

Creative Development in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Pamela May



Practical Guidance in the

EYFS

A David Fulton Book

Series edited by Sandy Green

Creative Development in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The clear and practical information in this book will help practitioners in supporting and developing the natural curiosity of children, helping them explore and express their own ideas through a variety of activities including music art and dance. The author explores the balance between the necessary freedoms of choice that creativity requires and the control which thoughtful practitioners must exert and offers ideas for building children's imaginations through play.

Pam May is an Early Years consultant.

Practical Guidance in the EYFS

Series Editor: Sandy Green

The *Practical Guidance in the EYFS* series will assist practitioners in the smooth and successful implementation of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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Creative Development in the Early Years Foundation Stage

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Introduction

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) gives a mandatory framework to providers of all registered early years settings. Its purpose is to enable children to achieve the five outcomes of *Every Child Matters* (DfES 2004), a central element of the Government's ten-year childcare strategy, *Choice for Parents, the Best Start for Children*. These outcomes are:

- 1 staying safe;
- 2 being healthy;
- 3 enjoying and achieving;
- 4 making a positive contribution;
- 5 achieving economic well-being.

The principles that underpin the EYFS are crucial in helping children to achieve the aims of *Every Child Matters*, and they run, like threads, throughout the document. These principles, which are also referred to as commitments, state what practitioners need to have firmly in their minds and to include in their day-to-day practice to ensure that children are able to achieve the *Every Child Matters* outcomes.

The principles are grouped into four themes in the EYFS which are:

- 1 a unique child;
- 2 positive relationships;
- 3 enabling environments;
- 4 learning and developing.

These principles reflect children's rights to grow up safely and healthily and to achieve their potential through challenging but enjoyable learning experiences.

The EYFS places an increased emphasis on practitioners' understanding of child development so that learning experiences can be carefully matched to the individual child's interests, abilities and preferred ways of learning. There is also an emphasis on the vitally important role that children's families play in providing children with their first and continuing education.

A recognition of the close emotional links established between young children and primary carers, both at home and in the setting, is a key feature of this document; as is the requirement to match learning experiences to children by carefully 'looking, listening and noting' (DfES 2007). This places a high emphasis on planning, based on sound observation of children, to give a firm foundation on which to plan for and assess their next steps as well as their overall progress.

This book takes the creative-development area of the EYFS and aims to help practitioners reflect on their practice and to develop it so that all children can learn both about being creative and also how to learn in creative ways across the whole curriculum. It uses the strands and requirements of the EYFS, the commitments and areas of child development as its basic structure when exploring different aspects of creativity.

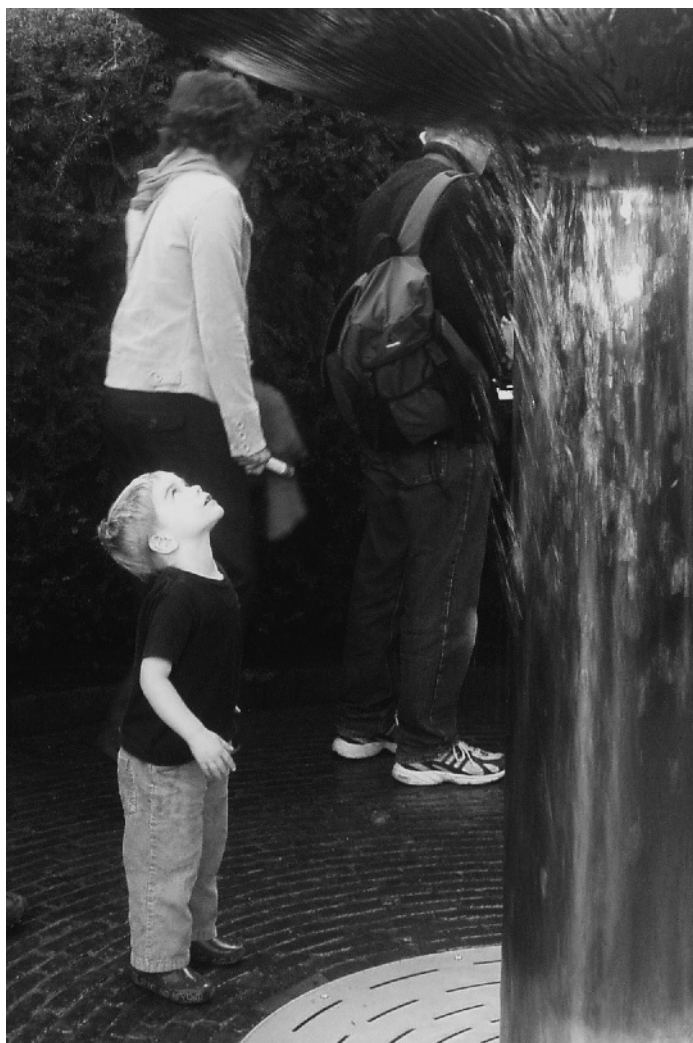
Creativity is one of the basic building blocks of the human species. Together with the necessity to be numerate, literate and to understand about and function within the world around us, creativity enables humans to function at their highest level; it engages curiosity, focuses concentration and stimulates feelings of well-being. To create something of which one is proud is one of the most deeply satisfying emotions that humans can experience and may well have its origins in the basic need of humans to adapt and change to survive.

In terms of young children's learning, creativity is closely linked to all the other areas of learning in the EYFS. Children need a good self-image to be creative and, conversely, creative children will enjoy innovative and lateral thinking whilst learning about numbers, language and science. They will give and receive great pleasure from what they create, be it through music, painting, construction or imaginative play.

Within the framework of the EYFS, this book explores the conditions that best support creativity in both children and in practitioners. It considers how the themes of the EYFS can be used to encourage creativity and how practitioners' accurate observations of children, their flexible use of resources

and their knowledge of child development can help children to feel confident enough to express their creative and imaginative ideas. The EYFS Practice Guidance explains this concept beautifully. It suggests that children must *feel secure enough* to 'have a go', learn new things and be adventurous (DfES 2007: 104).

Each chapter in this book takes one of the aspects of the EYFS areas of learning known as creative development. For example, the first aspect, is 'responding to experiences, expressing and communicating ideas' (DfES



Learning new things and being adventurous: Jacob and the fountain

2007: 106). A play scenario will describe what this requirement may look like in practice, and this is followed by possible resources that will support the learning and suggestions for aspects of the play that practitioners might observe and note down. Examples of activities and resources from a range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds respond to the EYFS's requirement to be inclusive in supporting all children's creativity. Examples come from established good practice and aim to help practitioners provide a rich environment for children and to extend their own understanding. Each of the four aspects of creativity in the EYFS will be examined in this way, across the full age range from birth to the end of the foundation stage. This part of the book provides a straightforward and essentially practical guide to supporting children in their journey towards achieving this early learning goal.

Each of the activities is preceded by one or more of the requirements in the Development matters column as stated in the EYFS. These are specific to the activity concerned. It is important to note that there are other Development matters requirements that do not specifically refer to the chosen scenario. These are clearly set out in the guidance, and practitioners need to make constant reference to them.

Alongside the practical sections of the book this chapter provides the theoretical framework that underpins all the suggestions and ideas described in [Chapters 1–4](#). A good understanding of why and how teaching and learning happens in particular ways in the early years is critical to its successful implementation. For example, early years practitioners need to know why play is the key to young children's successful learning before they can confidently set up a learning environment that engages children's individual curiosity and promotes creativity. There will be the opportunity for practitioners to question and reflect on their practice in the light of the theories discussed. In recognising the central part that creativity plays in our lives, this book aims to celebrate those aspects which we all have, to a greater or lesser extent: questioning, originality and imagination.

A theoretical base

A definition of creativity

Creativity is one of those concepts that everybody uses; they think they know what it is but, when challenged, find it almost impossible to define. Wikipedia lists more than sixty definitions in psychological literature alone,

and that is without the literary and educational ones. However, creativity can be usefully thought of as the ability to construct something new out of things or ideas that already exist. Imagination is an integral part of that process as it is crucial in picturing what doesn't yet exist. The Government's own document *All Our Futures* has this suggestion of a definition: 'Creativity is an imaginative activity fashioned so as to produce outcomes that are both original and of value' (NACCE 1999: 29).

Here is an example. Jo is a young child at the creative area in an early years setting. He is nearly five years old. The setting he attends is well organised and richly resourced with easy-to-find boxes, paper, glue, scissors, a stapler and hole punch. Andy, an early years practitioner, is nearby keeping an eye on proceedings. Jo stands in front of the selection of materials and tools, and, in his imagination, pictures the car he would like to make. What happens next is quite astonishing. He matches his picture of the car to the materials and tools in front of him and makes the decision that he can create his imagined car from the resources that he can see. Next, he selects what he knows he will need by constantly matching his imagined picture to the resources. He begins to create his car by choosing a square box and finding four cardboard discs to make the wheels. His progress from here on is dependent on a number of crucial factors, for example how much practice he has had at imagining and creating, his manual dexterity, his level of confidence and his ability to seek help.

All goes well for a while as he sticks the wheels to each corner of his car. But then disaster strikes as he gets impatient waiting for the glue to dry and tries to help the process along a bit by adding some Sellotape to the joins. The wet, sticky muddle that follows is nearly enough to daunt him, but he sees Andy, the practitioner, nearby and says, 'I can't do this.'

'Which bit do you need help with?' asks Andy, eager to help but not wanting to take over.

'I can't get the wheels to stick on', says Jo. From then onwards, a careful sharing of skills and ideas enables new discs to be stapled on to the corners of the car and a hole to be cut in the roof so that Jo can put some toy passengers inside. Andy's knowledge of Jo's level of development helps him decide that Jo is happy with his car as it now is and considers it finished. Jo is not yet at the stage of wanting to decorate it or to make the wheels turn. Jo rushes to the road-map mat on the floor and joins several of his friends who are playing with toy cars, lorries and buses.

These are the important parts of this scene that have helped Jo to create his car:

- The setting is well resourced with equipment that is likely to stimulate Jo's curiosity.
- There are adults who understand what the potential learning is from the creativity area.
- The adults know Jo well enough to realise what he is most likely to need help with and at what point he will be satisfied with his model.
- Jo has enough trust in Andy and enough self-confidence to ask for help.
- There is enough time for Jo to try out his ideas, make mistakes and, finally, to succeed.

The process that Jo has been through was referred to above as astonishing, and so it is in terms of the complexity of thought needed to turn an idea into a creation that is finished and can be used. Everyone goes through this process, whether they are an artist facing a blank canvas or a mother making up a story to soothe a tired toddler. The application of an idea to make something new is at the heart of creativity. The process may be complex (like the artist's) or simple (like the mother's) but each is purposeful, satisfying and unique.

The EYFS themes and commitments card reinforces what has been suggested above: 'When children have opportunities to play with ideas in different situations and with a variety of resources, they discover connections and come to new and better understandings and ways of doing things. Adult support in this critical process enhances their ability to think critically and ask questions' (DfES 2007: Card 4.3).

The five conditions for creativity

Let us look at each of the five conditions that helped Jo create his model and examine the theory behind each one in order to better understand why they were necessary to Jo's success.

1. The setting is well resourced with equipment that is likely to stimulate Jo's curiosity. Research tells us that development of the brain depends not only on the genes we are born with but also on the experiences we have. This is sometimes called the 'Nature versus Nurture' debate. The development of magnetic resonance scanners has enabled us to see just what happens inside babies' and young children's brains. The scanner shows brain activity