

## JABADAO

Developmental Movement Play (DMP) is an approach developed by JABADAO since 2002. It is child-led, play-based and shows how movement prompts the development of the brain as well as the body.

We have been running an extended DMP project since 1998 involving settings across the UK. Over 1,500 settings across the country are now using DMP following training with JABADAO. Many more are using aspects of DMP (especially indoor movement areas), without realising it is part of a whole approach. It's influence is spreading and its value widely recognised.

DMP began back in 1998, with two years of consultation - across the early years sector in England and with developmental movement practitioners in the UK and US. Between 2000 and 2002 we developed the approach, with a five-day course to pass it on to others.

Between 2002 and 2009 we ran an action research project in partnership with 26 settings who tested the value for children and families and helped us to adjust the training so that it became as practical and useful as possible. We continue to work with settings to change the opportunities available to young children for life-enhancing movement play.

### **The DMP approach:**

- explains why movement is such an important foundation for young children's learning, health and wellbeing
- supports children's natural drive to move and move freely
- draws on existing theories about the links between movement and the development of the brain and nervous system and combines them with theories about play
- helps adults to see how, in our increasingly sedentary culture, we often get in children's way, unwittingly undermining an important part of the developmental process

The theoretical underpinning for the approach encompasses:

- How we know our world
- Links between early movement and future functioning
- Human development
- Supporting children's learning

### **Concept 1:**

Perception is active, often no less active than imagination, and we constitute the shape and meaning of our world as we consciously engage with it. The felt sense of our reality is as significant as any other means we have of constructing reality. Movement play, as supported through this approach, is concerned with enabling children to engage actively with the lived body as a way of knowing themselves and the world. Developmental Movement Play lies, therefore, within the philosophical tradition of phenomenology and theories of animate organism.(Marcel. Sartre. Merleau-Ponty).

## Concept 2:

Sensory motor activity supports the development of functioning necessary to be able to learn.

2a. In order for the higher levels of the brain to work, the lower levels must sort information accurately. Active physical and sensory exploration enables the child to become a more mature, efficient organizer of sensory information. (Sensory Integration: A. Jean Ayres)

2b. There is parallel development in perceptual awareness, the development of the brain of the infant and the development of early movement patterns. Patterns established in the first year underlie all other movement. Because each previous stage underlies and supports each successive stage, any skimming, interrupting, or failing to complete a stage of development can lead to alignment / movement problems, imbalances within the body systems, and problems in perception, sequencing, organization, memory, and creativity. (Body Mind Centering: Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen)

2c. Increasingly, neurophysiologic research demonstrates that experiences do change both the physical structure and the functioning patterns of the human brain. It points to the importance and influence of physical wellbeing for learning and the role of movement in helping children with learning disabilities. (Marion Frostig. Florence Scott. Bette Lamont. Carl Delacato. Glen Doman. Sally Goddard Blythe.)

2d. A child's perceptual and motor abilities are influenced by one another. Developmentally based physical education programmes have the potential to enhance perceptual-motor functioning, to increase readiness for learning, to improve self-esteem and to reduce barriers to learning. (David L. Gallahue.)

## Concept 3:

Most children tend to seek out the activities that provide sensory experiences which are most beneficial to them at that point in development. Children's drive to move in particular ways is in part biologically driven. (A. Jean Ayres). Their development will be enhanced if adults provide a safe and stimulating environment in which children can explore their innate drives, at their own pace and in their own ways.

## Concept 4:

Sensory motor exploration is a valuable thing in its own right providing a means to focus on the feeling of life itself.

4a. Movement play is the medium through which human beings learn in direct participation with the languages of the body sensation, feeling, movement, image and instinct. It is a means of exploration and learning common to all humans and provides a way to focus on the lived body as a source of information and delight. It can be a medium through which to develop embodied learning. It is also a medium through which we can learn about adaptability, as the essence of movement is change-in-relationship. As we move, we are always making connections, creating relationships, both within ourselves and between ourselves and the world.

4b. Attending to sensory motor experience provides the opportunity to listen to the body in order to uncover the experience of self - internally, in relationship to others and the natural world. In this way of learning, the sense of being that precedes doing is important. (Authentic Movement: Mary Starks Whitehouse. Janet Adler. Joan Chodorow)

4c. Movement both reflects and affects inner self. The way we organise our movement reflects the way we organise ourselves. Movement can be used to gain information and insight, to find coping strategies and to bring about change. (Dance Therapy practitioners: Marion Chace, Trudi Schoop, Rudolph Laban)

4d. The feeling of identity arises from a feeling of contact with the body. To know who one is, a person must be aware of what they feel. (H Harlowe)

### **Concept 5:**

Human development is a discontinuous, self-organising, transactional process between the task, the individual and the environment throughout a person's life. Human beings are driven to strive for, and create, opportunities that will promote development. Change happens over time but in a highly individualised way. Typical age periods are of little value. (Bio-ecological perspective: Nicholas Bernstein. Urie Bronfenbrenner).

We decided not to adopt a phase-stage approach, which meant that we would not offer any age guidance to particular stages of development, nor highlight people with developmental delay within the group. Our intention is to take people as we find them and emphasize the kind of environment and relationships needed to support the developmental process that everyone makes, however slowly.

### **Concept 6:**

Human beings become increasingly open to learning when they feel, at a deep level, that their subjective experience is both respected and progressively understood. The structure and organization of the self appears to become more rigid under threat and to relax its boundaries when completely free from threat. Realness, acceptance and

empathy are required by the facilitator to create an environment in which boundaries can expand. (Carl Rogers). Empathy, in kinaesthetic terms, is the capacity to know another person's inner feelings based on sensory experience. Empathy utilizes attunement in tension flow, which is based on kinaesthetic identification with the tension changes of another person. This requires openness to kinaesthetic awareness. (Judith Kestenberg) Physical relationship is a key component of physical, and other, learning; the way children are supported physically has a profound effect on their self-confidence, body knowledge, physical and emotional security and communication. (Veronica Sherborne). Adults are part of the learning environment, and just as they have a responsibility to provide wonderful sights, textures, sounds, tastes and smells for children (Maria Montessori), they have a responsibility to provide wonderful movement experiences.

Children need open-ended movement experiences and the movement equivalent of open-ended questions (provided through movement dialogue) to help them to explore their experience through sensory motor means. (Jean Piaget. Maria Montessori)

Being seen without judgement, interpretation or projection, is a key part of the sensory motor learning process. Adults, and children, can enhance and expand the learning environment by learning to be a participating witness. (Janet Adler)

Careful observation is crucial. Adults provide scaffolding to support children's growing competence based on careful observation of where each child is, rather than where developmental theory suggests they might be. (Lev Vygotsky)

### **Concept 7:**

Free-flow play deeply involves children so that they wallow and reach their greatest levels of concentration. This involves their ideas, thoughts, feelings, relationships and physical movements. Free-flow play enables children to apply what they know, reflect on it, use it in different ways, experiment and explore with what they know and have learnt of relationships, feelings, ideas, thought and the movement of their bodies. (Tina Bruce.)

### **Concept 8:**

A rich tactile environment is vital to development.

## **A new approach**

### **New approach: new perspective**

In setting out to address these issues, we undertook extensive research into a range of movement and dance approaches, both in the UK and the United States. Our own background already encompassed psychodynamic movement therapy, (Chase, Schoop, Leventhall, Harris, Penfield) movement observation (LMA), experiential developmental

movement (BMCTM) improvised dance techniques, process-oriented movement (Authentic Movement). To this we added an understanding of developmental movement theory and in particular, work with the Seattle Developmental Movement Centre and Bette Lamont to whom we owe a particular debt of gratitude.

## **Developmental Movement: theory**

Theory around developmental movement has developed in two distinct ways:

- as a remedial programme for people identified with neuro-developmental delay presenting as barriers to learning (eg: dyspraxia, dyslexia)
- as a programme to support the achievement of (higher) potential

In the UK, the Institute for Neuro-Physiological Psychology (INPP) have been working with this material for over 20 years, offering individual remedial work for children and awareness training for teachers. Latterly, they have also been conducting research into movement programmes in schools.

As the work has been picked up by mainstream educationalists in the UK, new approaches have also emerged (eg Gym Trail) and movement has more credence as a support for learning (eg Write Dance). Individual educational consultants have included aspects of developmental movement theory within their recommendations for activity programmes in early years settings.

## **Developmental movement: embodied theory**

In parallel, this material has also been explored by body workers, starting with the body/movement and working with the material from an experiential point of view. Here the work is about embodiment - a creative process in which each person explores the developmental patterns in relation to their own experience, and develops the ability to learn through body intelligence as well as through the intellect. It is in these approaches that the most detailed work has been done linking movement not only with development, but also with the emerging sense of self.

## **Developmental Movement Play: an overview**

DMP is a new approach which draws extensively on the two strands of developmental movement material - theory and embodied practice.

It is important that this is the response of specialist dancers, bringing a new perspective and a new range of theory and skills to the field of child development and early education. These include:

- movement observation (Laban Movement Analysis)
- embodied developmental movement theory and practice (Bainbridge Cohen, Hartley)

- developmental movement theory (Ayres, Scott, Lamont)
- psychodynamic movement therapy (Chase, Schoop, Leventhall, Penfield)
- process-oriented movement work (Mindell, Starks-Whitehouse, Adler, Stromsted)
- improvised dance technique (Paxton)

In addition, theory about play and learning are also an integral part of the approach:

- Froebel, Montessori, Steiner, Piaget, Vygotsky, Pringle, Bruner, Bruce