This paper reports a survey study that explores the relationship between teachers' beliefs and values regarding music and movement in early childhood settings. This study approached 200 randomly selected early childhood centre directors to invite them to complete a questionnaire regarding music and movement experiences in their centres. The findings reveal there is a broad range of practices within music and movement education in early childhood settings, as well as highlighting the diversity of beliefs and attitudes regarding the place of music and movement in early childhood programs. These findings show what various teachers include within their definition of music and movement, what kinds of music and movement experiences they programme, how these experiences are programmed and why they are programmed this way. The paper will present these findings which explore the relationship between teachers' beliefs and values regarding music and movement education, and their teaching practice.

Aim of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the place of music and movement in the curriculum in early childhood settings. The study specifically investigated the experiences that are offered to children in early childhood settings and how those experiences are incorporated into early childhood programmes. The central research question was:

*What is the place of music and movement education in the curriculum in early childhood settings?*

Four sub-questions were developed to assist in directing of the research path. These questions were:

1. What kinds of music and movement experiences, if any, are offered to preschool children?
2. Are these music and movement experiences a formal and/or informal part of the educational programme?
3. What value do early childhood educators place on the use of music and movement experiences during the preschool years?
4. What factors influence the inclusion of music and movement experiences in early childhood settings?

Background

The relationship between music and movement cannot be ignored (Jackman, 1997; Jenkins, 1994). Many children respond to music through movement and these experiences also offer children a great source of enjoyment (Jenkins, 1994). This enjoyment together with the numerous developmental benefits of using music and movement experiences in early childhood settings should be recognised and thus encouraged.

Many researchers have reported the benefits of music and movement to a child’s whole development (Jackman, 1997; Fortson & Reiff, 1995; McFee, 1994; Walker, 1992; Lowden, 1989). A child’s language, cognitive, physical, social and emotional development all may be enhanced through music and movement experiences. Language, for example, is nurtured through vocabulary development in experiences such as singing (New South Wales Department of Education (NSW DET), 1987). Cognitive functioning is supported through the use of experiences that allow for bodily expression (Lynch-Fraser, 1991). In addition, music and movement experiences can be used as a tool to assist in the learning of specific concepts such as counting in mathematics (Humphrey, 1987). Physical development is fostered through the opportunity to develop movement skills while engaging in music and movement experiences (Hamilton, 2003; Jenkins, 1994; NSW DET, 1987; Pangrazi & Dauer, 1981). Social development is promoted through the use of music and movement in group times which promote social interactions (Henniger, 1999; NSW DET, 1987). Finally, emotional development is enhanced through the opportunity for self-expression which music and movement experiences invite (Read, Gardner & Mahler, 1993; Brinson, 1991).

While there is substantial documentation regarding the benefits of music and movement experiences for young children, many still believe that experiences such as music and movement are not vital to a well-rounded early childhood education (Gharavi, 1993). These experiences are rather viewed as added ‘extras’ to more traditional academic areas.

Little is known about the actual programming of music and movement experiences in early childhood settings, despite the recognition of varying opinions regarding these experiences. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many teachers share the view that music and movement experiences are beneficial to
a child’s whole development. However, this anecdotal evidence also suggests that their practices often do not reflect this understanding.

In response to this gap in the current literature, this study aimed to identify what music and movement experiences are currently implemented in early childhood settings and how this is done. In addition, factors that influence these programming decisions were sought. In turn, this study hoped to raise awareness of the benefits of including music and movement in early childhood settings.

**Methodology**

The research design followed the survey approach, through the use of a postal questionnaire. This postal questionnaire was developed and sent to 200 randomly selected early childhood settings within New South Wales. These settings were all registered with the National Childcare Accreditation Council (NCAC). A total of 119 early childhood teachers agreed to participate in this study and returned their questionnaire.

The survey approach is a ‘middle of the road’ form of data collection (Burns, 1994). That is, this approach has the distinct advantage in that it is possible to collect both qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously in questionnaires (Aldridge & Levine, 2001). Through the use of both closed and open-ended questions, the study was able to gain both numerical and descriptive data from respondents and then use these data for analysis. Survey research also has the advantage of enabling the researcher to gain a wide range of views. Gaining a wide range of views was important to ensure that the numerous differences that have been anecdotaly acknowledged in the early childhood field were identified and a thorough and systematic account of these recorded.

All questions in this postal questionnaire were devised after much consideration of the current literature available as well as discussions with a number of early childhood teachers (Burns, 1994). In addition to the postal questionnaire, respondents were invited to participate in an interview. This part of the study was included to complement the questionnaires in order to gain a more in-depth view on the topic and clarify any uncertain aspects that may have emerged from the questionnaire data. Unfortunately, no early childhood teachers came forward to be interviewed and hence this part of the study could not be undertaken.

Initial contact was made with potential participants through a cover letter included with the questionnaire. This letter explained who the researcher was, why the study was being conducted and the procedure for participation. Directors were asked to return the completed questionnaire using the stamped addressed envelope that had been included. In addition, one individually wrapped gourmet tea bag was included with each questionnaire as a personal touch and friendly incentive to return the questionnaire.
Higher response rates are said to be achieved through the use of follow-up mailings (Bryman, 2004; Fink, 2003; Wallen & Fraenkel, 2001; Mertens, 1998; Wiersma, 1995). Two follow-up mailings were done in this study. The first was a postcard asking for questionnaires to be returned and the second and final follow-up mailing was another complete mailing of the questionnaire which facilitated the return of questionnaires for the ones that had been misplaced. Bryman (2004) states that by using reminders, response rates can increase noticeably. An increase in the response rate was seen in this study from 30.5% after the initial mailing to the final 59.5% after both the reminder postcard and second complete mailing.

Pilot Testing
Five early childhood teachers were approached to pilot test this questionnaire. They were asked to provide feedback regarding any aspect of the questionnaire that they were unclear about or thought needed improving. The early childhood teachers were chosen for their convenience to the researcher as they were all personally known, however, all were employed by different early childhood centres.

From the first round of pilot testing, several factors were identified by respondents as areas that could be improved prior to the final printing of the questionnaire. These factors included the colour of the questionnaire, the wording of some of the questions and the addition of a further question at the end of the questionnaire. Before any of these alterations were made, a thorough review of all pilot questionnaires was undertaken to ensure that these alterations were relevant in all instances.

This pilot testing was the primary source of ensuring the reliability of this study. Each question was reviewed individually before the questionnaire as a whole was checked for its reliability. The total reliability for the questionnaire was 87%. De Vaus (2002) suggests that between 80-100% reliability in the test–retest method is necessary to ensure reliability and below this, the reliability of the instrument must be questioned.

Data Analysis
The data gained from this questionnaire were analysed and arranged into both statistical and narrative form to present findings. A mixture of pie, column and bar graphs were chosen to create visual images that clearly show trends in the quantitative data.

Data analysis for the qualitative data went through the processes of ‘classifying, categorising and ordering’ (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000, p. 282) the questionnaire data.

This classification and categorisation of the qualitative data identified a number of themes that were emerging from the data. The data were grouped according to
these emergent themes and then ordered in terms of relevance to the study. From this a narrative was structured around the emergent themes (Cohen et al, 2000; Mertens, 1998).

Findings

Sub Question One - What kinds of music and movement experiences, if any, are offered to preschool children?

All early childhood settings involved in this study reported that they offer some form of music and movement experiences to the children enrolled in their centres.

A variety of music and movement experiences were reported as currently being offered to children in early childhood settings (see Figure 1). Singing emerged as the most commonly used of all the music and movement experiences. This supports the available literature regarding the music and movement experiences used in early childhood settings (Jenkin, 1994; Gharavi, 1993). All early childhood centres within this study engage in singing experiences as part of their music and movement programmes.

Singing is also commonly linked with movement, actions, simple dances and dramatisations which all contribute to the overall music and movement experience. One example given was children moving together in a line while singing ‘The Wheels of the Bus’. These singing experiences ‘allow opportunities for children to interpret through body movements.’ (Jenkins, 1994, p. 282).

In addition to singing and singing games, the main experiences found in early childhood music and movement programmes are playing instruments, movement to music, including movement with props, listening to music and musical awareness. Other music and movement experiences are offered to children on a less frequent basis and these include relaxation including yoga and tai chi, drama, visiting professionals, structured dance and end of year performances put on by the children.

Many of the statements given by respondents can be summarised as one centre has done in their curriculum statement for creative and aesthetic provisions: ‘We offer a broad variety of musical experiences for all the age groups that promotes an appreciation for all different types of music,
including music of different cultures. We incorporate both planned and spontaneous music experiences within the programme. These may include a variety of age appropriate songs, finger plays, nursery rhymes, use of instruments and rhythmic activities, as well as movement experiences such as dancing and other group games."

This finding again supports the literature regarding desirable practice in relation to music and movement in early childhood settings (Hildebrand, 1997; Jackman, 1997; Jenkins, 1994). In contrast, children in other early childhood settings are primarily limited to experiences involving singing and singing games.
Figure 1

Music and Movement Experiences Offered to Children in Early Childhood Settings

- singing and/or singing games
- playing instruments
- movement with props, e.g., scarves, beanbags etc.
- movement to music
- music provided for spontaneous/free dancing
- musical awareness
- stretching
- relaxation
- formal dance experiences – e.g., simple folk dances
- drama/acting out movement stories
- visiting professionals
- Kinda Dance program
- other specialised music and movement programs
- Other

Number of Responses

Never
Seldom
Often
Always
Sub Question Two - Are these music and movement experiences a formal and/or informal part of the educational programme?

Good quality early childhood programmes contain thoughtfully planned learning experiences to meet the developmental needs of the children as well as numerous opportunities for spontaneous or formally planned experiences (Hildebrand, 1997; Jenkins, 1994). Music and movement experiences are no exception and should also cover an informal and formal portion of the programme. The findings of this question reveal that in all but two cases, music and movement experiences are seen to cover an informal and formal portion of the programme in the early childhood settings in this study, albeit to varying degrees. Depending on the type of music and movement experience, some experiences are formally planned more frequently while others occur more informally (see Figure 2). In addition to children being offered music and movement experiences in early childhood settings, some centres also encourage children's interests and spontaneous experiences and value this informal part of the programme.

Staff at some centres give priority to music and movement experiences. Staff at one centre “will carry through the children's spontaneous singing to more formal activities.” In these centres, music and movement is an integral area of the educational programme and is encouraged within all age groups. One centre goes as far as saying:

“(m)ore than 85% of the time we are introducing music in various forms and routine events. Staff use music for transition times and at least one formal music and movement lesson is planned daily.”

Three other centres regularly use music, in particular singing for transitions. The value these early childhood teachers are placing on spontaneous music and movement experiences such as singing, are seen to create an effective music and movement programme within early childhood settings (Jenkins, 1994).

Many of the music and movement experiences offered to children form part of both the informal and formal educational programme. There are some experiences, however, that are primarily formally programmed. These include visiting professionals, structured dance experiences and end of year performances. Some of these experiences must be organised through sources outside of the centre and therefore require prior planning by the teacher. In addition, there could be a number of other reasons for this, for example, staff knowledge and expertise in conjunction with their level of confidence in an experience, their behaviour management strategies and the interests of the children.

Providing music for free movement or dancing on the other hand, is more often found to be an informal part of the educational programme. The nature of this experience lends itself to being a spontaneous experience. However, it should
be noted that since this is a frequently requested music and movement experience in early childhood settings, early childhood teachers should make careful observations and incorporate opportunities for free dancing into their programmes on the basis of children’s interests. Spontaneous music and movement experiences are a valuable part of early childhood music and movement programmes (Hildebrand, 1997; Jenkins, 1994). However, these spontaneous experiences should occur alongside carefully programmed ones.

In addition to providing music for free movement, the children at three centres often spontaneously incorporate music and movement as well as dramatisations into their free play, for example, in the sandpit. One of these centres notes children “will often request use of instruments, tapping sticks and scarves/streamers during their play.” Another three centres convey their numerous opportunities for music and movement experiences and how these are “often spontaneous and driven through children’s interests.”

Teachers who are sensitive to the needs and interests of the children in their care are able to draw upon everyday experiences to encourage numerous spontaneous experiences, such as singing, throughout the day (Jenkins, 1994). In one centre, when an event occurs that remind staff or children of a song, children and staff stop to engage in this experience. Examples include at “nappy change, building with blocks, (and) drawing.”

The creation and inclusion of music learning centres or areas is one way for teachers to both formally plan and allow for the spontaneous developments of children (de Vries, 2004). These learning centres were reported by a number of respondents. One respondent explained their music centre which is permanently set up and always accessible to the children. This area contains instruments, CDs, and the centre songbook for the children to view. Another centre has a music area set up in their 0-3s room where babies can reach out and shake the instruments.

Singing, as was previously discussed, is the most common music and movement experience found in early childhood settings (Jenkins, 1994; Gharavi, 1993). This is also an area that is both formally and informally planned. One centre reported that it programmes four new songs each month for the children to learn and sing in addition to their daily informal choice singing time. This means that although singing is a formally taught experience while a song is being learnt, later this song will become part of the centre’s informal song repertoire (Hildebrand, 1997).

Listening to music is also a common informal experience. At four centres, the children will often select some music and request for it to be played which is always accommodated at appropriate times. The literature concerning listening to music discusses the need of children to have the opportunity to listen to a
variety of music (de Vries, 2003; Jenkins, 1994; Alper, 1992) rather than their primary choice of music.

Only two centres that reported additional information on their music and movement programme stated that although they plan music and movement experiences everyday, these are structured experiences hence are “rarely free and spontaneous” and are usually “quite dull and repetitive”. One possible reason for this is the reported lack of confidence felt by teachers in this area (de Vries, 2004; McMahon, 1967, cited in Nyland, Ferris and Deans, 2004; Bridges, 1994; Husen & Postlethwaite, 1994; McFee, 1994).

The division between formally and informally planned music and movement experiences has not been well documented in the current literature and could therefore be a focus of further study.
How Music and Movement Experiences are planned in Early Childhood Settings

**Number of Responses**

- Singing and/or singing games
- Playing instruments
- Movement with props, e.g., scarves, beanbags etc.
- Movement to music
- Music provided for spontaneous/free dancing
- Musical awareness
- Stretching
- Relaxation
- Formal dance experiences – e.g., simple folk dances
- Drama/acting out movement stories
- Visiting professionals
- Kinda Dance program
- Other specialized music and movement program
- Other

*Figure 2*
Sub Question Three - What value do early childhood educators place on the use of music and movement experiences during the preschool years?

Early childhood educators generally feel as though music and movement experiences are of great value in early childhood settings (see Figure 3). In addition to using music and movement experiences to foster certain developmental areas, music and movement experiences are said to be of use to specific groups of children namely children from non English speaking backgrounds (NESB), children with special needs and children who are gifted or talented as well as for use as behaviour management and learning tools.

Value to Children from NESB
Music and movement experiences were seen as being of great value to children from NESB by the majority of respondents. Several elaborated on this belief and it is believed that children from “Non-English speaking backgrounds learn the English language easier when singing or with music.” Music and movement experiences are seen to allow for the extension of children’s language skills in a socially inclusive manner as music is a universal medium (Clarke & Abbott Smith, 1990).

Value to Children with Special Needs
Music and movement experiences were also primarily seen as being of great value to children with special needs. Many centres plan additional music and movement experiences for these children or supplement the current music and movement programme to include experiences that focus on the particular needs of these individual children. Small group experiences can be found for children with additional needs and one respondent reported that they “have had much success in reaching out to children with special needs using music and singing as the first point of real contact”. This finding is consistent with much of the literature regarding the value music and movement has on children with special needs (Cass-Beggs, 1990) and the specialised programmes that are thought to be valuable to these children (Samuels, 2005; de l’Etoile, 1996).

Value as a Behaviour Management Tool
Nine respondents discussed their use of music and movement as a specific tool. These included, gaining children’s attention, assisting transitions, settling children, for communication purposes, for enjoyment and to help and encourage parental involvement. The use of music and movement experiences in assisting with transition times is also noted in the literature (Hildebrand, 1997; Jenkins, 1994; Spodek, 1985).

Settling Children
Music and movement experiences are valued in early childhood settings for the ability they have to settle children (Jenkins, 1994). Children enjoy these experiences and early childhood teachers report that “(g)enerally all children (are) settled well with music activities”. This includes, children and babies at rest
and sleep time, babies throughout the day, children during transitions and into new experiences, children who are new to the centre and as a general relaxation tool. In some behaviour guidance programmes music is also used to help promote ‘calm’.

**Communication**

Music and movement experiences are also valued for their ability to promote communication in children in particular, but also parents, staff and others involved in early childhood settings. Music and movement are valued for allowing children to learn additional skills for communicating without the usual language channels as well as helping to reach out and communicate with shy children and encourage parental involvement. In addition, in one language development programme, “music is used to model language and help with individual programs.” Sanders (1992), describes how music and movement experiences that involve the use of props are beneficial to children who are shy as they offer a focus that is not directed at them.

**Value as a Multicultural Tool**

A number of centres reported that music and movement are valued as important multicultural tools in their settings. One centre reports their philosophy on this, stating:

“(r)egardless of whether we have children from non-English speaking backgrounds we provide many multicultural experiences and encourage all languages to be used within our environment.”

This honouring of diversity is consistent with the guidelines outlined in the NSW Curriculum Framework (New South Wales Department of Community Services (NSW DOCS), 2002).

**Value in Enhancing other Curriculum Areas**

It has been reported that music and movement experiences enhance other curriculum areas in early childhood settings (Jackman, 1997). This study reveals that early childhood settings use music and movement experiences to teach science concepts such as sound, mathematics concepts such as counting, language skills as well as enhancing physical development. This finding supports Jenkins’ (1994) understanding of music as a link to science in addition to being beneficial to a child’s physical development. Humphrey (1987) also acknowledges that music can be a beneficial learning tool when learning mathematics concepts and the NSW DET (1987) acknowledges the use of music in early childhood settings to increase a child’s vocabulary.

**Value to Encourage Self-esteem and Respect**

Only one respondent outlined their centre’s philosophy on this, stating:

“(w)e aim to foster a positive self-esteem, a willingness to explore and experiment, and a respect for other people’s opinions and creative abilities, as well as their own. We hope to engender an appreciation of beauty, and the value of creative pursuits of all kinds…The children are
also given opportunities to make up their own songs and rhymes as well as sing in front of their peers, which further enhances their confidence and self-esteem and also teaches them to respect the creativity of others.”

Jenkins (1994) believes that if music and movement is a prominent element of the daily programme, children will have the opportunity to ‘develop an appreciation for music and its many assets.’ (p. 283).

One respondent summarised their feelings towards this question by stating “(h)olistically music/movement experiences benefit all children.” This statement is in line with much of the research in the area of music and movement in early childhood education which identifies music and movement experiences as contributing to the development of the whole child (Jackman, 1997; McFee, 1994; Walker, 1992; Lowden, 1989).

![The Value of Music and Movement Experiences to Different Groups of Children](image-url)
Sub Question Four - What factors influence the inclusion of music and movement experiences in early childhood settings?

As anticipated, a variety of factors has been reported to influence the inclusion of music and movement experiences in early childhood settings. These factors include the level of training staff have in music and movement education, individual staff values and attitudes towards music and movement, staff experience and confidence in the area of music and movement, family expectations, accreditation expectations, the number of children and staff, the physical space and resources available, geographical location and costs (see Figure 4).

Level of Training of Staff in Music and Movement Education
Generally it was reported that the level of staff training in music and movement education had a significant impact on the use of music and movement in early childhood settings. Staff at 71.4% of centres in this sample had early childhood teacher training relating to music and movement. The balance of the sample comprised centres where no member of staff had early childhood teacher training relating to music and movement. From this group, one respondent who stated that the staff often did not know what to do for music and movement experiences reported that “(w)orkshops give us ideas. T.V. shows such as play school also give us ideas.” This demonstrates the need for formal training regarding the understanding of how to programme and implement music and movement experiences in early childhood settings.

Individual Staff Value and Attitude to Music and Movement Experiences
Again, it was generally reported that individual staff values and attitudes toward music and movement experiences had a significant impact on the use of music and movement in early childhood settings. This value may be related to a number of factors ranging from a thorough to incomplete understanding of the importance of music and movement in early childhood settings, staff training relating to music and movement and staff exposure to the use of music and movement experiences in early childhood settings. While the values and attitudes of individual staff members have been reported to have significant impact on the use of music and movement experiences in early childhood settings, further research is needed into reasons other than the level of staff training in this curriculum area.

Family Expectations
There were mixed responses as to what influence family expectations had on the use of music and movement experiences in early childhood settings. No further information was provided by any of the respondents and this may have been for a number of reasons, many of which are concerning. Firstly, it may be that parents and families are not consulted in regards to the music and movement programme which contradicts the usual early childhood philosophy of ensuring good partnerships with parents (NSW DOCS, 2002; NCAC, 2001; Bredekamp &
Copple, 1997; NSW DET, 1987). Secondly, parents may not either understand or believe in the value of music and movement experiences for their children (Gharavi, 1993), which is concerning and shows a need for information to be given to parents. While there could be many reasons as to why this is the case, with no further information provided, the influence of family expectations could not be adequately determined.

**Accreditation Expectations**

Although few reported that accreditation expectations had no influence on the use of music and movement experiences in their centres, the majority was divided in regard to the extent of this influence on their use of music and movement experiences in their settings.

Some of those who said that accreditation expectations had no influence on their use of music and movement experiences reported that they would offer music and movement experiences in any case.

One of the accreditation guidelines states that children must have opportunities to be involved in music and movement experiences (NCAC, 2001). However, these guidelines use the word ‘regular’ and are open to individual interpretation. While the option to display individual characteristics is essential in a quality early childhood programme, this may mean that centres who are not confident in implementing music and movement experiences or do not see the value of these experiences, incorporate music and movement experiences into their programmes on a less frequent basis.

**Number of Children and Staff**

Respondents were more or less equally divided as to the influence of the number of staff and children on including music and movement experiences in their settings. Fortson and Reiff (1995) believe that children need to have the opportunity to be involved in experiences with different sized groups.

**Physical Space Available**

Once more the respondents were divided as to the influence of the physical space available on their use and inclusion of music and movement experiences. *The Children’s Services Regulation 2004* states that:

The premises of a centre based children’s service must have at least 3.25 square metre of unencumbered indoor play space per child that is exclusively for the use of children provided with education and care while in attendance at the service. (NSW Government, 2004).

Centres that have not renewed their licence this year (2005) will be operating under an older requirement. In view of this new regulation, as these centres are due to renew their licences, they will have to review the set-up of their centres and therefore the amount of space they have available for such experiences or the number of children accepted for enrolment.
Type of Curriculum/Programme

Music and movement experiences in some centres, as one respondent commented, attempt to,
“cover a broad range of contexts, are used to develop all areas of development, follow children’s interests and children actively have input into music movement activities – planned and spontaneous”. This comment was indicative of the views of a large number of respondents.

At three centres, music is used extensively for routines, such as nappy change times, play times, meal times and greeting songs. For example, “Music is an integral part of our daily routine. We encourage children to sing their favourite songs before morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea.”

One centre plans music and movement experiences everyday and in addition to varying the daily experiences, they are repeated “throughout the week so that the children can internalise the experience.” Hildebrand (1997) discusses this as a useful method for teaching children new songs.

The changing nature of the early childhood curriculum in many centres is also seen to be shifting the way music and movement experiences are programmed in early childhood settings. Many centres are turning their programming methods towards the emergent curriculum. In turn, fewer structured experiences are found in these settings and instead a greater variety of informally led and child initiated experiences are found. While the value of informally led and spontaneous music and movement experiences are acknowledged in the literature, this literature predominantly is still relating to the more structured music and movement experiences found in early childhood settings (Hildebrand, 1997; Jenkins, 1994).

Resources

The resources available also affect the inclusion and kinds of music and movement experiences offered to children in early childhood settings. Commercially produced resources including song books, tapes and CDs are often used in early childhood music and movement programmes and are noted to be the primary resource type used by most centres. De Vries (2004) advises that these resources can be beneficial to teachers who are insecure in their own ability to programme effective music and movement experiences.

Family input and participation are also often encouraged. Children are actively encouraged to bring in music or instruments from home to share with the group. By allowing and encouraging children to bring in resources from home, teachers are communicating to children that they are supportive of their home experiences (NSW DOCS, 2002).

One centre uses the pool workers available from the Ethnic Communities Council to help in their provision of multicultural music and movement experiences.
These workers help the centre to include Malay, Chinese, Vietnamese and Korean experiences. The use of these resources together with the service they provide is a worthy topic for further investigation.

In addition, the children at some centres have access to instruments at anytime throughout the day in music learning centres. They are also able to ask for music to be played which “allow them to listen, sing along, play along or dance.” These music learning centres are recognised to ‘promote musical play and the development of individual creativity.’ (de Vries, 2004, p. 9).

**Staff Knowledge and Expertise**

The knowledge and expertise of staff employed by a centre greatly influence the music and movement experiences carried out in that centre whether this is in a positive or negative way. Staff members who have a talent and passion for music and movement generally include these in the programme either more frequently or with a broader range of experiences. On the other hand, staff members who are less knowledgeable and confident in this area generally include a smaller range of experiences.

A number of respondents expressed concern that lack of formal training in the area of music and movement has resulted in a general lack of confidence of early childhood teachers to implement this area of the curriculum. It has been identified that increased training opportunities are needed for staff to ensure this area gains the attention it deserves. This general lack of confidence has also been identified by a number of researchers (de Vries, 2004; McMahon, 1967, cited in Nyland, Ferris & Deans, 2004; Bridges, 1994; Husen & Postlethwaite, 1994; McFee, 1994; Gharavi, 1993). Gharavi (1993) elaborates to discuss the need for formal training opportunities for early childhood teachers, identifying various potential sources for this training.

A number of respondents reported that they have staff members who are competent at playing a musical instrument. One respondent identified the skills of their casual staff. One of these casuals plays the drums and this skill is used to the advantage of the centre's programme. In contrast however, another centre stated that, while they have a piano, there is no one at the centre who can play it. It is interesting to note that the ability to play a musical instrument was previously regarded as essential for early childhood teachers (Harrison, 1985). For example, students at the Sydney Kindergarten Teachers College, for an extended period, were required to take piano lessons. No such requirements can be found in teacher training institutions today.

**Weather**

At three centres the number of music and movement experiences offered to children is determined by a variety of factors from the weather to the moods of the children. Jenkins (1994) describes how music and movement can lift the
moods of children and how the weather influences the choice of activities that are available. The findings of this study show that, if it is raining and the children are unable to go outside, more music and movement activities will be carried out indoors as a way of allowing the children to let off ‘steam’. One respondent stated “sometimes children just want to move, so we put music on and they can dance and jump around as they feel”. However, if the children are tired, less physical activities are carried out.

![Factors Influencing the Use of Music and Movement Experiences in Early Childhood Settings](image)

**Figure 4**
What is the place of music and movement in the curriculum in early childhood settings?

All respondents acknowledge that music and movement experiences have a place in an early childhood curriculum. This place, however, is seen to vary due to a variety of factors as previously discussed. These experiences are seen to be of both value to the general development of all children as well as meeting the individualised educational needs of specific children.

While all respondents recognised that music and movement experiences have a valuable place in an early childhood curriculum, its place between centres varied. The place of music and movement experiences has been identified as being in both the formal and informal part of the educational programme. Despite this general knowledge, differences between the types and frequency of experiences were identified. The value of using music and movement in early childhood settings was discussed in terms of children's general development, with music and movement experiences being understood to foster children's language, cognitive, physical and social and emotional development (Jackman, 1997; Fortson & Reiff, 1995; McFee, 1994; Walker, 1992; Lowden, 1989). These experiences are also said to be of specific value to the individualised educational needs of some children (Samuels, 2005; de l'Etoile, 1996).

Recommendations

An evaluation of the results of this study indicates that early childhood teachers believe that music and movement experiences have a significant place in early childhood settings. However, music and movement experiences may not be implemented in a way that reflects this finding. This variation is due to factors such as a lack of staff knowledge and training relating to music and movement experiences rather than their understanding of the value of these experiences. In consideration of this evaluation, the following recommendations have been made.

For Directors

A number of recommendations have been made as they are responsible for the overall running of each centre. Directors must be aware that early childhood teachers need regular opportunities to receive professional development specifically relating to the area of music and movement in order for the children in their care to receive good quality music and movement programmes. In addition to offering training that relates to the theoretical understanding regarding the value of incorporating music and movement experiences into their programmes, Directors need to explore the possibility of offering practical training experiences for their staff. One possible way of achieving this is through links with relevant music, movement and dance teachers or schools in the local community.
Directors, with the help of teachers, need to ensure that parents and families understand the value that music and movement experiences have for their children’s development. This may mean that an information session relating to music and movement needs to be held, relevant articles included in the centre’s newsletter, informal ongoing discussions conducted with parents, and resources made available for access within the parent library.

**Early Childhood Teachers**

Early childhood teachers should take on board all of the above recommendations for Directors, in addition to acknowledging their skill levels in this area. Early childhood teachers, who believe this is an area that warrants improvement, should reflect this in their personal development plan and develop a plan to increase their knowledge and understanding in this area. In addition, early childhood teachers should familiarise themselves with the external sources of support available to them in the community. One such example is the Ethnic Communities Council which was identified by one respondent in this study.

**Teacher Training Organisations**

These organisations also have a role to play in determining the place of music and movement experiences in early childhood settings. Due to the variations of qualifications available to those wanting to work within the early childhood field, it is essential that all of the institutions offering these qualifications have an understanding of the importance and value of music and movement within early childhood education.

All teacher training courses should contain a section relating to music and movement. These courses should provide pre-service teachers with a theoretical understanding of the value of including music and movement in an early childhood programme as well as providing the opportunity for skill acquisition which will lead to the increased confidence regarding music and movement in the profession as a whole.

**Professional Development Services and Publishers**

These services are in a unique position to offer on-going assistance to the early childhood field. In view of this position, these services should ensure they are providing the information and resources required for early childhood teachers to gain a thorough knowledge and confidence in the area of music and movement.

Early childhood teachers need opportunities to ensure their understanding of the theoretical knowledge relating to the use of music and movement experiences in their settings in addition to practical ideas regarding the implementation of these experiences. Professional development workshops that provide a well-balanced approach between theory and practice will enable early childhood teachers to both understand and implement an effective music and movement programme in their centre.
Early childhood teachers need opportunities to gather practical ideas, ideally in an informal and comfortable manner. An informal newsletter, that does not attract high membership fees, may be one possible answer. In addition, time for discussion with other teachers at workshops and web message boards may be other potential solutions.

Professional groups and services could consider consolidating to focus on the issue for the need of greater opportunities for the on-going professional development and training of early childhood teachers. This focus could consider how this training and professional development could be better achieved as well as how it could be made more cost-effective for early childhood settings and teachers.

**Further Research**

This study has identified numerous areas for further research and proposes the following recommendations to researchers. Firstly, researchers need to develop positive and trusted relationships with early childhood settings to enhance the opportunities for centre based research, including interviews with teachers.

Further research needs to be conducted into the place of music and movement in early childhood settings. In particular, a more in-depth look at staff beliefs, values and knowledge is needed to allow for a deeper understanding of this issue and to identify further recommendations that would be useful to this area.

A review of the use and benefits of incorporating Yoga and Tai Chi as relaxation tools in early childhood settings should also be undertaken. In addition, investigations into the use of background music to influence art experiences, the use and availability of visiting professionals and gender differences in music and movement experiences, particularly dance, would also be beneficial.

The issue of physical space has been identified by some as influencing their inclusion of music and movement experiences. Research is needed to adequately identify if this is in fact a cause for concern in early childhood settings, and if so, what might be possible solutions.

Published research needs to be more inviting and user-friendly to early childhood teachers and settings. The level of professional readings appears low within the field and appropriately published research may increase the rate of reading by early childhood teachers.

Historically, students training to be teachers engaged in much study to enhance their understanding in the area of music and movement (Harrison, 1985). As a result of the findings of this study, research into the current opportunities to engage in formal training in the area of music and movement, would increase the understanding of the formal training opportunities available to teachers.
Conclusion

This research was undertaken to determine the place of music and movement within early childhood settings, as well as determine the factors that influence the inclusion of these experiences. It has been found that music and movement is a significant educational experience within early childhood settings. However, the use of this part of the curriculum is not always acknowledged or completely understood by early childhood teachers. This lack of understanding is reflected in the diversity of the answers to the questionnaire questions. The findings for each of the research questions has been provided, however it is acknowledged that future research on this topic is needed.

References


