

Movement and dance in early childhood

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Mollie Davies, (2003) Movement and dance in early childhood Paul Chapman

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Trwyddedwyd i'w ddefnyddio ar gyfer y cwrs BMSA4003 - Developing and Supporting Physical Development in Early Childhood

Teitl: Movement and dance in early childhood

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What is movement?

Everything that we discover about life, we discover through movement. Light waves reach the eye, sound waves contact the ear. Both smell and taste involve movement. Above all, our capacity to touch and move to gain further experience, confirms our awareness. (Hodgson 2001: 172)

This chapter provides a theoretical framework which serves as a reference point, or identity kit, for the many examples of children's activities which illustrate subsequent chapters of this book. It also provides a way of thinking about, supporting, enriching and recording children's movement for all those concerned with early childhood education.

The indivisibility of movement from human functioning may be one of the reasons why its importance in terms of child development is not always given the serious recognition it deserves. It is so inbuilt that it is not until movement is seen to be dysfunctional or ineffective in some way, such as in autism, depression, attention deficit hyperactive disorder, cerebral palsy or mood swings, that it emerges as a significant educational phenomenon. Post-graduate Dance Movement Therapy programmes on offer in the UK and elsewhere include diagnostic and treatment tools in their training and, increasingly, dance and movement join art, drama and music therapies in their bid to modify and enhance living. In the therapeutic context non-verbal communication of the body is 'incorporated with other research to refine coping distinctions and measure changes' and, as such, is universally acknowledged. (Bartenieff 1980: viii)

While welcoming such advancements in the therapeutic field, I believe that movement plays an equally important role in the growth, development and education of all children. However, because movement of young children is seen to be a part and parcel of their everyday lives the danger is that it can be taken for granted and overlooked in terms of its importance in the educational spectrum. Those concerned with child care and education may

see no reason to classify and analyse something which seems so obvious. In contrast, however, as soon as children show the first signs of emergent reading skills, help is at hand; resources, methods and procedures are actively sought and discussion within and between family units abounds. Similarly, as children's interests in numeracy become apparent, parents are the first to join in the bigger/smaller, taller/shorter phase of discrimination. Even if parents and early childhood practitioners do not have detailed knowledge in these areas, realising its importance they seek it out and provide materials and experiences which assist learning at this stage.

In movement, too, important achievements are noted, valued and discussed with pride. Photograph albums and family CD libraries are filled with illustrations documenting such events as early, unsteady steps, digging in the sand, kicking a ball and swimming without support. But there the similarity ends. Although there is often movement-oriented provision in parks, playgrounds and gardens, detailed guidance for promoting, observing and recognising activities stimulating growth, development and creativity is far behind that in other areas of learning. Sometimes adults 'sense' what is needed to help children initiate, consolidate or progress in their movement activities but, however valuable and successful this sensing may sometimes seem to be, it needs to be related to a much larger canvas of knowledge. If parents and early years practitioners are to function knowingly it is necessary to extend beyond sensing. If they are to take responsibility for movement as an important area of children's experience then they need to know what 'constitutes' movement just as they need to know about all the other areas of learning for which they make provision.

The challenge was to find a model which was sufficiently proven and sufficiently flexible to relate to young children in a variety of situations: a model or framework which would establish general principles and cater not simply for provision but also for extended learning in objective and creative contexts. In choosing the framework used throughout this book acknowledgement is made to the theories of Rudolf Laban (1948, 1966, 1980) and those concerned with the development of his ideas including Bartenieff (1980), Lamb (1965), North (1972), Preston (1963), Preston-Dunlop (1998), Redfern (1973), Russell (1965) and Ullmann who continued his work after his death. After a remarkable life spent in researching movement in a variety of theoretical and practical contexts Laban's findings remain the most pertinent and relevant available today. As Hodgson (2001: 55) writes:

A good deal of Laban's work and theory forms the foundation of so much of our understanding of movement, that quite often people come to regard it now as common belief.

This allegiance may be partly due to his guiding principles which echo those of leading educational theorists of today, and which permeate my own thinking. Laban did not create a 'one and only' model but instead inspired others to take up and develop his principles in the variety of fields in which he worked. Preston-Dunlop (1998: cover), Laban scholar and researcher, writes:

His ideas have innovations not just in dance, but also in acting and performance, in the study of non verbal communication, in ergonomics, in educational theory and child development, in personality assessment and psychotherapy.

In her conclusion she comments (ibid.: 269):

Today his [Laban's] concepts are alive and well, adapted, pruned and developed to accommodate the needs and demands of the twenty-first century.

Theoretical framework of movement

Human movement is not only unique to the species but is also unique to each individual within it. To understand and recognise the complexity of individual uniqueness it is necessary first to establish the common denominators from which personal movement springs. **The body, the instrument of action**, is central to the classification of movement. Giving colour and form to the 'playing' of that instrument are three important and interrelated categories:

- *dynamics* which relates to how the instrument moves
- *space* which refers to ways in which the body inhabits and uses space
- *relationships* which identifies ways in which the body acts and interacts with people and objects.

THE INTEGRATION OF MOVEMENT

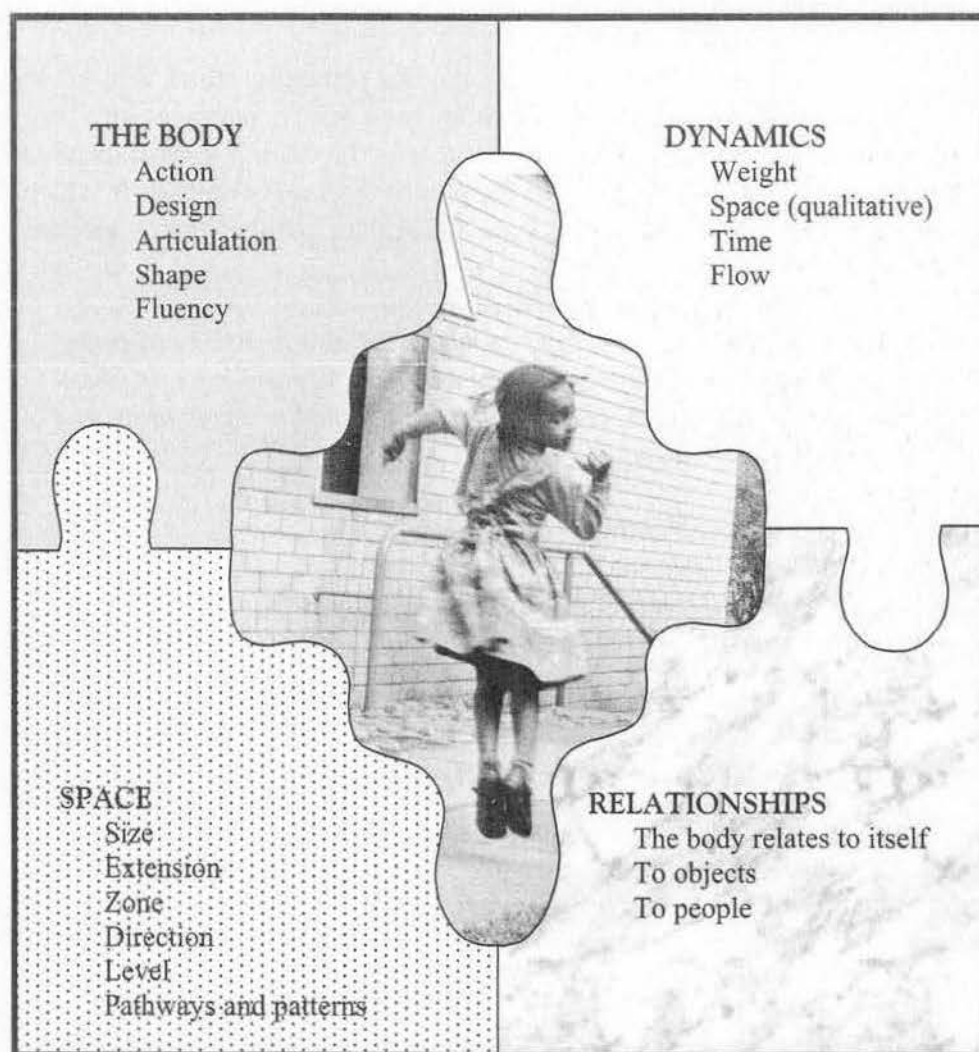


Figure 1 A general classification of movement in relation to young children from 0 to 8 years

The body: what takes place

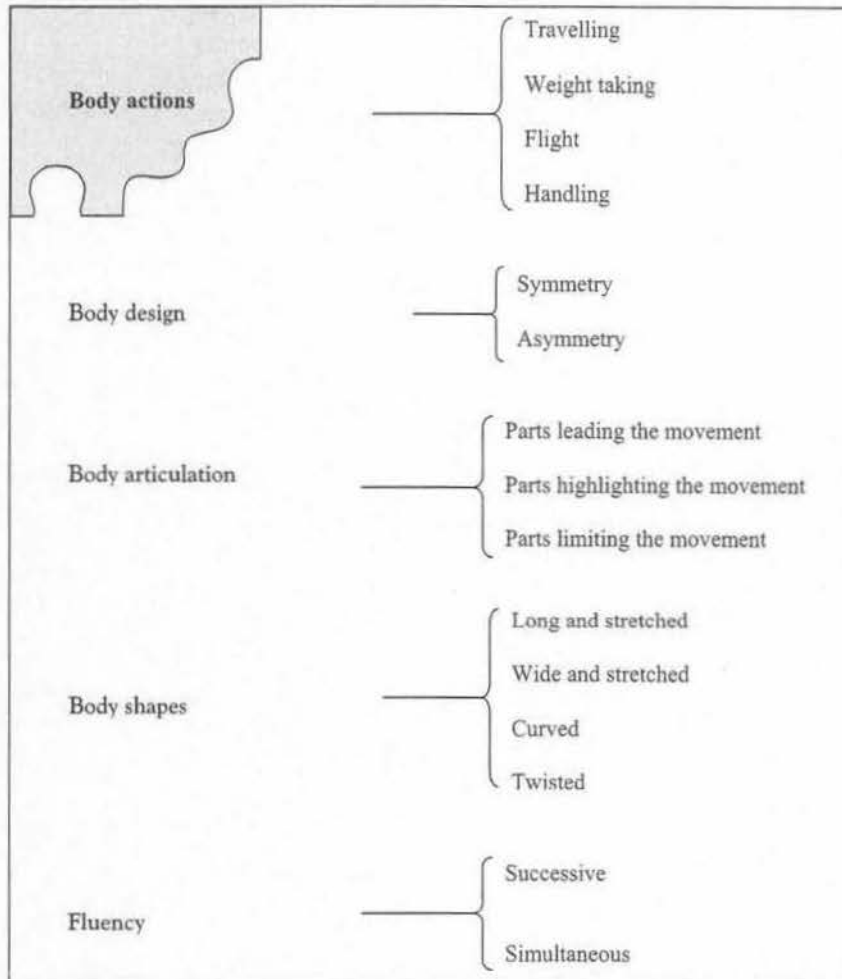


Figure 2 The body: the instrument of movement activity

The body in action

The body moving into action is a vital part of all movement activity whether it is spontaneous or in response to structured situations at home, in the play centre, in the supermarket, in the early years setting or at school. It is through the dynamic and spatial use of a growing number of separate and related actions, *action schemas*, that children become increasingly competent and versatile in a variety of movement situations.

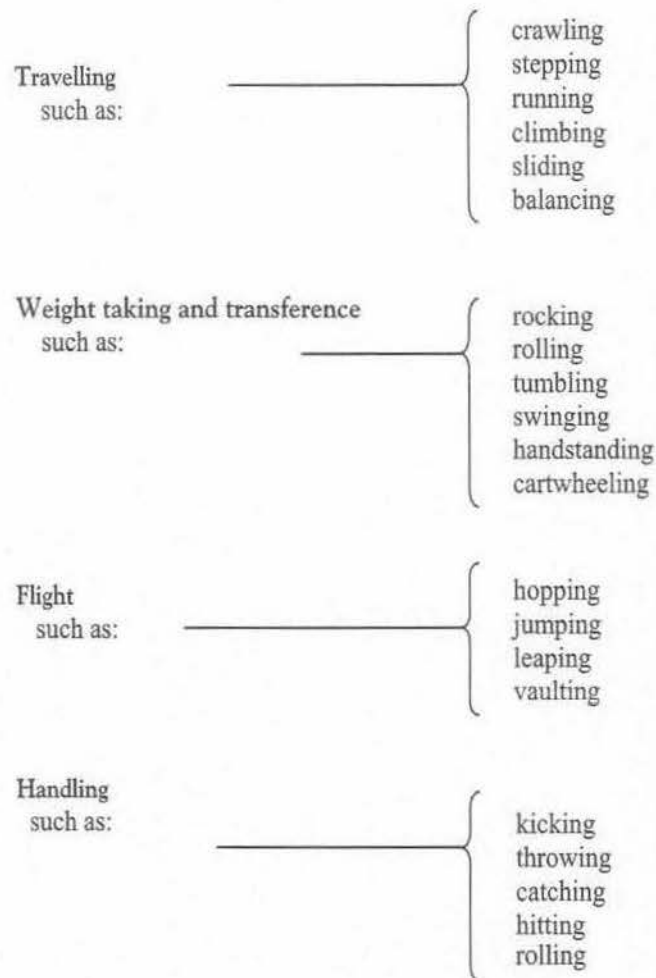


Figure 3 The body in action

At first actions of babies are restricted to the relatively confined spaces they inhabit and the people with whom they are in contact. Reaching, grasping, sucking, wriggling and kicking feature dominantly in the early months. As soon as they become more independently mobile they are able to invest their actions in spatial areas previously unavailable to them. The shuffling and crawling activities of babies develop into a range of *travelling* actions which

typify the play of young children as they transport themselves from one place to another.

Sometimes children enjoy staying put in small pockets of space and explore actions which *support or transfer their weight*; they rock, roll over, turn upside down and, in all these activities, face different perspectives of their world. As they amass and develop a more complex range of action schemas so their perspective experience widens. The *Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage* draws attention to the importance for children to see things from different perspectives such as from the top of a climbing frame, in a tunnel or below a box (QCA 2000: 102).

Actions associated with dexterity, involving *handling objects*, such as throwing, kicking and catching which feature in young children's 'games play', also have their early roots. The baby's grip and release of a rattle through to the sophisticated throwing and catching of the eight-year-olds represent another category of important body actions children gradually add to their repertoire.

Overcoming gravity and being in flight is a delight for all children and is something which remains with them throughout the first phase of living and beyond. Before they can manage to push off and make themselves airborne they jump from a stair, kerbstone or chair which, in reality, means *dropping* down rather than *jumping* down. Although at this stage they are not yet quite there, nevertheless the children are getting the feel of the activity. Being helped to jump by or with adults, willing to participate in the play situation, is a way of feeling what it is like – in this case *to be airborne* – an experience important to the development of any activity.

Parents and early childhood educators will immediately be able to think of some of the actions their children can perform, particularly those which are frequently repeated and that have become current favourites. They will also be able to recall ways in which some of these have developed over time. When, for example, a turn became a spin, when a jump came out of a run, and when a jump lasted long enough to make a shape or turn in the air such as the one shown in Photograph 1. Body action is an important ingredient of movement, particularly so for young children. Specific examples of body actions will be discussed in a variety of contexts in the chapters which follow.



Photograph 1 Turning in the air: two actions in one

Body design



Figure 4 The body is well designed

The general public, including children themselves, are increasingly design conscious. Designer labels on clothes, mobile phones and toys are firmly established as indicators of prestige. In the professional worlds of dance and sport, design characteristics of the human body are photographically captured in a range of athletic and artistic achievements, many of which seem to defy the expected range. So breathtaking are some of these achievements it is difficult to remember that they have their roots in the body of the newborn baby – that the nurturing of such potential lies in the hands of those who educate and care.

Through its natural structure and the number and arrangement of limbs, often the body of a baby is initially anatomically *symmetric* although very early on habitual ways of moving with emphasis on one side of the body over

the other frequently involve the use of *asymmetry*. Apart from early reflex shaking and beating activities of very young babies, symmetry, brought about through equal emphasis of both sides of the body, is usually associated with evenness and involves movement characterised by control and balance. Examples of symmetry are swinging, exerting two-sided movement of arms and legs, a low squat position near the ground frequently adopted by young children, or engagement in a handspring enjoyed by eight-year-olds.

Asymmetric movement is recognised by the way one side of the body is emphasised more than the other and where there is a lack of equivalence between the two sides. In contrast to the even balance associated with symmetric movement, asymmetry is characterised by off-balance and less restrained movement which has a tendency to be 'ongoing'. Specific movement activities, such as early throwing behaviour, require an appropriateness of body design but, apart from these, both children and adults usually have a natural preference for either two-sidedness or one-sidedness. A quick glance at a group of children as they listen to a story, eat a meal or engage in dramatic play will give clear indications of their preferences.

Body articulation

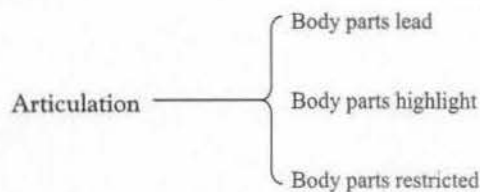


Figure 5 The body is well articulated

A well-articulated body can emphasise the use of one part or several parts of the body at will. These may lead the movement as the head does when 'being a plane' or where hands go first to meet the ground on the way to a handstand. Parts of the body may be given a role of importance and highlighted as in the way the hands wave or the feet tap dance. Highlighting the varied use of body parts is natural for children at early stages of learning and an important experience for both skilled and inventive performance. So, too, is the restricting of body parts, a limitation which children often impose upon themselves. 'No hands', a special favourite, is illustrated for us in Photograph 2 which shows Charlotte, aged seven, as she enjoys the see-saw.



Photograph 2 Self-imposed bodily restriction: no hands

Body shapes

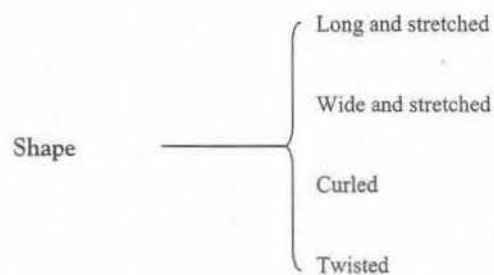


Figure 6 The body can make a variety of shapes

Body shape refers to the form of the body when a position is held and there are four of these which can be easily identified in children's movement play.

Long and stretched

The first shape is *long and stretched* emphasising the use of one direction only. It stresses the dimension of length and body parts are aligned to produce the



Photograph 3 An elongated body shape

effect of elongation and narrowness. This shape is seen clearly as children tunnel their way through hollow tubes, play at parachuting, dive, attempt a netball or basketball shot, or are directed to stand up straight! In Photograph 3 Eleanor, aged two-and-a-half, is responding to a suggestion to stretch up as tall as she can. As she does so her body becomes narrow and long as she pierces the space in an upward direction.

The second body shape is also stretched but this time in *terms of width*. The natural tendency of two-dimensional movement results in this shape as arms and legs are stretched sideways into space, spreading away from the centre of the body and creating a tension between the limbs themselves. Children enjoy making two-dimensional star shapes early on, as shown by Lucy and her mother in Photograph 4. Sometimes this shape is used to suggest 'being big' or to provide a barrier to stop someone, or something, getting past.



Photograph 4 *Wide and stretched: mother and daughter share a two-dimensional body shape*

Jumping in a star shape soon becomes a favourite activity and is often seen as older children take off from walls, trees and apparatus or into the swimming pool. In swimming breaststroke the star shape, with its *two-dimensionality of movement*, is emphasised as a child's body travels through the water. The more complex activity of a cartwheel shows a moving, star-shaped image as the weight of the body is taken successively from hand to hand to foot to foot as the body revolves. It also serves a symbolic function in expressive movement. Spinning in a horizontal star shape may occur in a catherine wheel or spinning-top dance or performed simply for the circular movement sensation itself.

A third body shape, *three-dimensional in character*, which is essentially *rounded*, is often seen in rolling activities where the spine curves and the

extremities meet – or almost meet – each other. The curve may sometimes be taken in the opposite direction, with the back of the head and the heels sharing the arc. This is a shape which, at later stages of growth and development, constitutes part of athletic or acrobatic activity as seen in a backward dive, a 'crab walk' or pole vault. In artistic terms, it is one often used by both contemporary and classical dancers.

The last of the four body shapes is *twisted* as different areas of the body pull against each other around one or more axes. It is much used by the seven- and eight-year-olds in dance and dramatic play associated with aspects of the natural environment such as gnarled trees, with wizards, sea monsters and other imaginary creatures. The sinuous way in which young bodies twist and turn in and out of railings, small spaces and almost impossible gaps also show this particular body shape to perfection.

Bodily fluency

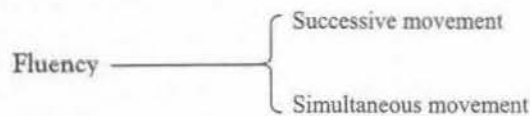


Figure 7 The body has a natural fluency

In *successive movement*, body parts are brought into play one after another in a wave-like, rippling action. Such movement has a fluidity about it and makes for continuity. It can be identified early on in the writhing of babies and, later, objectively in the movement of young children as they grasp a low-hanging branch and, starting with their feet, take their body through with the use of knees, hips, spine and head as they achieve balance the other side. *Simultaneous movement*, on the other hand, occurs when some and, at times all parts of the body move at the same time. The 'togetherness', implicit in simultaneous movement, is present throughout the whole action, from the moment it starts until the end of its passage. An obvious example of this is when babies bring all of themselves to their centre, perhaps in pain or delight, creating a small ball. At the other end of the age range we see young children of seven or eight years taking on the style of premier league players as they hurl their bodies across the space to 'save a goal'.

Dynamics: how movement takes place

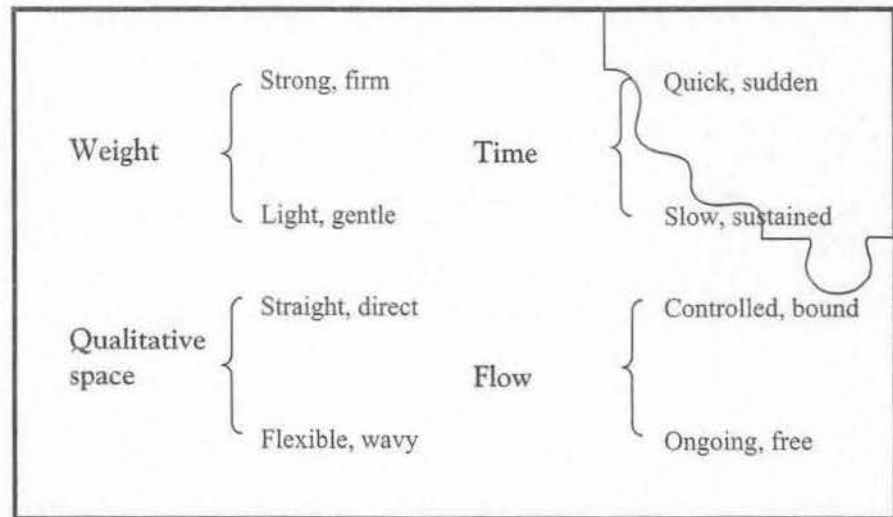


Figure 8 The body moves dynamically and rhythmically

All human activity is dynamically and rhythmically charged and structured. Young children, like people at every stage of life, are recognised by the dynamic and rhythmic make-up which personalises their style of moving. The combination and interrelatedness of the movement factors of weight, qualitative space, time and flow determine the rhythmic and dynamic differences between individual children and characterise 'how' they move. Sometimes specific actions require a particular rhythmic and dynamic mix if the response is to be effective; the *strong* leg action in kicking a ball, the *slow, careful* threading of shoe laces, the *vigorous* shaking of a rattle or tambourine. Making appropriate responses to specific daily challenges such as these implies a rich dynamic range from which to select: a range that needs stimulating, supporting and nurturing throughout the primary years.

Weight

Very young children, typically at about two years, understand the weight factor of movement mainly in terms of opposites, of movement being either *strong and forceful* or *light and gentle*. As their understanding increases, so finer discriminations of strength and force can be produced at will and in context.

Changes in the muscular tension of the body which result in changes of energy and force occur, for example, when children pit their energy against external structures. In order to pull up on the sides of a cot, onto a branch of a tree, or to climb a rope, a *strong grip* of the hands and *strength* in the shoulder girdle and arms are needed to lift the body in defiance of its own weight. Eight-year-old James, seen in Photograph 5 needed a tremendous amount of *strength and energy* to travel the full length of the overhead track. He helped himself by creating a swinging rhythm which took away some of the muscular strain as he transferred his weight from one ring to the next. *Strength and energy* are also required to jump far, high and wide, to kick a ball hard, and to effectively hammer a nail into a piece of wood. Movement can be more lightly and gently charged. A *delicate touch* is needed to make light brush marks on the paper, to stroke the hamster or to catch a soap bubble on an outstretched hand. In dance, *firminess* is brought into play where power and purpose are features of expression while *gentle, buoyant movement* is, as it were, finely tuned.



Photograph 5 Strength and energy are needed here

Qualitative space

Some movement can be described as very *straight, direct and thread-like* in appearance. Other movement has a *flexibility* which gives it a three-dimensional feel. This part of young children's dynamic movement make-up is perhaps less easy to observe in the early stages than the other three factors of weight, time and flow. Certain situations may require the use of one or the other of these space elements. For example, children may use *flexibility* in putting their arms into the sleeves of their coat, twisting in and out of the banisters or casting a magical spell. *Directness* features prominently where aiming is involved, in trajectory activities for instance or when a narrow focus is given to the task in hand as shown by Mark in Photograph 6 as he gives his entire attention to his modelling.



Photograph 6 Mark concentrates on his modelling

Time

Movement can be *speedy and sudden* as well as *slow and leisurely*, with degrees of differentiation between the two. *Fast and slow* are movements which

appear early in the understanding of young children. Through experimenting they soon become aware that, for many of their activities, there is an appropriateness of speed: a *slow* stretching of the leg to find the section of the climbing frame or rung of the ladder which can safely take the weight of the body, a *quick* dash to get to the ball and the *lively quality* of the 'breeze' dance, are all examples of an appropriate use of time in the play of most four-, five- and six-year-olds. In addition to being *fast and urgent* and *slow and leisurely* there are many degrees along the continuum. As children gradually become more competent and use more and more of these segments of time, so ideas of *acceleration* and *deceleration* come into play, featuring prominently in the movement of children aged around six, seven and eight.

Flow

Flow refers to movement which ranges from being *restricted and bound* through to movement which is essentially *free and outgoing*. Descriptions of young children are often given by adults in terms of flow, with phrases such as 'outgoing', 'expansive', 'restrained' or 'withdrawn' giving clues to their behaviour. As well as being indicative of mood, the use of flow also features in the acquisition of skill, for example, in cutting paper, in making models, in learning to write or to play a musical instrument. At first, *bound flow*, associated with extreme care, reflects tentativeness. But, as skill improves, so does the sense of confidence expressed by the freeing of flow. As Roberts (2002: 105) suggests, having a sense of mastery is deeply linked with feelings of self-esteem. Activities carried out on agility apparatus involve a *range of flow responses*, freer flow giving continuity to the activity and restraint, involving the ability to stop and hold back, helping to prevent accidents to the mover and other children in the vicinity.

Dynamics in context

Dynamic and rhythmic components of movement have no particular value in themselves. What is important is that they are used appropriately. It is 'no better' to be able to move with sudden, quick vitality than with sustainment and leisure. Strong action is 'no better' than a gentle, fine touch. Assessment depends entirely upon the context in which movement occurs and, therefore, it is important to have as wide a range of dynamics as possible in order to make appropriate selections and combinations. Readers will notice the

absence of the diagrammatic breakdown of the dynamics section of the movement framework. In order to avoid repetition this appears in Chapter 6 where children's expressive behaviour is considered in more depth.

Space: the medium in which movement takes place

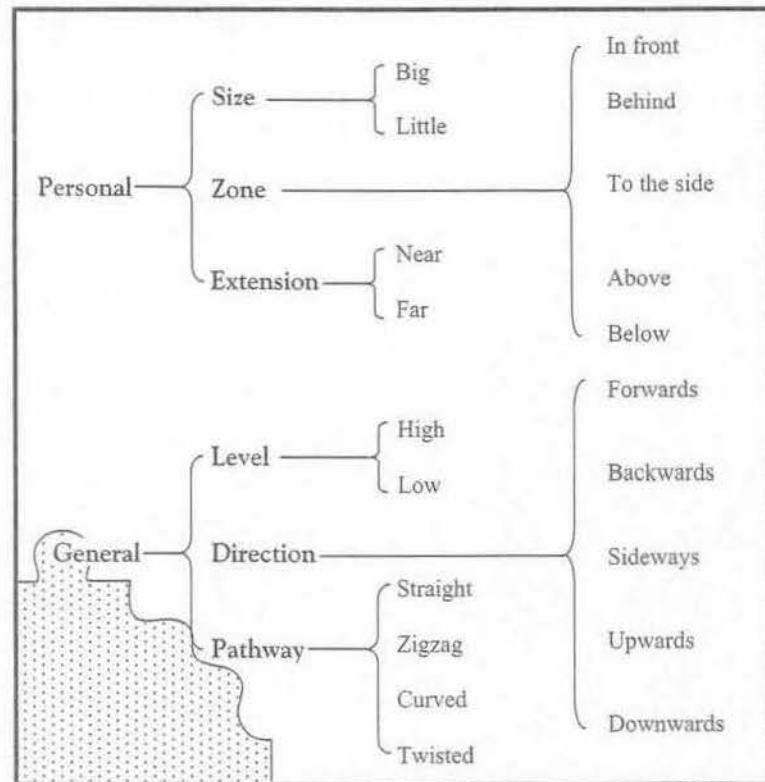


Figure 9 Space: the medium in which movement takes place

Space is referred to here in two ways; first as the *personal space surrounding the child's body*, sometimes referred to as the *kinesphere* (Laban 1948) and, secondly, as the *general space which is beyond personal space and bounded by the particular confines within which any of the children's activity takes place*. Personal space is as far as children can reach round about themselves when they are situated in one place. Their general space might be the playpen, the sofa, the stairs, the climbing frame in the garden, swings and roundabouts in the park, the adventure playground, a specially designated section of the nursery or the hall of the infant school. Children carry their personal space with them

as they travel in the general space in which they move.

Size and extension

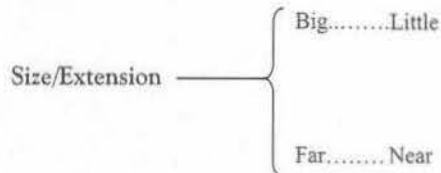


Figure 10 Big and little – near and far

In the movement world of young children, size is usually associated with extension and so these two elements of personal space are considered together. In identifying movements which are kept near the body or extend a long way from it, and are large or small, it is easy to conjure up images of children who use such notions frequently. 'Near', 'far', 'big' and 'little' feature prominently in the learning of young children and their experience in this area is vitally important.

Zone

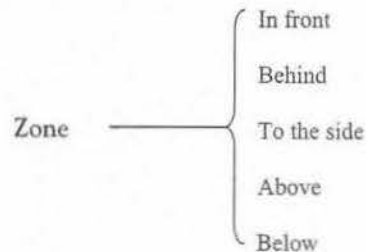


Figure 11 In front, behind, to the side, above and below

The structure of the body gives rise to spatial areas of movement with different parts of the body having their 'natural' zones. Young children use their arms a great deal to gesture in the upper areas of space in front of, behind, to the side and above their bodies. This natural zoning occurs similarly with the legs which step, gesture and jump in the lower regions of personal space. Fun and excitement may be brought about by varying the natural use of zones; moving around with hands grasping ankles and hanging upside down on a

ladder are just two such examples of inverted zoning which children seek naturally for themselves or are encouraged to try out by others.

Direction

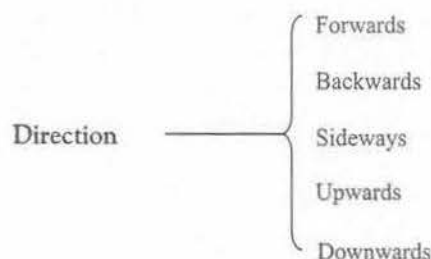


Figure 12 Forwards, backwards, sideways, upwards and downwards

Direction is a development of zoning. The three bodily dimensions of *length, breadth and depth* provide the basis of all orientation in space; the length of the body gives rise to the directions of up and down, the width of the body to left and right, and the depth of the body to forwards and backwards. It is obvious from the skeletal structure of the body that forwards is the most natural direction in which to move. When babies are able to stand unaided this is usually the first direction taken when they begin to walk. It is not, however, only the dimensions of the body but also awareness of different body parts which help the understanding of direction. Apart from crawling, when the head leads the baby forwards while parallel to the ground, the head is naturally associated with movement of an upward direction while the feet give a sense of going down. The sides of the body, together with the arms, familiarise children with sideways, while the chest and back of their bodies are strongly associated with forwards and backwards respectively.

In encouraging 'dance-like' play, young children are best helped to appreciate directions by references to the body with suggestions to 'follow their noses', or their 'heels go first'. At about six years of age, when directional awareness is less dependent on reference to their own bodies, children can cope with general suggestions to move in different directions. It is useful to remember that while in 'dance-like' activity directions can be used freely and creatively, in games-oriented activity direction is employed according to the demands of a particular game and, therefore, opportunities for variation are limited. Nevertheless, direction is an important factor in games and games-like activities, first, in action skills such as kicking, hitting and throwing and, later, for the seven- and eight-year-olds, in tactical play.

Level



Figure 13 High and low

Level, or the height at which any action takes place, ranges from *low to high* with many variations between the two extremes. Again levels are personal, in that they are related to the body.

- Low level is deep and around the floor.
- Medium level is situated approximately at mid-body.
- High level is above the head.

Young children often use these ideas in their play. One well-known example is in 'family play' where one child bends the knees and shuffles along at low level, being the baby, while the other walks on toes, or puts on high-heeled shoes, in order to 'become' the grown-up and use authority from 'on high'. Characteristically, young children enjoy extremes as they move freely or respond to suggestions from adults or friends. They know and delight in the use of high and low as they move. The 'in between' medium level is used less frequently and with less understanding by the very young. It is more likely to be passed through en route than actively engaged in its own right. Later, in relation to the young child's increasing ability to recognise smaller divisions and to order them sequentially, usually around six or seven years, it assumes greater importance.

Pathways and patterns

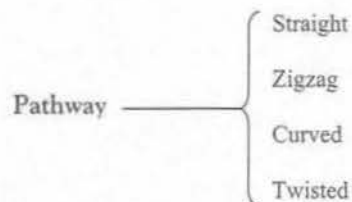


Figure 14 Straight, zigzag, curved and twisted

Pathways are important in children's spontaneous play. Two-, three- and four-year-olds mainly travel in straight lines and curves while by about six or seven, children may be expected to respond to challenges to move in all four of the following ways: *straight, angular, curved and twisted*. Challenging children to move in particular pathways implies considerable knowledge on their part and understanding in this sphere of movement comes about slowly.

The challenge to 'make a straight movement in space' implies:

- no change of direction
- an uninterrupted pathway
- a single focus.

The challenge to 'make an angular movement in space' implies:

- movement that changes direction acutely
- an awareness of sharp angles
- a zigzag movement.

The challenge to 'make a curved movement in space' implies:

- a directional change that is gradual
- an awareness of smooth, even movement
- no hint of angularity.

The challenge to 'make a twisted movement in space' implies:

- movement which curves first in one direction and then in another
- an awareness that movement is going back on itself creating a pattern similar to an S or figure of eight.

Movement patterns, such as those seen in track marks left in a wet sand tray, in a painting or when walking down a muddy lane, are situations where the movement is two-dimensional in nature. When, however, children move in what might be called 'air space', movement becomes more flexible and three-dimensional. As well as those across the floor, pathways and patterns in the air created by gestures of the arms are an important element of dance. In most agility-type activity, floor patterns assume greater significance than air patterns and in many games ground pathways are major considerations,

often coming about by chance according to how the game develops and the kinds of tactics involved.

Relationships: the moving body interrelates

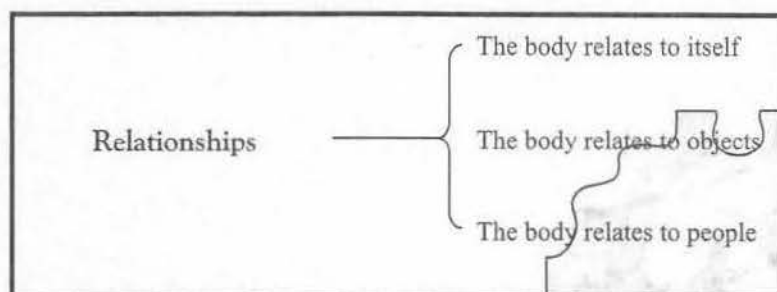


Figure 15 *The body relates to itself, to objects and to people*

The body relates to itself

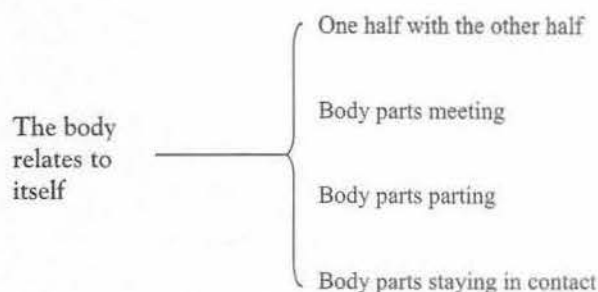


Figure 16 *The body relates to itself*

One of the growing excitements for young children comes about through a gradual realisation of the various ways in which different parts of the body relate to one another. Sometimes the relationship occurs between large sections of the body. As seen in Photograph 7, Hannah, aged four, maintains a strong, wall-like lower half while her top half bends over to look through her legs. Other examples include making a back for someone to jump over or providing a gap through which to pull a friend. These are relationships between parts of the body which children knowingly create for themselves.



Photograph 7 Looking through legs gives a different perspective

As a child's awareness of individual body parts increases, so, too, does the sophistication with which these parts relate to each other. In 'dance play', for example, not only may the palms of the hands touch each other as in clapping but sides, backs and fingertips may make contact in a variety of ways. The right hand wrapping round the body to arrive near to, or on, the left shoulder brings about a different expression from the right elbow resting on the right hip. In handling apparatus the body tends to play a participatory and supporting role while specific parts are engaged in action, for example, when an arm and hand are involved in bouncing a ball.

Relationships between body parts also involve dynamic, rhythmic and spatial nuances. *Cartwheels* and *handstands* demand refined articulation of the 'relevant' parts of the body and careful spacing between them as the weight is adjusted throughout the activity. Weight adjustment is also important in all sorts of *climbing activities* where hands and feet work in synchronisation as children travel along, upwards or downwards. Climbing is an extremely complex business and early attempts are often restrained and

slow. It is as though the children are pausing for thought or collecting themselves, which is, in a sense, what they are doing. As if to help the children on their way adults are sometimes tempted to give physical assistance, even to the extent of lifting the foot of a young child and placing it on the next rung. This might seem helpful but as the foot is momentarily taken out of the child's control the important changes of body weight which give significant signals to the child are temporarily removed. Although the pattern of hand-foot co-ordination is differently sequenced as children become more skilled, the weight adjustment remains central to the activity of climbing itself.

In Photograph 8, Josh, two-and-a-half years old, shows confidence which



Photograph 8 Hands and feet move simultaneously as distance is estimated



Photograph 9 Josh takes a well earned and needed rest

can be seen in the lovely, long stretch of his body and the careful placing of hands and feet as he estimates the distance between the rungs. Although, on this occasion, he missed a rung at one point on the way up, he resumed climbing almost immediately, his hands and feet easily regaining their former co-ordinated pattern. The quiet assurance with which he recovered and took up where he left off is due, in part, to the support of his mother and, in part, to the fact that he had experienced this activity before. It was interesting to observe that Josh took the opportunity to rest on a conveniently placed flat surface of the climbing frame and to be still after he completed his climb. Action and recovery are natural partners in early childhood activity and children may often be seen in attitudes of repose on agility apparatus. This is absolutely normal, a time to be respected and not to be rushed.

The body relates to objects

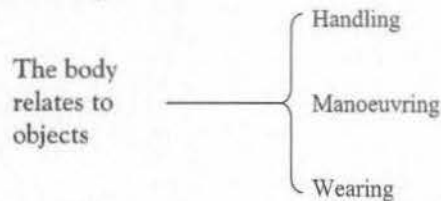


Figure 17 *The body relates to objects*

Activity related to objects which can be moved and manipulated causes the body to behave in different ways from movement related to the stable environment. Children's play with hoops, bats and balls, where there is considerable unpredictability and where chance frequently dictates the next move, is different in kind. In bouncing a ball against the floor or a wall, effective contact has to be made between the hand and the ball. This is difficult for very young children and few under five can manage to keep such an activity going for long. Even greater demands are made when the same activity is carried out with a bat instead of the hand. Now an additional relationship has to be made between the child and the bat in an attempt to make contact with the ball. Contact between objects, in this case a bat and a ball, is brought about by the use of the body in time and space.

In dance, activity related to objects happens less frequently although early dance experiences often include successful handling of balloons, ribbons and drapes. However, while drapes and dressing-up clothes may facilitate expressive movement, early childhood practitioners will recognise how very young children, who usually move with ease and fluency, can suddenly become wooden and stick-like when encouraged to move with a tambourine, hand castanet or set of bells. But by the age of seven and eight children can cope with and enjoy dancing with percussion. Instead of the restriction found in the movement of younger children, they manage to make the musical instrument an extension of their body as they move. Some also cope well with the increased complexity of dancing with two instruments, such as a drum and beater, demanding grip from both hands – a feat outside the realm of the youngest children. However, all children enjoy moving with materials and other objects and, as long as their use is self selective or introduced in an informed and sensitive way, they delight in dancing in this way.

The body relates to other people

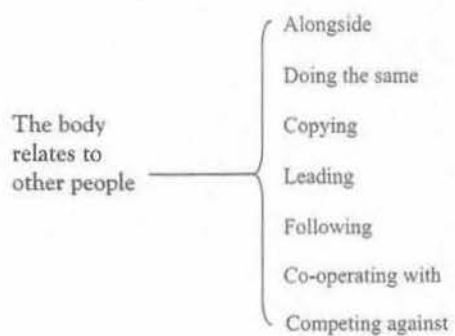


Figure 18 *The body relates to other people*



Photograph 10 *Callum watches his mother to 'time' his jump*

Associating with other people is an integral part of the movement activities of young children. They work alongside others sharing space and equipment in the sense that they allow it to happen and, sometimes, when one child initiates an activity two or three others will join in. 'Follow my leader' is a popular movement theme that involves an early, uncomplicated relationship. At its most basic the followers conform only to the leader's track – *where* it is taking place. This gradually develops so that more and more of the detail of the movement content – *what* the leader is doing – is taken on by the follower. By the time children reach seven or eight, identical complex 'I move as you move' sequences are often in evidence. This activity demands clarity and consistency from the leader and detailed observation and selection of appropriate movement patterns on the part of the follower.

Children include adults and their peers in negotiating relationships; they climb, pass and travel round, up and over them. Co-operating alongside, and competing with, characterise two more of the social relationships which young children experience. During an activity time together Callum and his mother have danced, jumped and played football. Photograph 10 shows Callum looking at his mother's feet, 'checking' when she is about to jump so that he can match his jump to hers and take off at the same time.

Summary

The main concern of this chapter has been to establish, comment upon and illustrate the four separate categories of human movement in the ways in which they relate to young children. These categories are closely and intricately related. The following chapters will look in greater detail at integrated patterns of children's activity as they learn to move more effectively and expressively, and move to learn in terms of thinking and socialising.