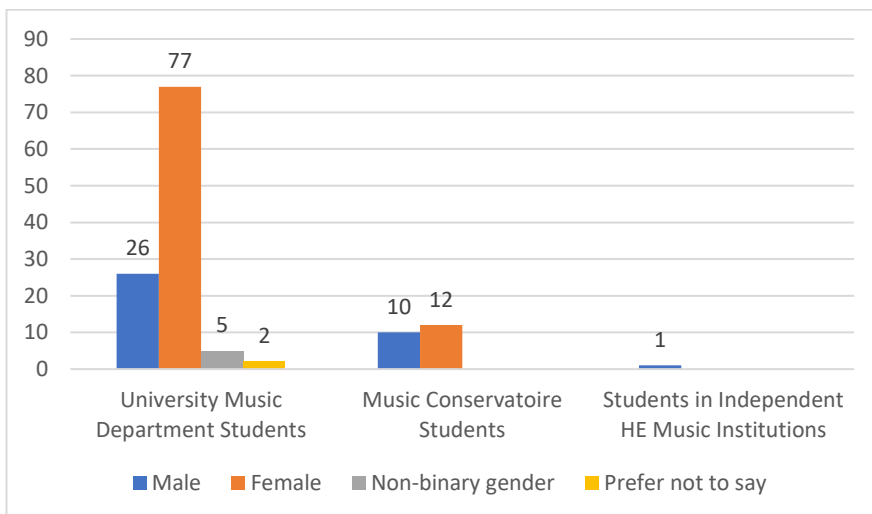


Figure 10-4: Number of respondents in relation to their institution and their preferred gender.

Figure 10-5 shows the number of students in relation to their age group. As shown below, the large majority of UMD students (74%) belonged to the 18-25 age group, whereas 12% (13) students indicated to be between 26 and 30 years old, 2% (2) between 31 and 35 years old, 11% (12) more than 36 years old, and 1% (1) preferred not to disclose their age. In contrast, of the 22 MC students, 59% (13) indicated to be between 18 and 25 years old, 18% (4) to be between 26 and 30 years old, 5% (1) to be

between 31 and 35 years old, and 18% (4) responded to be more than 36 years old. The music student attending an IHEMI indicated to be between 31 and 35 years old.

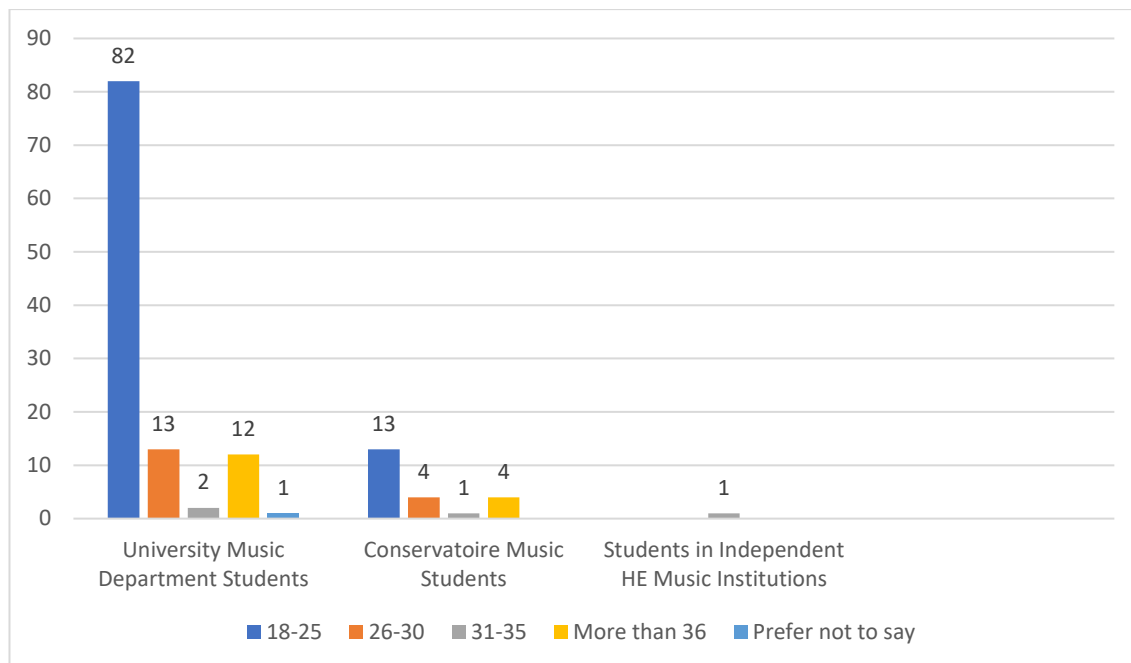


Figure 10-5: Number of respondents in relation to their institution and age group.

Tables 10.1 and 10.2 below show the instrument distribution in relation to the number of UMD and MC students. The instrument families follow the same categorisation as for IVT respondents (see Chapter 7), whereas that of the specific instruments observes the terminology used by these music students in their questionnaire responses²⁹. In comparison to the classification of IVT teachers, this dataset shows a greater range of instruments, as well as categories such as composition and conducting (see Table 10.1). The largest group of music students was represented by pianists and singers. The student in the IHEMI indicated to play the piano.

²⁹ It is for this reason that the general term *woodwind* has been maintained.

		UMD-UG	UMD-MA	UMD-PhD
Bowed	Cello	1		
	Double bass	1		
	Erhu		1	
	Violin	5	1	2
Plucked				
Plucked	Electric guitar	1		
	Guitar	2	3	
	Guzheng			1
Woodwind				
Woodwind	Clarinet	4		
	Flute	7	1	1
	Oboe	1	1	
	Recorder	1		
	Woodwind ³⁰		1	
Brass				
Brass	French horn	1		
	Saxophone	1	1	1
	Trombone	1		
	Trumpet	3		
Keyboard				
Keyboard	Organ	1		
	Piano	19	6	12
Composition	Composer			1
Conducting	Conductor			1
Voice	Singer	17	4	3
TOTAL		66	19	22

Table 10.1: Instrument distribution in relation to the number of UMD students (n=107).³¹

³⁰ See previous footnote.

³¹ Three respondents did not answer the question about indicating their instrument.

		MCS-UG	MCS-MA	MCS-PhD
Bowed	Cello			1
	Viola	1		
	Violin	2	1	1
Plucked	Bass guitar		1	
	Electric guitar		1	
	Harp	1		
Woodwind	Clarinet	1		
	Flute	2		
	Oboe			
Brass	Saxophone	2		
	Trumpet	2		
Keyboard	Piano	1	1	
Voice	Singer	2	2	
TOTAL		14	6	2

Table 10.2: Instrument distribution in relation to the number of MC students (n=22).

10.2 Respondents' familiarity with the AT

This section illustrates some of the findings about music students' experiences with the AT. First, it provides the proportions of music students with/without knowledge of the AT at the time of the questionnaire distribution, presenting the numbers of music students who had or had not partaken in AT sessions (e.g. AT workshops, lectures and/or individual/group sessions). Furthermore, it examines the views of those music students who had not heard about the AT prior to completing the survey and who indicated a potential interest in knowing more about the AT after reading descriptions about it (the passages were extracted from literature and focussed on the claimed psychophysical benefits of the AT, both in relation to performers and general health — see Chapter 3 and Appendix G). Then, it illustrates the ways in which respondents who were familiar with the AT had made their first contact with the AT, and the reasons why some of them had decided not to have a direct experience with the AT.

10.2.1 Students familiar or not with the AT: Looking at the numbers

Music-student respondents were asked the following question: '*Prior to completing this questionnaire, did you know anything about the AT?*'. While half of the UMD students (50%, n=55 of 110) reported that they did know not anything about the AT, 13.63% (3 of 22) of the MC students had not previously heard about the AT. The remaining half of the UMD students (50%, n=55 of 110) indicated that they were familiar with the AT, whereas 86% (19 of 22) MC students and the only student in IHEMI reported that they knew about the AT.

Music students who indicated that they were familiar with the AT were also asked to specify whether they had previously had a direct experience of the AT or not. While 24% (26) UMD students within this sub-group who were familiar with the AT indicated that they had participated in AT sessions, 26% (29) reported that they had not; conversely, 77% (17) MC students responded that they had had a direct experience of the AT, whereas 9% (2) had not. The only IHEMI student indicated that they had partaken in AT sessions (see Figure 10-6 for a visual overview).

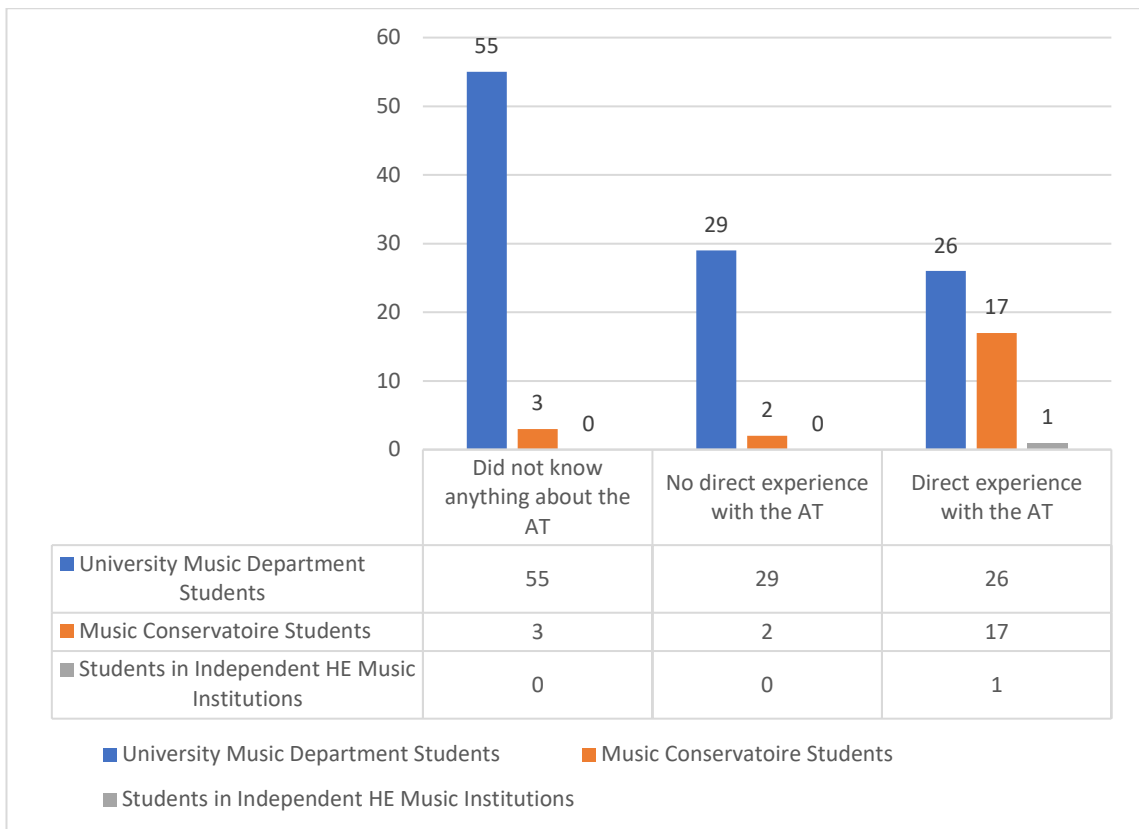


Figure 10-6: Proportion of music students (n=133) with/without knowledge of the AT, and with/without experience of the AT.

To set out the context of the next main section (10.3), some preliminary information about the number of sessions, teaching format (one-to-one/group) and mode of delivery (face-to-face/online), and the frequency of sessions is summarised in Tables 10.3, 10.4, and 10.5³² (a detailed analysis of the teaching context and mode of instruction will be presented in Chapter 13).

	Number of sessions			
	One-off session	Fewer than 5	Between 5 and 10	More than 10
UMDSs	5	6	5	6
MCSs		5	8	4
IHEMIs		1		

Table 10.3: Number of music students with experience of the AT in relation to the number of sessions they had taken.

³² Any discrepancies with the total number of music students are due to missing information in the survey responses.

	Teaching format			Mode of delivery		
	1-2-1	Group	Both	F2f	Online	Both
UMDSs	9	7	6	20	1	1
MCSs	7	6	4	10	4	3
IHEMIS			1	1		

Table 10.4: Number of music students who had taken AT sessions in relation to the teaching format and the mode of delivery.

		UMDSs	MCSs	IHEMIS
Frequency of sessions	One-off	6	2	
	Ad hoc	1		
	Once a term	1		
	Weekly	6	10	
	Periodically		1	
	Fortnightly	3	3	
	Sporadically/Infrequently	1	1	1
	Depended on years³³	2		
	Annually	1		

Table 10.5: Number of music students with direct experience of the AT in relation to the frequency of sessions.³⁴

10.2.2 Willingness to know more about the AT

The music student respondents (n=58) who indicated that they did not know anything about the AT were invited to read passages extracted from AT literature describing what the AT was. The passages were taken from the Society of Teachers of the Alexander Technique (STAT, 2023a) and NHS (NHS, 2021) websites and focussed on the AT in relation to performers and everyday life. They were then asked to comment on whether they would be willing to know more about the AT after reading the two descriptions about it. This theme concerning students' willingness to know more about

³³ The respondents probably meant: 'Varied depending on their year of study'.

³⁴ To represent the different session frequencies, respondents' original indications have been preserved. Any discrepancies with the total number of music students are due to missing information in the survey responses.

the AT also recurred among a few extra responses from those who knew about the AT but had not had direct experience with it in relation to the final question '*Is there anything that you would like to add in relation to the AT and your experience as a music student?*' at the end of the questionnaire. For clarity and comparison purposes, these further views will be provided at the end of this sub-section.

Many of the 55 UMD students without knowledge of the AT (n=43: 31 UG; 7 MA; 5 PhD) answered that they would be willing to know more about it. Three respondents (two UG students and one MA student) said that they would be somewhat interested in knowing more about the AT; one MA student commented that it would not be 'on top of [their] list' (UMDS-MA-P43), whereas two students, one UG and one PhD, answered that they would not be interested in the AT. Six responses were incomplete and could not be used. With regard to MC students, the two respondents who were attending an MA course and were not knowledgeable regarding the AT stated their interest in it.

Respondents revealed that they would be willing to know more about the AT to enhance their music performance practice. UMDS-UG-P23 said that the AT sounded 'like an interesting concept' and they felt that 'it would aid [their] performance skills'. In particular, one of the most common expressions of interest related to performance anxiety issues. UMDS-UG-P12, for example, felt that: 'it sounds like it could be helpful, especially as I personally struggle massively with performance anxiety'; equally, UMDS-UG-P26 thought that 'everybody, whether you are a confident or shy individual, is familiar with feeling nervous when it comes to performing. For a musician, techniques to overcome stage nerves would always be useful'.

Another common reason for UMD students' interest in knowing more about the AT was to deal with playing-related postural issues. One respondent commented: 'I tend to have pretty poor posture when I play: it would be useful to break that habit' (UMDS-UG-P17). This was echoed by UMDS-UG-P19: 'whilst playing my instruments, my posture can get really terrible and that causes tension in my body, and this makes it hard for me to perform'. One respondent alluded to a correlation between posture and stress: the AT 'would also be very useful as for example my hands and fingers hurt sometimes after practice, which I think is due to wrong posture, especially when I'm stressed' (UMDS-UG-P9). A sense of surprise about this potential link was expressed by

UMDS-UG-P7, who after reading the two descriptions about the AT, commented: 'I've never associated posture with performance anxiety'.

Other UMD students were interested in knowing more about the AT to support their teaching practice. UMDS-MA-P48, for example, wrote: 'as a former student of music performance myself and [interested in] a possible future career in teaching music performance, I am interested in learning about this technique'. Another respondent expressed a similar motivation: 'I'm really interested in helping students overcome stage fright' (UMDS-MA-P47). This again highlights a common concern among respondents about performance anxiety difficulties. Conversely, one music student revealed that they would be interested in knowing more about the AT because of its applicability to everyday life. As UMDS-UG-P30 put it: 'yes, [I would be interested] as it's applicable to other high-stress daily activities'. Interestingly, only one respondent emphasised the importance of science-based approaches and benefits, which may in turn impact the credibility of practices such as the AT: 'I would [be interested]. If it would help with performance, then all information is useful, especially if it's proven to work' (UMDS-UG-P28).

The two MC students without knowledge of the AT and who were interested in knowing more about it provided two contrasting reasons which echoed UMD students' responses. Whilst MCS-MA-P111 said that the AT 'will help [their] teaching both in 1-2-1's as well as the group lessons', MCS-MA-P112 commented that the AT 'would be useful, particularly with [their] singing practice', once again suggesting the potential interest of music students to know more about the AT to enhance their performance and, in some cases, their teaching skills.

The few UMD students who were slightly interested or not interested in knowing more about the AT wrote that they would not be interested in the AT because it would not align with their degree pathway. For example, UMDS-UG-P31 said: 'No, [I would not be interested because] I'm not focussing on my performance ability in my degree'. Similarly, UMDS-UG-P33 wrote: 'I think the Technique's pretty useful, but as I'm not a professionally-trained performer, I don't think I will be into it that much'. This tied in with UMDS-PhD-P52 who commented: 'Nope, [I would not be interested because] I am not a performer'. This points towards perceptions of the AT as a practice with potential benefits only to performers and not to anyone regardless of their field of expertise.

As mentioned above, a few music students who knew about the AT but had not taken any AT sessions also expressed an interest in it. UMDS-PhD-P72 wrote that 'it would be nice to know more' about the AT. The same was thought by UMDS-MA-P69: 'I would be interested in finding out more/possibly studying AT in the future'. On the other hand, a sense of despair was expressed by UMDS-UG-P57 who acknowledged a perceived importance of setting up efficient coordination skills at an early age, which the AT was deemed to help with: 'I wish I had known more about it from a much younger age in order to alter my technique before I got set in my practice'. This has implications for the incorporation and application of the AT in instrumental/vocal (I/V) practice.

10.2.3 How music students have heard about the AT

Music students who were familiar with the AT commented on how they had heard about it. Their answers often included multiple responses and thus there were many crossovers among experiences.

Many UMD students wrote that they had come to know the AT through their instrumental/vocal teachers (IVTs) talking about the AT or incorporating AT principles in their teaching. UMDS-PhD-P110 put it: 'I heard about the AT through my singing teacher'. Another respondent gave more detail, indicating how the AT could be recommended by IVTs to solve playing-related issues: 'my piano teacher during my MA recommended that I receive some sessions to help with my stiffness when playing' (UMDS-PhD-P99). Regarding IVTs being inspired by AT principles, UMDS-UG-P106 described: 'I had a piano teacher, for almost two years, who specifically taught piano under the lens of AT'. A similar view was provided by UMDS-UG-P57 who explained:

All my piano teachers prior to university had referenced the technique as an example of excellence of holding your body whilst playing, and my piano teacher at university practises the [Alexander] Technique ... [and] I have had my technique/stance critiqued from that point of view.

On the contrary, only one MC student, MCS-UG-P114, specifically commented that they had heard about the AT through IVTs.

Another common way for UMD students to know about the AT was through word of mouth and peer recommendations. While a few students provided general comments, such as UMDS-UG-P64 who had 'heard [the AT] being talked about', others

gave more detail. For example, some students had encountered the AT through their peers having AT sessions and talking about these. UMDS-PhD-P71 wrote: 'two friends tried it at a conservatoire'. Likewise, UMDS-PhD-P100 recalled: 'I have heard about [the AT] for the first time ... in my music department: a couple of friends were having AT lessons [with the AT teacher in the department] and I heard about it through them'. As a few students described, these conversations had revolved around postural and health-related playing issues and potential solutions. UMDS-MA-P97 said that while they were in secondary school, 'an older student who had been to an AT workshop passed on the tips that she had received about playing saxophone while sat down on a chair', whereas UMDS-PhD-P103 described that they had heard about the AT 'from a fellow musician ... when [discussing] possible avenues to treat performance-related injuries'. These discussions and conversations, however, had also happened outside of the music community. As UMDS-UG-P79 reported: 'when I would take dance classes I heard people discuss it as something related to posture', suggesting that conversations with peers might shape potential perceptions of the AT. In addition to this, recommendations from family members contributed to increase an awareness of the AT. UMDS-MA-P8 said: 'my mother, father, and grandfather all practised [the AT] at various stages in their lives'; likewise, UMDS-PhD-P101 recalled how they had learned about the AT through their spouse: 'my wife, [a string player], in the past, had several sessions with an Alexander teacher. She advised me to do the same. I complied'. Interestingly, all of these factors were less prevalent among MC students who reported that they had primarily heard about the AT at music courses and, most often, during HE studies.

Many UMD and several MC students mentioned that they had first heard about the AT while attending non-HE music courses. UMDS-UG-P56 stated that they had done 'a workshop on AT at a music summer school'; similarly, MCS-UG-P120 said: 'I first heard and did Alexander sessions at a youth music course'. Some respondents provided more detailed answers, indicating that they had heard about the AT at residential courses with orchestras. As UMDS-UG-P81 said: 'at a youth orchestra residential course a woman came in to do some AT with us'. This was echoed by MCS-UG-P125 who recalled that they had been 'given a taster session as part of an orchestral outreach program as a child'. Conversely, some UMD students mentioned that they had encountered the AT through singing and choral courses, such as UMDS-

PhD-P73 who explained that they had encountered the AT at a 'singing course for choir, in which [they had] undertaken a group workshop' on it. Two other UMD students specifically mentioned having heard about the AT at a masterclass with an AT teacher and pianist, and at a course for violinists.

Some UMD and many MC students explained that they had developed their awareness of the AT through HE music institutions. This resonated with the PhD student in the only IHEMI, who had heard about the AT 'through AT specialists at institutions [they had] worked at'. With regard to UMD students, while a few of them reported hearing about the AT through institutional promotion of the AT in their HE institution, such as 'advertisement/leaflet for an AT class on department noticeboard' (UMDS-PhD-P71) and 'practice room posters' (UMDS-UG-P64), a few others had heard about the AT through AT 'workshops throughout performance at undergraduate level' (UMDS-MA-P95) and 'via the [name of a music department] who has an AT instructor' (UMDS-PhD-P75). Only one UMD student, UMDS-UG-P59, commented that they had heard about the AT through promotion at a conservatoire during open days, indicating how these events may impact the perception of the AT and awareness of it: 'before choosing to study music at university I went to an open day at [name of a conservatoire] where they spoke about the AT and there was the option to attend an example lecture on it'.

Regarding MC students, many of them reported that they had heard about the AT through lectures, introductory courses and, in contrast to UMD students, elective modules on it. For example, MCS-UG-P124 recalled: 'I had some introductory classes about AT in my first year of undergraduate course. I hadn't heard about AT prior to that'; likewise, MCS-UG-P122 said: 'it's one of the modules at the conservatoire', suggesting potential provisional differences among UMDs and MCs (a discussion about perceptions of provisional aspects of the AT among music students will be presented in Chapter 12)

Lastly, a few UMD students reported that they had encountered the AT in a non-HE educational setting, such as during high school. UMDS-PhD-P78 commented: 'when I was at school, I had the chance to hear a talk on AT and observe a brief session'. Likewise, UMDS-UG-P92 had heard about the AT 'through classes at high school'. There is no data providing evidence as to whether these classes had happened in the public or private sector. Conversely, a few UMD and MC students said that they

had learned about the AT online (e.g. blogs by famous IVTs and performers) and, as MCS-UG-P121 remarked, 'first of all through YouTube videos', which suggests that online material may have an impact on perceptions of the AT.

10.2.4 Reasons not to have a direct experience with the AT

Both UMD and MC students without direct experience with the AT were asked to comment on the reasons why they had not directly engaged with it. Many of them provided multiple reasons for this lack of engagement, resulting in a multifactorial representation of this matter.

One of the reasons for UMD students not to have a direct experience with the AT related to the perceived relevance of the AT. A couple of them wrote that it was 'not something [they] ever considered' (UMDS-UG-P59) or 'have thought about' (UMDS-UG-P58). Some others mentioned that they did not feel the need to take AT sessions. While a few of them found sufficient the advice provided by their IVT in relation to their I/V practice, others did not consider the AT relevant to them, although not all were sure about this. For example, UMDS-UG-P57, who had become familiar with the AT through their IVT (see data presented in Section 10.2.3), stated: 'I felt that my technique/stance was not in need of altering, however, since being critiqued on it from someone who uses [the AT], I have found benefit in my playing'. Similarly, UMDS-UG-P60 wrote that they were 'happy with [their] teachers and the way they [had] taught' them, while UMDS-PhD-P73 expressed that their 'singing teacher [was] already giving exercises to correct posture'. In contrast, UMDS-MA-P69 and UMDS-PhD-P74 commented respectively that they were not 'sure if [AT sessions] were applicable' or 'pertinent to' them. It is interesting to notice that one student thought: 'it's for pianists, as far as I'm aware' (UMDS-MA-P68), suggesting potential misconceptions about the nature of the AT or uncertainties about it. Indeed, another music student, UMDS-UG-P56, explained that they had not taken any AT sessions because they were not 'entirely sure [about] what [the AT was]'. On the other hand, MCS-MA-P115 wrote that they did not seek out sessions because they were 'waiting for a diagnosis of potential arthritis, and ... wanted to wait to ask [their] rheumatologist if this technique would be beneficial for' them.

Another reason was a lack of opportunity to take AT sessions. Some music students indeed commented that they had 'not had the opportunity' to engage with

the AT (e.g. UMDS-UG-P66; MCS-UG-P114). However, while a few respondents wrote that they did not know of any AT teacher whom they could contact (UMDS-UG-P61) or they were not aware of 'where to go' to get information about the AT (UMDS-UG-P80), a few others said that the AT sessions had not been 'available' to them (e.g. UMDS-UG-P62), with one specifying that sessions had not been available in their 'region' (UMDS-MA-P69). In addition, other music students explained that they had not taken AT sessions because of a lack of offer and promotion of these in their institutions. For example, UMDS-MA-P65 explained that they had not taken AT sessions because they had not 'seen any offered', echoing what UMDS-UG-P56 wrote: 'I have not seen any advertised'. This raises questions about potential barriers to promotion and provision of the AT, which will be discussed in Chapter 12.

Cost was another reason for some of these students not to engage in AT sessions. Respondents provided different explanations about how financial considerations had impacted their decision not to take AT sessions. UMDS-UG-P63, who was pursuing university studies supported by external funding, felt some restrictions about the extent to which they could allocate some of this funding for AT sessions and alleviate their playing-related issues, highlighting socio-economic barriers that may prevent music students from engaging with the AT:

It's expensive and I don't have a personal budget for music tuition. I've been funded so far by [music-related societies]. I didn't feel I was allowed to use this budget to access a specialist for tension/pain ... I can't afford them myself ... so I see the pain/limitations I deal with as connected to my social class and ... I can't just choose to see a physio or have an Alexander [Technique] lesson or change my [instrumental] teacher to someone specialising in tension and pain.

On the other hand, UMDS-PhD-P77 explained that although they did not find the cost of the lesson prohibitive, they could not afford to take AT sessions: 'the cost of lessons isn't expensive, but my current financial situation means that I don't have enough of a disposable income to pay for regular sessions'. UMDS-MA-P68, in contrast, wrote that they 'didn't want to pay for [the AT] as an extra service', highlighting the position in which the AT might be in some HE institutions.

Time was another reason why a few students did not take AT sessions, but respondents did not provide detailed comments about this. However, a few students explained that they had not engaged in the AT because of pursuing other interests. UMDS-PhD-P72 wrote that they had not chosen the AT as an elective course at a

previous institution³⁵, despite having had the opportunity to: ‘I didn’t take it as one of my options — I was more interested in performance, jazz history’. Nonetheless, they commented that it would have been nice to ‘have been offered AT as a singer at university’, indicating how music students may have different priorities at different stages of their studies. Finally, two other two students explained that they had ‘explored other techniques’ (UMDS-PhD-P84) but did not state what these were.

10.2.5 Familiarity with the AT: Discussion of the findings

Findings showed that a larger proportion of UMD students in some UK universities were not familiar with the AT in comparison to MC students in some UK conservatoires. To the best of my knowledge, this is the first study drawing such a comparison and, therefore, these findings cannot be compared with previous literature on the AT. The fact that a higher number of UMD students were less familiar with the AT could suggest that the AT may be more widespread in MCs rather than UMDs. Nonetheless, considering the differences in respondent numbers between UMD and MC students (110 UMD versus 22 MC students), this must remain a speculative point. In addition, given that this survey was anonymous, and institutions’ names were not collected, it was not possible to accurately determine how many students came from the same institution to investigate whether students’ lack of knowledge about the AT could be associated with a particular institution.

This study found that although many UMD and a few MC students did not know anything about the AT, they were interested in knowing more about it to enhance their performance and particularly to deal with performance anxiety issues. This aligns with previous research which demonstrated the high prevalence of performance anxiety challenges among HE music students (Blair & van der Sluis, 2022) and thus a desire to reduce them. Yet this raises questions over music students’ expectations about the AT. If in promotional materials it is claimed that the AT reduces performance anxiety issues and music students expect this support for music performance anxiety, it is then essential that these expectations are considered in relation to, for example, financial factors affecting the cost of sessions over a long period of time, particularly in contexts

³⁵ It is possible that the student was referring to a junior conservatoire as they wrote the following with regard to how they had acquired familiarity with the AT: ‘mainly through junior conservatoire piano study as a teenager’ (UMDS-PhD-P72). However, it is not possible to be definitive about the exact level of prior institution to which the respondent was referring.

where funding for sessions is not available, and thus students not being able to afford recurrent sessions. Long-lasting change may require time and if reducing performance anxiety may hypothetically come at a later stage of engaging with AT sessions, or if performance anxiety is not the primary benefit of the AT (Valentine, 2004), it is important that music students are informed about this so that they can make appropriate choices.

Data indicated that music students would like to engage in AT sessions to solve playing-related postural issues, which were often connected to higher stress levels (see UMDS-UG-P7 in section 10.2.2). This is in line with Shoebridge et al.'s (2017) conceptualisation of posture as a multifaceted matter and the fundamental AT principle of the interconnection between psycho-physical domains (Alexander, 1932/1990). In addition, it connects to research on the prevalence of musculoskeletal disorders among music students (Baadjou et al., 2018; Steinmetz et al., 2012), showing again the kind of difficulties HE music students may experience, with implications for I/V teaching and the provision of health and well-being education courses in HE music institutions.

Another interesting finding was that a few music students were interested in knowing more about the AT to support their teaching practice and help their pupils. This may relate to a lack of pedagogical training among those students who may start teaching without having had any relevant training on health and well-being practices in application to I/V teaching, such as relating to performance anxiety and the biomechanics of playing or singing. There is evidence of the adaptation of AT principles to I/V practice, such as a series of books on the AT and its application to many instruments by Ethan Kind (e.g. Kind, 2014), but these findings have further implications for the potential embedment of AT principles in I/V teaching and the development of AT-based pedagogical courses for pre-service IVTs. However, there may be limitations associated with the content of these courses. Having AT sessions may not entitle the receiver to pass on this knowledge — a prerogative that comes with a certified qualification following three years of professional AT training (STAT, 2023h) — and therefore, further research is needed to investigate the feasibility of any courses specifically tailored to pre-service IVTs, also considering the possibility for divergent views among AT teachers about the application of the AT to I/V teaching (see Chapter 6).

Findings indicated that only one student was interested in knowing more about the AT because of its applicability to everyday life. This is surprising but could be explained by the relatively young age of this sample of music students who may not necessarily experience health issues impacting their ongoing general health — except for those with underlying health conditions — and therefore who might not be interested in practices supporting their general health. Not only has this implications for the promotion of the AT, but also for the development of musicians' health and well-being courses raising awareness about the impact of general healthy behaviours on music-related occupational disorders, as literature on the topic suggests (Matei et al., 2018). In addition, only one student said that their interest in the AT would be enhanced if scientific evidence of the benefits existed. Although this was not mentioned by other music students who were not familiar with the AT, it is important because it suggests that scepticism towards the AT could be potentially overcome through research-based evidence demonstrating the benefits of the AT.

In this study, it was found that a few UMD students who were focusing on theoretical subjects in their studies were not interested in taking AT sessions because of a perceived relevance of the AT to music performance only. One explanation could be that in AT promotional and educational materials targeted to musicians, the AT might primarily be promoted as a technique aimed at performers and not as also an educational method with wide-ranging benefits for all (e.g. to relieve back pain from sitting for prolonged periods of time). An example of this is the book *The Alexander Technique for musicians* (Kleinman & Buckocke, 2013), which is advertised as 'a unique guide for all musicians, providing a practical, informative approach to being a successful and comfortable performer' (Royal College of Music, 2022, n. p.). While this description may attract music students engaged in performance, not only does it omit considering those music students who may not be engaged in performance but may benefit from taking AT sessions, but it also prioritises the promotion of the AT as a tool just for performers. In a similar manner, a workshop on the AT in a UMD was promoted as follows:

Alexander's work explores how awareness influences how we function mentally, physically, and emotionally. It helps us find greater physical ease in movement and to create optimum conditions for performance and practising. In this class, we will study Alexander's core discovery of a primary pattern of coordination in humans, and how that relates to stress and performance

anxiety. It will include learning functional anatomy as it directly applies to practising, studying, and performing. (University of Cambridge, 2020, n. p.)

Although this information mentions that the AT may help with 'studying', it seems that more emphasis is given to performance rather than to the application of the AT to other spheres of life. It can therefore be hypothesised that promoting the AT as a practice potentially helpful to *all* music students, performers or not, could raise an interest in the AT among those who may not necessarily be engaged with performance activities but could benefit from taking AT sessions, which could contribute to the wider provision of aspects supporting health and well-being within the institution.

Data showed that many UMD students had become familiar with the AT through their IVTs. This highlights the active role of IVTs in the promotion of the AT and, more broadly, the support of health and well-being practices, echoing findings in Norton's (2016) research on health promotion in I/V teaching. However, only MC students had emphasised the role of IVTs in the promotion of the AT to them, and this point could be explained by the fact that many MC students had primarily become familiar with the AT through attending AT elective sessions/courses at their HE institution, emphasising the pivotal role of institutions in the promotion of the AT among music students. While a few UMD students had also noted hearing about the AT through their institution (e.g. leaflets), it can be speculated that IVTs may play a more important role in raising awareness about the AT in those institutions where the AT is not offered to music students as an elective subject.

This study found that peer recommendation and word of mouth contributed to develop familiarity about the AT among HE music students. In particular, friends taking sessions in the same or a different institution, or conversations around solutions to health and well-being issues, for example, were catalysts for increased awareness about the AT. This is not surprising because there may be a sense of solidarity among those who may feel themselves as part of the same community or who may share the same challenges (Little et al., 2022). In addition, the fact that one student mentioned that the AT had been promoted to them as postural technique (see Section 10.2.3, UMDS-UG-P79) demonstrates how people's experiences and the way they talk about these might shape their perceptions of the AT. It has often been mentioned how the AT might be more than a postural tool. F. M. Alexander tended to avoid the term *posture* as it would convey an incorrect perception of the AT (Alexander, 1941/2015).

Nobes (2020) argued that the word posture ‘doesn’t occur once in F. M. Alexander’s most accessible book’, *The use of the self*, and that ‘the Alexander Technique isn’t about posture’, although most people ‘have improved their posture as well, but that was a side benefit’ (pp. 12-13). Nobes (2020) further considered that people might perceive the AT as a postural practice due to teaching approaches that could lead to misinterpretations of the AT:

Some “traditional” Alexander teachers use “chairwork” as a teaching method, and it is very easy to mistake the point of it as learning how to stand and sit well. But what they are teaching is not a different way of getting out of a chair, it’s a way of switching on a mind/body aliveness, which leads to natural movement and to standing and sitting effortlessly. (p. 5)

Therefore, these findings suggest that peer recommendations play an important role in spreading the word about the AT but may also heavily impact the perceptions of the AT among those who have not experienced it yet. For example, peers who have participated in one workshop on the AT or those who have taken recurrent AT sessions (group and/or one-to-one) may promote the AT in varied ways. Teaching approaches might also influence these perceptions, and further studies could investigate potential incongruences between those.

Other aspects that contributed to developing awareness of the AT among HE music students were summer/residential music courses, highlighting the influence that these courses may have on shaping perceptions of the AT among them. In addition, findings indicated that some music students had become familiar with the AT while at school. This was surprising and raises questions about parity of opportunities among music students prior to HE studies, considering that the secondary schools in which the AT is taught are mainly within the private sector (STAT, 2023i) and may not be accessible to those from different socio-economic backgrounds. Further empirical research on AT in these contexts is needed to investigate the impact of AT sessions on people’s perceptions of the AT as well as the policy process underpinning the provision of the AT within those.

Online platforms and means of communication, such as YouTube videos and blogs, were found to have increased awareness about the AT among music students. This was not surprising due to the familiarity of many youngsters with technology (Prensky, 2001) but has implications for the consistency and quality of information

about the AT, which in turn may affect perceptions relating to the AT and any misconceptions about it. A further study with evaluative focus on AT online materials is therefore advocated.

Some respondents indicated that they had not participated in the AT because of perceived lack of relevance of it. Firstly, a few UMD students found IVTs' advice sufficient, especially of those teachers whose teaching had been influenced by AT principles (see UMDS-UG-P57, Section 10.2.4). This is interesting because it raises questions about the extent to which IVTs have experience of the AT, and then how they may adapt and use this knowledge within their I/V teaching, and, considering how relevant hands-on work is to the AT (de Alcantara, 1999/2007), the limitations that may exist. Therefore, further empirical studies are needed to investigate how IVTs who have engaged in AT sessions use the AT in their teaching and how they convey AT principles through it (see Chapter 9). Secondly, other students were not sure whether the AT would be relevant to them. It was surprising that one student thought that the AT pertained just to pianists, revealing potential misconceptions about the AT. It remains unclear how this perception arose since the AT has widely been applied to many instruments as well as singing (Kleinman & Buckocke, 2013), but it indicates potential miscommunication about what the AT entails.

This study found that a lack of opportunity may prevent music students from taking AT sessions. More populated urban areas may offer students more chances to engage in the AT before HE, or during HE studies in situations where the AT is not available in the institution, showing geographical barriers that may impact on the uptake of AT sessions and resulting in inequalities of opportunities among music students in the same country. Online learning may potentially overcome these barriers — as has already been suggested in other fields, such as I/V music teaching (King et al., 2019) — but further work is required to establish the feasibility of the AT in an online setting (music students' experiences with AT online sessions will be examined in Chapter 13). Furthermore, data indicated that some UMD students had not engaged in the AT because of a lack of provision and promotion of the AT in their HE institution. AT is available in a few UMDs (STAT, 2023i); however, there might be promotional barriers affecting provision and participation even in those institutions where there is AT availability (as has been examined in previous chapters). Therefore, these findings have important implications for developing the AT in the UK HE music sector.

Findings indicated that socio-economic barriers may impact music students' engagement with the AT. Cost was found to prevent music students from taking or considering taking AT sessions; these findings corroborate those indicating disparity of educational opportunities among people from different socio-economic backgrounds (Hecht & McArthur, 2022). The fact that one student did not want to pay for the AT as an extra activity suggests that cost might impact students' views on the AT.

Finally, the factor of time was also found to impact music students' choices to take AT sessions, although music students did not provide much information about this. In addition, interests in other disciplines and subjects contributed to music students' decisions not to take AT sessions. This finding has important implications for the position of the AT in the HE music curricula, considering that it may not be well-received by *all* music students — as is likely to happen for any sub-component in HE — and therefore raising questions about the integration of AT instruction in HE music institutions.

10.3 Summary of the chapter: Key themes

This chapter examined the first set of findings concerning music students' perceptions of the AT. In particular, it presented and discussed themes concerning students' familiarity with the AT and their willingness to know more about it. A large proportion of UMD music students were not familiar with the AT; many of the students who were not knowledgeable about the AT were interested in the AT mainly to enhance their performance and overcome music performance anxiety challenges. Other students were not interested in the AT because of perceived lack of relevance of the AT to their studies.

This chapter also examined the perceptions of the AT among those music students who were familiar with the AT but did not undertake any AT sessions. Word of mouth, peer and IVTs' recommendations contributed to developing music students' familiarity with the AT. However, factors such as perceived lack of relevance of the AT, limited opportunities to take AT sessions, and cost prevented many of the respondents from taking AT sessions. The next chapter will examine the views on the AT among those music students who had undertaken AT sessions.

Chapter 11: Perceptions of the AT among HE music students studying in UK HE music institutions

(PART II)

Chapter 11 provides a detailed analysis of music students' experiences with the AT. It illustrates findings about music students' reasons to have AT sessions (one-to-one, group lessons and/or workshops) and their feedback on these, analysing their experiences (expected/unexpected) and views on the potential benefits and limitations of the AT as well as their mixed and negative experiences. In addition, this chapter explores music students' reasons for having or ceasing AT sessions, their perceptions of the risks of the AT, and their definitions of the AT. Data from music students possessing direct experience of the AT forms the primary source for this analysis; however, data from music students without a direct experience of the AT will also be examined to illustrate comparisons among lived experiences, preconceptions, and existing beliefs. Following on from the previous chapter, the questions that this chapter addresses are:

- How is the AT viewed by music students studying in UK HE music institutions?
- How is the AT defined by music students studying in UK HE music institutions?

11.1 Music students and the AT: A detailed examination

11.1.1 Students' reasons for having AT sessions

Respondents commented on the reasons why they had decided to have a direct experience of the AT. Findings show multiple and varied responses, with many similarities among respondents in different educational settings: university music departments (UMDs), music conservatoires (MCs), and one independent HE music institution (IHEMI).

One of the most common reasons for music students to have AT sessions was to increase their postural comfort whilst playing. Further responses revealed that this often intertwined with solving musculoskeletal pain due to playing and reducing muscular tension. For example, MCS-PhD-P132 noted: 'I am always looking for the best

way to hold my instrument and to play without pain. I had pinched nerves from playing and reoccurring frozen shoulder which is why I took lessons originally'. This was echoed by UMDS-MA-96: 'I first started [the AT] for physical reasons — I'd had repetitive strain injury and I always felt some physical discomfort while playing'; similarly, MCS-UG-P116 explained: 'I had a lot of tension in my upper back, shoulders and arms. I also developed tendonitis. I took lessons to help this'. In one case, pain was deemed to be the result of both academic studies and playing-related reasons:

[I started having AT lessons because] I was experiencing back pain from academic study — sitting down and using a laptop for many hours on end; and shoulder and arm pain on my left side from practising the flute every day due to the awkward cross-body posture that flute-playing requires. (UMDS-MA-P98)

Another student reported that their need to take AT one-to-one lessons had originated from an interest in increasing postural awareness and comfort due to underlying health conditions. As UMDS-UG-P94 explained: 'I have scoliosis and general joint hypermobility syndrome hence the need to understand my posture better'.

Another common reason for music students to have AT sessions was curiosity. MCS-UG-P121 reported: 'these lessons were offered by my conservatoire, and I was mostly very curious to try it out'. This resonated with UMDS-UG-P85: 'the first lesson I had was out of curiosity as I had never heard of [the AT], and I thought I'd check it out'. Curiosity was also sparked by an interest in the health and well-being of musicians. UMDS-UG-P89 explained how their interest arose through the physical benefits of the AT that had been promoted to them, which highlights how the uptake of AT sessions and perceptions of the AT might be affected by the specific benefits of the AT promoted to people: 'I was curious as I'd heard of it before and heard about the benefits for posture and back pain' (UMDS-UG-P89). MCS-UG-P117 observed that: 'I have always been curious about gaining a better understanding of how our musicianship affects our health (both physical and mental), so I was also intrigued by AT for that reason'. This connects to UMDS-UG-P94, who commented: 'I ... struggle with my mental and physical health and wanted to gain greater insight into the mind-body connection', pointing at a view of the AT as a perceived psychophysical practice.

Several respondents indicated that another common reason for taking AT sessions was to enhance music performance, but only a few students provided

detailed comments on this. Among these, MCS-MA-P130 wrote that they 'had heard about improvements to playing/singing' on the Internet and therefore decided to take AT lessons. However, UMDS-PhD-P102, who had indicated music performance enhancement as the only reason to take AT sessions, wrote that they had started AT lessons because they 'had tension in [their] playing', suggesting that the music performance benefits they had expected to gain were perceived to be the result of reduced muscular tension and not resulting from inherent qualities of the AT as a music performance enhancer. Interestingly, one student reported that they had started having AT sessions to 'improve [their] scores' (UMDS-UG-P87), highlighting that there is perception that the AT could support their results. All of this raises questions about parity of opportunities among music students pursuing performance-based degrees.

A few respondents commented that they had started AT sessions to prevent injuries and develop good postural habits. UMDS-PhD-P104 explained that they had attended an introductory workshop in their previous institution to reduce playing tension and improve their playing technique as well as to prevent injuries:

I was interested and thought it had potential to help me become even more comfortable when playing and also improve my technique and prevent future physical issues, so I attended the introductory sessions at [name of a university music department].

This echoed MCS-MA-P129 who stated that they 'had never experienced any [playing-related issues] in any serious form' but 'nevertheless [had] felt [the AT] could be a useful tool to either prevent or use in case those symptoms did appear' and thus decided to attend some AT group classes. Another respondent, who had attended a one-off AT session out of curiosity, described the following:

At the time, I wasn't experiencing any pain around my playing, but I was encouraged by the musical director to make the most of the free lesson offered during our residential as we were told it would help us to make good habits as developing musicians. (UMDS-MA-P97)

Interestingly, while the respondent did not explicitly refer to postural habits in this comment, they wrote in another segment of the survey that they had expected to gain 'better performing posture/awareness of posture while performing', pointing again at the perception of the AT as a postural technique.

Other music students mentioned further reasons to take AT sessions. A few of them reported that they attended AT group classes and workshops as mandatory components of a music course outside HE or a degree in a MC. For example, UMDS-UG-P90 wrote that an introductory AT session was a ‘compulsory course for summer school’. Conversely, MCS-UG-P124 wrote that AT ‘classes were part of [an] undergraduate course’. The student in the IHEMI, on the other hand, said that they had not had ‘a health reason for exploring AT *per se* [emphasis added]’ but that the AT had been ‘offered as a continuing professional development opportunity’ (IHEMIS-PhD-P133), highlighting the role of HE music institutions in promoting the AT and the recognition these may give to it.

Lastly, a few respondents indicated that they had started taking AT sessions to solve performance anxiety issues. UMDS-UG-P87 wrote that they had taken AT lessons because of ‘anxiety closing up throat [and] anxiety attacks in performances’. MCS-UG-119, who indicated that they had started one-to-one lessons both to deal with performance anxiety and to enhance their music performance, further commented that ‘one main reason [to take AT lessons] was a need/want to feel in command of [themselves] when performing and building awareness and presence when playing’. On the other hand, only one student mentioned that they had started taking AT lessons after having been ‘hurt while doing physical activity’ (UMDS-PhD-P100).

11.1.2 Experienced (expected and unexpected) and perceived benefits of the AT

Respondents commented on their direct experience of the AT. Many of them expressed positive sentiments about it. For example, several said that it was ‘useful’ (UMDS-UG-P92; MCS-PhD-P131), ‘very helpful’ (UMDS-PhD-P99; MCS-UG-122), ‘very interesting’ (UMDS-UG-P89; MCS-UG-P117), ‘extremely beneficial’ (UMDS-UG-P85; UMDS-UG-P118), and ‘life-changing’ (UMDS-MA-98). One respondent said that after an initial feeling of discomfort, they had found AT sessions interesting; as UMDS-MA-P95 explained: it was ‘awkward at first but [I] was able to engage with it more as it went on’.

According to this sample of music students, the most stated benefits of AT sessions were increased body awareness, reduced tension and pain, and postural comfort. These benefits interlinked with each other and were perceived to have a

positive impact on music performance. UMDS-PhD-P99 described in detail how beneficial the AT had been after having adapted to it:

My muscles were very tense while playing (both in practice and performance), for example, my shoulders were constantly raised, my jaw was tensed, and my wrists had very little flexibility. I didn't realise how tense I was until it was pointed out during the sessions ... and simply being made aware of this was a shock. I took a while to get used to trying to relax during practice, but I benefitted greatly and have a great freedom in my playing as a result.

This was echoed by MCS-UG-P118 who stated: 'I used to be a very tense player which caused me massive pain. [The] AT has allowed me to release this tension, reduce pain and massively improved my playing'. In one case, this increased body awareness was quite surprising: 'I did not expect to get anything but a quick fix of my knee. Instead, I have had the chance to learn more about both the capabilities of my body and the tensions I experience without realising it' (UMDS-PhD-P100). With regard to postural benefits, UMDS-UG-P89 wrote: '[I] found [the AT] very interesting and got a lot out of it, with a new look on how I should stand and sit when playing an instrument or singing'. This approach to physical awareness and postural comfort was felt non-judgemental by one respondent who highlighted: 'I got great feedback on my posture but also understood that I wasn't being critiqued for the way my body was and rather just becoming more aware of how my body naturally functioned' (MCS-UG-P127).

These experienced physical benefits aligned with the expectations of many respondents. For example, MCS-UG-P122 indicated: 'I was expecting what it provided me: playing without so much tension and being freer and more comfortable with my instrument'. It is interesting to note that these outcomes were also in line with data among music students without a direct experience with the AT. According to many of these music students, the AT allows a 'better understanding of how your body is when performing' (UMDS-UG-P56) and leads to 'improved posture whilst playing ..., and also having less injuries and feeling less strained whilst playing and practising' (MCS-MA-P115), highlighting perceptions of the AT as a purely physical practice.

Another common benefit was performance anxiety. While in a few cases this appeared to be an expected outcome of the AT, in many others this was unexpected. One respondent noted that by having AT lessons, they had envisaged to 'stay calm when in front of an audience' and the AT 'helped with' it (UMDS-MA-P95). Another respondent wrote that despite thinking at first that the AT was 'simply relaxation', the

AT 'helped greatly with performance anxiety, and, due to this, enabled [them] to move into professional music-making' (UMDS-PhD-P101). This had a knock-on effect on the respondent's ability to engage with their music performance. As they described: 'using the AT ... meant that my conducting technique, in particular, took on more connection with the music, with less physical and mental effort'.

Many other respondents expressed a sense of surprise about the focus of the AT on the mind-body connection. UMDS-UG-P96 commented that 'over time [the AT] became more than just the physical aspects, but also the mental aspects, such as dealing with music performance anxiety, getting yourself in the right mindset for performances', and they had not realised 'how much of a mental aspect there was to AT'. This echoed MCS-UG-P116's assertion: 'I didn't expect the mental aspect of it all'. Although some respondents who had not had a direct experience with the AT highlighted possible psychophysical benefits of the AT, such as UMDS-UG-P61, who wrote that the AT 'could help make students more insightful to how physical and mental attitudes can and do affect our playing', performance anxiety was less prominent than other purely physical benefits envisaged by this group.

Other music students were pleased to notice how the AT had positively impacted their everyday life. One respondent described this in detail, highlighting both the benefits they had noticed and the time and effort they had spent in integrating the AT in their life:

In my first lesson about two years ago, I had a moment of feeling entirely free from chronic pain for the first time in over a year. Since then, I have been practising every night³⁶ (when I remember!), and it has helped hugely with study-related back pain and repetitive strain injury, as well as providing a daily dose of mindfulness ... I didn't realise how much the AT would affect my daily life for the better ... My teacher showed me how to incorporate the Technique into simple, everyday actions such as standing up, sitting on a chair, and interacting with basic objects. In addition, I had a couple of sessions with my flute: my teacher helped me practise AT while I opened my flute case, assembled my flute, brought it into position, prepared to play, and blew a single note. (UMDS-MA-P98)

Similarly, MCS-UG-P119 wrote: 'I felt much more aware of my body but also my surroundings which was surprising. I also gained much more grounding/awareness in my playing but also in my everyday life'. Furthermore, the AT was believed by some

³⁶ This respondent may be referring to the constructive rest (De Alcantara, 1999/2007).

music students to help with other stressful situations and lead to increased confidence. UMDS-MA-P95 noted: I 'was able to apply the techniques to more general life and anxiety faced outside of performance'. This view was corroborated by UMDS-PhD-P101 who illustrated:

[I experienced] increased mental and physical confidence. As a naturally (very) shy person, this was what enabled me to be a more effective musician, and really also has helped me to become a mature student to obtain a first degree, and then to take up encouragement to embark on a PhD.

Interestingly, this respondent mentioned that their 'direct experience with AT was around 40 years ago', which indicates the distinctive and historical feature of the AT as a psychophysical practice.

A few respondents noted the benefits of the AT as a transferable skill to learning and teaching. UMDS-MA-P97, who had attended one AT group workshop, explained how they had used AT principles to learn a new instrument and cultivate good practices: 'the awareness that I gained from my lesson has enabled me to pick up the new instrument without getting into bad habits'. In addition, they wrote that they had made 'reference to AT as a teacher when [they would teach] students about posture'. This tied in with MCS-PhD-P131 who commented that they used 'principles of Alexander within [their] teaching', raising questions about the implications of AT training and AT-based knowledge for music students who might undertake any teaching (e.g. private tuition) and professional IVTs.

11.1.3 Mixed and negative experiences

A few respondents expressed mixed and negative feelings about the AT. These generally related to the nature of the AT. UMDS-PhD-P105 wrote that it was 'useful at the time' but then 'it became redundant the more experience and confidence [they] gained as a musician', adding quite strongly that the AT was 'pointless'. UMDS-UG-P89 described that 'parts of it were very relaxing [and others] were difficult and frustrating', such as the 'non-doing'. They continued saying that they 'always hoped it would improve [them] musically' but acknowledged that they had not perhaps applied 'the ideas well enough' (MCS-MA-P130). Furthermore, MCS-MA-P128 stated that their experience with the AT was 'okay' but they 'didn't really understand what it was' due to their young age.

Conversely, one music student³⁷ described that their experiences with the AT depended on the AT teacher. As they explained: '[the experience I had with the AT teacher in my HE music institution] did not help to relieve the physical tensions and postural issues that I sought help for and had flagged up. In this sense it differed greatly from my previous experience of AT', adding that they had found intrusive the AT teacher asking questions about their private life, an approach that they considered irrelevant to the purpose of AT sessions.

11.1.4 Limitations of the AT

While a few students wrote that they did not notice any limitations of the AT (e.g. MC-UG-P118) but did not provide much detail about this, others commented on some of the limitations that they had experienced, explaining what these were and how they may have impacted their overall experience with the AT.

One of the limitations concerned the extent to which the content of AT sessions related to music. One respondent illustrated that the usefulness of AT sessions depended on whether sessions had focussed on the application to music or not: 'I had a few lessons separate to music which were not much help' (UMDS-PhD-P102). In a similar manner, MCS-MA-P130 indicated that AT lessons had been helpful for physical activities, such as 'swimming and running', but they did not feel that the AT had been 'applied directly to musical ideas', which they had expected it would have helped with.

A few other respondents found it difficult to replicate the results experienced during AT sessions in their own time. One student, who had taken more than ten AT sessions on a fortnightly basis, ascribed this difficulty to the type of guidance received, which contributed to ceasing sessions:

I had a hard time recreating the experience alone, so I eventually stopped taking the lessons ... The main limitation for me was that I was often unable to recreate the experience I had during a lesson when I practised alone because the guidance was quite vague ... [and I] didn't understand what I was supposed to do. (UMDS-PhD-P103)

UMDS-MA-P96, who had sought AT sessions to attain 'less tension ... [and] more comfort and freedom while playing' and had taken more than ten AT sessions on one-

³⁷ The P-number has intentionally been omitted for anonymity reasons.

off and weekly bases, did not explain the reasons why they could not replicate what they had experienced during AT sessions but commented on how frustrating it had been. This resulted in a sense of dependence on the AT teacher who they thought would have provided them with self-help skills in contrast to their instrumental teacher:

I found that ... I'd have this amazing experience during class but couldn't do it on my own, which can lead to a sense of dependency and helplessness, which was exactly what I was trying to work on because I used to feel dependent on my piano teacher. (UMDS-MA-P96)

Other limitations concerned the AT's application to instrumental/vocal (I/V) practice. UMDS-PhD-P99 lamented a reduced concentration on the musical aspects of playing because of a perceived extensive focus on bodily sensations: 'I was concentrating more on how my body felt when practising rather than concentrating on the music'. However, they continued that they were 'not sure if this [reduced concentration would] necessarily [be] a negative thing in the long run', hinting at the benefits of the AT that may appear over time. In fact, the AT may take 'a long time to apply to actual playing/performance', as UMDS-PhD-P104, for example, felt. Furthermore, another student wrote about the challenges in reconciling AT instruction with vocal lessons, highlighting potential friction between AT and I/V teachers: 'some concepts of AT were challenged by my vocal teachers and coaches, who were stating the exact opposite methods of movement/muscle engagement [and what would be] right/helpful' (UMDS-UG-P124). Since some of these limitations of the AT led to quitting AT lessons, as described by UMDS-PhD-P103 in the previous paragraph, the next section examines findings about music students' reasons to stop and continue taking AT sessions.

11.1.5 Factors influencing engagement with the AT: Reasons to stop or to continue taking sessions

The majority of music students who had had a direct experience with the AT answered that they had stopped taking AT sessions. Of the 22 UMD students who answered the questions, only two were still taking or were about to resume AT sessions. Among the 17 MC students, only one was still having AT sessions, whereas the student in the IHEMI had stopped taking them.

Many respondents provided multiple reasons that had led them to quit AT sessions. One of the most common factors was cost and that fact that AT sessions were considered to be 'quite expensive' (UMDS-UG-P85). This coupled with the views of some UMD students about how aspects relating to the provision of and funding for the AT had impacted their choice to stop taking AT sessions (a detailed analysis of the provision of the AT within HE music institutions will be discussed in Chapter 12). UMDS-UG-P85 said: 'I only had the free sessions that were offered by the university as I couldn't afford to pay for them myself'. Likewise, UMDS-PhD-P100 explained the financial challenges of self-funding AT lessons and the correlation between the effectiveness of the AT and regular commitment to it:

The price of the sessions definitely played a part in my decision to stop taking AT lessons ... As a student and part-time worker, I could not afford AT sessions on a weekly basis at that price (almost £40), and regularity is probably vital to the positive outcome of AT.

Interestingly, one UMD student, who had taken AT lessons in a previous institution, a MC, said that they had stopped taking AT lessons because they 'couldn't afford it anymore' (UMDS-PhD-P103).

The reason to stop taking AT sessions because of costs involved was less prevalent among MC students. In fact, some of them explained that they had stopped taking AT sessions because of a limited number of sessions paid for by their institutions or the fact that the AT had been offered as a short elective course. MCS-UG-P127, for example, said that they had stop taking AT sessions because the 'college prescribed hours ran out'. Similarly, MCS-UG-P125 and MCS-UG-P123 wrote respectively that 'the course at conservatoire finished', and that they had 'picked it as an elective ... and completed the course'. This was echoed by the student in an IHEMI who mentioned that they had stopped taking AT lessons because they had finished the 'token sessions' available to them within an employed role at their institution (IHEMIS-PhD-P133). However, one student, MCS-UG-P117, mentioned the financial difficulties of affording AT private lessons, revealing how policies on provision may impact students' choices to engage with the AT and how cost may have been an indirect reason for this sample of MC students to stop taking AT lessons: 'I can't afford to pay for them privately at the moment and I cannot get them regularly through my institution'. Indeed, some MC students expressed a desire for their institution to provide more free AT lessons: 'it

would be great to have access to one-on-one sessions for free at any time of year'. This therefore suggests that cost may still have indirectly played a role in MC students' choices to stop taking AT lessons, despite more widespread institutional provision in the conservatoire sector.

UMD respondents mentioned that, similar to MC students, they had stopped taking sessions when the course providing them had finished or when they had left the institution in which they had taken these sessions. UMDS-UG-P93 explained that they had quitted AT sessions because the '[choral] course ended', whereas UMDS-UG-P92 and UMDS-PhD-P103 wrote respectively that they stopped taking sessions because they had 'left high school' and because their 'Master's course [had come] to a close'. Nonetheless, the fact that the course providing AT lessons had finished did not always lead to an interest in taking further sessions. As UMDS-MA-P97 wrote: 'I only had one free lesson, and I didn't feel the need to continue taking them after returning from the residential'. This connected to the fact that a few other UMD students stopped having AT sessions due to reaching a plateau. For example, while UMDS-PhD-P102 'felt [AT lessons] weren't achieving any further', UMD-PhD-P100 stated that their 'knee [had] recovered in a few days and so did not see the point of continuing' lessons, illustrating how expectations affect music students' engagement with the AT in the long run. This sense of having reached a plateau was echoed by a few MC students. While for some of them this had a negative connotation, such as MCS-PhD-P132 who stated they had stopped taking AT sessions because they had 'met its limitations with regards to how it could help' them, for one music student that appeared to be a positive situation: MCS-UG-P118, who had taken more than ten AT sessions, stopped these because of having 'enough knowledge to carry on by myself', indicating the potential of the AT as a tool of self-empowerment.

Some UMD students stopped having sessions because of time commitments. As UMDS-UG-P91 explained: 'the AT was a one-off as part of an online course. I didn't have the time to continue with it'. For several students, the AT was in fact a 'big time commitment ... and not a quick fix' (UMDS-UG-P85); it could add 'another thing to ... often extremely busy schedules' (UMDS-UG-P89), which were felt to be potential barriers to engagement with recurrent AT lessons. Although MC students did not specifically mention that they had stopped taking AT sessions because of time commitments, a few of them explained that the AT required 'the need to be very

patient with yourself in order to be able to achieve a good practice' (MCS-UG-P122) and that 'some [students] will have lost their interest before they gain the benefits' (MCS-MA-P130). This highlights that time constraints and a desire for immediate results could conflict with the nature of the AT.

A few music students mentioned that they had stopped taking sessions because of reasons related to their AT teacher. This pertained to UMD rather than MC students. While two of them said that they had stopped taking sessions because their teacher had 'moved away' (UMDS-PhD-P101), two others did not develop a good rapport with the AT teacher. In particular, one of them wrote that they 'did not feel comfortable at all with idea of keeping having sessions with [the AT teacher]'³⁸ but they did not disclose what these issues were.

Finally, only a few students were still having AT sessions. One of them mentioned how the COVID-19 pandemic had disrupted their learning and wrote about the reasons to resume lessons and the benefits they expected to gain:

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, I have had no lessons for just over a year ... I have noticed the marked effects of not having weekly AT lessons and thus often forgetting to practise every night — my back and shoulder pain has been considerably worse, and I have forgotten a lot of the Technique, so have found the pain more difficult to manage. I am therefore starting up lessons again so that I can re-familiarise myself with the Technique, return to my daily practice and weekly lessons, and hopefully observe positive changes in my body again. (UMDS-MA-P98)

UMDS-UG-P94, on the other hand, stated that they were still taking AT lessons because they had 'paid for a set of 10!' but acknowledged that they had 'a lot to learn', tying in with what MCS-UG-P126 wrote regarding their reason to continue taking AT lessons: 'I find [the AT] very beneficial and feel there is still plenty to learn about it'.

11.1.6 Perceived risks of the AT

Music students commented on the potential risks of the AT. Many of them did not envisage or were not aware of any risks, suggesting that the AT could be seen as a safe practice. 'I don't see any risks', UMDS-MA-P95 wrote. This was echoed by MCS-MA-P130 who said: 'nothing comes to my mind'. Some of them, however, provided more detailed answers and speculated about the potential risks of the AT.

³⁸ The P-number has intentionally been left out.

A common theme among responses was the importance of a trained AT teacher to avoid injuries. UMDS-MA-P97 explained:

The only risk I can think of would be if the practitioner wasn't qualified to deliver lessons, especially to those with special needs. Everybody's bodies are different, and if a practitioner didn't understand the body well enough, then they could actually lead to doing more harm than good.

Likewise, MCS-UG-P10 said that 'not having a good AT teacher' could be a risk. In addition, a high level of professionalism was felt necessary to deal with hands-on guidance in a sensible manner. UMDS-MA-P97 wrote that 'AT lessons can also be intimate, so it is important that the practitioner is someone who can be trusted'. This was mirrored by the student in the IHEMI who emphasised that 'safeguarding and wellbeing must be upheld' considering the 'inevitable touching of students'. In fact, according to UMDS-PhD-P100, some people may be reluctant to receive hands-on work, but this was deemed a fundamental part of the AT:

In consideration of my little experience, I do not see any risks in taking AT lessons unless someone is really reluctant to engage with a technique that is basically performed hands-on. However, in this case I do wonder what's the point of having AT sessions... I feel it's a bit like trying to play [an instrument] without touching [it], it makes no sense!

The AT teacher, therefore, needed to be appropriate for the student. As UMDS-MA-P96 argued: 'I think the teacher has to be right for you'; nonetheless, they continued that 'there's so much variability between teachers that it's hard to generalise', drawing attention to the variety of teaching approaches to the AT and teachers' individual traits.

11.1.7 The definition of the AT: A variety of definitions

Students with knowledge of the AT were asked to define the AT at the end of the survey. Responses showed a variety of definitions. Since students often referred to multiple qualities of the AT, it was not always possible to separate these characteristics.

Students addressed the AT in a variety of ways: from a technique/method (e.g. UMDS-MA-P66) to a set of exercises (e.g. UMDS-UG-P93). Many responses were tailored to the music field, whereas others related to physical practices in general. Many students without a direct experience of the AT generally referred to the AT as a

postural technique. UMDS-MA-P68 stated that the AT is ‘some kind of advice given to improve the posture of musicians’; similarly, UMDS-UG-P62 wrote the AT is ‘a method used to help improve posture’. This tied in with MCS-MA-P115: the AT is ‘using postural techniques to relieve and minimise strain and excess stress on the body’.

In contrast, many of those students with a direct experience of the AT mentioned both its bodily and mental characteristics. UMDS-UG-P91 argued that the AT is a ‘technique that is used to help a musician recognise the importance of the connection to their body, mind and the quality of their playing’. MCS-MA-P130 highlighted the focus of the AT on dealing with habits: ‘[the AT is] letting go of habitual tensions by using the mind to inhibit these reactions and release the muscles’. UMDS-PhD-P103 provided a more general definition of the AT, addressing both the postural and mental characteristics of the AT: ‘the AT is a somatic method with the goal of creating effortless movement and a flexible and healthy posture. It also has cognitive elements acknowledging the connection between thought being movement’. This was echoed by MCS-UG-P117 who stated that the ‘AT is the correlation between thought and movement, and a practice that helps people use their body in the most effective and thoughtful way possible’. On the other hand, other students referred to the AT as a body awareness practice: ‘a method of building awareness of the body’ (MCS-UG-P119). Interestingly, one student with a direct experience of the AT defined the AT as mainly postural technique: the AT is ‘a way of improving postural problems’ (MCS-MA-P128), which suggests that perceptions of the AT might be difficult to generalise. For example, UMDS-UG-P61, who had not taken any AT sessions, described how their understanding and definition of the AT had been influenced by other people’s perceptions of it:

I would define the Alexander Technique as a branch of music practice/study which focuses on mentality and the physical body — posture, mindset, perhaps even lifestyle choices such as diet and sleep ... From how I have heard others talk of Alexander technique, it is not simply having good posture, it is also a set of ideas that can be made into a lifestyle, meant to be carried out throughout the day, not exclusively before, during or after a performance ... Having never had a lesson in it myself I may be wrong, but this is how I’ve understood it from hearing others talk about it.

This indicates that the perceptions of the AT might depend on several factors, such as word of mouth, which also affect the way people may define it.

11.1.8 Experiences with the AT — A detailed examination: Discussion

This study showed that music students sought to take AT sessions for several reasons. The most common was to increase postural comfort and reduce musculoskeletal disorders. While in most cases these issues were associated with playing and practising, in one instance these were the result of sitting at the computer for extended periods of time (i.e. UMDS-MA-P98's comment in relation to back pain). These findings align with previous research on playing-related musculoskeletal disorders among music students (Kok et al., 2013) and the effectiveness of the AT in reducing back pain (Little et al., 2008), with implications for the place of the AT in HE music institutions as a form of support not only for music students undertaking performance-based degrees but also for theoretical ones. The fact that one student (UMDS-UG-P94) had turned to the AT to increase their understanding of posture and to deal with underlying health conditions, Joint Hypermobility Syndrome and scoliosis, has important implications for the provision of the AT to those music students who may be affected by the same condition and may find the AT beneficial in dealing with it. There are no studies about the effectiveness of the AT in participants with hypermobility — except for sparse anecdotal evidence (Bull, 2015) — or with scoliosis, and thus further research could be undertaken to explore this.

Findings illustrated that curiosity had influenced music students in taking AT sessions and, in some instances, attending AT workshops and classes offered by institutions. Data showed how curiosity about the health and well-being had affected music students' choices to engage in the AT. This is interesting as it suggests that curiosity is an important factor impacting the uptake of AT lessons in HE music institutions but raises questions about how to develop an interest for the AT among those music students who may not necessarily have a natural curiosity for it. It is possible that some promotional styles and strategies could pique curiosity about the AT (see Chapter 12). Furthermore, it could be speculated that increasing students' interest in the health and well-being of musicians may correlate with a rise in the uptake of AT sessions in HE institutions where both health and well-being courses and AT sessions are offered; nonetheless, further work is needed to demonstrate this correlation. Interestingly, one of the issues that emerges from these findings is that curiosity for the AT had been sparked by the promotion of the physical benefits of the AT (e.g. relating to posture and back pain). Although this shows the challenges that

bring some music students to the AT, it highlights perceptions of the AT as a primarily physical practice, raising intriguing questions regarding the communication of the nature of the AT in the music community.

The current study found that another reason for HE music students to take AT sessions was to enhance music performance. This, however, appeared to be a consequence of a desire to reduce stiffness and muscular tension rather than a benefit of the AT per se. Only a few music students reported having had AT sessions to prevent injuries and develop good habits, suggesting that the AT may be seen as a treatment rather than a preventative tool by those who may have not yet started sessions, for example. It is not therefore surprising that a large number of music students had engaged in the AT to resolve musculoskeletal disorders (see previous paragraph). Prevention is central to the AT philosophy (Alexander, 1923/1987). However, this study revealed the prevalence of perceptions of the AT among this sample of music students as a mainly rehabilitative practice and therefore this study supports action within the AT community to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the AT in the HE music sector.

What is surprising is that one UMD student had started AT sessions to improve their academic performance, given that the AT is largely promoted as supporting performance and posture. For example, the Royal Academy of Music promotes the AT as way to ‘release tension, correct bad postural habits and keep your body aligned – all vital for getting the best out of your career in music’ (Royal Academy of Music, 2022, n. p.). The combination of this and the previous finding has implications for the equality of opportunities in those institutions providing music performance degrees and where the AT is offered but is entirely funded by students, resulting in potential inequalities among those music students who can and cannot afford to take AT sessions. It is true that music students may still undertake AT sessions through a private provider and benefit from this; nonetheless, inequality may arise when it is the institution itself that may inadvertently cause this through providing the AT as a “pay-for-it yourself” option.

Only a few respondents started AT sessions because of these being a compulsory part of a music course or an undergraduate degree in a MC. Regarding the HE music sector, while this finding indicates that the AT might prevalently be additional to the music curriculum, it may suggest that in some MCs the AT may be considered an important component of music students’ development (a comparison of

aspects of provision between UMDs and MCs will be made in Chapter 12). On the other hand, it is interesting that the PhD student in the IHEMI revealed that AT had been offered to them as part of their Continuing Professional Development (CPD). A potential explanation of this might be that the culture of the institution could emphasise the health and well-being of those within it and may value the AT as a relevant form of support. Further work is advocated to investigate the long-term effect of providing AT sessions as part of CPD for postgraduate researchers and staff, but this raises questions about the feasibility of offering AT sessions to PhD students and employees in institutions which may not be able to afford such provision. It is possible that some institutions may not offer individual lessons and therefore other options, such as group classes, could be considered to minimise the financial burden (an examination of one-to-one and group sessions will be discussed in Chapter 13).

Findings revealed that many respondents had enjoyed their AT sessions. The fact that in one case (i.e. UMDS-MA-P95) the level of interest and engagement had increased after an initial feeling of discomfort might suggest that for some students it may take time to engage with the AT, and care may be required from AT teachers to introduce and teach the AT. Respondents indicated a wide range of benefits from increased body awareness and reduced pain to enhanced music performance and reduced performance anxiety. This is consistent with previous research studies on the effects of AT lessons on music students (Davies 2020b; Klein et al., 2014) and supports findings in Valentine et al.'s (1995) research, for example, in which 'all subjects mentioned help with physical effects such as breathing or posture' and 'others emphasised mental attitudes towards playing' (p. 138). In addition, some respondents in this current study identified the AT as a useful tool to cope with everyday challenges, corroborating anecdotal evidence in Lee's (2019) research illustrating that the AT had 'provided [students] a practical living skill to deal with various life situations' (p. 116). Furthermore, the present study found that the AT might be a transferrable skill to learning and teaching. This might be explained by the fact that the AT focusses on *skills* and *processes* applicable to different spheres of lives rather than on a set of passive exercises (STAT, 2023a). Further research could investigate the viability of AT-based content for music students who may develop an interest in teaching, but this again poses questions about the extent to which AT knowledge could be transferred by unqualified individuals, as discussed in 10.2.5.

Physical benefits of the AT were found to be generally in line with music students' expectations about the AT, whereas benefits to music performance anxiety deviated from those expectations. In fact, data showed that only a few students had engaged in the AT to resolve performance anxiety issues. It is possible that students had good support with music performance anxiety from their IVTs and did not need extra support on this or that they were not necessarily undertaking much performance. This low prevalence might also be explained by perceptions of the AT as a mainly physical practice, aligning with beliefs among respondents who had not taken any AT sessions: it was thus not surprising that also among these students, benefits to performance anxiety were less common than physical ones. It is not possible to compare these findings with previous research since this is the only study investigating music students' expectations of the AT. Nonetheless, UMDS-PhD-P101's account concerning the long-standing psychophysical characteristics of the AT echoes potential miscommunication about the nature of the AT highlighted throughout the course of this dissertation (see the penultimate paragraph of section 11.1.2). Therefore, these findings have implications for enhancing communication about the AT between the AT and the music community in the UK HE music sector.

While many students had found the AT beneficial, a few others expressed mixed and negative feelings about it. It is difficult to explain why one respondent had initially found the AT 'useful' and then 'redundant' and 'pointless' (see UMDS-PhD-P105, 11.1.3), but it might be related to the student's personality, the kind of AT teaching received, and/or the ways in which their IVT may have included work which overlapped. Yet, these are just speculations and cannot be supported by evidence in previous research, given the lack of it. Aspects relating to the nature of the AT, such as non-doing (see 11.1.3), were also considered to result in a sense of frustration towards the AT. This is interesting because non-doing is one of the basic principles of the AT philosophy (see Chapter 2). As F. M. Alexander (1941/2015) wrote: 'in my work, we are concerned primarily with non-doing in the fundamental sense of what we should not do in the use of ourselves in our daily activities' (p. 142). This finding has implications for the communication of AT that may require AT teachers to explain concepts considering the different ways in which individuals respond to challenges and new situations.

The age at which students had taken AT sessions was found to impact their experience with the AT. Notably, the fact that one student had not understood the nature of the AT due to their young age (MCS-MA-P128) suggests that AT sessions need to be adapted to students' ages. Bosanquet (1987) advocated the importance of the AT to all levels of music education and thus this adaptation of the AT to students' ages is paramount considering that the perceptions of the AT that individuals develop in those years may consequently influence their uptake of AT sessions in their further studies (e.g. to resume AT later on in life). Furthermore, findings showed that different approaches to teaching the AT impact music students' views of the AT. A teaching approach that probes the individuals' psyche may hinder participation of those students who may not be willing to disclose personal information. Further research could investigate AT teachers' approaches to teaching and the extent to which disclosing personal information is necessary for a positive AT experience.

Other important findings related to the limitations of the AT experienced by some music students. Sessions which had focussed on a direct application of the AT to music playing were found to be more useful than those on everyday activities (see 11.1.4). This supports the results in Davies' (2020b) research suggesting that 'an AT curriculum specifically designed for music students is likely to be beneficial across a range of factors influencing both health and performance' (p. 4). However, this application approach to the AT (i.e. directly focussing on complex activities, such as playing an instrument) has generated controversy in the AT community over the years, with many supporters advocating a 'classical teaching' of the AT which focusses on the attainment of basic skills through simple procedures, such as standing up/sitting down on/off a chair, before its application to more complex activities, such as music playing/singing (Fischer, 2022, n. p.). A classical teaching of the AT seems to be in line with Alexander's principle of end-gaining and concerns regarding practices focussing on reaching an end rather than on the means through which a movement, for example, can be indirectly achieved (Alexander, 1910/1946; Alexander, 1941/2015 — see Chapter 2). In the same vein, Rootberg (2011) described the benefits of a step-by-step approach to the AT in relation to singing:

I told [my pupil] that some students coming for voice expect only to work on breath, voice, and a bit of posture; and I could use the principles of the Alexander Technique through that direct application, but that through my

teaching experience I've learned that those who took the time to learn the principles first and then apply them to voice were—in the long run—happier with the outcome and stuck with the lessons longer so they could deepen their skills sufficiently to become more independent and confident in working on themselves. (pp. 157-158)

It is therefore suggested that longitudinal studies are undertaken to evaluate the effectiveness of the application approach to the AT in contrast with a classical one as there is a lack of research on the efficacy of both approaches in the long run.

Another important limitation of the AT, which a few music students mentioned, related to the replication of the AT experience in students' own time. The perception that this difficulty was due to vague instructions could be explained by the experiential nature of the AT in which students may need to rely on the AT teacher to acquire new sensory experiences, especially in the first stages of their learning. However, it was surprising that the two students who revealed this difficulty had taken more than ten AT individual and group sessions, raising questions about the number of AT sessions necessary to achieve replicable results independently of the teacher. It is possible that the frequency of the sessions (e.g. fortnightly) might have impacted students' ability to sustain their learning or that their difficulty in replicating the results might be ascribed to AT teachers' approaches to teaching. Therefore, these findings emphasise a need for clear guidance and students' need to achieve independent learning skills, also considering that the AT is claimed to be 'a skill for self-development' (STAT, 2023a, n. p.), and again point to the need for further research.

Findings revealed that a few students had found it difficult to apply AT principles specifically to I/V practice. One respondent observed that this challenge could be normal, aligning with findings in Jørgensen's (2015) investigation in which students had realised that the AT was not a quick fix. A potential explanation of the difficulty in applying AT principles to I/V practice might be that the AT aims at helping people develop new habits and, considering that student may have developed their playing skills over the course of many years, it may take time to embed new habitual behaviours. Furthermore, the perceived difficulty in applying AT principles because of incongruences with I/V techniques suggests that there may be scope for collaboration between I/V and AT teachers to develop ways in which the AT could be integrated into I/V practice successfully, without incurring fundamental clashes potentially leading to confusion among music students.

This study found that cost had been one of main reasons for UMD students to quit AT sessions. Some students mentioned the financial challenges in continuing to take AT sessions, taking advantage of the limited opportunities provided free of charge by the institutions. Regularity was found to be necessary to achieve consistent results but financially impractical for those having to pay for sessions. In contrast, a lower number of MC students reported stopping taking these because of financial difficulties. This could be explained by the fact that some MCs may provide more AT opportunities to music students rather than UMDs (see next chapter). Nonetheless, cost could have been an indirect reason for students to stop taking sessions, given that a few students had revealed their struggles in pursuing private sessions, whereas others had expressed a desire for their institutions to provide more AT sessions for free (aspects relating to the provision of the AT are examined in more detail in the next chapter). The findings therefore have implications for the implementation of more funding for music students to take regular AT sessions.

Data revealed that some students had stopped taking AT sessions after completing the course which had provided them; this experience had not always sparked an interest in pursuing the AT further. There may be several explanations for this; it is possible that some students may not be predisposed to participate in psychophysical practices because of limited natural inclination to these. Furthermore, other students had remarked on having reached a plateau. In particular, the perception of feeling empowered expressed by MCS-UG-P118 corroborates claims of the AT as being a self-tool, as mentioned above. This is interesting because it raises questions about discrepancies of experience among people taking a relatively high number of AT sessions, making it difficult to interpret findings. However, this study has shown that the AT may be an individual learning experience, whose outcome depends on multifaceted factors.

The rapport with the AT teacher was found to impact the uptake of AT sessions. This was mirrored in Section 10.3.3, revealing that music students' experiences with the AT could be affected by different teaching approaches, which suggests that a positive teacher-student relationship might be of paramount importance for the success of AT sessions. It could be speculated that the student-teacher relationship in AT one-to-one lessons, for example, may resemble that in I/V lessons given the intensity of the one-to-one lesson dynamics (Gaunt, 2008; Gaunt, 2011) and therefore

this finding is not surprising. Further studies are warranted to delineate the characteristics of effective AT teachers, as have already been conducted in relation to IVTs (see Carey et al., 2015; Davidson et al., 1998).

This study found that the COVID-19 pandemic had forced some students to stop taking AT sessions. This finding was not unexpected as the AT involves hands-on guidance, which could be problematic in times where physical contact needs to be avoided or minimised due to health concerns (World Health Organisation, 2020). Furthermore, time issues also led to a few students quitting AT sessions. It is not possible to compare this finding with previous studies directly; however, Davies (2020b) reported that, for some students in their research, 'the main reason given for missing classes [had been] scheduling conflict' (p. 3). This has implications for the provision of elective AT-based activities in HE music institutions considering the importance of regular sessions and music students' schedules. Interestingly, only a few students were taking AT lessons at the time of the data collection. As data was collected in April-May 2021 and the implications of the pandemic were still present (Van Essen-Fishman, 2022), it could be hypothesised that the consequences of the pandemic may have affected the overall number of students who were participating in AT sessions due to health apprehension, the attendance of distance learning courses, or the teacher's availability and adaptability to a difficult environment. Nonetheless, the fact that a few students were continuing AT sessions suggests that the AT represented for them a valuable learning opportunity supporting their music studies.

The AT was found to be a generally safe physical practice according to this sample of music students. This is in line with the NHS (2021) evaluation of the AT and Little et al.'s (2014) study. However, one important finding that emerges is the perception of the importance of a qualified AT teacher to avoid injuries and undertake hands-on guidance in a professional manner, considering how fundamental hands-on work was deemed to AT practice (see UMDS-PhD-P100's view) and the variances in AT teachers' approaches to the AT (see UMDS-MA-P96's comment). To the best of my knowledge there is no standardised code of practice for AT teachers working in HE music institutions and thus these findings have implications for the development of a standardised code of practice providing guidelines for AT teachers working in the HE music sector; this could also be of relevance to the private sector.

Finally, students provided a variety of definitions of the AT. The AT was generally defined as a postural practice by those students without a direct experience of the AT, whereas it was defined as a psychophysical practice, also with postural benefits, or as a body awareness practice by many students with a direct experience of it. This aligns with the findings of the current study comparing the views of those who may see the AT as a purely physical or a psychophysical practice (see 11.1.2), emphasising again the need for a clearer communication of the AT. It is possible that a direct experience of the AT might influence students' understanding of the AT, but the definition of the AT as a postural technique by MCS-MA-P128, who had taken AT sessions at a young age, suggests that a direct experience of the AT might not necessarily correlate with a perception of the AT as a psychophysical practice. It is possible that the AT may be perceived as a postural technique by young learners of the AT, which may then inform their perceptions of the AT in later years (as mentioned above). In addition, word of mouth might be central to influencing people's perceptions and understanding of the AT among those who have not experienced it (see UMDS-UG-P61's view at the end of 11.1.7). This study therefore has implications for improving the communication of the AT in the HE music institution and the broader music community.

11.2 Summary of the chapter: Key themes

This chapter provided a detailed examination of music students' personal experiences with the AT. Findings concerning their reasons to undertake AT sessions, experienced benefits (expected and unexpected), perceived limitations, and unhelpful experiences were discussed. Non-physical benefits were generally noted after a series of AT sessions; however, sessions which had focussed on a direct application of the AT to music were regarded by some respondents as more helpful than those on everyday activities. This chapter also discussed music students' reason to stop or continue taking AT sessions. In particular, cost was one of the most common reasons for students to cease taking AT sessions. Furthermore, the AT was generally perceived as a non-risk practice but considerations were made about the expertise of the AT teacher and the varied approaches to the AT.

Lastly, findings relating to the definition of the AT were examined. A variety of definitions showed differences among students with or without direct experience with

the AT in relation to perceptions of the AT as a purely physical practice. The next chapter will discuss students' perceptions in relation to the provision, the promotion, and the recognition of the AT in UK HE music institutions.

Chapter 12: Perceptions of the AT among HE music students studying in UK HE music institutions

(PART III)

This chapter examines the third set of findings about the perceptions of the AT among Higher Education (HE) music students. While the previous two chapters have discussed students' personal experiences with the AT, Chapter 12 outlines findings about their views on the provision and the promotion of the AT, as well as the recognition of the AT and AT teachers in UK HE music institutions. The questions that this chapter answers are:

- What are the views of music students studying in UK HE music institutions on the provision of the AT in the UK HE music sector?
- What are the views of music students studying in UK HE music institutions on the promotion of the AT in their UK HE music institutions?
- What are the views of music students studying in UK HE music institutions on the recognition of the AT and AT teachers within the UK HE music sector?

12.1 The provision and promotion of the AT in HE music institutions according to music students

Music students were asked to comment on the provision of the AT in the institution where they were studying. Those who had studied in multiple UK HE music institutions were encouraged to provide comparisons among them.

12.1.1 Students who had taken AT sessions in their institutions and those who had not

Many of the university music department (UMD) students with a direct experience of the AT (n=15)³⁹ answered that they had not attended AT sessions in their current institution. Some of them (n=5) had attended AT sessions in summer music courses, whereas others had taken AT sessions privately (n=4), at previous UK HE music

³⁹ 21 out of 26 UMD students answered this question.

institutions (n=1 at a university; n=1 at a conservatoire), at high school (n=2), at a music centre (n=1), or at both a previous UK HE music institution (i.e. university) and a residential course with a youth orchestra (n=1). Only six UMD students wrote that they had taken AT sessions where they were studying. Conversely, many music conservatoire (MC) students (n=11)⁴⁰, as well as the student in an independent HE music institution (IHEMI), had taken or were still taking AT sessions in their current institution, whereas a few other MC students had studied AT privately (n=3), at previous institutions (n=1 at another UK conservatoire; n=1 did not specify it) and at a residential music course (n=1).

12.1.2 Types of provision

Respondents provided some information about the provision of the AT in the institution where studying, even though only a few provided detailed comments about it⁴¹. Given that the survey was anonymous, it was not possible to accurately map out the provision of the AT in the UK HE music institutions in this sample.

Eight UMD students answered that their institution did not provide AT sessions, whereas three of them were not aware of any AT provision. One pointed out that the AT was not offered on a regular basis: ‘my institution does not offer regular AT lessons. I think I have seen one or two AT workshops advertised throughout my time here’ (UMDS-MA-P98). In fact, a few UMD students mentioned that the AT was an additional activity, with limited opportunities for free sessions. UMDS-UG-P85 wrote: ‘the institution provided one free lesson per year to all students’. In contrast, UMDS-MA-P95, who had taken AT sessions at a previous university, explained that ‘the lessons and workshops [had been] offered as part of the performance module to help with performance anxiety and general enhancement in performing’, highlighting diverse provision of the AT among different UMDs. One MC student, who had previously studied at a UK UMD, stressed that the AT had not been ‘available at university but [was] at conservatoire’ (MCS-UG-P119).

MC students also commented on the kind of the provision that their current institution offered. According to this sample of respondents, the AT was generally

⁴⁰ 17 out of 17 MC students answered this question.

⁴¹ The student in an IHEMI did not provide extensive details about the provision of the AT in their institution.

provided as an elective subject, with a few individual and group sessions scheduled throughout the year. MCS-UG-P118 described: 'there are four free one-to-one lessons available a year and then after that they are subsidised. There is also the module [on the AT]'. MCS-UG-P116 commented: 'I think it's good that we get four one-to-one lessons a year and that AT is offered as a module in groups', describing their appreciation of the provision of the AT in their institution. Similarly, MCS-UG-P123 explained that their HE institution provided the AT 'as a module anyone [could] participate in' and that 'also free 30 min sessions [were] offered even if you [didn't] pick it as an elective'. In contrast, a few other MC students wrote that the AT 'was free as a mandatory part of the [conservatoire] course' (e.g. MCS-UG-P125), pointing at differing AT provision also among UK music conservatoires.

12.1.3 Views on the provision of the AT and funding for AT sessions

A few UMD students who had taken AT sessions in their institution provided comments on the access to and funding for AT lessons in their institution. Two students said that the provision of the AT 'was really good' (UMDS-UG-P87) and 'very good!' (UMDS-UG-P94). In contrast, a few others were more critical of it. UMDS-UG-P85 explained that they had 'benefitted from [a free trial lesson] but would have found it much more beneficial if it had been a few free lessons per year' to 'deal with issues more efficiently'. While one student revealed that they were 'unaware of any funding for AT sessions' (UMDS-PhD-P99), another one highlighted the shortcomings of the provision of the AT in their HE music institution, suggesting potential ways for improvement in relation to funding:

I think something has to be done in terms of funding to promote the AT among students ... When I took the sessions, I had to pay [for] them all and really couldn't afford that. I think that if a music department wants to offer this opportunity to students — which I think can be very valuable! — something should be done to encourage students' participation, for example, by covering part of the session cost, discounts or promoting session packages at reasonable prices. (UMDS-PhD-P100)

In fact, a general sense among UMD students was a desire that UMDs provided the AT to music students but at no additional cost or partially subsidised. As UMDS-PhD wrote: 'semi-regular sessions might be helpful but only if they were available free or at a very low cost'. This was echoed by UMDS-UG-P92 who thought that the AT 'would

benefit many in the department'. While UMDS-UG-P95 would have liked the institution to provide AT sessions because the AT could 'be applied to everyday life and helps with dealing with exam and essay stress', UMDS-UG-P98 thought that it 'would hugely benefit musicians to practise AT within both private and ensemble practice' and that it was 'an important means of both preventing and alleviating instrument-related pain and injury', echoing the benefits of the AT discussed in Chapter 11. Interestingly, two UMD students who had not taken AT sessions commented on the provision of the AT in their institution without being asked to do so: 'it would be nice ... to have been offered AT as a singer at university' (UMDS-PhD-P72) and 'I would have liked actual lessons on this in the department' (UMDS-MA-P65).

In contrast, a few others were not interested in whether the music department provided the AT. UMDS-UG-P93 explained that the provision of the AT 'wouldn't affect' them since they 'most likely wouldn't attend', while UMDS-PhD-P102 wrote they would not be interested because lessons would not 'really apply to [them] or [their] research'. Nonetheless, another respondent acknowledged that although the AT would not be relevant to themselves, it would still be useful to other students and thus should be offered to them: 'I don't think I would be bothered personally, but I think [AT lessons] are beneficial and should be available for other students', raising questions about the provision of the AT as an elective subject for those UMD students who might be interested in it.

With regard to MC students, several of them expressed positive comments about the provision of the AT in their current institution. 'I think it's wonderful to be offered AT lessons. You are entitled to four lessons, which doesn't seem too much but definitely gained me much more than I would have expected' (MCS-UG-P121). This tied in with MCS-UG-P123 and the student in an IHEMI who remarked respectively that the AT was 'easily accessible' and that the provision of the AT was 'fantastic' (IHEMIS-PhD-P133). Conversely, one respondent lamented that: 'the access was mediocre as there were some introductory classes — which [was] good — but these were overcrowded which was not helpful', and 'we can access extra AT lessons that we would have to pay for' (MCS-UG-P124), highlighting organisational and financial barriers to accessing ongoing AT lessons in their institution.

Although many MC students were generally satisfied with the provision of the AT, they also expressed a desire for the institution to provide more free sessions

during their studies. MCS-UG-P117 stated: 'I was offered eight free lessons through my institution, but I would love to have more regular lessons because I think that's when you'd notice a real benefit from them'. This resonated with MCS-UG-P127 who mentioned that 'it would be great to have access to one-on-one sessions for free at any time of year'. MCS-UG-P119 was also happy with the provision of the AT in their institution, saying that it was 'good and free to access', but considered that 'more lessons would be great'. In particular, a few others felt that the AT could be an integral part of the music curricula. 'Perhaps some compulsory group lessons in the first (two?) years of the course' would be 'beneficial', MCS-UG-P121 thought, while MCS-UG-P126 argued that the AT could be compulsory because of its health and well-being benefits: 'I think it will be better for the community well-being [for the AT] to become a mandatory subject'. Another student, however, indicated the financial challenges that institutions might face to offer the AT to all music students: 'the conservatoire only offers a few sessions per student, to be able to offer them to as many [students] as possible' (MCS-UG-P121). Interestingly, the provision of the AT may vary within the institution itself, as one student revealed: 'some departments have more access to the AT than others and I think there should be more of a balance' (MCS-UG-P122), which raises questions about parity of opportunities among music students attending the same institution and the financial difficulties associated with it.

12.1.4 Reasons not to take AT sessions in their institutions

The UMD students who had not taken AT sessions in their institutions gave reasons for this. Several of them mentioned a lack of provision, or a lack of knowledge about the provision of the AT in their current institution. UMDS-UG-P93 wrote that sessions were 'unavailable'; UMDS-MA-P96 did not 'think [the institution] offer[ed] any'. UMDS-MA-P95 thought that AT lessons had not 'been offered' to them as they were 'not taking performance'. Some students were not interested in taking sessions in their institution. While UMDS-PhD-P103 wrote that they were 'practising other somatic methods', UMDS-PhD-P102 stated that they were 'a musicologist and not a performer'. This highlights the students' different aims and interests as well as their varied perceptions of the AT, which could influence interest and take-up.

Cost was another reason for UMD students not to take AT sessions in their current institution, echoing findings discussed in Chapter 11. For example, UMDS-UG-

P90 wrote that lessons are 'expensive' and they did not 'want them'. In addition, geographical barriers and time constraints were potentially limiting students' ability to take AT sessions where they were studying. As UMDS-PhD-P101 stated: '[I am] simply too busy, and I live away from the campus so only attend when absolutely needed'.

MC students also commented on reasons why they had not taken AT sessions in their institution. MCS-PhD-P131 had not had time to take AT lessons. Another student said that they had 'wanted to but [had not been] able to because of [oversubscribed] demand' and was hoping 'to get some' in the following year (MCS-UG-P120), suggesting the difficulties in providing the AT for all students. Furthermore, MCS-MA-P130 mentioned that they had not been 'offered so far' because they were on a 'teaching programme rather than performing'. This echoes the perception of the AT as a practice purely aimed at performers.

12.1.5 The provision of the AT and other somatic/psychophysical practices

Students were invited to offer insights into the provision of other somatic practices, such as yoga and the Feldenkrais Method. Many of them expressed positive feelings about these, which were thought to be beneficial in helping students deal with psychophysical challenges. UMDS-MA-P97 believed that 'for health purposes (both mental and physical), these [practices were] all great'. UMDS-PhD-P103 noted that the provision of these practices was 'crucially important to avoid performance-related pain and injuries'. In particular, UMDS-MA-P95 felt that somatic practices were 'really helpful to keep calm and motivated during exam season and essay deadlines'. One respondent argued that 'there should be more acceptance of [somatic practices]' (UMDS-UG-P87), which suggests a perceived scepticism towards these. In fact, according to UMDS-UG-P91, 'all [these] practices should be taken up more widely'. This emphasises that an increase in health and well-being awareness may apply not only to musicians but also to any individual.

Some students provided information about the provision of other somatic practices in their institution. A few students reported that their institutions did not provide other somatic practices (i.e. MCS-UG-P121; IHEMIS-PhD-P133). Others mentioned that their institution did not provide either Tai Chi or the Feldenkrais Method (UMDS-PhD-P99; MCS-UG-P124). Conversely, MCS-UG-P124 explained that

the provision of a gym and physiotherapy was for free because the institution they were attending was 'a joined music and dance institution'. With regard to yoga and Pilates, MCS-UG-P122 and MCS-UG-P124 said respectively that the 'conservatoire provided yoga and Pilates classes' and that 'yoga classes [were] free to attend', whereas UMDS-PhD-P99 and MCS-UG-P121 stated that 'yoga sessions would be a student-led society/pastime' and that 'yoga lessons [were] being delivered through the Sports union', indicating that the provision of other somatic practices varied among institutions. However, the provision of somatic practices seemed to vary within the same institution depending on the student's course pathway: 'I think music students should have some sort of compulsory physical activity because we use our bodies for our career. Singers get that in my institution, and I think instrumentalists should too', MCS-UG-P117 explained. This casts doubts about equality of opportunities among music students in the same institution.

Several respondents wished that HE institutions provided other somatic practices to music students. MCS-UG-P125 said that they would be 'interested in [these] and would like to see more, in order to provide more facets to the course'. MCS-UG-P120 echoed: 'honestly ... if [the provision of somatic practices] was available, I would definitely try it'. Provision, however, needed to consider students' financial challenges. 'I think it'd be great but again I think only if it was free for students as many wouldn't be able to afford it', UMDS-MA-P96 argued. This tied in with MCS-UG-P119 who also referred to the perceptions of somatic practices as an add-on to musical development: '[in my institution] you are charged to participate, and they are still seen as additional to your artistic practice'. Another respondent thought that the provision of somatic practices would be valuable, but it could pose practical challenges: 'I think it would be very beneficial, but I am not sure if there is time to have weekly lessons on it throughout the year so it may be an issue of practicality rather than wanting to do it' (UMDS-UG-P86). In contrast, two respondents were against the provision of other somatic practices in HE music institutions. While one music student argued that they would be a 'waste of time by and large' (UMDS-PhD-P105), MCS-MA-P126 explained as follows: '[I am] not particularly interested, and I feel that considering the limited budgets universities have to work with, I'd rather they didn't spend more of that budget on these ancillary practices', echoing the perceptions of the AT and other practices as supplementary to music practice mentioned above by MCS-UG-P119.

A few students made specific comments about individual practices. Others did not provide any because of a lack of knowledge (e.g. UMDS-UG-P85), whereas only one made a direct comparison between those practices and the AT. MCS-UG-P126 described the reasons why they felt that yoga should be included in the music curriculum:

This year I started learning yoga by myself and I think it would be great than art institutions incorporate this practice as a mandatory subject for everyone. It disciplines body and mind such as is required in a practice of an instrument and other types of arts.

Indeed, yoga was deemed to help with stage fright, as UMDS-UG-P90 stated: 'yoga would be good e.g. for performance anxiety'. Regarding the Feldenkrais Method, MCS-MA-P130 said: '[I] have only had one Feldenkrais lesson, [it] was fascinating and [I] would love more'. However, UMDS-UG-P97 felt that the AT had 'more adaptability to the music performance environment specifically than most other practices', with implications for the application of somatic practices to music development and potential comparisons among these.

12.1.6 Music students' feedback on the promotion of the AT within HE music institutions and ways to promote it: A need for collective effort

Music students were asked to comment on the promotion of the AT within their institution. A few UMD students lamented a lack of promotion of the AT. UMDS-PhD-P78 made a comparison among the different institutions⁴² in which they had studied and highlighted a lack of promotion of the AT: 'in the institutions I have attended, [the] AT wasn't promoted to performers'. In contrast, others felt that the promotion could be enhanced to increase awareness of the AT within the institution. While one UMD student explicitly wrote that the AT 'was not promoted very well' (UMDS-UG-P87), UMDS-UG-P94 noted the need for better promotion: 'I think it's promoted quite well, although perhaps it could be advertised a little more as I know students who didn't know it existed [but] ... I think it could be promoted even more!'. In fact, the promotion of the AT seemed somewhat ineffective, despite various means of advertisement around various institutions. One student referred to the role that their

⁴² It was not possible to determine whether these institutions were university music departments or music specialist institutions.

instrumental/vocal teacher (IVT) had played in promoting the AT to them: 'I have only seen a few posters about the AT at [my UMD]. I was made aware of the sessions by my instrumental teacher — otherwise I may not have known they were available'. Another UMD student, who was attending the same music department⁴³, mentioned that the AT had also been promoted through emails: 'I think efforts have been made to promote the AT since I stopped having sessions [some time ago]. I recall receiving two or three departmental emails about the possibility of having AT sessions'. Furthermore, another respondent commented that the AT had been promoted through AT workshops, but these seemed to be infrequent: '[an] occasional AT workshop was advertised at my institution' (UMDS-MA-P98).

Regarding MC students, some of them expressed their views on the promotion of the AT within their institutions. One felt that the AT was promoted well and highlighted the further role of word of mouth promotion resulting from this: '[the AT is] quite widely promoted and many people talk of its benefits' (MCS-UG-P119). Another student alluded to the importance of word of mouth and the role of peer recommendation in promoting the AT: 'I recommend it to anyone who hasn't tried it yet, it may be useful, it may not, but it's not stressful at all so I don't see why you shouldn't try at least' (MCS-UG-P120). This was mirrored by the student in the IHEMI who felt that the AT was promoted 'excellently' and that 'all students [were] offered to have contact with [the] AT specialist throughout their studies' (IHEMIS-PhD-P133).

Nonetheless, a few other MC students thought that the AT was poorly promoted. MCS-UG-121, for example, lamented that the AT 'is not really promoted' and that 'you [only] get an email at the beginning of each term asking whether you would like to take it up'. One respondent felt that the level of promotion seemed to decrease across the years: 'it is somewhat hyped during the first year, and then left and forgotten after that' (MCS-UG-P124). This correlated with a lack of knowledge about the AT among music students. MCS-UG-P118 wrote that the AT 'could be more [promoted] as some people [were] unaware of what it actually is'. A similar view was mirrored by MCS-UG-P123: '[the AT] is definitely not promoted enough as a lot of people do not fully understand what it involves'. In fact, a few others said that although the AT was generally promoted by the AT teacher through emails at the start

⁴³ The two students spelled out the name of the institution in which they were studying. P-numbers have intentionally been left out.

of the academic year, this was not enough, and more promotion should have been undertaken by IVTs and the institution itself. As MC-UG-P116 argued: '[the AT] should be more promoted from principal study teachers [since] it's only advertised through emails from the AT teachers'. This need for collaborative promotion was echoed by MCS-UG-P117 who explained: 'we get sent emails from the AT teacher, but I would love it if it was encouraged more throughout the departments'.

12.1.7 The quality of the teaching space and the equipment for AT sessions

A few music students provided their views on the quality of the teaching space for AT sessions, highlighting aspects such as its size and appropriateness as well as the availability of the equipment necessary for them.

Regarding UMD students, one of them wrote that teaching space was 'good' (UMDS-UG-P85), whereas three others thought that it was not always appropriate for one-to-one lessons. UMDS-PhD-P100 recalled the challenges that the AT instructor had experienced in finding a suitable space for AT lessons and the frustration of this:

I'm not sure about how things are now, but when I used to take sessions, there was no dedicated room for AT sessions. For this reason, I changed a few rooms within my sessions and while some of them were bright, warm and welcoming, others were really tiny and inadequate; and it was also a pain for the practitioner as they had to move all their stuff around the department every time they had to change rooms.

The inadequateness of the teaching space was mentioned by UMDS-PhD-P99: 'the rooms were quite small and cramped, and often were piled high with books and so this wasn't the most welcoming environment in which to relax (which was my main problem)'. This resonated with UMDS-UG-P94 who revealed: 'the room I'm in is not particularly ideal, as it is I think a professor's (old or current) office, so there's not much room and a lot of books in the way!'

Several MC students indicated that that the quality of the rooms was 'good' (e.g. MCS-UG-P116) or 'very good' (MCS-UG-P118) but, in few instances, it could have been improved. MCS-UG-P123 was pleased with the teaching space, explaining that AT classes had taken place in a 'large room with more than enough space' and a 'large mirror which [came] in handy'. MCS-UG-P119 also thought that the teaching space was 'good', but 'bigger rooms with more natural lighting' could have been provided. In

contrast, MCS-UG-P124 was not satisfied with the teaching space for the AT and emphasised how its poor quality had impacted their engagement with AT sessions: 'the room quality was worse than most of the rooms in my institution, which was disengaging'. The student in the IHEMI also seemed to covertly criticise their institution in terms of the provision of equipment for AT lessons: 'the [AT] instructor brings their own equipment on site (including a table) [which] the institution wouldn't have [had] ... otherwise' (IHEMIS-PhD-P133). These findings may have implications for the recognition and status of the AT within the UK HE music sector.

12.1.8 The provision and the promotion of the AT: Discussion of the findings

Findings illustrated that many MC students had taken AT sessions in their institutions, whereas only some UMD students had done so. This was not unexpected considering that, according to the Society of Teachers of the Alexander Technique (STAT, 2023i), the AT is taught only in a few UMDs. The data within the present study indicates further UK UMDs offering AT occasional workshops or a limited number of sessions in addition to those listed by STAT. The precise details of these institutions cannot, however, be revealed in order to respect the principles of respondent anonymity and confidentiality.

The current study found that the provision of the AT differed from institution to institution, not only among UMDs and MCs, but also among institutions of the same kind. With regard to UMDs, some students were aware of provision in their current or previous UMD (see MCS-UG-P119, section 12.1.2). According to others, AT sessions had not been provided on a regular basis. One-off AT group workshops had generally been provided for free; while in one institution a single individual AT taster session had been offered to all music students, in another one AT group classes had been part of a performance module. Regarding the MCs in this sample, the AT had mainly been offered as an elective subject: in one institution four one-to-one lessons in each year as well as group classes which formed part of an elective module had been offered, whereas in other institutions the AT had been part of a compulsory module. Since the purpose of this study is not to supply a detailed list of institutions providing/not providing the AT, these findings are important because they suggest that there is no standard provision of the AT in UK HE music institutions. It is possible that the situation

may have changed since data was collected in 2021. However, some MCs may offer more AT opportunities in comparison to other UMDs but, despite this, the provision of the AT appears to be at the discretion of the individual institutions and not part of a well-established music curriculum framework. For example, there is no reference to the AT in the 2019 Subject Benchmark Statement (QAA, 2019) regarding music.

Findings indicated that only a few UMD students had been pleased with the provision of the AT in their institution. In fact, many UMD students lamented a lack of regular provision of AT individual lessons and desired more funding for AT lessons given the benefits of the AT to music performance, pain reduction, and, as one respondent emphasised, students' ability to cope with exam stress (see UMDS-UG-P95, Section 12.1.3). Cost had been felt to be a barrier preventing UMD students from taking lessons in their institution; this coupled with the perception that the AT was only offered to performers, a view mirrored by a MC student on a teaching course. MC students appeared generally content with the provision of the AT but would have appreciated access to more regular AT lessons at no additional cost. One student (MCS-UG-P122) demanded more balance of access to the AT among different departments (e.g. instrumentalists versus singers) within the same institution. Furthermore, a few MC students suggested that the AT could be embedded in the music curriculum given the health and well-being benefits. In particular, one student (MCS-UG-P121) thought that group classes could be mandatory for UG studies in Year 1 and/or Year 2.

These findings have important implications for the provision of the AT in UMDs and MCs, making a case for its provision at least as an elective subject since not all students may want to partake in AT sessions. Although a few UMD students had not been interested in the provision of the AT, they had been supportive of its provision for other students who may benefit from it. It is possible that those students who may not necessarily want to engage in AT sessions could nonetheless benefit from them. Yet, offering the AT as an elective component may respect everyone's interests and give anyone the opportunity to participate. It could be argued that UMDs may not be able to offer the AT in the same way as MCs. For example, the proportion of academic and performance content may differ between UMDs and MCs, and there may be limitations in terms of academic requirements justifying the AT in the music curricula (though this could be ameliorated through reflective assignments requiring the

inclusion of academic literature on the AT). There may be also financial constraints affecting provision (see MCS-UG-P121, Section 12.1.3). Therefore, further investigations could support the devising and testing of an AT curriculum framework in light of students' interests, financial limitations, and the wider institutional and educational aims and ethos. In addition, the perception that the AT may be purely for performers not only has implications for the development of a curriculum framework that takes also into account the different educational pathways in HE but also for the promotion of the potential benefits of the AT going beyond music performance (see Chapter 11).

Findings indicated that some students held positive views about the provision of other psychophysical practices (e.g. yoga, the Feldenkrais Method) in HE music institutions. These practices were deemed to help students deal with psychophysical challenges, such as pain management, stress and overall health and well-being, aligning with literature discussing the use and effectiveness of these disciplines among musicians and music students (Khalsa et al., 2009; Paparo, 2022). The view that the acceptance of these practices may need to be raised inside and outside HE music institutions hints at the interdependence of the HE music sector with the broader community, with implications for studies comparing the perceptions of these practices among musicians and non-musicians.

The provision of psychophysical practices was reported to be varied. A few students mentioned no provision of Tai Chi or the Feldenkrais Method, whereas others referred to that of a gym and physiotherapy, yoga and Pilates (e.g. MCS-UG-P124). The provision of these practices depended on the individual institutions (e.g. a conservatoire linked with performing practices such as dance); disciplines such as yoga were often organised by students' societies and were not part of the curriculum offer in the UMDs and MCs in this sample. The fact that in one case (see MCS-UG-P117, Section 12.1.5) the provision varied between singers and instrumentalists could be explained by the direct use that singers may have of their body in performance (e.g. for acting). However, considering the importance of health prevention in HE music institutions (see Chapter 1), parity of opportunities would be relevant for both singers and instrumentalists. Furthermore, findings showed that some students were interested in the provision of other practices but for free, echoing the findings discussed in 12.1.3 in relation to the funding for AT sessions. A few other students did

not show an interest in it, and this raises questions about the inclusion of somatic practices as mandatory part of the HE music curriculum, considering the practical challenges that students may face in pursuing weekly sessions, as UMDS-UG-P86 noted.

A few students expressed appreciation of yoga and the Feldenkrais Method; however, UMDS-UG-P97's view that the AT could have more explicit application to music practice has implications for studies directly comparing the AT to other psychophysical practices, considering the lack of empirical research on this. The AT, yoga, and Feldenkrais are often grouped together (Schlinger, 2006), but according to Nobes (2020), the AT 'has more in common with Zen ... than it does with "bodywork", or things like yoga and Pilates that everyone tends to associate it with' (p. 12). These findings thus highlight both potential misconceptions about the AT and the need for developing further understanding of it.

This study found that the promotion of the AT in both UMDs and MCs could be enhanced. This cannot be said about the IHEMI in which the promotion of the AT had been considered as excellent, though it must be recognised that this was only by the one student respondent from that institution. Regarding UMDs, while a few UMD students had revealed a limited promotion of the AT, several others had provided ways in which it could be promoted considering the paucity of advertisement and the perception of high numbers of students without awareness of the AT. The AT had mainly been advertised through posters, email communication and AT group workshops; however, IVTs were found to additionally support the promotion of the AT. It is possible that some students may not be attracted by typographical advertisement and therefore these findings illustrate the important role of IVTs in promoting the AT in institutions. Similarly, a few MC students had been satisfied with the level of promotion of the AT within their institutions and highlighted the pivotal role of word of mouth in promoting the AT. Others had complained about promotional limitations, resulting in a lack of awareness of the AT among music students; in fact, the AT had generally been promoted by AT teachers through emails, but a more collective effort from IVTs and institutions could increase awareness. It was surprising that no students had mentioned the role of academic staff in promoting the AT to them, and it raises questions about the reasons underpinning this. These findings, therefore, have

implications for the development of targeted promotion to enhance the awareness of the AT and AT-based activities in those UMDs and MCs offering the AT.

Findings indicated that the teaching space and the equipment for AT sessions could be enhanced in some institutions. One UMD student had been pleased with the designated teaching space, whereas a few others noted inadequacies of spaces and the difficulties of the AT teachers to access appropriate teaching space. With regard to MCs, several students appeared happy with teaching spaces, whereas a few others would have appreciated improvements in relation to lighting, for example. In contrast, one MC student (MCS-UG-P124) considered the AT teaching space to be of a lesser quality in comparison to that for other activities, resulting in reduced engagement. The fact that AT teachers may need to bring their own equipment — as the student in the IHEMI revealed — was surprising, and it is not yet clear whether budget restrictions may hinder institutions from providing AT teachers with the necessary equipment and a permanent, secure location for it. While it was not possible to identify the specific institutions and thus make comparisons, the negative comments that students had expressed have implications for the provision of a teaching space that considers students' and teachers' needs. It is possible that students may correlate the institutional valuing of the AT with the quality of the teaching space, but this is just an interpretation of the latent meaning underpinning MCS-UG-P124's view. However, AT sessions require a quiet space in which students can focus, and which enables AT teachers to undertake their work within the best possible conditions. An assessment of the teaching spaces and equipment is advocated in those institutions offering AT sessions in both group and one-to-one formats.

12.2 The recognition of the AT and AT teachers within the UK HE music sector

Respondents wrote about their views on how the AT and AT teachers may be perceived in the UK HE music sector. 38 UMD, 14 MC and 1 IHEMI students provided their opinions on this, which showed a variety of perspectives on the recognition of the AT within HE music institutions.

12.2.1 The overall recognition of the AT

A few UMD students thought that the AT was regarded positively in UK HE music institutions, although not all of them were certain about it. UMDS-MA-P95 believed that the AT was ‘thought of highly and considered to be important’, whereas UMDS-UG-P85 stated that the AT was ‘regarded highly, but [they were] unsure’. In particular, one student explained that in the HE music sector the AT was considered as a ‘specific tool to improve musicians’ well-being and to develop performance skills’ (UMDS-PhD-P76). A few MC students also felt that the AT was held in high regard in the UK HE music sector. For example, MCS-PhD-P132 and MCS-UG-P125 thought the AT was ‘highly regarded’, ‘well supported ... [and] respected’.

Only a few UMD students expressed overtly negative feelings about how the AT may be viewed in the UK HE music sector. UMDS-UG-P91 thought that the AT could be seen as a ‘waste of time that could easily be done on your own without a teacher’. Likewise, UMDS-UG-P93 argued that the AT could be considered ‘as unnecessary or useless’. One student, on the other hand, believed that although the AT might not be held in high regard in UK HE music institutions, its level of recognition was higher than in other countries:

Comparing to the country where I come from, my perception is that the AT is much more regarded here and there are much more opportunities to engage with it in the UK higher music education. However, through informal conversations with home students and other people interested in the AT, it seems that it's not highly considered, and its benefits are underrated. (UMDS-PhD-P100)

This raises further questions about the appreciation and availability of the AT in the UK in comparison to other parts of the world.

12.2.2 AT as an add-on

A common theme among both UMD and MC students was that the AT was generally seen as an add-on. UMDS-UG-P57 wrote that the AT was regarded as ‘highly [thought of] though not seen as essential to high level performance practice’. This was echoed by UMDS-UG-P87: ‘it is seen as helpful but not necessary’. MC students also commented that the AT might be considered as a supplementary practice, despite being seen as potentially valuable: ‘It feels very extracurricular’ (MCS-UG-P127). This tied in with what the student in the IHEMI believed: ‘[the AT is regarded] not highly

enough. The profile needs to be raised. [It is] still viewed as an extra perk' (IHEMIS-PhD-P133).

A few students wrote about the reasons why the AT may not be seen an essential aspect of HE music students' learning. One UMD student thought the AT could be seen as of lower importance than other means to develop musical skills, resulting in the perceptions of health and well-being matters as non-essential to music students' development:

I think it's seen as something of an "extra-curricular activity" ... rather than it be an optional part of the syllabus/a weekly series of lessons. I find this problematic, as it suggests physical and mental wellness is an "add-on", rather than a critically important facet of being a musician ... I don't know any AT teachers working in HE music institutions, but I would worry that there is a palpable disconnect between what they do versus what other staff members do — perhaps their practice is seen as less "musical" and so less relevant to the institution, again due to the aforementioned "extra-curricular" assumption. I hope this is not the case, as it would be completely wrong! (UMDS-MA-P98)

With reference to university settings, another UMD student argued that the AT was not regarded as an essential aspect of the music curriculum because of a perceived lack of appreciation of health and well-being issues in the HE music sector:

AT is not remotely a focus at university. We have no lectures on it or lessons and perhaps rarely a masterclass session, but certainly it is not seemed as essential. The most I ever covered it at university was in a performance module discussing performance practice, but little more was said. If it is related to posture, I think AT has understandably been neglected from an academic spectrum because the importance of posture and individuals' lifestyle are still very underappreciated in all aspects. (UMDS-UG-P61)

This, however, related not only to the UK HE music sector but also the general music industry. As the respondent continued:

As instrumentalists are not taught that their whole lifestyle will affect their playing — all-nighters, binge drinking and the like found in university culture — and it does not yet seem to be a well-known truth, I am not surprised a branch of study such as AT is very much neglected, by university students, by younger musicians, by professional musicians, by most musicians. (UMDS-UG-P61)

A similar feeling was shared by another student who lamented:

[There may still be] a sense of pride in working so hard at your instrument that your health suffers — I can definitely think of guys I came across orchestras

with for whom bleeding lips at the end of a day's rehearsal was a badge of honour. (UMDS-UG-P64)

Therefore, any interventions to support musicians' health and well-being would need to be carefully considered in order to attract students, also in light of their impact on recognition of the AT within the HE music sector and the broader music field.

12.2.3 Factors affecting the recognition of the AT: The type of institution and the categories of people

Data analysis revealed that there might be other factors affecting the recognition of the AT within the HE music sector. Some UMD students highlighted that the recognition depended on whether the institution was a MC or a UMD. UMDS-UG-P59 wrote: 'I know [the AT] is considered important at conservatoires ... and I have only ever seen this brought up at conservatoire open days where they made quite a big deal of it and never in university'. Furthermore, UMDS-UG-P86 thought that not only were there differences in how the AT was considered in conservatoires and universities, but also that these differences were present among institutions of the same kind, such as different UMDs: '[the AT is] incredibly important at conservatories, but maybe not so much at universities but that depends on the institution as [the one I attend] encourages it, which I like'. Interestingly, two MC students made comparisons among different MCs and HE music institutions, arguing that the recognition of the AT may vary depending on the culture of the institution and students' willingness to embrace change. MCS-MA-P130 explained that the AT was regarded as 'mostly good' but that there were 'very few places, conservatories, that actively use it' and it would have been 'great to see others using [it] more'. MCS-MA-P115 wrote: 'there are several branches of HE music — popular, classical, and jazz music institutions. From my experience in popular music colleges, I feel it may be welcomed, but sadly not widely taken up due to reluctance to change by students'. This suggests that the recognition of the AT is a multifaceted matter and connects to factors within the institution and also to the openness of students.

The recognition of the AT seemed to depend also on the category of people holding the beliefs. As UMDS-UG-P61 wrote: 'it seems like a hit and miss, most seem to have heard about it without ever having lessons in it, some people swear by it'. MCS-UG-P121 wrote that 'perhaps by some [the AT may be deemed] as not really

necessary', suggesting potential comparisons among different categories of people within HE music institutions. With regard to IVTs, students expressed different views on how they may consider the AT. MCS-UG-P124 highlighted that IVTs may not necessarily refer to the AT or consider it essential: 'most of the teachers I interacted with didn't mention it, or only mentioned AT as a helpful, but not necessary additive to practice'. In contrast, UMDS-MA-P65 explained that their IVTs had 'always thought highly of' the AT. On the other hand, UMDS-PhD-P99 noted differences in how music students and staff may view the AT: 'I get the impression that it is well regarded by students, but older faculty members see it as not useful (holistic rather than medical, for example)'. This tied in with the perceptions that the AT could be considered as 'just for people with physical problems like posture issues' (UMDS-UG-P90) and 'mainly for people experiencing physical discomfort' (UMDS-PhD-104), indicating that '[the AT may not be] understood' (UMDS-UG-P60).

12.2.4 AT as a fringe science

A few other students pointed out that the AT might be seen as fringe science, whose mechanisms might not be supported by research-based evidence. UMDS-UG-P88 and UMDS-UG-P90 respectively explained that the AT might be considered as a kind of 'alternative/hippy practice' and that 'its workings are a myth'. This was echoed by MCS-UG-P119 who stated that the AT was 'often considered a bit "wishy-washy" or pseudo-science', suggesting that scientific evidence about the AT might contribute to raising its profile and recognition within HE music institutions.

12.2.5 The recognition of AT teachers: Different levels of recognitions and factors affecting it

Music students provided views on how AT teachers may be perceived within HE music institutions. A few of them were unsure about this and did not comment. The themes that emerged shared many similarities with those relating to how the AT may be recognised in the UK HE music sector.

A few students believed that AT teachers might be considered as equally important as IVTs, academic, administrative, and professional services staff. UMDS-MA-P66 wrote that AT teachers 'might be regarded with the same level of respect as their counterparts'. This tied in with MCS-UG-P120 who stated: 'staff is staff, I don't

think there'll be a difference'. However, a few MC students claimed that the recognition of AT teachers depended on whether AT teachers were musicians or not: 'I think the vast majority of staff would see them as equals [but] there may be some judgement towards AT tutors if they are not trained musicians themselves' (MC-UG-P123). This judgment seemed to be confirmed by MCS-MA-P115 who argued: 'if [AT teachers] are musicians themselves then I would hope they would be regarded with the same level of respect as any other teacher'. One student, when asked to comment how AT teachers might be viewed in HE music institutions, emphasised that their 'AT teacher [was] also a piano lecturer' (MCS-UG-P121), suggesting that the recognition of this AT teacher may have been affected by their role as an instrumental professor.

Many other UMD and MC students felt that AT teachers might be regarded 'not as highly' (UMDS-UG-P87) or as 'less important' (MCS-UG-P118) than other members of staff. This was thought by some to be ungenerous given the benefits that the AT could bring to musicians: 'AT teachers should be regarded as equal [since they are] teaching people [how to deal with] performance stress and fixing a performance injury' (UMDS-MA-P95). Likewise, UMDS-PhD-101 said: 'I suspect that AT ... practitioners might be regarded as of lesser status and importance. But there should be a recognition that ... [the] benefits [of the AT] are directly linked to ease and therefore intellectual and physical progress'.

A few UMD students explained that AT teachers may be viewed as 'less academic' (UMDS-UG-P60). This perspective was echoed by the student in an IHEMI who wrote that AT teachers were 'not in the same regard as academics' and were 'seen as extra' (IHEMIS-PhD-P133). Nonetheless, for a few UMD students AT teachers were still considered as professionals 'trained to do a specific job or role' (UMDS-PhD-P74). This contrasts with the views of AT teachers as potentially dispensable: '[AT teachers are] possibly regarded as unnecessary as breathing techniques and posture can be taught by anyone' (UMDS-UG-P91). However, it is possible that these perceptions may be linked to the accessibility of the AT and lack of knowledge about it. '[AT teachers might not be viewed] as academic or important but ... that's not really true: they just teach a different side of music which isn't as accessible or well-known' (UMDS-UG-P90).

UMD students made direct comparisons concerning the recognition between AT teachers and other categories of people in HE. While one student believed that AT

teachers may be in 'a similar position to instrumental teachers' (UMDS-PhD-P76), a few others felt that AT teachers may be regarded less than IVTs, and as UMDS-UG-P59 remarked, 'probably not as highly as instrumental teachers [since the AT may be] not seen as much of an advanced skill'. In fact, some respondents thought that AT teachers would be considered either '[on] a par with admin staff' (UMDS-PhD-P71) or 'more along the lines of learning support/enabling services than administrators' (UMDS-UG-P57). One student explained this in greater detail, highlighting how there may be commonalities between the way IVTs and AT teachers are regarded in HE music institutions, although IVTs' expertise may be seen as more important in comparison to that of AT teachers:

I suppose that [AT teachers] are probably seen as support staff. They are probably peripatetic, so they may not be treated as inclusively as academic members of staff (in the same way as instrumental tutors are often excluded from the department). However, I feel as though they may be treated worse than instrumental tutors, as the subject they teach is seen as non-essential and something of an optional add-on for students who are interested. (UMDS-MA-P97)

However, other UMD and MC students believed that the recognition of AT teachers depended on the people holding the view. As UMDS-PhD-P99 wrote: 'I feel that instrumental teachers see AT teachers as helpful — my own piano teacher recommended that I see an AT teacher — but non-instrumental teachers may see it as a waste of time'. Regarding how students, academic and administrative staff might regard the AT, UMDS-PhD-P100 felt that students might hold IVTs in higher regard than AT teachers because of the rapport developed during their studies:

I think [AT teachers] are probably less regarded than instrumental teachers by students as developing skills at their instrument is what music students in higher education are generally focussed on. For this reason, students could develop a close relationship with their instrumental teachers and be less interested in their body awareness. I'm not sure about the academic and administrative staff.

The close relationship between IVTs and music students was mirrored by MC-MA-P129 who emphasised how music students' aims impact the recognition of the AT: '[AT teachers are considered] of secondary importance. Students come primarily to these institutions to learn and hone their craft with their instrument, not to learn the AT'.

Two UMD students also commented on how AT teachers may feel about themselves and their role in UK HE music institutions. Both considered that AT teachers may feel disposable; nonetheless, while UMDS-PhD-P77 thought that '[AT teachers] may not regard themselves as part of the staff if the AT isn't implemented in the institution's courses', UMDS-UG-P61 argued that 'AT teachers may feel more isolated in a work group, especially if their peers don't regard/respect/understand much about their practice, its uses and importance', emphasising that a better understanding of the AT might contribute to nurturing appreciation towards the AT within HE music institutions.

12.2.6 The recognition of the AT and AT teachers: Discussion of the findings

This study found that the recognition of the AT in UK HE music institutions could not be easily generalised. Overall, findings showed that according to a few UMD and MC students, the AT was held in high regard within UK HE music institutions, but not all of the students were sure about this. However, for a few other UMD music students the AT could be viewed negatively in UK HE music institutions. The fact that this perception had come from students in UMDs might be the result of AT perhaps being less prevalent in UMDs rather than in MCs; indeed, one student correlated this limited usage of the AT with the perception of it as being a worthless practice. The recognition of the AT in UK HE music institutions, nonetheless, could be higher than in other countries according to one of the respondents. For example, the studies by Cavalcanti (2020) and Önal (2022) showed that the AT might not be widespread in HE music institutions in both Brazil and Turkey. Considering the lack of research on this matter, further work is needed to compare the recognition of the AT in UK HE music institutions to that in other countries.

One interesting finding was that according to students, the AT was commonly seen as an add-on activity in UK HE music institutions. This perception was considered problematic because it might give the impression that health and well-being practices were additional aspects of music learning (see UMDS-MA-P98). In fact, for a few students the health and well-being of musicians was not only a neglected aspect of the music curriculum but also of the music profession in which the long-held 'no pain, no gain' assumption was still prevalent. This is corroborated by Matei and Ginsborg

(2022), who argued that students' need for 'injury management ... reflect a "no pain, no gain" belief', reinforcing the idea of a normalisation of pain (p. 6). These findings thus support the need for the development of health programmes (Rosset et al., 2022) which could potentially have a cascading effect on the recognition and support for healthy practices in HE music institutions.

Factors such as the type of institution and the category of people holding particular views were found to impact the recognition of the AT in UK HE music institutions. According to some UMD students, the recognition of the AT was higher in MCs rather than UMDs. However, findings are more nuanced, showing that there might be different levels of recognition among institutions of the same kind and that the recognition might be dependent on the culture of the institution. Furthermore, data showed that different categories of people within HE music institutions, such as academics, IVTs, and students, might hold the AT in different regard. The variable understanding of the AT may explain this finding. It is also possible that the lack of robust evidence of the effectiveness of the AT and the resulting beliefs of the AT as fringe science may impact its recognition. Therefore, this study shows that the recognition of the AT is an intricate matter, supporting the need for a better understanding of the AT in HE music institutions and the gathering of robust empirical evidence demonstrating its effectiveness.

Lastly, this study found that, based on students' accounts, the recognition of AT teachers may depend on many factors, making it difficult to reach a definitive conclusion given mixed perceptions about this. While a few students had thought that AT teachers might be regarded at a similar hierarchical level as other staff members, for a few MC students the recognition depended on whether AT teachers were proficient at a musical instrument or not, or whether they held an additional role as an academic. Other students felt that AT teachers were regarded at a lower hierarchical level and viewed as less academic but still as professionals. Regarding a direct comparison between IVTs and AT teachers, AT teachers might be viewed at the same hierarchical level as IVTs or possibly at a lower one, considering that there might be more appreciation towards IVTs' expertise rather than that of AT teachers. However, according to these students, the level of recognition might depend on the people holding the beliefs. In particular, academics might view AT teachers as less important, whereas IVTs might see them as valuable. Students, on the other hand, may value IVTs

more than AT teachers because of the direct relevance of IVTs' expertise to their studies and because of their more frequent contact with them. It is possible that the recognition of AT teachers may depend on a perceived limited understanding of the AT, as mentioned in the previous paragraph and emphasised by two students (see UMDS-PhD-P77 and UMDS-UG-P61). Nonetheless, these findings indicate that AT teachers might not be perceived as fully integrated in institutional structures, with implications for how AT teachers view themselves and how the different categories of people in HE view their practice. This is the first research investigating this, and additional studies could be undertaken to provide further comparison.

12.3 Summary of the chapter: Key themes

This chapter investigated the third set of findings concerning music students' perspectives on the AT. In particular, it presented and discussed their opinions on the provision and promotion of the AT in their HE institutions. With regard to this sample of respondents, the AT was mainly provided as a side activity, with differences in the provision between UMDs and music specialist institutions; additionally, the provision of the AT also varied between institutions of the same kind, which showed that there is no standardised provision of the AT. However, there was a general sense that the provision and the promotion of the AT within UK HE music institutions could be improved.

Chapter 12 also examined music students' views on the recognition of the AT and AT teachers. This was perceived to be multifactorial, depending on a number of elements, such as the person holding the view and the specific characteristics of the institutions. Furthermore, the recognition of the AT was found to be impacted by limited understanding of the AT in UK HE music institutions as well as perceptions of the AT as fringe science. The next and final chapter concerning music students' views on the AT will address aspects relating to its teaching and practice. Then, a general discussion comparing AT teachers', IVTs', and music students' findings will follow.

Chapter 13: Perceptions of the AT among HE music students studying in UK HE music institutions

(PART IV)

This chapter examines the last set of findings about the perceptions of the AT among HE music students studying in UK HE music institutions. It illustrates their views on the teaching format (one-to-one and group), the mode of delivery (face-to-face and online), a triadic lesson (an AT teacher, an instrumental vocal teacher and a student working together in the same room) and resources on the AT. The question that this chapter answers is:

- What are the views of music students studying in UK HE music institutions on aspects related to the teaching and practice of the AT within the UK HE music sector?

13.1 The teaching format: One-to-one and group teaching

Music students provided information about the teaching format through which they had experienced the AT: one-to-one, group, or both. Those students who had participated in AT group classes (e.g. workshops and/or courses) were asked to give their views on AT group teaching, whereas those who had taken both one-to-one and group sessions were invited to compare the two. Overall, AT group classes were found to be useful and enjoyable. For example, UMDS-UG-P86 commented: 'I really enjoyed the group session [I had]'. Conversely, one student did not particularly enjoy an AT introductory and theory-based group class because the teacher 'wasn't very engaging' (UMDS-UG-P93).

One of the key benefits of AT group classes was the development of observational understanding: 'I was able to observe how it is applied in others and how they react. This helped me to understand my own experience' (MCS-PhD-P131). This coupled with benefits contributing to peer learning; as UMDS-PhD-P104 noted: '[I] could learn from others'. Furthermore, many students found it valuable to hear others' experiences and share their own, a process which was considered to both promote

learning and offer emotional support. UMDS-MA-P95 stated that they were 'able to share experiences with other people and see how they deal with their anxiety too'; similarly, UMDS-UG-P87 wrote that it 'was good to see other people's views on their limitations'. Group learning, indeed, seemed to foster interaction and build emotional connection among peers. While MCS-UG-P127 described that they had 'mostly enjoyed sharing the experience and hear[ing] others ask candid questions', MCS-UG-P120 felt that group work 'strengthens bonds', echoing UMDS-UG-P91's perception that this emotional connection might help students adapt to the experiences offered by the AT in an online AT group class: 'in a group, it made [the AT] less awkward as we shared the experience and had a bit of a giggle when breathing together in silence'.

Group size was an important factor contributing to the perceived effectiveness of AT sessions. Firstly, it was considered to affect the amount of hands-on work that students could receive, suggesting that a small group might facilitate AT practical face-to-face group sessions. As MCS-UG-P127 explained: 'not many people turned up, so the sessions were small ... I always thought sessions with a smaller class size were best as you could get some one-to-one experiences/feedback'. Hands-on work was seen to be an essential component of AT group classes. UMDS-PhD-P104 described: '[I] could learn from others but the most useful time was of course when [the AT teacher and their assistants] went round us all one by one'. Secondly, group size was considered to impact motivation and engagement. One student mentioned: 'the group was too large, and some of the people were not interested, which proved to be distracting' (MCS-UG-P124). Unfortunately, data do not indicate what size was perceived to be 'small' or 'too large' but this nevertheless highlights that group size is an important element to consider when planning AT group sessions as it might influence the participants' experience and the effectiveness of the AT.

Another factor that could contribute to the effectiveness of AT group classes was the composition of the group. This was mentioned by only one student, but is interesting since it may have implications for the provision of the AT in HE. UMDS-MA-P96 described how a homogenous group of people of the same age and area of expertise might contribute to better engagement: 'in general AT group classes (i.e. with non-musicians with different age groups) it was different because everyone has totally different goals and needs, so what other people work on do[es]n't necessarily apply to you or help you'. On the other hand, comparing AT one-to-one to group

teaching, MCS-UG-P125 thought that group classes would be more appropriate for novice rather than advanced learners: 'I think [group] works at a beginner level because the [AT] teacher needs to outline basic concepts of the technique to all students, but it might be beneficial to go one-to-one as you get more advanced', which suggests that student's knowledge about the AT might be another element to consider in relation to the provision of the AT in HE music institutions.

Despite the benefits of AT group classes, one-to-one lessons were perceived to be more effective in adapting to students' needs. MCS-PhD-P132 explained that 'both [one-to-one and group sessions] were helpful but one-on-one gave more personal feedback'. Likewise, UMDS-UG-P89 described: 'one-to-one is much more personal to your needs, and they base the exercises around your problems and your aims'. Interestingly, MCS-MA-P129, who had not taken AT one-to-one lessons, hypothesised the same: '[AT group classes were] perfectly valid for the introductory lessons I received'. They additionally felt that for someone experiencing symptoms such as playing-related musculoskeletal disorders, 'one-to-one tailored lessons would be far more effective'. This was mirrored by UMDS-PhD-P103 who recalled how 'individual sessions [had been] much more valuable' than group classes which were 'interesting and informative' but had 'less effect on' their individual learning and development. Furthermore, UMDS-MA-P98 mentioned that they had 'felt a bit intimidated about going' to AT workshops organised by their institution because the sessions were 'performance-based' and they had 'often experienced performance anxiety around other musicians'. This again highlights the adaptability of AT one-to-one lessons to students' needs and raises questions about the content and the provision of AT group classes in HE, considering factors such as its content and accessibility.

13.2 Mode of delivery: AT face-to-face and online teaching

Music students were asked to illustrate whether they had experienced the AT face-to-face, online, or both. Many had taken part in AT face-to-face sessions, whereas only a small number had experienced the AT online (n=5) or both face-to-face and online (n=4; see Table 10.6, Chapter 10). Therefore, only a handful of respondents could provide first-hand experience of the AT in an online environment and make comparisons with the two modes of delivery.

Respondents expressed some positive comments about AT online sessions. MCS-UG-P121, who had only taken one-to-one lessons online, observed: 'I loved it. I can't compare it to on-site lessons, but I didn't notice much limitation'. MCS-UG-P123, who had attended both face-to-face and AT online sessions, explained that 'online lessons were still very engaging compared with face-to-face ones'⁴⁴. A sense of surprise about the effectiveness of AT lessons was communicated by UMDS-UG-P85 who wrote: 'online was surprisingly good'. In addition to expressing their feelings about the AT in an online environment, some respondents identified the reasons for deeming it successful. One student commented that online group classes fostered independent learning skills and discussion among peers in contrast to face-to-face lessons:

Online there was more responsibility on myself to identify problems with my poise instead of having the teacher identify them for me. Also, because there was a limit to what we could do online, there was more discussion with the class about personal techniques/goals which was interesting and helpful. (MCS-UG-P123)

Another student claimed that AT online sessions might help with logistics: '[AT in an online environment] are a good option if one doesn't have the time or means to travel to a weekly lesson' (UMDS-UG-P91).

Despite these positive comments, there was a sense that AT face-to-face sessions were generally more effective than those online. UMDS-UG-P85 remarked: 'face-to-face are definitely better than online'. Two other students reflected on this in more detail, explaining that the main advantage of AT face-to-face over online sessions resided in the possibility of hands-on guidance in the face-to-face context: 'face-to-face lessons are so much better than the ones online. Personally, I think the AT instructor being able to guide you and show you what they mean in real life makes such a difference' (MCS-UG-P117). This was echoed by MCS-UG-P118 who explained: 'face-to face [were] much better. Although online was helpful, nothing can compare to the hands-on work' (MCS-UG-P118). Notably, hands-on guidance seemed to facilitate the communication of concepts, but online verbal communication might have been

⁴⁴ This student took both one-to-one and group sessions but from the comments it is not sufficiently clear whether they experienced *both* one-to-one and group sessions online. They definitely attended AT group classes in an online environment (see the next comment in relation to the benefits of online group classes).

challenging also due to the nature of the virtual environment itself. While MCS-UG-P122 said that '[online lessons] are very different from the in-person ones because normally the teacher touches the points of your body you have to correct and it's easier to sometimes explain what is wrong with what the student is doing', UMDS-UG-P91 commented that '[it is] hard to follow instructions when there isn't someone showing clearly what to do in front of you. A small box [i.e. the AT teacher's video stream display] on Zoom isn't nearly as beneficial as in person'. In fact, one student felt that they had not experienced the full value of the AT because of having only had group classes online: 'I felt I could not make the most of it or use the techniques day-to-day because I received lessons online' (MCS-UG-P120), suggesting that online sessions may have some benefits but may not be considered as an alternative to face-to-face.

13.3 Views on a triadic lesson

Respondents were invited to comment on a triadic face-to-face teaching format in which an AT teacher and instrumental/vocal teacher (IVT) would work together with the student. The majority of students had never experienced a situation of this kind (UMD students: n=20; MC students: n=16; the student in an IHEMI: n=1). Despite this, respondents were encouraged to reflect on how they might feel in a triadic lesson, providing comments on both potential challenges and benefits. Only one student, (MCS-PhD-P132) reported having participated in this format.

MCS-PhD-P132 commented on their experience but did not write extensively about it. They explained that they had felt 'good' in this format, adding that it had been initiated by a 'summer program ... to get both a physical and musical correlation from it' and that the IVT had already been knowledgeable about the AT prior to the lesson (the data do not indicate whether the IVT was acquainted with the AT teacher or not). Regarding the students who had not experienced it, many of them commented that they would be interested in trying it out, envisaging that a triadic lesson would potentially be beneficial, informative, and stimulating. For example, UMDS-UG-P92 said that this would be 'insightful and very helpful'; similarly, MCS-UG-P124 wrote that it would be 'very interesting'.

One of the most commonly stated reasons for why a triadic lesson would be helpful was to enhance simultaneous learning in relation to musical and bodily aspects

of the music performance: 'It would really help integrate the physical/bodily concepts with musical ones, which I'm often having trouble working with both at the same time' (MCS-UG-P125). This was echoed by others commenting that this 'sounds great, would be great to have someone focused on movement while singing/playing' (MCS-UG-P130); 'it is beneficial to understand the connection between playing and posture and breathing' (UMDS-UG-P91); 'I would get both playing and postural feedback in one, what could be better!' (UMDS-UG-P89).

Another reason why a triadic lesson would be beneficial was to nurture the application of the AT to instrumental/vocal (I/V) practice. MCS-MA-P129 mentioned that this teaching format would 'potentially [result in] better integration of the AT technique with the instrumental technique'. Likewise, UMDS-PhD-P103 noted: 'I feel it would make it easier to translate the AT knowledge into the instrumental technique, but I think that the instrumental teacher would need to have a basic knowledge of AT too', echoing MCS-PhD-P132 above, as well as highlighting that IVTs' understanding of the AT might be a potential prerequisite for a triadic lesson to be successful.

A triadic lesson was also perceived to be useful in enhancing constructive discussions between AT and I/V teachers. While MCS-UG-P126 stated that 'it would be a great opportunity to have both points of view', UMDS-PhD-P99 mentioned how a collaborative atmosphere could be helpful in supporting students' learning, hinting at how the AT and I/V practice could be seen as two sides of the same coin: 'a benefit of this [three-way interaction] is that both professionals can have a dialogue between them about what is the best way to aid the student, as their respective disciplines would complement each other'. The potential benefits of these constructive discussions were noted by MCS-UG-P124, who also stressed the need for enhanced collaboration and interaction between AT and I/V teachers:

I would say it would be quite beneficial to have both perspectives at the same time, and to confront them in real time, rather than having a one-to-one lesson and just say "my teacher said that last time, but you say something different".

Although discussions were seen as a potentially enriching aspect of a triadic lesson, they might also hinder interaction between AT and I/V teachers. MCS-UG-P116 wrote that the AT teacher and the IVT 'would disagree a lot, to be honest'; MCS-UG-P124 argued that a triadic lesson would be 'challenging as [their] vocal teacher might have different ideas than [the] AT instructor'. A few students illustrated some of the

difficulties in balancing AT instruction with the demands of music practice, which could then lead to clashes with IVT's ideas in a triadic teaching format: 'sometimes I feel as though AT teachers do not understand the needs for tension at times when playing my instrument. My teacher may do things that an AT teacher would disagree with' (MCS-UG-P118). In fact, according to MCS-UG-P123, AT teachers' understanding of I/V techniques would be fundamental to a successful three-way interaction: 'a potential challenge may be a clash in opinion between tutors, especially if the AT tutor is unfamiliar with the logistics of playing the instrument in question', emphasising not only music students' needs in a triadic teaching format but also those in AT individual and group sessions. Nonetheless, one student thought that varied viewpoints and priorities and thus the success of a triadic lesson could also depend on how much IVTs emphasised postural issues in their teaching:

Depending on the teacher, I think it might have worked better or worse ... I used to pull some really strange poses when playing oboe, so my teacher would often comment on those things while playing, and I feel like having a second AT teacher would lead to them tripping up on each other all the time. But my saxophone teacher was much more relaxed and rarely, if ever, commented on my posture, so it may have been good to have had an AT teacher in those lessons every now and then. (UMDS-MA-P97)

A few students expressed mixed and negative feelings about a triadic lesson. One of the most common themes was that this format could be stressful. This theme also recurred among those students who had considered that this teaching format could be useful but also potentially challenging. UMDS-UG-P86 noted that 'it may be quite a pressurised environment as you not only have to think about what you're playing but how you play it too'. UMDS-UG-P91 thought the same: 'it might be a bit off putting to have two people staring at me and I have to focus on my playing as well as breathing and posture'. Furthermore, other respondents mentioned that 'the amount of information ... from both tutors could be overwhelming' (MCS-UG-P119). As UMDS-PhD-P101 commented: 'as a shy person I think I would find it intimidating', suggesting that the degree to which music students may find it stressful and overwhelming could also be linked to students' personal traits.

Music students talked about other factors impacting the usefulness of a triadic lesson and any other potential challenges. One student mentioned that lesson planning would be fundamental to success: 'overall ... I think the session will be

beneficial if the structure is organised between the two teachers so there isn't a clash on what will be focused on when' (UMDS-UG-P91). With regard to its limitations, 'a negative would be that the student may have to sacrifice a paid instrumental lesson in order to have their teacher there — since the lesson would naturally deviate from the music in place of AT' (UMDS-PhD-P99), highlighting potential barriers to provision of a triadic lesson in a HE music setting and questions of funding. Interestingly, UMDS-PhD-P100 expressed their reluctance towards this framework given the music educational environment in which they had been educated:

All my instrumental learning took place in another country where body-awareness techniques are not much regarded in the context of higher music education, so I can't really imagine how it would feel to take AT lessons with my instrumental teacher [in the same room].

This draws the attention to different cultural and educational differences affecting the success of a triadic lesson and the AT more broadly.

13.4 Resources on the AT: Books and videos

Music students were invited to answer whether they had engaged with any resources on the AT (e.g. books, peer-reviewed articles, videos). Only a small number had done so (UMD students: n=10; MC students=5) and could provide information on this.

Respondents mostly mentioned books and articles about the AT, but there were few recurrences among responses. Some of the books to which students referred were: *The Alexander Technique for musicians* (Kleinman & Buckocke, 2013), *The Alexander Technique* (Gray, 1991), *Indirect procedures* (de Alcantara, 2013), *What every violinist needs to know about the body* (Johnson, 2009), and *The Alexander Technique: Learning to use your body for total energy* (Barker, 1990). A few respondents also referred to F. M. Alexander's original writings such as *Man's supreme inheritance: Conscious guidance and control in relation to human evolution* (1910/1946) and *The use of the self* (1932/1990). In addition, a few students had consulted websites mentioning the AT, such as *Bulletproof musician* (Kageyama, 2023) and that of the British Association for Performing Arts Medicine (BAPAM, 2023), as well as peer-reviewed articles such as Shoebridge et al. (2017) to which UMDS-UG-P94 referred. Only UMD-UG-P61 had watched a 'YouTube video about the AT, ... a basic introduction to "what is Alexander technique"'.

Music students provided multiple reasons for reading about the AT. One was to undertake academic assignments. UMDS-MA-P66 indicated that they had read about the AT 'to research topics [their] tutor had discussed'. Interestingly, UMDS-UG-P94 and UMDS-UG-P61 mentioned that they had engaged in resources about the AT 'as part of the Musicians' Health and Wellness module' and 'for a university essay'. This was echoed by other two MC students who had read about the AT 'for an essay' (MCS-UG-P116) and 'further studying and research purposes during [a] module on music and well-being for [a] MMus course' (MCS-MA-P115), illustrating the role of institutions in developing health literacy and promoting health and well-being practices, such as the AT, in the HE music sector.

Other common reasons for reading about the AT were curiosity concerning the AT and health practices, self-development, and recommendation. MCS-UG-P118 had read about the AT 'to learn more about the subject', whereas UMDS-PhD-P76 read because of a 'personal interest in health and well-being of musicians'. Regarding self-development, students had engaged with AT resources to develop their I/V technique and postural comfort. While UMDS-MA-P66 had read some AT literature 'to work on techniques to perfect [their] singing', UMDS-MA-P65 explained that they 'wanted to improve [their] posture'. This was mirrored by MCS-UG-P116 who, although they had engaged with AT resources for an academic assignment (see previous paragraph), had also done so for their 'own benefit when playing [their] instrument'. Furthermore, students mentioned having read about the AT because of recommendations by AT and I/V teachers: 'The book was written by my teachers ... and they suggested it' (UMDS-PhD-P103). On the other hand, UMDS-PhD-P104 said that their 'violin teacher [had] recommended [reading *What every violinist needs to know about the body* (Johnson, 2009)]', showing again that IVTs may raise awareness about the AT among music students.

13.5 The teaching and practice of the AT: Discussion of the findings

Findings showed that many students enjoyed AT group classes and valued these for developing observational skills, promoting peer learning, and acting as a catalyst for learning and building emotional connection among peers. These results corroborate

those of Little et al. (2022) who illustrated that ‘participants tended to value the group support and solidarity highly and liked having the opportunity to share experiences and problems with the group’ and used ‘group lessons as an opportunity to observe and interact with other participants and learn from one another’s experiences’ (p. 5). However, there might be various factors to consider for the success of group classes.

First, this study found that group size might impact the effectiveness of AT group classes. A small group in which AT teachers — and, potentially, their assistants — would provide individual hands-on guidance affected learning positively, whereas a large group could be distracting and reduce engagement. This supports Little et al.’s (2022) statement indicating that the ‘particularly small group size’ (of eight participants or fewer) in their study allowed ‘opportunity for hands-on work’ (p. 7); however, there are considerations about whether findings concerning health care patients translate completely to music students given different characteristics in some cases (e.g. a health diagnosis).

Furthermore, it is true that there are different types of AT group sessions, from introductory workshops to regular AT classes, and that the group size may depend on the aim of the session: a theoretical introduction to the AT might involve a large group of students but, as UMDS-UG-P93 emphasised, a largely theory-based AT session may result in reduced engagement. Additionally, there are factors to consider in relation to the frequency and duration of the group sessions. For example, the participants in Loo et al. (2015) ‘received an intervention of Alexander Technique training in a group class where each session lasted three hours’ (p. 2414; see Chapter 2), which might be overly long. Nonetheless, group numbers might need to be set at a small number for AT face-to-face practical workshops and recurrent classes where hands-on guidance might be required, for example. AT teachers may have assistants helping with this but having assistants may not be a viable solution in places where HE institutions do not have a connection with local AT training schools or where budget is restricted. There is limited research on the effectiveness of AT group classes for HE music students (Davies, 2020b). Therefore, the current research has implications for the provision of AT group teaching in HE music institutions. Institutions may face financial limitations in providing AT classes, particularly considering the feasibility of providing and funding AT sessions to all who might be interested, especially in institutions with a large population of music students. Further work is advocated to compare AT working practices and

outcomes with different group sizes, also considering the aim of the sessions, the availability of assistants, the frequency and duration of the classes, and the financial challenges involved.

Second, the composition of the group might affect the success of AT group classes. According to one student (UMDS-MA-P96), groups in which participants shared the same aims, area of expertise, and age were found to be more effective than those with a varied mix of people coming from different backgrounds. An implication could be that institutions arrange group classes based on students' expertise (e.g. same instrument and study pathway) or similar age. Interestingly, the fact that MCS-UG-P125 thought that group classes might be more suitable for novices rather than advanced AT learners is in contrast with Little et al. (2022) stating the opposite: 'group lessons were preceded by individual lessons to reduce initial misunderstanding' (p. 2). Therefore, future research might investigate the effectiveness of group classes according to students' previous experiences with the AT.

Although music students generally seemed to enjoy group classes, all of the respondents would still prefer one-to-one lessons. Individual lessons were considered to be more effective in comparison to group classes, corroborating the findings in Little et al.'s (2022) research in which participants felt that 'if required to choose only one format then individual lessons will be more effective overall' (p. 8). The finding that AT performance-based group workshops could be a barrier to engagement with the AT, stemming from a sense of social comparison, raises questions about the provision of AT group classes for music students (see UMDS-MA-P98, the last paragraph of 13.1.1). Considering UMDS-MA-P98's view, it can be speculated that AT group classes in which students are encouraged to perform might prevent students who experience music performance anxiety from attending. It is unclear how UMDS-MA-P98 developed this perception, but the combination of these findings has implications for the provision of the AT in HE music institution. A mixed course of both one-to-one and group sessions might be a feasible solution in terms of effectiveness, adaptability to students' needs and cost reduction. Yet, group classes with a focus on performance might hinder participation. Performance activities could be included progressively within regular AT group classes or avoided in introductory workshops to minimise discomfort; students could also have a choice about the format in which they might participate, and it would be interesting to examine how many would opt for one-to-one and/or for group

sessions. Further studies are required to investigate the effectiveness of a mixed course of individual and group sessions considering the advantages and disadvantages of the two formats revealed by this research.

Findings indicated that a small number of respondents had taken part in AT online sessions (one-to-one and group). Students had been pleased with these; in one case, there was a sense of surprise about the effectiveness of AT online (see UMDS-UG-P85, 13.1.2). It could be argued that since students had experienced online sessions during the COVID-19 pandemic, they might have regarded any AT provision positively. However, there is a lack of research on this, but the view that AT online sessions may develop independent learning skills aligns with findings about I/V online teaching: a participant in de Bruin's (2021) research noted that 'students became more critical and showed an adaptability that was surprising' (p. 5). Nonetheless, this current study showed that face-to-face sessions were still regarded as more effective than those online due to the possibility of receiving hands-on guidance: a perceived fundamental component to facilitate the communication of concepts. AT organisations have been promoting AT online sessions in recent years (e.g. Professional Association of Alexander Teachers, 2022b), but empirical investigations could investigate the effectiveness of teaching AT online in comparison to face-to-face. As noted above, AT online sessions could be an alternative to face-to-face in order to deal with logistics such as travel issues. However, it is possible that online AT sessions might be more effective after receiving a certain number of face-to-face sessions (see MCS-UG-P120 at the end of 13.1.2). Further studies could shed light on this matter considering both the level of the learners and the teaching format (one-to-one and group online sessions).

Participants articulated their views on a triadic lesson format in which an AT and I/V teacher would work with them in the same room. Only one student had experienced this during a summer course, finding it beneficial; the fact that the IVT had been knowledgeable about the AT prior to the joint session suggests that this may have contributed to its success. In contrast, the other respondents had never experienced this format but were interested in trying it to develop simultaneous learning of musical and bodily aspects of their music performance. This aligns with responses in Pranevičius' (2019) report on a Norwegian collaborative project aimed at integrating the AT into I/V practice (see Chapter 2). One of the student participants in

this project explained that some IVTs, in comparison to AT teachers, may lack specialisation rather than competence in advice regarding sensory awareness and the bodily manifestations of music playing:

The harp teachers look at how you sit and how you move, but they aren't specialised. And I think that the AT is a very specialised way to look at things. It's not about, 'You have to sit straight and not move too much'. It's more about a feeling you develop. (Pranevičius, 2019, p. 31)

A simultaneous triadic learning experience might thus be beneficial but may present some challenges.

The current study found that students felt that this format could potentially lead to disagreement between AT and I/V teachers. Findings showed that a certain degree of openness might be required from both AT and I/V teachers, as well as the student: while a few students noted that AT teachers might need to develop some knowledge of the technicality of music playing, UMDS-MA-97 (see 12.1.3) highlighted that a successful collaboration may depend on the IVT's teaching approach to the physicality of playing. This is in line with the inclusion criteria of the study by Fox and Romaniuk (2021) in the USA who tested a triadic teaching collaboration (AT teacher, IVT and student) with participants who 'showed open-mindedness, commitment to the project, enthusiasm, and a strong willingness to learn' prior to the start of the project (p. 7). Nonetheless, according to a few students in the current study, a triadic lesson could potentially be stressful and overwhelming. Provision might be difficult because of restrictions relating to lesson allowance (see UMDS-PhD-P99), and there could be cultural reticence towards somatic and psychophysical practices amongst students and teachers from different educational backgrounds. Considering all this, these findings provide support for the design of further research exploring triadic teaching formats in UK HE music institutions.

This study found that only a few students had engaged with books, peer-reviewed articles, blog posts and videos on the AT. It can be speculated that these resources might have had a limited impact on students' perceptions of the AT; however, it is interesting that some of the titles of the sources mentioned refer to the 'body' (e.g. Johnson; Barker), suggesting that resources on the AT may shape perceptions of the AT as a physical practice. An important finding was that studying health and well-being modules was effective in promoting the AT among music

students. It is interesting that only a few students mentioned F. M. Alexander's original writings, hinting at a limited familiarity of students with these. In addition, findings showed that students displayed some intrinsic motivation to deal with playing-related issues in conjunction with consulting AT resources. Further studies could investigate the extent to which these sources could support students' learning and potentially enhance it. The research by Little et al. (2022) implemented the use of self-study resources in their study design; yet this was deemed to be an 'atypical' component (p. 7), thus investigations in the music field could incorporate this element. Furthermore, the current study found that some students may encounter AT resources through their IVTs. Not only does this show the key role of IVTs in promoting the AT among students but this also has implications for future comparison between AT and I/V resources to illuminate potential similarities and discrepancies within the information provided.

13.6 Summary of the chapter: Key themes

This chapter discussed the last set of findings concerning music students. AT group sessions were regarded as useful in providing different learning experiences in contrast to one-to-one; however, music students showed a general preference for AT individual teaching. A few respondents also provided their views on AT online sessions: these were perceived to develop independent learning skills, but more investigations are needed to explore AT online teaching further. Largely positive views were expressed regarding a triadic lesson, which could be beneficial but potentially challenging due to divergent viewpoints between AT and I/V teachers. Lastly, only a few music students had engaged with AT resources, demonstrating a potential limited influence on students' perceptions of the AT. The next chapter will compare AT teachers, IVTs, and HE music students' views. Then, a final chapter will conclude this thesis.

Chapter 14: General discussion

This thesis addresses the perceptions of the AT among three categories of people in UK Higher Education (HE) music institutions: Alexander Technique (AT) teachers, instrumental/vocal teachers (IVTs) working in HE music institutions, and HE music students studying in the UK. The literature review revealed that most of the previous research has focussed on testing the effectiveness of the AT. Only Lee (2019) examined the views of five AT teachers on the implementation of the AT in five HE music institutions in the UK, USA, and Canada. However, my research intended to provide a comprehensive understanding of the AT in UK HE music institutions analysing the different perspectives of a larger sample of participants through two interview studies (one with 19 AT teachers and the other with 11 IVTs) and a survey study (133 music students). Chapters 4 to 13 presented and discussed the findings concerning the perceptions of the AT among the three categories of participants. This chapter revisits and draws together key evidence from the previous chapters, but while Chapters 4-13 examined findings to answer the ancillary research questions, this chapter answers the overarching question of this thesis (Chapter 2): *What are the perceptions of the AT in UK HE music institutions among Alexander Technique teachers, instrumental/vocal teachers, and music students?* The discussion will thus provide a comparative analysis of the perceptions of the AT in UK HE music institutions among the three different participant categories and, to fulfil this aim, it will be organised into five themes: the communication of the AT, its image and promotion, the AT teaching format and delivery mode, the teaching of the AT and collaborative elements, and the provision of the AT in HE music institutions (i.e. curriculum and other institutional factors, and safeguarding policies).

14.1 Communication of the AT

14.1.1 Challenges in communicating the nature of the AT

The literature review identified variances of definition of the AT. As Fitzgerald (2007) stated, 'the AT will have as many different interpretations and definitions as there are people who engage with it' (p. 10). These differences were also found among the participants of this current study. AT teachers referred to the AT in multiple ways:

while many of them focussed their definition on the psychophysical benefits of the AT, a few others appeared to tailor their definition around purely physical benefits, revealing potential divergences among the AT community (Chapter 4). IVTs, who had diverse levels of direct experience with the AT, also provided varied definitions of the AT but, in contrast to the AT teachers, many of them mainly referred to it by addressing its physical and postural benefits; only those few IVTs who had directly undertaken a high number of sessions over the course of many years mentioned the psychophysical characteristics of the AT (Chapter 7). Music students also defined the AT in several ways: those who were familiar with the AT but without a direct experience of the AT referred to the physical nature of the AT, whereas many of those with direct experience of it highlighted its psychophysical features (Chapter 11).

It is not possible to compare the different proportions of IVTs and music students holding these views because of the unbalanced sample. It can be speculated, though, that the fact that some IVTs had had a direct experience of the AT more than 10 years ago had influenced their perception of the AT, in contrast to today's music students, who may have developed a more nuanced understanding of the AT due to potential differences in how some AT teachers, for example, communicate their work. However, several music students revealed that they had mainly discovered psychophysical benefits after a series of AT sessions (Chapter 11), which suggests that the AT might still predominantly be regarded as a physical practice by those who do not directly engage with it, or by those who only take a few sessions. Therefore, what is interesting is that a direct experience of the AT, ideally over a series of sessions, may be required to develop an understanding of the AT given the challenges that defining and communicating the nature of the AT may pose (Chapters 4 and 7).

A verbal description of the principles of the AT might indeed not be straightforward (Valentine et al., 2022). Similar difficulties were noted by the participants in Jones and Glover (2014) who struggled to verbalise their experiences with the AT. It is true that some factors influencing verbalising and communicating the perception of the AT could be difficult to control, with evidence showing how fundamental peer recommendation and word of mouth are in promoting the AT (Chapter 5, 7, 10). Nonetheless, according to Woods et al. (2020), 'it can sometimes

take time for [learners of the AT]⁴⁵ to move away from the idea that they are receiving therapy' (p. 18)⁴⁶. The authors continued that it is thus vital for learners of the AT to 'gain an understanding of being engaged in a learning process over which they have control and responsibility' (Woods et al., 2020, p. 18), which suggests that it might be AT teachers' responsibility to explain this clearly and hints at the potential need for improving the communication of what the AT is.

In fact, according to many AT teacher participants in the present study, defining the AT is a challenging task because of various factors: the experiential nature of the AT (which was thought to be necessary to develop of an understanding of the AT), the lack of both unity in the AT community, and a comprehensive definition of the AT by the originator of the AT (Chapter 4). The same difficulty was echoed by the IVTs; in particular, IVT-P11 revealed how the challenge to define to the AT resided in the fact that AT teachers had diverse teaching approaches to the AT, which highlighted the need for enhanced communication of the AT (Chapter 7). This variety of AT teachers' teaching approaches to the AT was also indicated by music students (Chapter 11), and it could potentially shape learners' perceptions of the AT. Jones (1976/2019) pointed out that AT teachers' pedagogical approaches, for example, may have hindered people from learning the AT:

There have been failures of pupils to learn the Alexander Technique ... Some of the failures have been due to bad teaching – to the teacher's ineptness with words, or his inability to convey the kinaesthetic experience in a meaningful way, or his refusal to adapt his way of teaching to the pupil's needs. (p. 163)

It is possible that Jones' accounts referred to the early times of the AT teaching practice — it is worth noting that the first AT training course was founded in 1931 (Murray, 2019) —and the quality of teaching may have improved over time. Cole (2022) identified that F. M. Alexander's teaching approach to the AT might have also led to misinterpretations about the AT (this will be discussed in 14.4). De Alcantara (1997) stated that although there should be some common principles among AT teachers, the teaching of the AT is as diverse as the number of teachers undertaking it:

⁴⁵ The word 'students' has been replaced with 'learners of the AT' to increase the understanding of the excerpt.

⁴⁶ The page number refers to the version of the article free to access on the University of Hull's research repository website (<https://hull-repository.worktribe.com/output/3548906/an-education-for-life-the-process-of-learning-the-alexander-technique>) and not to that on the peer-reviewed journal website which could not be accessed. This applies to other instances as well.

'a teacher always brings her temperament, personality, and background to bear upon her understanding of the Technique' (p. 81). Indeed, one AT teacher (AT-P17) in this current study mentioned that some AT teachers were still teaching the AT in a postural way. Furthermore, although direct experience of the AT might contribute to developing an understanding of the AT, it may not be sufficient because the AT was still defined as a mainly postural technique by one participant, MCS-MA-P128, who had taken AT sessions at a young age and had developed their understanding of the AT based on those early experiences. Therefore, all the above-mentioned factors pose challenges to the communication of the nature of the AT and have direct implications for the understanding, the promotion and visibility of the AT in HE music institutions.

14.1.2 Limited understanding of the AT

AT teachers identified several psychophysical benefits of the AT, claiming it to be a general discipline with preventative, rehabilitative and performance enhancement characteristics (Chapter 5). However, some of them lamented a lack of understanding by HE administrators, for example, who were thought to perceive the AT as a postural technique and not as an educational tool due to their lack of direct experience with AT sessions (Chapter 4). AT teachers also thought that IVTs held contrasting views about the AT and what it could offer to music students, whereas they felt that music students engaged in AT sessions to solve an issue and thus initially regard the AT as a rehabilitative rather than a preventative and educational practice. Furthermore, previous misleading learning experiences were considered by a few AT teachers to impact music students' understanding of the AT (Chapter 5).

All of the IVTs in this research were supportive of the AT and thus it is not possible to compare AT teachers' views with those of IVTs who might be resistant to the AT. Only those IVTs who had an extensive experience with the AT appeared to acknowledge the perceived extensive benefits of the AT and potentially have a deeper understanding of the AT (Chapter 7); however, most of the IVTs would recommend the AT to their students to solve arising issues, which aligns with the reasons why many of the students in this research had engaged with the AT in the first place.

Many music students in this research would indeed turn to the AT to solve an issue rather than to prevent one. A further explanation of this could be provided by

Jones (1976/2019) who stated that ‘most pupils when they start having lessons are struck by the improvement in their health and refer to this improvement when they try to describe the Technique to their friends’ (p. 189), which again suggests the role of word of mouth in shaping perceptions about the AT. However, Jones (1976/2019) noted that the AT is not ‘curative’ but is ‘preventative’; curative processes may happen as a result of having AT sessions but were not the aim of the AT (p. 195). As Jones (1976/2019) further argued, using a medical paradigm to describe the AT would be misleading because the AT ‘can profitably be taught to anybody; it is not restricted in its application to people with disabilities’ (p. 189), which emphasises the relevance of the AT to different categories of people regardless of their health status. This therefore suggests that there may be a limited understanding of the AT as a curative and/or preventative practice.

In addition, the fact that psychological benefits would generally be recognised by some music students in the present study as unexpected further corroborates the existence of a limited understanding of the AT in UK HE music institutions (Chapter 11). Although there is still a lack of ‘a fully psychophysical model of the AT’ (Kinsey et al., 2021, p. 8), recent studies have developed models explaining the physical and non-physical outcomes of the AT (Cacciatore et al., 2020; Kinsey et al., 2021), which can thus increase the understanding of the potential value of the AT. For example, Kinsey et al. (2021) concluded that non-physical outcomes ‘can be generated through improvements in physical wellbeing, and through experience of mind-body integration and subsequent application of AT skills to non-physical areas’ (p. 9) and highlighted that ‘further work should seek to widen its application beyond the traditionally perceived areas of movement, posture, and pain’ (p. 9), which hints again at a need for enhancing the communication of the AT.

Furthermore, this limited understanding of the AT in HE music institutions is evidenced by the views of those few music students who would not be interested in the AT because of considering it relevant only to music performers or pianists (Chapter 10). F. M. Alexander (1932/1990) pointed out that one of the processes of the AT is what was defined by the American philosopher John Dewey as “‘thinking in activity”” (p. 42). Similarly, Jones (1976/2019) noted that ‘what distinguishes the Alexander Technique from all other methods of self-improvement [known to them] is the character of the thinking involved’ (p. 192). This again shows the applicability of the AT

to any area, since 'learning how to learn' is considered fundamental to the AT (Jones, 1976/2019, p. 193). It is therefore evident that the promotion of the AT in HE music institutions might need to be developed to improve the understanding of the AT among different categories of people within HE music institutions and beyond, with effects on the provision of the AT in the HE music sector both for music students and staff.

14.1.3 The visibility of the AT in HE music institutions: Evaluation of the specific institutional context

This study identified that the provision and institutional recognition of the AT within UK HE music institutions depended on several factors; in particular, the specific institutional context in which AT teachers operated. This echoes Jørgensen (2014) who cautioned against generalising research findings collected in diverse institutional settings, such as university music departments (UMDs) and music conservatoires (MCs). Although the few AT teachers working in UMDs who participated in the present research perceived more institutional barriers than their colleagues working in MCs, findings showed that it is the specific institutional context that might influence the extent to which the AT is valued by the institution and not the similar educational setting: a music specialist institution or UMD. In fact, some of the AT teachers who had worked or were working in some UK MCs revealed that the institutional recognition of the AT varied between them, with a few instances where the AT was perceived to be highly valued and respected (Chapter 4).

Similar views were shared by some music students who felt that the recognition and provision of the AT differed among institutions, also in consideration of the specific prevalent musical context operating within them (e.g. Western classical music versus popular music; see Chapter 12). This mirrored the view of the AT teacher working in an independent HE music institution (IHEMI) with a focus on popular music who perceived their educational environment as a particularly privileged one (Chapter 4).

Institutions valuing the health and well-being of music students appeared to be a fertile ground for the visibility of the AT (Chapter 4). For example, health and well-being courses were found to be effective in promoting the AT among music students (Chapter 13). However, one AT teacher (IVT-P7) revealing that the AT was not part of a

health and well-being module suggested that the presence of health and well-being courses could not necessarily be indicative of the place that the AT occupies in the institution (Chapter 4).

The ability and the persistence of some AT teachers to negotiate with policy makers and IVTs was fundamental to developing the AT in a few institutions. This suggests that institutional openness to and valuing of the AT is paramount for an integration of the AT within the HE music sector. In fact, this study showed that the AT was generally considered and provided as a side activity to performance and academic studies, and since the recognition of the AT is perceived to vary among the different people holding the beliefs (Chapter 4, 8, 12), the extent to which the AT is valued in the institutional community as a whole might be particularly influenced by the level of institutional support. This argument is further corroborated by the findings among students indicating that there might be a correlation between the quality of teaching space and the recognition of the AT (Chapter 12); a view that was also held by one of the IVTs in Chapter 7 (IVT-P4). Jørgensen (2014) highlighted that there are different parameters that impact the teaching and learning qualities in diverse educational environments, such as the 'artistic basis', the 'size', and the 'funding' (p. 4). The findings of the current study thus indicate that HE institutions might need to consider the wider institutional context in which they operate either to assess and potentially improve the provision of the AT in contexts where the AT is already taking place, or to consider its use and potential value. Nonetheless, any appraisal of the value of the AT is strictly dependent on the understanding of the AT within these institutions.

Although the AT is perceived to be a popular practice in the music field (Harer & Munden, 2009), the present study shows that a large number of UK UMD students were not familiar with the AT in comparison to music students in some MCs. It has already been discussed how this finding could lead to speculation on why UMD students might be less familiar with the AT in contrast to MC students. Given the imbalance of the participant groups within the dataset, this could only be hypothesised (Chapter 10), even though this limited awareness of the AT in UMDs might be supported by the perceptions among some UMD students of a lack of awareness about the AT among their peers (Chapter 12).

However, the views of some MC students recommending better promotion of the AT in light of the perceived limited knowledge about the AT in their institutions

cast doubt about whether the AT is known widely not only among UMD but also among MC students in the UK HE music sector. The AT is claimed to be taught in many MCs in the UK (STAT, 2023i), but the previous chapters identified that the provision of the AT varied among different institutions (Chapter 4, 8, 12), and thus a correlation between the provision of the AT and the extent to which it is known by music students could not be easily drawn. Some institutions may offer more AT opportunities than others, and findings about the promotion of the AT revealed promotional challenges, which may impact the visibility of the AT and, in turn, the uptake of AT sessions (Chapter 5, 8, 12). In addition, one AT teacher participant mentioned how the provision of the AT was less widespread for music students studying popular music (Chapter 4). Therefore, this study again realises that the profile of the AT in HE music institutions might need to be evaluated in consideration of the characteristics of the specific institutional contexts.

14.2 Image and promotion of the AT

14.2.1 Research-based culture

Chapter 2 identified recent investigations examining the AT in different fields: in health research, some studies were conducted to investigate the AT in reducing back and neck pain (Becker et al., 2018; Little et al., 2008; MacPherson et al., 2015); research on biomechanics investigated the effects of AT sessions on postural tone (Cacciatore et al., 2011); a more recent article provided a preliminary neurophysiological model explaining the mechanisms of the AT (Cacciatore et al., 2020). The literature review, however, highlighted the paucity of robust evidence examining the effectiveness of the AT in the music field (Davies, 2020a; Davies, 2020b; Klein et al., 2014; Valentine et al., 1995; Valentine et al., 2022), along with anecdotal evidence based on course evaluation feedback and reflective journals showing the potential benefits of the AT for music students (Lee, 2019).

According to some AT teachers in the current study, this limited research on the AT might contribute to potential scepticism towards the AT, which could be perceived as an eccentric practice and fringe science (Chapter 4). This view was supported by some IVTs in this research who believed that the AT could be regarded as 'weird' and 'wacky' (IVT-P9), or as IVT-P1 noted, 'a bit voodoo' and classifiable as

'homeopathy' (Chapter 7). Similar perceptions were revealed by a few music students who argued that the AT might be perceived as 'hippy practice' (UMDS-UG-P88) and 'wishy-washy' (MCS-UG-P119). This aligns with information scattered around the web, such as lesson testimonials and newspaper articles. For example, Howe (2012) reported that one AT learner 'came originally to the Alexander Technique as a cynic ... [and] thought it was going to be hippy mumbo-jumbo' (n. p.); CBS Local Media (2012) explained that 'the Alexander Technique isn't some hippy-dippy new age therapy' (n. p.). Interestingly, these perceptions contrast with early accounts of the AT by Dewey who was 'convinced of the scientific quality of Mr Alexander's work' (Alexander, 1932/1990, p. 9). It is not yet clear why these perceptions might exist. It is possible that there might be misleading stereotypes about AT teachers being perceived as unconventional, as IVT-P4 revealed (Chapter 7); alternatively, Tarr (2011) noted that the dependence on a founder is typical of alternative practices rather than mainstream medicine and since this might hinder the AT from being accepted in the wider medical community, it could be hypothesised that a similar idea might influence the perceptions of the AT in the music field.

Nonetheless, what is interesting is that these perceptions of the AT as fringe science have implications for the provision of the AT in HE music education institutions. It has already been mentioned that the AT was not included in a health and well-being module for UK conservatoire students because of the limited research evidence supporting the use of practices such as the AT (Matei et al., 2018). Considering that one student in the present research revealed that they would be interested in the AT especially if the AT was proven to work (UMDS-UG-P28, Chapter 10), it is possible that on-going scientific validation of the AT and the dissemination of research findings could contribute to developing a more rigorous and potentially positive image of the AT, supporting its recognition and inclusion in HE music institutions.

Findings from this current study demonstrate the openness of many AT teachers to situate their practice in light of recent scientific developments. Although many AT teachers recognised the relevance of F. M. Alexander's original writings, they

acknowledged the importance of historical contextualisation of these texts (Chapter 6). This echoes Cohen's⁴⁷ (2019) recommendations to the AT community:

Science is a process, not just a body of knowledge ... The Alexander Technique, too, is a process. F. M. Alexander was brilliant, but he was not perfect, and some of what you have been taught during your training is probably wrong. Bearing this in mind, please don't let your explanations or understandings of the work crystallize. Hold your ideas lightly. Be adaptive: steady in your skill and open to change. (p. 10)

Furthermore, one AT teacher in the present study (AT-P10) highlighted the responsibility of the AT community of AT teachers and AT organisations to improve the professional image of the AT (Chapter 4), echoing Fitzgerald (2007) who mentioned the need for a research-based culture and scientific attitude to the teaching of the AT 'that honour[s] Alexander's principles and meet public demands for professional accountability' (p. xi). As mentioned in 14.1.4, this current study offers some preliminary first-hand evidence of the potential benefits of the AT, highlighting both the perceived limitations of the AT and mixed experiences with it among some music students, but it also shows that it might be the responsibility of AT teachers and AT organisations to develop their work in ways that meet the research-based criteria that HE music institutions may require to endorse its inclusion and promotion within a research-based culture.

14.2.2 Promotion of the AT: A shared task

Previous chapters identified that the promotion of the AT in HE could be further enhanced. Chapters 4 and 5 showed the critical role of AT teachers to promote their work through networking with staff (e.g. IVTs), typographical and email communication. In particular, a few AT teachers revealed the challenges of email advertisement in comparison to traditional means of promotion (e.g. leaflets), with some of them advocating for more visibility on departmental websites and an increased promotion of the AT to boost the uptake of AT sessions.

Music students emphasised the pivotal role of word of mouth as well as that of AT teachers in promoting the AT within the institution (Chapter 12). UMD students

⁴⁷ Dr Rajal Cohen is an AT teacher and an Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology and Communication at the University of Idaho, whose research interests include the AT and the interrelation of cognition, posture, and action.

revealed how fundamental IVTs had been in promoting the AT to them, whereas MC students believed that the promotion of the AT could be done by IVTs. On the other hand, all of the IVTs in this research demonstrated an openness to the AT and were active promoters of the AT among their music students (Chapters 7 and 8). According to these IVTs, the AT was promoted by institutions through email communication, departmental handbooks, and poster advertisement; nonetheless, word of mouth played a fundamental role in spreading information about the AT, with one participant (IVT-P8) feeling that the level of word of mouth differed between institutions.

These findings indicate that although AT teachers might need to invest time and energy to promote their work, the promotion of the AT in HE music institutions is a shared task. Recommendation from IVTs and word of mouth appeared far more effective to increase the visibility of the AT than typographical advertisement (Chapter 12). In addition, email communication was one of the ways in which institutions promoted the AT among music students, but it might not be effective if music students do not actively engage with email accounts (Chapter 5), or if emails contain too much information that could easily be missed (Chapter 8), not only by music students but also by IVTs.

In fact, it could be speculated that if the AT is promoted among IVTs through departmental emails, IVTs working across different institutions and juggling with different email accounts might miss these, resulting in limited awareness of the available departmental AT opportunities. This could subsequently affect students; indeed, while Chapter 7 revealed how a few IVTs were either unaware of or had limited knowledge about the AT in their institutions, Chapter 12 showed how one student had failed to notice AT promotional materials, with their IVT's recommendation making up for the limitations of poster advertisement. This has implications for the involvement of IVTs in the health and well-being of music students, especially among those IVTs who may not actively participate in wider activities within the institution because of their type of employment status (Chapter 7).

However, findings showed that some IVTs might be reluctant to recommend and promote the AT due to the cost associated with AT sessions, perceived philosophical clashes between recommendation and the non-coercive nature of the AT, and in instances where they deemed mainstream healthcare as more appropriate (Chapter 8). Furthermore, some IVTs in this research felt that some of their colleagues

may not recommend the AT to music students and may be resistant to it because of 'ignorance' (IVT-P9), 'lack of knowledge' (IVT-P2), and the difficulty of expressing the nature of the AT (IVT-P2). It has already been discussed how surprising it was that no music student had mentioned the role of academic staff in promoting the AT among them (Chapter 12). It is possible that there might be some scepticism among academic staff about the AT because of the limited research-based evidence of the AT and the AT being perceived as fringe science (see previous section). It could be speculated that academic staff not involved in music performance might not have experienced AT directly and their lack of experience of the AT could influence their understanding of the AT and thus their support. However, this indicates that collaboration among AT teachers, IVTs and institutional health services might be useful to support IVTs in their role as promoters of the AT and of health and well-being initiatives, also considering the benefits that the AT may bring to music students. IVTs themselves could benefit from this enhanced collaboration by being better informed about the potential value of the AT and access to AT sessions, which could assist their health and well-being (Norton, 2016).

In spite of a few mixed and negative experiences, many music students reported several psychophysical benefits of the AT (Chapter 11), with the IVTs in this sample supporting the potential value of the AT for music learning. These benefits were perceived by music students to go beyond music performance and extended to teaching, academic assignment stress, and everyday life (Chapter 11). As mentioned in the previous chapters, further empirical work is warranted to investigate these benefits as music students' accounts are based on self-reported data, and literature on the effectiveness of the AT in the music field is still limited (see Chapter 2). Nevertheless, this study provides supporting evidence that the AT could be a potentially useful tool for music students in consideration of what the AT could offer.

Those institutions who decide to endorse the AT might need to have a range of promotional means to advertise it and to ensure that promotion is targeted to enhance the understanding of the AT among the different categories of people in HE, especially when the AT is offered as an extra-curricular activity and might be perceived as non-essential (Chapters 4, 7, and 12). Institutions might not only need to ensure that there is awareness of those AT-related opportunities among staff (academics, IVTs, and professional services staff), but also actively promote these opportunities to

music students. Music student societies and health and well-being student representatives might need to be involved in this collaborative effort, particularly considering how peer recommendation is paramount in the promotion of the AT. Institutional well-being provision could also include the AT (Royal Academic of Music, 2022). However, it might not be sufficient to promote the AT among music students without careful consideration of financial arrangements and the financial burden that self-funded AT sessions have on music students (Chapters 11 and 12). This has direct implications for the delivery mode of AT sessions and the provision of the AT in HE music institutions, which could consider cost-effective settings to provide the AT where budgets are limited.

14.3 The teaching format (one-to-one/group) and the delivery mode (face-to-face/online)

14.3.1 A combination of one-to-one and group teaching

As discussed in the literature review (Chapter 2), the AT is traditionally delivered one-to-one, but group classes are also utilised (Valentine et al., 2022). With regard to previous research findings supporting AT group teaching, in the medical field Becker et al. (2018) provided preliminary evidence on the effectiveness of AT group classes to reduce neck pain, whereas Little et al. (2022) investigated a combined approach of AT one-to-one and group sessions for relieving back pain. Another body of literature has focussed on the effectiveness of AT group classes among music students (Davies, 2020a; Davies, 2020b; Loo et al., 2015). These studies demonstrated the potential effectiveness of AT group classes in healthcare and music research but also showed the variety of approaches to AT group teaching — where individual instruction can be undertaken within a group context (e.g. Loo et al., 2015) — as well as different group size and duration of classes (see Chapter 2).

The current study found that many AT teachers supported group teaching because of the different learning experiences that group classes could offer learners in contrast to one-to-one lessons, particularly through observational understanding and peer learning (Chapter 6). This echoed the perspectives of music students who, despite showing preference for AT one-to-one lessons due to the higher degree of specificity to solving individual issues, perceived AT group classes as beneficial (Chapter 13), also

because group teaching appeared to foster a sense of solidarity among learners (Little et al., 2022; see Chapter 13). These findings are thus important because they provide music students' first-hand experiences with AT group teaching, in contrast to previous research (e.g. Lee, 2019). However, there are factors to consider for potentially improving the effectiveness of AT group classes, with implications not only for the HE music sector but also for summer music courses offering AT, AT teacher training courses and further studies investigating AT group classes.

14.3.2 Factors affecting AT group teaching

Findings indicated that there are different types of group classes depending on the aim of the session (e.g. introductory workshops or AT courses). In Chapters 6 and 13, considerations were found to be made by AT teachers and perceived by music students in terms of lesson content, group size and composition (e.g. learners' level and area of expertise), amount of hands-on work, availability of AT teacher's assistants, and potential barriers to engagement with AT group workshops, such as their focus on music performance which may prevent students with performance anxiety issues from attending those sessions.

Group size was thought to be an essential component of effective AT group teaching by both AT teachers and music students. A small group size allowed AT teachers to give all learners hands-on guidance which, despite the potential limitations it might have on learners' autonomy, was deemed to be an essential component of AT teaching (see Chapter 6; institutional policies about hands-on work will be discussed in 14.4.2). Although the participants in this research did not mention the specific group size, it could be speculated that for practical AT sessions, a group of 5-6 students could be the ideal number for those sessions to be effective, as recommended by Lee (2019) and as designed by Davies (2020a; 2020b) in their research. However, the availability of AT assistants might influence the number of students in the sessions and thus it might be at the discretion of the institution or of the organiser of the session to consider this opportunity, the funding implications of providing assistants, and assess its effectiveness (see Chapter 6).

On the other hand, theoretical AT sessions could potentially involve a larger group of learners. As AT-P17 revealed, group classes were useful to deliver theoretical knowledge to a large group of students (Chapter 6); however, the view of one music

student (UMDS-UG-93) suggesting that theory-based sessions could limit engagement indicates that a balance between theory and practice might promote participation (Chapter 13). This is supported by Kleinman (2018) who proposed that AT teachers develop sessions in which a maximum of three pieces of core information is included to avoid teaching 'everything you know about [the AT] in the first lesson' (p. 20) and potentially overloading participants. Therefore, this has implications for the development of AT group class curricula which considers both the aim of and the length of the AT group session and/or course.

Findings also showed that the clarity of presenting information is another aspect to consider in relation to AT group teaching. The experiences of some IVTs with group classes, which had left them with feelings of puzzlement (Chapter 7), suggests that clear explanations of what the AT involves (e.g. background of the AT) might be paramount to deliver introductory AT group sessions. This is particularly important because AT workshops are often organised by HE music institutions both to promote the AT and to offer it to a large number of students (Chapters 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13). The need for clear communication is further supported by the view of one AT teacher (AT-P16) who felt that AT group classes might be confusing for novice AT learners. Therefore, it is essential that explanations are established at the beginning of and carried out throughout AT group sessions. It is suggested that introductory workshops provide a comprehensive understanding of the AT that considers the points discussed in 14.1 about the promotion of the AT as an educational self-help tool with diverse applications rather than as a solely curative practice. This may help develop an understanding of the AT in the music field as whole and not just in the HE music sector.

This study also found that the suitability of AT group sessions might depend on the level of the learners and their previous knowledge of the AT. According to one student, group sessions were more appropriate for novice learners, whereas for one AT teacher (AT-P16) AT group sessions would work only with learners with previous experiences with the AT. It has already been noted that the participants in Little et al. (2022) had been given one-to-one sessions before attending group classes to avoid confusion (Chapter 13). It is however possible that the content of the AT session might need to be adjusted depending on the level of the learners and, potentially, their area of expertise since homogenous groups were felt by a few students to be more effective (see Chapter 13). This aligns with the provision of the Royal College of Music

in which learners are grouped according to their AT experience levels, whereas it contrasts with the 'mixed enrolment' at the Boston Conservatory at Berklee, America, where learners with diverse experience are grouped together because this is believed to 'enrich each student's Alexander experience' (Lee, 2019, p. 98).

There is no literature examining how all these parameters influence the effectiveness of the AT. However, all of this has direct implications for the provision of AT group classes in HE music institutions. Indeed, this study concludes that AT group classes could be complementary to AT one-to-one lessons because of both their educational and practical benefits. Music students could be offered the option to opt for one-to-one and/or group sessions (Chapter 13); this raises interesting questions about the number of students choosing one or the other and the motivation leading to these choices. Furthermore, institutional budgets might be limited (Chapters 4, 8, 12) and therefore group classes could be a valid cost-effective solution where recurrent AT individual lessons cannot be offered by HE music institutions.

These findings also have implications for AT training courses and the employment of AT teachers with AT group teaching professional training. Professional AT organisations such as STAT do not seem to include professional training for AT group teaching in their training courses (Little et al., 2022) in contrast to other AT professional bodies, such as the Interactive Teaching Method (ITM, 2018), in which 'all ITM teachers have been specifically trained to teach group classes as a primary teaching tool' (n. p.). These findings thus suggest that further pedagogical training could be given to AT teachers working in HE music institutions to undertake group teaching.

14.3.3 Online teaching: A further area of investigation

The COVID-19 pandemic forced educators to work in an online environment and to devise effective teaching strategies that would be suitable for online teaching. This also applied to AT teaching: as Woods et al. (2020) stated, the pandemic 'has brought about new ways of working remotely with experienced students and teachers that would not have been considered before' (p. 10). This could suggest that the level of the learner and the experience of the AT teacher are important factors to consider in AT online teaching, and, to the best of my knowledge, the current study has been the first one investigating views on AT online teaching.

Chapter 13 showed that a small number of music students had participated in AT online sessions both in one-to-one and group settings. A few students had enjoyed them, and one student felt that AT online sessions could develop independent learning skills and promoted active engagement (see MCS-UG-P123). Furthermore, since another student (MCS-UG-P121) could not compare online with face-to-face sessions, it is not clear what their view would have been had they had the chance to compare the two modes of delivery and thus these results need to be interpreted with caution. Music students had also taken AT online sessions during the 2020 pandemic, and it is possible that their positive views about online teaching might have been influenced by the fact that any learning experience would have been appreciated during a time where people were deprived of social interactions and of many learning opportunities. Despite these positive perceptions, face-to-face sessions were still thought to be more effective than online because of the possibility of receiving hands-on guidance.

The same reluctance towards AT online teaching due to a lack of hands-on guidance was expressed by some AT teachers; however, a few of them were surprised about the possibilities that AT online teaching could offer — echoing UMDS-UG-P85's similar feeling — with other AT teachers questioning the amount of hands-on guidance AT teachers usually provide in AT face-to-face sessions and considering the suitability of AT online sessions according to the level of the learner (Chapter 6). The latter aligns with Woods et al. (2020) who highlighted that online teaching might yield positive learning outcomes only with AT learners with prior experience of hands-on work. Interestingly, similar views were shared by some IVTs: while many were hesitant towards AT online teaching, a few were curious about its potential and again deemed it feasible only with learners and AT teachers who had already developed a face-to-face working relationship (Chapter 9). Therefore, it is possible that AT online teaching might be a valid supplement to face-to-face sessions with more experienced learners and that it could solve logistics issues, as one student revealed (see Chapter 6). As briefly mentioned in previous chapters, the findings of the current study warrant further research investigating AT teaching in a virtual environment considering its implications for the provision of AT online teaching in HE music institutions.

14.4 The teaching of the AT and collaborative elements

14.4.1 Independent learning skills and the AT in application to music

The analysis of music students' experiences illustrated the limitations of the AT that some music students had experienced in relation to their music practice. A few music students revealed that they had found it difficult to recreate the experience of the AT lesson in their own time. One student thought that this was due to vague instruction; another student revealed that this led to frustration and a sense of dependency on the AT teacher. Cole (2022) pointed out that a passive approach to AT sessions and thus a failure to develop independent learning skills may be the result of the legacy of F. M. Alexander's pedagogical strategies. Cole (2022) argued that 'Alexander's own process of discovery was about *thinking, observing and reasoning out* a new "means whereby" to a desired end or outcome [emphasis in original]' and 'it seems that Alexander dropped the requirement for reason and thinking when it came to teaching others about the technique' (pp. 4-5) by providing them with a passive experience and exclusively relying on hands-on work. This connects to what a few AT teachers in the current study questioned concerning a perceived over-reliance of AT teachers on hands-on guidance and the importance of developing learners' self-independent learning (Chapter 6). Based on the expectations of a few music students, it seems thus evident that independent learning skills seem paramount for the effectiveness of the AT, which would also align with the expectations for HE music students more generally within their degree programme (whether UG or PG).

Furthermore, sessions which focussed on the direct application of the AT to music performance were found to be more useful than those on everyday activities by a few music students. As mentioned in Chapter 11, there are questions concerning whether the application of the AT directly to music practice could be more beneficial for music students than a style of teaching centering around and commencing with a prescribed set of simple procedures (e.g. sitting, standing). De Alcantara (1997) argued that a direct application of the AT to learners' specific expertise is 'a risky proposition, and it takes a very resourceful teacher and an equally responsible pupil to bring it off' (p. 87), which seems to suggest that it could be problematic but potentially viable under certain circumstances. This points to the divergent views of the AT teachers in Lee (2019) on the content of AT sessions for music students: while two teachers were

in favour of a direct application of the AT to music, both because it aligned with students' expectations and because it fostered the integration of the AT to their music practice, another teacher was wary about it because it might be counterproductive and confusing for novice learners of the AT and could be appropriate only for advanced AT learners. These divergent opinions echo the perspectives of some AT teachers in this research who felt that a triadic lesson, for example, with student, AT teacher and IVT (discussed below in 14.4.2) would be against the spirit of the AT as it would foster an end-gaining attitude (Chapter 6).

Criticisms of F. M. Alexander's pedagogy have been voiced recently. Cole (2022) pointed out that 'the contradictions in AT teaching stem largely from the fact that the steps Alexander took on his own process of discovery about behaviour ... were different from the steps he taught to others when passing on his "technique"' (p. xix). Cole (2022) further continued that the distinction that F. M. Alexander had made between lessons on basic procedures/movements (e.g. sitting/standing) and those on more complex activities (e.g. music playing) 'is another part of the confusing legacy of F. M. Alexander' and 'introduces a split between theory and practice' (p. 152). However, the purpose of the current study is not to provide a pedagogical analysis of the AT but to uncover perceptions of it in UK HE music institutions. What appears evident is that the AT aims at rejecting an end-gaining approach to human activity, which seems in line with pedagogical theories of process-oriented teaching (Bolhuis, 2003) in which educators focus on the development of processes rather than on outcomes (Biasutti, 2015). There remain questions about how music students could effectively achieve this with AT during the course of their studies, and research investigating different AT approaches could evaluate this (Chapter 11). Nonetheless, these findings have implications for the development of AT lesson content in HE music institutions where negotiations need to be made concerning students' expectations, institutional offer and funding. It is open to debate in the AT community how all of this can reconcile with the nature of the AT, while considering that a music-based AT curriculum could prove beneficial (Davies, 2020b). Further scientific evidence is needed to support the AT more robustly for it to be justified within the overall institutional provision.

14.4.2 The integration of the AT into music practice: Team-teaching

A few music students identified the challenges that they had experienced in connecting the AT to their music practice. This echoed the experiences of two IVTs in this research who had found it difficult to connect the AT in its application to music. It can be argued that the AT requires time and dedication for it to be embedded successfully in life (Leibowitz & Connington, 1990). However, recent research projects in USA and Norway examined the integration of the AT into music teaching through a successful model involving active collaboration between AT teachers, IVTs, and music students (Fox & Romaniuk, 2021; Jørgensen, 2015).

Comparing the views of AT teachers, IVTs, and music students, the current study also illustrated that the integration of the AT through team-teaching and a triadic lesson could be potentially useful in bridging the gap between the AT and music practice (Chapter 6, 9, 13). Characteristics such as openness and willingness to learn and collaborate might be required by all the parties involved since a triadic lesson could lead to disagreement, which could nonetheless be resolved with planning and frank interaction. Furthermore, considerations about the level of the music students and individuals' traits were found to affect potentially the success of a triadic lesson.

The benefits and challenges of a team-teaching scenario share many similarities with those illustrated by Haddon (2011) and Wöllner and Ginsborg (2011) in relation to music students working with different IVTs. In particular, Haddon (2011) stated that 'the main disadvantages were those created through trying to meet the demands of both teachers' (p. 81). This raises concerns about how music students could negotiate AT instruction alongside input from their IVT; the fact that playing/singing techniques differ among diverse playing/singing traditions (see Waters, 2020a; Waters, 2020b) might require openness, sensitivity, and informed understanding from AT teachers. This also raises questions about the cultural acceptance of the AT and psychophysical practices into instrumental/vocal practice by IVTs and music students coming from diverse cultural and educational backgrounds (Chapter 13). However, a team-teaching model could offer pedagogical insights both into the AT and instrumental/vocal teaching and this study, along with previous literature, is only a starting point for future extensive investigations into the feasibility and implementation of this team-teaching model in UK HE music institutions (see Chapters 6, 9, 13 for an in-depth examination in relation to the different categories of people).

14.5 Provision of the AT in UK HE music institutions and institutional policies

14.5.1 Curriculum institutional factors

The analysis of the AT teacher's perspectives showed that the AT was embedded in the music curricula in three out of nine HE music institutions; however, this integration differed from institution to institution. The AT was generally provided as a side offering, and funding for sessions varied among institutions (see Chapter 4 for a detailed discussion). Findings amongst IVTs and music students also showed that the provision of the AT varied among and within institutions; the AT was usually provided as a side and elective activity (Chapters 7 and 12). This corroborates Lee (2019) who illustrated that the provision of the AT in five HE music institutions was curricular and extracurricular, with course structures differing among institutions and only two institutions offering both types of provision. This means that the provision of the AT is institution-dependent both in the UK and potentially in other countries. As mentioned in Chapter 12, there is no mention of the AT in the 2019 Music Subject Benchmark Statement (QAA, 2019).

Many music students in this current study expressed a desire for institutions (both music specialist and UMDs) to provide more AT opportunities at no additional cost (Chapter 12). Tight personal budgets had prevented many music students from engaging in regular AT self-funded sessions (Chapter 11). The AT was thought to offer many psychophysical benefits, ranging from enhancing academic performance to wellness in everyday life (Chapter 11 and 12). Although IVTs supported these views and were supportive of the development of the AT in HE music institutions, they were nonetheless aware of the financial difficulties that institutions might have in providing regular AT sessions to all music students (Chapter 7).

Moreover, the views of those music students who were not interested in undertaking AT sessions suggest that it is debatable to embed the AT in the core curricula when interests among students vary. It is possible that some of those music students who were not interested in the AT held this view because of prejudices about the AT or negative experiences with it and thus it might be argued that they could be persuaded about its potential usefulness; however, the perspectives of some AT

teachers, IVTs and music students illustrating that different people might still have different inclinations to different practices undermine this argument (Chapter 6, 9, 13).

It has been discussed that according to some participants the AT might offer unique learning skills (e.g. thinking in activity) in comparison to other disciplines (Chapters 6, 9, 13), but further empirical evidence is warranted to validate these claims given the lack of peer-reviewed literature on it. Therefore, although there is no evidence showing that it is detrimental to include the AT in the curricula, especially because the AT is perceived as a relatively risk-free practice (MacPherson et al., 2013), this study supports the inclusion of the AT in HE music curricula at least as an elective subject (see Chapter 6, 9, 12, 13). This is further corroborated by the participants in Lee (2019) who felt that 'it is not necessary to make Alexander learning compulsory' but that 'it is important to make it available to students as an option because it can greatly benefit students' development as musicians' (p. 99).

The provision of the AT as elective, however, still raises questions about the perception of health practices and health and well-being behaviours as non-essential whenever those practices are offered as additional to the core curriculum (Chapter 12). This may do a disservice to the health and well-being policies within HE institutions and may be potentially misleading in terms of the value that institutions give to those policies, considering the vital role that institutions play in enhancing healthy behaviours among music students (Araújo et al., 2017). It is possible that by explaining to music students the reasons why the AT is offered as an elective and not as part of the core curriculum could limit that perception. It is also likely that the provision of the AT as a credit-bearing module could result in positive perceptions of the AT among music students. As mentioned in 14.1.3, UK HE music institutions have different institutional characteristics (see Papageorgi et al., 2010, who compared institutional cultures between one UMD and two MCs). It might thus be the responsibility of policy makers to develop AT provision in line with the institutional set of values, both in the visible and hidden curriculum (Pitts, 2003), and considering students' interests.

A combination of group and one-to-one sessions could be a cost-effective solution when institutional budgets are restricted (see 14.3). Team-teaching

opportunities⁴⁸ could be offered since there is evidence showing that a variety of learning opportunities are catalysts for the learning of the AT (Fox & Romaniuk, 2021). It is, however, important that equalities of opportunities are guaranteed. It has already been discussed that the provision of the AT differed within one institution — with differences among instrumentalists and singers — potentially resulting in inequalities among music students (Chapter 12). The same was examined in relation to the AT being offered to music students as an extra-curricular activity and students mainly paying for it (Chapter 12). Furthermore, institutions offering the AT through a “first-come-first-served” policy could limit participation of those students who might be in particular need (Chapter 7), especially if there is limited promotion of the AT and students thus miss sign-up deadlines. This study therefore suggests that these considerations are discussed within institutions in order to assure equality among those music students who may want to engage with the AT.

14.5.2 Safeguarding policies

This study found that the AT is generally perceived as a safe practice by AT teachers, IVTs, and music students (Chapter 5, 8, 11). This is in line with previous research findings in the medical field (Little et al., 2014). However, the AT seems a rather unregulated profession, similarly to instrumental/vocal teaching (Norton et al., 2019) but while for instrumental/vocal teaching polices such as DBS checks have been advocated (Boyle & Widdison, 2021), this does not seem the case for AT teachers. An Alexander Technique teaching core curriculum was only recently published by the Complementary and Natural Healthcare Council (2022); it will be of interest to see whether and how this might influence the practices of AT teachers working in UK HE music institutions.

Furthermore, there are questions about HE institutional policies on hands-on work in view of the responses of some music students who emphasised the importance for AT teachers to maintain professional integrity during AT sessions (Chapter 11). There is evidence that touch is a powerful and beneficial experience (Jones & Glover, 2014; Thuma & Miranda, 2020). However, more than half of the

⁴⁸ Team-teaching could also be regarded as a means to support teacher training and monitor quality, which could further justify the inclusion of team-teaching opportunities for AT teachers (see UCL, 2019, in relation to teaching in HE).

learner-participants in Jones and Glover's (2014) study, which investigated the psychological processes underpinning touch and its therapeutic effects, 'disagreed that they were aware touch would be used' in AT sessions (p. 150). Echoing IVT-P4's views (see Chapter 9), this opens up questions about the extent to which appropriate information about touch and written consent is given to those wishing to undertake or participating in AT sessions in UK HE music institutions. This also raises issues about the cultural acceptance of touch and its reception according to gender differences (Jones & Glover, 2014).

Lastly, findings showed that emotional challenges might arise in AT sessions (Chapter 5, 8, 11), with evidence showing that an invasion of the personal emotional space might be perceived as inappropriate in AT sessions. De Alcantara (1997) acknowledged that during AT sessions learners might experience emotional instability but that AT teachers 'must not take the place of counsellor or therapist' (p. 82). The author also argued that to deal with these situations, AT teachers could receive 'counselling training and combine [AT teaching] with actual counselling' (p. 83); this, however, was thought to be dangerous for both the AT teacher and the learner who could 'risk losing sight of the actual goals of the Alexander Technique, *goals which may well diverge from those of psychotherapy*' (p. 83, original emphasis). Similarly, Kinsey et al. (2021) noted that AT teachers should not be counsellors or therapists but suggested that it would be still useful for them to receive training to deal with learners' emotional issues in an empathetic manner. This thus highlights the need for established HE music institution policies regulating the content and aims of AT sessions, with implications for the professionalisation of the AT.

14.6 Summary of the chapter

This chapter has provided a general discussion of the main findings among AT teachers, IVT teachers, and music students. The general discussion has been organised into five overarching themes analysing the communication of the AT, its promotion, the teaching format and the delivery mode of AT sessions, the application of the AT to music practice and the collaborative elements with IVTs, and the provision of the AT in HE music institutions (curriculum institutional factors and safeguarding policies). For a detailed examination of the specific categories and themes, it is recommended to consult the previous chapters (Chapters 4-13). The next and final chapter will provide a

conclusion for this thesis: the limitations and implications of this study will be discussed as well as suggestions for further research.

Chapter 15: Conclusion

Chapter 15 concludes this thesis on the perceptions of the AT amongst AT teachers, instrumental/vocal teachers (IVTs), and music students working and studying in UK Higher Education (HE) music institutions. It opens with a summary of the main findings, which is then followed by an examination of the implications of this study, its limitations and suggestions for further research.

15.1 Summary of the main findings

This thesis makes an important contribution to developing understanding of the perceptions of AT in UK HE music institutions (music specialist institutions — i.e. music conservatoires and independent HE music institutions — and HE music departments). Two interview studies with 19 AT teachers and 11 IVTs and one survey study with 133 music students were conducted to investigate the perceptions of the AT among these categories of people. Findings addressed defining the AT, its provision, promotion, and recognition in UK HE music institutions. In addition, aspects relating to the teaching and practice of the AT were investigated.

15.1.1 *AT teachers' perspectives*

Findings concerning the perceptions of the AT among the 19 AT teachers were illustrated extensively in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. These chapters concluded that:

- The definition of the AT among AT teachers varied. Factors such as the recipient of the information and their area of interest affected the ways in which AT teachers would describe the AT. Common themes related their definitions to the applicability of the AT to everyday life and the aim of the AT in dealing with habits; however, there were differences in the extent to which AT teachers focussed their definition on either physical or psychophysical effects of the AT.
- The definition of the AT was challenging for some AT teachers, and a practical experience of the AT was deemed necessary to understand the nature of the AT.

- According to some AT teachers, the understanding of the AT was impacted by AT teachers' different approaches to the AT and therefore a lack of unity in the AT teachers' community.
- The potential educational value of the AT and its psychophysical benefits was perceived to be underdeveloped amongst stakeholders and administrators in HE music institutions; this was due to their limited practical experience with the AT and interest in it, along with their potential scepticism towards the AT given the limited research-based evidence on the effectiveness of the AT and the AT being seen by some individuals as a cult. However, many AT teachers believed that the appreciation towards the AT varied depending on the different categories of people in HE music institutions. The quality of the teaching space was also regarded to influence the recognition of the AT in the HE music sector.
- The provision of the AT varied among HE music institutions and depended on institutional culture concerning the health and well-being of musicians, the orientation of the musical culture of the institutions (classical/popular music), the institutional appreciation towards the AT, and the ability of the AT teachers to negotiate with institutional stakeholders.
- The specific provision differed among institutions of the same kind (e.g. music conservatoires and university music departments): the AT was integrated into the music curricula in a few institutions, with the AT being generally provided as an extra-curricular activity.
- AT teachers reported their effort in promoting the AT within their institutions. According to many AT teachers, the promotion of the AT in HE music institutions could be improved. Factors such as word of mouth were thought to influence the promotion and the perceptions of the AT.
- Funding for AT sessions differed amongst institutions and was thought to affect music students' engagement with the AT. Nonetheless, aspects such as time, need, their understanding of the AT and their interest in it were believed to influence music students' involvement with the AT.
- Both one-to-one and group sessions were considered to be beneficial. Group sessions varied in terms of content (e.g. practical-based and theory-based), and their effectiveness was impacted by the class size.

- The quality of AT materials (e.g. AT books) was perceived to be varied by many of the AT teachers. Books on the AT, for example, were thought to spark an interest in the AT since the understanding of the AT was thought to derive from practical experience.
- AT teachers regarded hands-on guidance as a fundamental aspect of the AT; however, a few AT teachers questioned the amount of hands-on guidance needed in AT sessions since an overly reliance to hands-on work was perceived to hinder students' independent learning skills.
- According to some AT teachers, AT online teaching could be potentially valuable, but its effectiveness might depend on the learner's previous experience with the AT.
- The AT was regarded by AT teachers as a general discipline: in fact, specific professional training for AT teachers working with musicians would be useful but not necessary. For some AT teachers, a triadic lesson (with student, IVT and AT teacher) could be a valuable professional development opportunity and could help music students connect the AT to their music practice, but it might be problematic if IVTs were potentially resistant to it. However, despite some scepticism among a few AT teachers, a triadic lesson could be an enriching experience for the three parties.
- Other somatic/psychophysical practices (e.g. yoga, the Feldenkrais Method) were considered to be beneficial, and a multi-disciplinary approach to the health and well-being of HE music students was advocated for. The AT, nonetheless, was regarded to be propaedeutic to other disciplines and to offer skills which could be applied directly to music practice.

15.1.2 Instrumental/vocal teachers' views

Chapters 7, 8 and 9 examined and discussed the findings concerning IVTs' views about the AT. The main findings are summarised as follows:

- The AT was generally seen in a positive light by the 11 IVTs in this research.
- IVTs regarded the AT as a valuable practice with a wide range of benefits; however, these varied amongst participants depending on their different levels

of experience with the AT. Participants with years of personal experience of the AT noted benefits to everyday life and in reducing anxiety and improving sleep.

- IVTs had encountered the AT in a variety of contexts but primarily during their own HE music studies as music students. Cost and time were two of the main reasons for not pursuing further sessions along with not feeling the need for it.
- The AT was defined in various ways by the IVTs, and the definitions differed according to the IVTs' multiple experiences with the AT. While many of the definitions revolved around the physical and postural benefits of the AT, others provided by more experienced learners of the AT focussed on the psychophysical outcomes of the AT.
- Many IVTs found defining the AT difficult because of the perceived intangible nature of the AT, the necessity of a direct experience of it, and the different pedagogical approaches to it.
- A few IVTs were not aware of the provision of the AT in the UK HE institutions where they were working. Those who were aware of it reported that the provision and funding for AT sessions varied between institutions. The AT, however, was generally seen to be provided as an extra-curricular activity.
- According to some IVTs, the AT was promoted through word of mouth, departmental emails, course handbooks, and departmental web pages. Emails were found to have limited effectiveness if they included too much information.
- IVTs themselves felt responsible for promoting AT-related activities to music students; they often encouraged them to take AT sessions to solve arising playing-related issues, such as tension and pain, and, in a few cases, performance anxiety.
- IVTs would not recommend the AT to music students for a variety of reasons, such as the cost associated with self-funded AT sessions, and in instances where mainstream healthcare was considered more relevant.
- According to the IVTs, music students perceived the AT as a purely physical practice and a quick fix for physical problems.
- IVTs revealed that music students had generally positive experiences with the AT; nonetheless, in a few instances AT teachers' approaches to the AT were felt to hinder the participation of a few music students.

- According to the IVTs, cost, lack of interest, and time were the main reasons why music students might not take part in AT sessions.
- IVTs thought that the recognition of the AT was varied and influenced by factors such as a lack of understanding of the nature of the AT and perceptions of the AT as fringe science. Institutional awareness of the health and well-being of music students and AT teachers' abilities to promote their work were deemed to affect the recognition of the AT in HE music institutions.
- Although the IVTs in this research held AT teachers in high regard, for some participants a hierarchical structure may exist and AT teachers may be regarded as less important than other categories of people (e.g. academic staff); however, this structure was considered to affect both AT teachers and IVTs.
- Three IVTs had experienced a triadic lesson. Those who had not were generally interested in trying it, although two felt reluctant.
- Experienced and perceived benefits of a triadic lesson were identified as mutual learning, AT teachers' ability to detect tension, provision of anatomical views on instrumental/vocal techniques, and an integration of the AT into instrumental/vocal practice. However, there might be pedagogical clashes between IVTs and AT teachers, challenges related to the level of the music students and the funding for these sessions. Many of these challenges could be solved with openness, familiarity with the AT, planning, and effective pedagogical strategies.
- Several IVTs incorporated some AT principles in their teaching, but a few of them expressed their doubts on how to integrate these.
- There was some reluctance towards AT online sessions by many IVTs because of a lack of hands-on experience; only two IVTs were curious about it.
- Resources on the AT such as books were found to be supplementary to a direct experience with the AT.
- IVTs were open to different somatic practices (e.g. yoga, the Feldenkrais Method) and expressed various views on these in comparison to the AT.

15.1.3 Music students' views

The findings concerning 133 music students' perspectives were discussed in Chapters 10, 11, 12 and 13. The main findings are summarised below:

- A high number of university music department (UMD) students were not aware of the AT in contrast to music conservatoire (MC) students (as mentioned in Chapter 10, this needs to be considered with caution given the different number of respondents between UMD students and MC students).
- Music students who were not familiar with the AT would mainly be interested in it to enhance their performance and solve performance anxiety issues.
- A few UMD students with a focus on theoretical courses were not interested in the AT.
- UMD students had primarily become familiar with the AT through their IVTs, whereas MC students encountered it through AT elective courses at their HE music institution. However, peer recommendation and word of mouth were other main factors contributing to the promotion of the AT among music students.
- Regarding music students with no direct experience with the AT, a lack of AT opportunities outside and within HE education, socio-economic factors, time, and lack of interest were the main reasons for not taking AT sessions.
- Music students with a direct experience of the AT took AT sessions for several reasons. The most common one was to reduce postural tension and musculoskeletal disorders.
- Many of the music students had positive experiences with the AT and experienced a variety of benefits. Benefits to music performance anxiety and other psychological benefits were perceived to be unexpected.
- In contrast, a few other music students had mixed and negative experience with the AT because of their young age and through experiencing approaches to the AT focused on psychological introspection.
- Limitations of the AT were found to relate to difficulties in replicating the experience due to the vagueness of instruction and in applying the AT to music practice.
- Cost was the main reason why music students stopped taking AT sessions. In a couple of instances, clashes with the AT teacher influenced music students' decision to continue taking AT sessions.

- The AT was generally perceived as a safe practice, but AT teachers needed to be skilful and respectful of the learners due to hands-on guidance.
- Music students provided varied definitions of the AT. While those who were familiar with the AT but without a direct experience of the AT focused their definition on the physical nature of the AT, many of those with direct experience of it referred to its psychophysical nature.
- The provision of the AT varied from institution to institution: the AT was generally offered as an elective subject and/or extracurricular activity.
- Many music students lamented a lack of regular AT provision and would like more funding for AT sessions.
- Overall, the general promotion of the AT was considered underdeveloped by several music students given the limited awareness of the AT by some of their peers.
- According to music students, the recognition of the AT and of AT teachers depended on many factors, such as the type of institution (music specialist and university music department), the musical orientation of the institution, the person holding the view (e.g. academic staff, IVT), and perceptions of the AT as fringe science. However, the AT was generally considered to be perceived in HE music institution as an add-on activity.
- The quality of the teaching space was considered to affect the recognition of the AT.
- Music students were open to and interested in other psychophysical practices.
- Group sessions were considered by those music students who had tried them to be useful; nonetheless, one-to-one lessons were generally regarded as more effective.
- A small number of music students were pleased with AT online sessions, but face-to-face sessions were considered more effective because of hands-on guidance.
- Despite potentially being challenging, a triadic lesson could be an interesting format for several music students.
- A few music students had engaged with printed/digital resources on the AT due to personal interest and through health and well-being course assignments.

15.2 Implications and recommendations

Chapters 4-13 illustrated and discussed the findings of this study. Chapter 14 provided a triangulation of the main findings across the three categories of participants, and several resultant issues emerged. The following points collate the main implications arising from this study and provide practical recommendations for tackling these issues:

1) The communication of the nature and potential values of the AT could be ameliorated. Many AT teachers and some IVTs and music students perceived the AT as transcending a postural practice; however, findings showed that the understanding of the AT might be limited, and the AT may be regarded as a curative practice rather than a preventive discipline with educational outcomes. This limited understanding is influenced by different factors, such as the lack of unity in the AT community, diverse teaching approaches to the AT and resources on it, learners' varied experiences with the AT and the experiential nature of the AT. Therefore, considering the divergences within the AT community revealed by this study, it is primarily the responsibility of the AT organisations and AT teachers to enhance the communication of their work by clearly and consistently explaining what the AT involves both verbally and with the development of appropriate resources; indeed, findings showed that according to some AT teachers, some AT books may convey an inaccurate perception of the AT. An increased understanding of the AT could positively impact the profile of the AT in the UK HE music sector.

2) The AT has been considered to have a wide range of psychophysical benefits by some IVTs and music students. However, more robust empirical research is needed to support these claims. Considering the perceptions of the AT as fringe science — which this study unveiled — research-based evidence on the benefits of the AT could impact the understanding of the AT, its provision and recognition in the UK HE music sector.

3) Pedagogical approaches to the AT vary among AT teachers. Findings showed that the AT may be perceived by music students as a form of psychological

support, which may limit participation amongst perspective learners who might have different expectations about the AT. Discussions within the AT community need to be undertaken to address how this pertains to the spirit and ethos of the AT and how it may affect the expectations that people may have about AT work.

4) In addition, some AT teachers are influenced by the pedagogical approaches of other psychophysical practices. AT teachers hold different views about the amount of hands-on work and its impact on improving independent learning skills. Empirical work is required to evaluate these differences, especially in consideration of the extent to which different pedagogical approaches to the AT align with HE policies on fostering independent learners. It is thus recommended that AT organisations further develop their code of practice considering the potential variations among AT teachers, with implications for the training of AT teachers and the professionalisation of the AT. These discussions might also examine some of the limitations of the AT that a few music students had identified, such as their difficulties in recreating the benefits of the AT experienced in the AT sessions.

5) The provision of the AT for HE music students is institution-based and varies depending on the type of institution (e.g. music specialist institution/university music department) and within the same institution (i.e. in relation to different music specialities: singing versus instrumental music). Different types of provision (e.g. elective courses and opt-in opportunities) would be beneficial to align with music students' different interests and timetabling, and appropriate teaching spaces should be provided to AT teachers to undertake their work adequately. However, parity of opportunities would also need to be ensured, considering that financial challenges might hinder students to take part in regular AT self-funded sessions. A combination of institutionally-funded one-to-one and group AT sessions could mitigate this.

6) The institutional well-being provision of the AT could also be geared towards staff (e.g. academic staff, professional services staff, IVTs). Findings showed that in a few cases, limited AT sessions are offered to staff members, and thus

the provision of the AT could be considered in light of the perceived benefits of the AT to everyday life activities and occupational health risk factors (e.g. protracted work at the computer). This, nonetheless, needs to be supported by further empirical evidence.

7) The promotion of the AT varied within the individual HE music institutions; however, they are responsible for developing effective promotional strategies when the AT is offered. In fact, the promotion of the AT within HE music institutions needs to be enhanced to increase awareness about the AT. A multi-strategy promotion could be adopted: different means of promotion (e.g. social media pages; institutional websites) could be considered to promote participation in extra-curricular AT activities, and promotional materials could be targeted to students' different music pathways and interests given the wide-ranging health and well-being benefits as well as educational outcomes (e.g. process-oriented approach to learning) that the AT could offer. As findings highlighted, health and well-being courses can also play an important role in promoting the AT among music students. However, since word of mouth was found to be one of the most effective means of promotion, cooperation from IVTs and academic staff should be fostered to support AT teachers in promoting their work.

8) Findings suggested that AT teachers and IVTs are indeed allies in supporting music students' learning. Openness, mutual respect, and willingness to learn from each other can nurture cooperative behaviours from which music students could benefit, for example in a triadic lesson. Music students' motivation and patience could be fundamental to long-standing learning. Nonetheless, considering music students' different interests, the AT could be part of a multi-disciplinary approach to health and well-being of music students, but institutional financial support may be vital for the recognition of the AT and other health and well-being disciplines.

9) The implications of this study go beyond the UK HE music sector and extend to other music education contexts. Summer music courses, residential courses, secondary schools and music centres providing AT sessions might develop

these opportunities considering the limited understanding of the potential psychophysical effects of the AT and the benefits that this study unveiled. All this can influence the expectations of stakeholders, particularly students, and the delivery and perceptions of the AT in the UK HE music sector.

15.3 Limitations of the study and suggestions for further research

15.3.1 Focus-related limitations and future directions

In this exploratory study, many themes have emerged which provide an overview of the AT in the UK HE music sector from the perspectives of three categories of people: students, IVTs and AT teachers. Focussing on a large number of themes from the perspective of three categories could be regarded as an ambitious project; however, concentrating on fewer categories (e.g. AT teachers and music students) or fewer themes and categories would have felt incomplete given the limited research on the topic. It could be argued that this study still provides a partial representation of the AT due to the lack of the views from academic and professional services staff. I had originally planned to include these perspectives and had collected some data through a few interviews and a survey study, but those data needed to be omitted because of the scale of the research and the imbalance of the datasets. Therefore, additional studies could fill this gap and investigate perceptions of the AT among academic staff and those in leadership roles who have agency over departmental educational offer and provision of resources, departmental image, decision making, and budget.

This study investigated the perceptions of AT teachers, IVTs, and music students only in the UK and a comparison among participants in different countries and educational systems could offer useful insights into this area. Similarly, further research could investigate the perceptions of the AT in relation to cultural differences, such as regarding hands-on work, and the inclusion of psychological aspects. Furthermore, the perceptions of the AT were examined in both HE music specialist and university music department institutions to provide a preliminary comparison between the two contexts. Since it was not possible to collect data in some UK institutions, further studies could investigate the perceptions of the AT in more detail in relation to specific institutional contexts, with a potential comparison between diverse musical cultures (classical, popular, or traditional music). Further inquiries could focus on

specific themes and examine these in more detail (see the individual discussions of the findings: Chapters 4-13).

Lastly, additional empirical work on the teaching of the AT in UK HE music institutions could be undertaken. This study unveiled the views of AT teachers, IVTs, and music students regarding one-to-one and group teaching, a triadic lesson, and online teaching. Further research is needed to evaluate a combination of one-to-one and group sessions as a cost-effective alternative to solely one-to-one lessons in light of AT teachers' and music students' accounts on the effectiveness of the AT in both one-to-one and group contexts, with consideration of the use of self-study materials (e.g. see Chapter 6, Section 6.1.7). Furthermore, empirical work could be undertaken to investigate the effectiveness of a triadic lesson in UK HE music institutions, a comparison amongst different psychophysical practices, and AT online teaching. Considering the perceptions of the AT as a transferrable skill to instrumental/vocal teaching, additional studies could also evaluate the feasibility of an AT course for student instrumental/vocal teachers. In addition, there is scope for investigating the effectiveness of the AT at a broader HE institutional level, such as in relation to academic and administrative staff engaging in office work.

15.3.2 Methodology-related limitations and future directions

This study investigated the views of AT teachers, IVTs, and music students through qualitative data. However, this type of data can be considered to be biased and inherently subjective (Robson & McCartan, 2016). For example, music students' reported benefits of the AT for reducing stress need to be further validated by objective verifications. Nevertheless, the fact that many views were supported across the different categories of people strengthens these findings.

An online survey study could be conducted to investigate AT teachers' perspectives on the AT in HE music institutions. This may promote greater disclosure of candid opinions since a few AT teachers in this research redacted some of their views in the transcripts, especially because the number of AT teachers working in HE music institutions are limited and there are obvious risks of identification. However, if the study included international respondents and views are compared between those working in different countries, these risks could be minimised.

The timescale of the research made it difficult to investigate the perceptions of the AT among a larger sample of IVTs. Data collection among IVTs was undertaken during the COVID-19 pandemic and this may have limited teachers' participation. However, further research could investigate IVTs' perceptions of the AT on a larger scale through a survey study. This could potentially unveil contrasting views on the AT since the IVT participants in the current research were generally supportive of the AT. Findings among AT teachers showed that negative perceptions among IVTs exist and thus it would be useful to uncover these views to increase the depth of understanding of the AT. These studies could also recruit a broader sample of IVTs to include teachers with diverse instrument specialisations and musical backgrounds.

Further studies could also investigate music students' perceptions of the AT through interview studies in order to generate richer data. Nonetheless, it would be also useful to conduct another survey study among HE music students to collect more data concerning students with a direct experience of the AT. The questionnaire could be distributed over an extended period of time to increase the response rate. Since the questionnaire administered for this research was self-constructed, further procedures of validation could be implemented to enhance its quality. Longitudinal studies could also compare music students' perceptions at the start and the end of the academic year to examine potential changes of perceptions, with the inclusion of students of different cultural backgrounds and those at different stages within undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research programmes.

15.4 Final remarks

On 19th December 2022, the Mars InSight spacecraft sent what could probably be its last account from the red planet:

My power's really low, so this may be the last image I can send. Don't worry about me though: my time here has been both productive and serene. If I can keep talking to my mission team, I will — but I'll be signing off here soon. Thanks for staying with me. (Robinson, 2022, n. p.)

There are at least two ways in which we can read this story: a cerebral and intellectual one, where the spacecraft has sent a pre-programmed message before powering off, or another, more evocative and mystical, where Mars InSight, covered in dust, tired, and with low energy, sent a farewell message to its team after four years of helping

them make ground-breaking discoveries. The attitudes to which we can approach this story reminded me of the AT and some of the positive experiences with it. However, not all spacecraft missions have gone well; likewise, experiences with the AT are shown to differ. My thesis is just one piece of the puzzle, but I do hope that it will help expand the understanding of the AT and will encourage further research on the AT in HE music contexts and beyond.

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Appendix A: Sample of interview email invitations

Email invitation for AT teachers:

My name is Federico Pendenza and I am a PhD student at the University of York. I am carrying out PhD research on the perceptions of the Alexander Technique within UK higher music education institutions (both universities and conservatories) at the University of York under the supervision of Dr Liz Haddon.

I am recruiting participants for my research: I am interviewing academic and administrative staff, instrumental and vocal teachers, AT practitioners and students in both UK universities and conservatoires.

I know that these are difficult times and face-to-face interviews are not possible at the moment. That's why I suggest interviews to be conducted via Skype/zoom/telephone if you are willing to participate.

Would you be interested in taking part in this research? I have attached the interview information sheet to give you a better idea of what my research is about.

Please, feel free to ask me any questions.

Looking forward to hearing from you,

Thank you very much,

Appendix B: Information sheets and Consent Forms

INTERVIEW INFORMATION SHEET

Research Title: Perceptions of the Alexander Technique within UK Higher Education music institutions.

What is the research about?

This research aims to investigate the perceptions of the Alexander Technique (AT) among the different categories of people within UK Higher Education music institutions: music students, instrumental/vocal/AT teachers, academic and administrative staff. In particular, this study is concerned with unveiling the factors that influence the provision of the AT and how the AT is received within UK universities and conservatoires.

Why is the research being carried out?

Although the Alexander Technique is a body/mind educational method adopted in conservatoires and universities to help musicians prevent injuries, enhance performance and overcome performance anxiety symptoms, no studies have been conducted to understand the perception of the AT that would inform future policies in tertiary-level institutions and increase a deeper understanding of the AT among instrumental/vocal teachers working in Higher Education music institutions or in other educational contexts.

Who is carrying the research out?

The research is being carried out by Federico Pendenza, 3rd year PhD student, under the supervision of Dr Liz Haddon at the University of York.

Has the research been the subject of ethical review?

Yes, this research has been granted ethical approval by the University of York Ethics Committee.

Do I have to take part?

No. It is entirely up to you to decide whether to take part in this study or not.

What will happen to me if I take part?

Due to the Covid-19 situation, interviews will take place via Zoom/Skype/telephone. You will send an email to fp707@york.ac.uk showing your interest in being interviewed. You will then be contacted to arrange a time and platform that suits you. Feel free to ask any questions you may have about the interview and/or the research project. Then, you will be asked to sign a digital consent form showing that you have agreed to take part in the research; a copy of the consent form will be provided. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving any reasons.

What would the interview be like?

The interview will be in a conversational-style approach. You will be asked questions about your thoughts on the Alexander Technique and your knowledge of it. **NO PRIOR EXPERIENCE OR KNOWLEDGE OF THE ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE IS NEEDED.**

How long would the interview take?

The time it takes for an interview varies; it depends on how much you say during the interview. Usually, interviews last for an hour and you are free to stop the interview at any time without giving any reason at all.

What are the benefits of taking part?

You will help increase the understanding of the Alexander Technique within tertiary-level institutions which will have direct impact on AT training and future health policies in universities' music departments and conservatoires not only in the UK.

What are the possible risks of taking part?

For some, the Alexander Technique may be considered as a sensitive topic considering the factor that influence their choices to have AT lessons. For this reason, you have the right to withdraw from the interview process at any time; the researcher will stop the interview process if any emotional distress is noticed during the interview, and will discuss (without recording) whether you would like to continue, either during this interview or at a future time.

Will I be paid to take part, or will any expenses be covered?

No, you will not be paid to take part in the research. Any expenses will not be reimbursed.

Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

All the information that are collected will be kept strictly confidential. Any data collected will be stored on the University's centrally managed network in password-protected folder.

Will the interview be recorded?

Yes, the interview will be recorded using a digital audio recorder. At your request, your voice on the recordings can be disguised using audio processing techniques such as dynamic pitch shifting and background noise addition. Interview recordings will be immediately removed from the original device and will be uploaded and stored in the University Cloud Storage to which only the researcher can have access.

How would the researcher use the interview recording?

The interview recording will be transcribed by the researcher; the interview transcript will be anonymised, making sure to delete any information relating to your name (a fictional name will be used) or gender. After this, the interview recording will be archived in a password-protected folder and will not be shared within anyone at any stage of the research or at future time.

Can I choose how the interview transcript will be used?

Before the interview, you will be asked to sign a consent form in which you allow parts of your anonymised interview transcript to be used as part of the researcher's PhD thesis and to any resultant publications/conference output. At request, the interview transcript can be sent to you after the interview to help you decide whether you want to edit or remove anything from the interview.

What if I decide to withdraw after the interview has taken place?

If you decide to withdraw after the interview has taken place, any audio recordings and/or transcripts of your interview will be destroyed. If you decide to withdraw after findings have already been disseminated, any contribution to the research will be removed from future publications/conference outputs; any paper/digital data will be permanently destroyed.

Contacts for further information

If you have any queries about this information sheet or this research project, please email Federico Pendenza, fp707@york.ac.uk, or Dr Liz Haddon, liz.haddon@york.ac.uk.

Many thanks for reading this.

Federico Pendenza

Interview Consent Form

RESEARCH STUDY: Perceptions of the Alexander Technique within UK Higher Music Education institutions

Please answer the following questions by ticking the responses that apply:

federico.pendenza@york.ac.uk [Switch accounts](#)



*Required

Email *

Your email address

I have read the Information Sheet for this study and have had details of the study explained to me *

Yes

No

I have been able to ask any questions about the research prior to the interview and I understand that I am free to contact the researcher with any questions I may have in the future. *

Yes

No

I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at time without giving any reasons for my withdrawal. *

Yes

No

I understand that I am free to decline to answer any questions in the interview. *

Yes

No

I agree to provide information to the researchers under the conditions of confidentiality set out in the Information Sheet. *

Yes

No

I agree for this interview to be audio-recorded. *

Yes

No

I prefer my voice on the recordings to be disguised using audio processing techniques. *

Yes

No

I consent to some parts of my interview transcript, once anonymised (so that I cannot be identified), to be used for any other research purposes. *

Yes

No

I wish to review my interview transcript before any further use. *

Yes

No

I give my consent to participate in the study under the conditions outlined in the Information Sheet. *

Yes

No

Please enter your full name and date *

Your answer

Appendix C: Interview/Word document interview schedules

Interviews with AT teachers

1	How long have you been working as an AT teacher?
2	What contexts have you worked in as an AT teacher?
3	<p>Within the higher education music sector in the UK, how do you think the AT is regarded? Do you think that there any differences between universities and conservatoires in how the AT is regarded?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has this changed over time? • Has this affected where you work and how much work you do as an AT teacher? <p>How do you think AT work is regarded compared to the work of other professionals in HEM institutions, such as instrumental/vocal teachers?</p>
4	How do you think the institution you work in supports/supported the Alexander Technique?
5	What kind of support would you like to receive?
6	<p>How is the AT promoted in the institutions that you work in?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is responsible for the promotion of the AT?
7	Why do people from that institution seek to have AT lessons?
8	<p>How is the AT provision structured at the institution you work in? Do you deliver AT work in this institution, Birmighman, one-to-one or in groups?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is this typical of how you work elsewhere?
9	What do you think about each context, from your perspective and from that of the people taking part?
10	<p>Regarding each context, 1-1 and group, what are the differences in your approach to teaching the AT? [prompts: what do you think about the effectiveness of the AT in these contexts? In what ways are these contexts beneficial to your teaching practice?</p> <p>How can language affect Alexander Technique instruction? Do you think that the effectiveness of the Alexander Technique is affected by a language barrier? Have you done any AT online lessons? How did you find these?</p>

11	<p>Have you ever been in a situation in which there were a music student, an instrumental/vocal teacher, and you working at the same time on the student?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What do you think could be the benefits of this teaching collaboration, e.g for AT teachers, students and instrumental/vocal teachers? ○ What might be the challenges of this situation? ○ How could these challenges be resolved? ○ Who do you think should pay for it? ● Yes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What benefits did you notice from this collaboration? ○ Where there any challenges? If so, what were they? <p>What would you do differently?</p>
12	<p>According to your knowledge and experience, does AT teacher training involve any training specifically designed for trainees wanting to work with musicians in the future?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes – What kind of training? ● No – do you think that there should be some training for AT practitioners specifically designed to work with musicians? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What kind of training?
13	<p>Has your AT teaching practice changed over time? If so, how?</p>
14	<p>What kind of resources do you use in your teaching with musicians?</p>
15	<p>Do you recommend any additional resources for music students to read or watch?</p>
16	<p>Are there any texts specifically for musicians about AT that you would recommend?</p>
17	<p>What are your views on FM Alexander writings?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Do you think that Alexander’s writings can be viewed as still valuable and relevant knowledge for AT training and teaching practice?
19	<p>What do you think are the benefits for musicians?</p>
20	<p>What do you think are the challenges for musicians in engaging with the AT?</p>
21	<p>Are there any specific challenges for music students that bring them to the AT?</p> <p>Would they be different from those of the general public?</p>

22	What do you think are the benefits of taking AT lessons for music students/staff in higher education music institutions?
23	Do you envisage any risks in taking Alexander Technique lessons?
24	<p>Do you think that other practices - such as yoga, Feldenkrais - would be beneficial to music students and staff?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Why? ○ Is there something more about AT that justifies its place in Higher Music Education? ● Yes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If so, do you think that these should be included in this department? ○ Is there something more about AT that justifies its place in Higher Music Education?
25	How would you define the Alexander Technique then?

Interviews with Instrumental/vocal teachers

1	<p>Prior to this interview, have you ever heard about the Alexander Technique?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● No – [very unlikely? The person would not be willing to be interviewed in the first place?]● Yes<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ How have you heard about it?
2	<p>Have you had AT lessons?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● No – why?<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Have you read anything about the AT?<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ No▪ Yes – Has this affected your decisions not to take AT lessons?● Yes – Why did you decide to take AT lessons?<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ How would you describe your experience of taking AT lessons?○ How many lessons did you have? Was it in this music department at UoY?○ Do you continue to take AT lessons?○ Have you read or watched anything about the AT?○ Yes - When? Before or after having AT lessons?○ Has this changed your understanding of the AT? How?
3	<p>Do you talk to your students about them having AT lessons?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● No – Why?● Yes – In what situations?<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Why the AT?○ Do you think that other practices - such as yoga, Feldenkrais - would be beneficial to students and staff in Higher Education Music Institutions?<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ No<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Why?● Is there something more about the AT that justifies its place in Higher Education Music Institutions?▪ Yes

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If so, do you think that these should be included in this department? • Is there something more about AT that justifies its place in Higher Music Education? <p>Do you embed AT ideas in your teaching practice? How? Could you give me some examples?</p>
4	<p>Just to clarify, do you teach only at or do you teach in other universities/conservatoires? Are you aware of the possibility to take AT lessons in the tertiary level institutions you work at?</p>
5	<p>What types of engagement with the AT are possible for music students in this department? What do you think about the funding of and access to AT lessons for students in this music department?</p>
6	<p>Do you know how students find out about the AT in this department?</p>
7	<p>Why do you think that students typically start to have AT lessons?</p>
8	<p>What do you think students feel are the outcomes of taking AT lessons?</p>
9	<p>Why do you think students stop taking AT lessons or decide not take AT lessons in the first place?</p>
10	<p>Do you teach in other universities or conservatoires?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes - How does the provision of the AT compare with that in other institutions where you teach? <p>No – Go to the next question</p>
11	<p>Have you ever been in a situation in which there were a music student, an AT teacher, and you working on the student at the same time?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What do you think about this teaching collaboration? ○ How would you feel in this situation? ○ What might be the challenges of this scenario? • Yes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What benefits for the student did you notice from this collaboration? ○ Where there any challenges? If so, what were they? ○ What would you have done differently? <p>Were there any benefits to your teaching from this collaboration?</p>

12	<p>Based on your experience of AT lessons, what are your views on AT online lessons?</p>
13	<p>Based on your current experience and knowledge, how would you define the AT?</p>
14	<p>Do you find defining the AT challenging?</p>
15	<p>In universities and/or conservatoires, how do you think AT work is regarded compared to the work of other professionals, such as i/v teachers, academic staff?</p>
16	<p>Do you think that perceptions towards the AT within the music profession and/or music education have changed over time?</p>
17	<p>How do you think AT professionals are regarded in comparison with other professionals, such as instrumental/vocal teachers?</p>

QUESTIONS

Q1 - Prior to this interview, have you ever heard about the Alexander Technique?

[Please select one of the two options below and provide your answer in the relevant text box]

1) No: What do you think the Alexander Technique could be?

2) Yes: How have you heard about it?

Q2 - If you had AT lessons, how would you describe your experience of taking AT lessons?

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Q3 - Have you read anything about the AT? If yes, has this changed your understanding of the AT? Please explain.

Q4 - Do you talk to your students about them having AT lessons?

[Please select one of the two options below and provide your answer in the relevant text box]

1) No: Why?

2) Yes: In what situations?

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If yes, why the AT?

Do you think that other practices - such as yoga, Feldenkrais - would be beneficial to students and staff in Higher Education Music Institutions? Please explain.

Q5 - Do you embed AT ideas in your teaching practice? If yes, how? Could you give me some examples?

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Q6 - Are you aware of the possibility to take AT lessons in the music department/s at the HE music institution/s you work in?

[Please select one of the two options below and provide your answer in the relevant text box]

1) No – If no, please state it:

2) Yes: What types of engagement with the AT in this/these department/s is/are possible for music students?

How is the AT promoted in this/these institution/s?

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If you teach in multiple HE music institutions, how does the provision of the AT compare between these different institutions?

What do you think about the funding of and access to AT lessons for students in this/these music department/s?

Q7 - Why do you think that students typically start to have AT lessons?

Q8 - What do you think students feel are the outcomes of taking AT lessons?

Q9 - Why do you think students stop taking AT lessons or decide not take AT lessons in the first place?

Q10 - Have you ever been in a situation in which there were a music student, an AT teacher, and you working on the student at the same time?

1) No: What do you think could be the benefits of this teaching collaboration?

How would you feel in this situation?

What might be the challenges of this situation?

2) Yes: What benefits did you notice from this collaboration (e.g for you and the student)?

Where there any challenges? If so, what were they?

What would you have done differently?

Q11: Based on your current understanding, what are your views on AT online lessons?

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Q12: Based on your current experience and knowledge, how would you define the AT? (For the validity and credibility of this research, please do not search this on Google or any other search engines 😊)

Q13: Do you find defining the AT challenging? Please explain.

Q14: Do you think that perceptions towards the AT within the music profession and/or music education have changed over time? Please explain

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Q15: In universities and/or conservatoire, how do you think AT professionals are regarded in comparison with other professional, such as instrumental/vocal teachers?

Q16: Is there anything else that you'd like to mention in relation to the AT and your experience as an instrumental/vocal teacher?

Appendix D: Survey email invitation

Hello,

My name Federico Pendenza, I am a 3rd year PhD student at the University of York Music Department and am carrying out PhD research on the perceptions of the **Alexander Technique** within UK Higher Education music institutions. At the moment, I am investigating the views about the Alexander Technique **among music students**: so, **I need your help!**

If you don't know what the Alexander Technique is, don't worry: no prior knowledge or experience of the Alexander Technique is needed, and you are more than welcome to participate in my research as you will help me shed light on this matter.

All you need to do is complete a survey that will take around 10-15 minutes depending on whether you know nothing about it or have some knowledge/experience of the Alexander Technique.

Participation is voluntary and you can withdraw from the study at any time. Responses are anonymous and confidential.

Here's the link to the survey: [link to the survey]

If you have any questions, you can contact me at fp707@york.ac.uk or my supervisor, Dr Liz Haddon, at liz.haddon@york.ac.uk.

Thank you very much,

Federico

Appendix E: Survey information sheet and consent form

The Alexander Technique and your experience as a music student

What is the research about?

This research aims to investigate the perceptions of the Alexander Technique (AT) among the different categories of people within UK Higher Education Music institutions: **music students**, instrumental/vocal/AT teachers, academic and administrative staff. In particular, this study is concerned with unveiling the factors that influence the provision of the AT and how the AT is received within UK universities and conservatoires.

Who is carrying the research?

The research is being carried out by Federico Pendenza, 3rd year PhD Music student, under the supervision of Dr Liz Haddon at the University of York.

Has the research been the subject of ethical review?

Yes, this research has been granted ethical approval by the University of York Ethics Committee.

Do I have to take part?

No. It is entirely up to you to decide whether to take part in this study or not.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be asked to complete an anonymous online questionnaire with open-ended text boxes which will approximately take you 10-15 minutes. Prior to completing the questionnaire, you will need to indicate your agreement to the following consent form; each component needs to be ticked before proceeding. You can withdraw from this study at any time.

What would the questionnaire be like?

You will be asked questions about your views on the Alexander Technique and your understanding of it. **NO PRIOR EXPERIENCE OR KNOWLEDGE OF THE ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE IS NEEDED.**

What are the benefits of taking part?

You will help increase the understanding of the Alexander Technique within tertiary-level institutions which will have direct impact on AT training and future health policies in universities' music departments and conservatoires in the UK and potentially on an international level.

What are the possible risks of taking part?

For some, the Alexander Technique may be considered as a sensitive topic considering the factors that influence their choices or possibilities to have AT lessons. For this reason, you have the right to stop completing the questionnaire at any stage without giving any reason.

Will I be paid to take part?

No, you will not be paid to take part in the research.

Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

Questionnaires are anonymous. All the information that is collected will be kept strictly confidential. You will not be able to identify yourself or be identified by others, including the researcher. Any data will be stored on the University's centrally managed network in password-protected folders.

What if I decide to withdraw from the research after completing the questionnaire?

Under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), you have a general right of access to your data, a right to rectification, erasure, restriction, objection or portability. You also have a right to withdrawal. Please note, not all rights apply where data is processed purely for research purposes. For further information see, <https://www.york.ac.uk/records-management/generaldataprotectionregulation/individualsrights/>.

On what basis will the researcher process my data?

Under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the University has to identify a legal basis for processing personal data and, where appropriate, an additional condition for processing special category data.

In line with our charter which states that we advance learning and knowledge by teaching and research, the University processes personal data for research purposes under Article 6 (1) (e) of the GDPR:

Processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest

Special category data is processed under Article 9 (2) (j):

Processing is necessary for archiving purposes in the public interest, or scientific and historical research purposes or statistical purposes

Research will only be undertaken where ethical approval has been obtained, where there is a clear public interest and where appropriate safeguards have been put in place to protect data.

In line with ethical expectations and in order to comply with common law duty of confidentiality, we will seek your consent to participate where appropriate. This consent will not, however, be our legal basis for processing your data under the GDPR.

Data will be held within the European Economic Area in full compliance with data protection legislation. For further information see, <https://www.york.ac.uk/it-services/google/policy/privacy/>. Data will be retained in line with legal requirements or where

there is a business need. Retention timeframes will be determined in line with the University's Records Retention Schedule.

Contacts for further information

If you have any queries about this information sheet or this research project, please email Federico Pendenza, fp707@york.ac.uk, or Dr Liz Haddon, liz.haddon@york.ac.uk.

If you agree to take part in the study, please tick the following statements:

- I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study.
- I understand that the participation in this study is voluntary.
- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving any reasons for my withdrawal.
- I consent to the information collected, once anonymised (so that I cannot be identified), to be used for this PhD research and other research purposes (e.g. publications, presentations at conferences).
- I give my consent to participate in the study under the conditions outlined above.

Appendix F: Sample of the questionnaire (extracts)

Background information

Section 1 - Background information

These questions aim to gather anonymous demographic information about you and the context in which you are currently studying.

In which type of UK tertiary-level music institutions are you currently enrolled?

- University Music Department
- Music Conservatoire
- Other tertiary-level accredited music institution

Are you ... ?

- An Undergraduate student
- A Master's (taught) student
- A Master's (by research) student
- A PhD student
- Other (e.g. PGDip/PGCert)

How many UK HE music institutions have you studied at?

- 1
 - 2
 - 3
-

What instrument/s do you play or/and are you a singer? (Please type in your answer)

What is your age range?

- 18-25 years old
- 26-30 years old
- 31-35 years old
- More than 36 years old
- Prefer not to say

How best would you describe your nationality?

- United Kingdom
- Country within the European Union (e.g. Italy, Cyprus)
- Country outside the European Union (e.g. USA, South Africa, China)
- Prefer not to say

How would you describe your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary gender
- Prefer not to say

You and the Alexander Technique

You and the Alexander Technique

The next questions will be about your experience of the Alexander Technique. Those will be tailored according to whether you have had direct experience of the Alexander Technique or not. **No prior experience of the Alexander Technique is necessary**; if you have had direct experience of the Alexander Technique, you will be asked additional questions relating to the teaching and practice of the Alexander Technique.

Prior to completing this questionnaire, did you know anything about the Alexander Technique?

- Yes
- No

For those who have heard about it

How have you heard about the Alexander Technique?

Have you ever had Alexander Technique lessons?

- Yes
 No

For those who did have sessions

How would you describe your experience of taking Alexander Technique lessons (please comment on any aspects of your experience)?

Why did you decide to take Alexander Technique lessons? (select as many as you want)

- Musculoskeletal pain
 Injury due to playing
 Postural comfort when playing
 Performance anxiety
 Music performance enhancement
 Curiosity
 Other (please specify):

With regard to the previous question, I'd really appreciate if you could provide more details about your answer/s:

What did you expect to gain from having Alexander Technique lessons?

Were there any unexpected benefits or limitations that you experienced as part of engaging with the Alexander Technique? Please feel free to provide as many details as you can.

How many Alexander Technique lessons have you had?

- One lesson
- Less than 5
- Between 5 and 10
- More than 10

How often have you had AT lessons?

- A one-off lesson
- Weekly
- Fortnightly
- Other (please specify):

Are you still taking AT lessons?

- Yes
- No

For those who are still taking sessions

Why are you still taking AT lessons?

Appendix G: Definitions of the AT used in the questionnaire

Performing of any kind means being out there in front of an audience. The Alexander Technique can help you overcome 'stage nerves'. High energy and coordination are essential to a good performance. These can be enhanced by developing the Alexander Technique skills of directed body use and refined attention. The Technique helps in this by developing in the performer a high level of awareness while at the same time help discard unwanted postural and emotional habits, to prevent pain and reduce stress and performance anxiety. The Alexander Technique helps us to acquire balance in performance of being both calm and unhurried, and yet full of energy and ready to act responses (STAT, 2021)

The Alexander technique teaches improved posture and movement, which is believed to help reduce and prevent problems caused by unhelpful habits (NHS, 2021)

The Alexander Technique is a skill for self-development teaching you to change long-standing habits that cause unnecessary tension in everything you do. Whatever your age or ability, the Technique can help boost your performance in any activity and relieve the pain and stress caused by postural habits, like slouching or rounded shoulders. Working with your teacher, you will learn to recognise your usual reactions to the stresses of life. You will find out how you have been contributing to your problems, how to prevent them and regain control (STAT, 2022)

After reading the passages above, would you be interested in knowing more about the Alexander Technique? (please give a reason for your choice)

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