

EVALUATION OF THE SKILLS FUNDING AGENCY PROJECT ESF FUNDED PROJECT

Akademi's ReAct London ESF Project

Evaluation Report
March 2009- December 2010

10 cohorts of beneficiaries, 120 young people, 28 artists, 5 schools, 1 community organisation, 3 cultural venues, 9 project workers, 1 college, 11 performances, audiences of approx 1250 people and 79 arts awards.... 1 film

1. Project Rationale

ReACT offered a tailored, personalised support, development and opportunities suited to the needs and aspirations of the young people concerned at the time of the project

ReACT provided artists and tutors who were adults skilled in building trusted relationships with young people who ensured personalised and tailored provision was delivered.

Akademi supported the aim to reduce the numbers of young people in project target boroughs on routes to unsuccessful adult lives; and to work with schools, extended schools, colleges, projects and agencies to increase the proportion of young people staying on in education beyond age 16.

ReACT project shared many agencies' emphasis on interventions contributing to preventing and reducing young people NEET numbers.

The programme joined by beneficiaries provided strategies, activities and actions that supported them to remain in learning. The ReACT programme contributed to schools' important work in the preventing and re-engaging young people who were at risk of NEET.

Programme Content

The creative content of the ReAct 3 programme was designed to be attractive to disengaged young people.

This provision was designed to help raise awareness amongst the beneficiaries of the barriers hindering their progress, and learn new skills, tools and attitudes to overcome these barriers.

ReAct 3 was designed to directly address the issue of non-participation, by utilising arts education as a 'hook' to draw in young people who were at risk of permanent marginalisation through their non-participation.

Inputs and Activities:

Learning Programmes

The learners took part in intensive 10 -12 week programme of creative arts activities providing training in performing arts, dance, vocals, media, drama, storytelling and fashion subjects.

Taster sessions and IAG with professional dance education practitioners and key workers was provided. Akademi offered wrap-around support with 1- to -1 support from project workers, professional artists and key workers.

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Accredited activity in the form of the Arts Award Level 1 was delivered; a national qualification that supports young people to develop as artists and arts leaders. Young people worked on individualised learning plans within the context of a creative production e.g. a dance performance, setting personal goals, recording achievements and tracking their own progress.

Other elements:

- Advice and guidance on employment in creative industries.
- Practical skills and portfolio developed.
- Opportunities to experience work-related training in established venues and with creative industry employers across London.
- Akademi integrated delivery of personal and social skills, with the aim of preparing young people for more formal types of education and training, or employment.
- The project was delivered by a team of education professionals – all established performing artists, dance artists, musicians, fashion designers, visuals artists, experienced in working with disaffected young people.

Inputs and Activities: **Innovation in the Activities**

The work would culminate in a performance or sharing by the learners such as part of the Big Dance 2010 at Sadlers Wells in Islington, London Youth dance day at the Mayor's Office Building on the South Bank (The Scoop); the 'Circa' festival at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, Southbank Centre, the Respect anti-racism festival in Brent. Learners collectively performed to audiences of approx 1250 people.

- Arts education partnerships and networks provided good recruitment routes
- The beneficiaries built real work-related skills, experience and role models working with successful practitioners.
- Akademi artists inspired the young people to work in the arts, and give a window in on the creative industries and the possibilities available to them.
- Akademi expanded our relationships with employers to show employers the potential in young people.
- Gave young people successes outside school or formal learning, so that they have a positive experience and feel valued.
- Signposted them onwards to more learning, training or employment.
- Linked with numerous agencies and support groups to provide arts based activities in their own 'safe' settings
- Worked alongside the 'cultural calendar' to ensure good enrolment
- Each session completely tailored to precise needs of learners and their issues
- Young people had access to opportunities for leadership such as one becoming an 'arts award adviser' and another setting up his own dance group which went to the TV show 'Britain's Got Talent'.
- Gave the young people an additional, unique qualification in the Arts Award.
- Cohort 1 at Brent's Encee Academy of Performing Arts took part in the world's first Kathak Beatbox choir, *Urban Vani*, as part of the performance called *Circa* at the, South Bank Centre on 28-29 March 2009. *Urban Vani* united the percussive vocals of Kathak and Beatbox in a unique and exhilarating performance.

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Project Management and Marketing

A highly experienced Education Manager was appointed to work on the LSC projects for Akademi and remained throughout the duration of the ReAct 3 programme end. An Education Consultant worked on the programme to steer strategy and quality assurance and ensure capacity –building took place.

Specialist youth culture and e-marketing produced some striking publicity to appeal to learner target group – flyers and postcards and to show clearly the ESF funding route to beneficiaries

Attended and presented at ESF national marketing seminar as a ‘good practice’ project
A member of staff attended each workshop to explain the use of ESF pro forma and support young learners to fill in correctly.

The Education Officer completed a project management course and implemented good practice into management processes we use to control the LSC projects.

Steering groups resulted in good referral system set up across project for recruitment

We revised procedures on ensuring beneficiaries are eligible and drew up a new checklist document.

We refined the spreadsheets we use for analysing the data for our required outcomes and tracking our progress on targets.

Staff attended child protection training and updated awareness and built capacity in the organisation.

A specific e-letter was developed to interested education and learning stakeholders. ESF Works Films and ESF article (good practice website) and article in Guardian newspaper.

Overcoming Barriers to Training

Resource packs were made up, distributed to learners, including accessible literature about the arts and youth arts activities, and Connexions services.

Role models provided and culturally-specific work introduced to support inclusion.

Workshops held successfully with particularly challenging young men and women within exclusion units.

Street culture and youth arts – media, street dance, rapping used to involve the most challenging learners.

A webpage went live to coincide with distribution postcards to learning sites, arts venues and young people’s services in the Central London area.

Non -mainstream delivery was achieved to encourage hardest to reach learners.

Softer Outcomes

Increased confidence and attitude to learning was the most overwhelmingly successful element of our work. Also a heightened sense of achievement, well being, self-image, communicating with others, both peers and new people, e.g. artists and audiences

A marked development in participants’ level of skill, both creative and technical.

Learners gaining life and creative skills: attendance, punctuality, collaboration, talking different roles, working with peers and also those in authority successfully, imagination, innovation, originality and flexibility, as well as skills associated with personal success and employability like lateral thinking, problem solving, negotiation, communication and team

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working. Learners develop their physical fitness, strength and coordination. Learners have a filmed and photographic record of their experience throughout the project.

Project Aims and Objectives

Akademi South Asian Dance UK received funding from the London Central Learning and Skills Council's European Social Fund programme to support 14-19 year olds at risk of NEET from March 2009-December 2010. Nine cohorts were run in the form of creative learning performance programmes for 120 young people in Brent, Camden, Hammersmith and Fulham and Islington from January 2009 to December 2010.

The young people were from disengaged, disaffected groups including ethnic minorities. Some of them either experienced marginalisation at school and as a result without positive and innovative intervention they were at risk of long-term disaffection and economic exclusion as they left school. They may have been experiencing low morale, poor qualifications, inadequate Key Skills and ICT skills and consequent poor employability skills. The need was to access support that helped them build their self-esteem, confidence, aspirations and sense of achievement. The major barrier to their accessing such support was the absence of local provision that is sufficiently innovative to reignite their desire for participation. Our project was designed to directly address the issue of non-participation, by utilising dance (and other art forms) production and performance as a 'hook' to draw in those young people who were at risk of permanent marginalisation through their non-participation. By building on individuals' enthusiasm for dance and other art forms, we re-engaged the target group with learning.

About Akademi:

Akademi is a cutting-edge, progressive organisation with an international outlook, based in the heart of London. It works to enhance the practice, understanding and appreciation of South Asian dance across the UK within a contemporary artistic, social and educational context. Its work is modern and holistic, informed by the traditions and rich heritage of South Asian dance and driven by the needs of South Asian dance artists in the UK. A pioneer in its field, Akademi is known for its achievements in training, education and community work and it celebrates its 30th Anniversary throughout 2009/10. It strives towards relevance, accessibility and excellence in all its initiatives, realising these aspirations through an energetic and varied programme of innovative projects that nurture the individual artist and encourage the diversity of South Asian dance forms.

Project Activities and Delivery Outputs and Results

The initial targets for the ESF contract were

- To engage 120 beneficiaries in Pre Assessment and Taster activities.
Akademi delivered 123 outcomes.
- To create 120 starts on non accredited learning.
Akademi delivered 120 outcomes.
- To create 120 starts on accredited learning
Akademi created 120 starts
- To complete 75 non accredited learning programmes

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Akademi delivered 96 outcomes.

- To complete 70 accredited learning outcomes
Akademi completed 79 outcomes
- To complete 70 progression outcomes.
Akademi provided 70 outcomes

IAG

Individual Assessment and Guidance took place with group and one on one discussions with Akademi advisers, and as well as written questionnaires. This revealed how many young people were interested in the different parts of the project:

Taking part in South Asian Dance workshops - 36%

Performing in a final piece to be shown at the Southbank Centre, the Patidar Samaj Community Centre, or other venues such as festivals or melas - 54%

Developing skills in an art form that they enjoy or wanted to know more about by completing the Arts Award - 54%

Getting experience of working in an arts organisation – 27%

Getting experience of being a performer - 45%

Learning to take responsibility for my work - 18%

Learning skills that will help me in my school work or learning - 9%

Developing my people and social skills - 18%

Challenging themselves - 82%

Having fun – 82%

IAG Overall Analysis:

Challenging themselves and having fun came out clearly on top with over 75% of them agreeing. Half stated they were interested in developing skills and achieving an accreditation that would help them in the future, and also getting experience as a performer and performing at live events. A third wanted to take part in South Asian dance workshops. Quarter of them wanted to get experience of working in an arts organisation. Roughly a fifth were interested in developing people and social skills and also taking responsibility for their work. At the bottom was learning skills that would help them in their school work or learning, with under one tenth of them.

One girl agreed it would help her with her future career choice to do the project and work in an arts organisation, and many mentioned they thought the project would help with their confidence levels.

Many identified that they were least looking forward to the paperwork side of the project and also not performing well at the live events.

This helped us to identify the expectations, needs, wishes and fears of the potential learners in order to plan the programme to encompass the diversity of the group, also to help design their Individual Learning Plans. Further one- to- one sessions and questionnaires with an Akademi adviser gave information on other skills, interests, strengths and weaknesses, literacy levels, learning styles and barriers to learning, potential and actual. This information was carefully considered and incorporated in to the ILPs and session plans for the 12 weeks.

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Partners

Haverstock School, Henry Compton School for Boys, Burlington Danes Academy, Mount Carmel RC Technical College for Girls, Copland Academy, Patidar Samaj Community Centre, London College of Fashion, the Southbank Centre, Sadler's Wells, The Big Dance 2010, London Youth Dance Day 2010, Brent's Respect Festival.

Art forms

South Asian Dance, Jazz, Salsa, Hiphop, Street, Bollywood / Bangra & Breakdance fusion, capoeira, modern dance Physical theatre, storytelling, drama, visual arts, fashion and stage make up; Beat boxing, Kathak/ Vocals.

Marketing

ESF film, ESF Awards Ceremony, ESF Works case Studies; ESF Cross Cutting Themes special report; You Tube, Facebook, E- flyers and flyers and posters to arts organisations, community groups, Schools, Youth clubs, Connexions services, PRU units, libraries, sports centres, major cultural venues, festivals, Big Dance literature, Akademi newsletters, web shots, blogs, Akademi website, London Cultural Improvement programme case study, LSC magazine, Arts Award publications.

LSC /SFA Monitoring

We had three very good monitoring colleagues from LSC and SFA.

The Monitoring visits provided guidance, breakdown of requirements when necessary; explanation of various stages and changes; support with systems and overview of the wider sector. They also gave Akademi an opportunity to talk about and present work in a supportive space and to engage with a large funder to offer our approach and perspective to the funding model.

The Data Service improved its service throughout the contract to good effect for Akademi.

In October 2010 Akademi was in the top 4% of LSC Providers in the country and received top up funding.

Quotations

'I achieved an Arts Award and a much more confident me. I became much of a performer during the project. [I] found different ways to use my body and how to influence a scene. I also achieved loads of skills that would help me if I chose to continue taking drama further, like do an A level.' Olivia, Hammersmith and Fulham

'We have learned and enjoyed many new and exciting activities/ games which help us to improve on our weaker skills for example communication, focus and teamwork games. Throughout producing the play I think working as a group has been key to making the production as good as it was. Through out rehearsals people have encouraged other people and have helped them. 'Jack Hussey, Hammersmith and Fulham.

'What I have achieved through this project is confidence, teamwork, participating in the play.' Jaimone, Hammersmith and Fulham.

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'I believed I achieved a whole new level of confidence and I also believe that I have developed on my public speaking and acting.' Rahsaan, Hammersmith and Fulham.

'We worked very well as a group. I improved my communication and self- awareness' – Emmanuel, Hammersmith and Fulham.

'Any kind of an achievement is an achievement. I didn't know I was achieving before.' Krishna, Brent.

'You can do anything you put your mind to.' Amalia, Brent

"I felt it bonded the group", "I liked leading (and) helping" Iliana, Camden.

It was "a real achievement to perform in front of Year 11" Joy, Camden

Participant's mum, 'He doesn't get involved in anything, but he loves this. His confidence has grown so much.'

Participant's mum, to participant, 'I am so proud of you. Your confidence has really grown, you are like a different person. And your dancing has really improved as well.'

Participant's carer during the project, 'This is really helping her. She's really quite naughty and this keeps her off the street. I don't know where she is half the time. I hope she sticks with it' (and indeed she made it to the end, to the performances)

Young person, after the performance as part of the Big Dance at Lilian Baylis Theatre
'It just shows you what you can do when you make an effort. I want to highlight my name on the programme and show everyone, I felt sick before I went on, I am so glad I did it'

Young person,' I didn't want to invite anyone because I thought I'd mess up but now I really want my family to come and see me doing this'

Caroline Bray Arts Award Regional Development Coordinator, London:

'It's fantastic to know that the arts award is linked to such high profile work! The show was amazing and a brilliant example of how old and new art forms can work together in very exciting ways'

Cross Cutting Themes

Akademi South Asian Dance provides a creative learning performance programme for young people at risk of becoming NEET.

Health promotion was integrated throughout the work. Issues such as smoking cessation, body image and promoting well-being are discussed.

Practical, pastoral and emotional support such as workshops on self-esteem, increasing confidence in the world and drama and forum theatre were common aspects of our delivery.

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Young people worked on individualised learning plans within the context of a production e.g. a dance performance or soundtrack. Akademi deploy healthy, fit, practitioners to provide advice and strong role models, and promote the sense of positive about your body image and access and participation in the performing arts for all.

Young people discussed how drugs, alcohol and smoking can impact on your ability to perform to your best capability.

We worked with professional dance education practitioners and key workers to develop skills and a portfolio that integrates healthy living issues.

We included general health questions in initial assessments and include health related targets in individual action plans.

The Every Child Matters Framework was used to assess the impact of the work.

Equality of Opportunity

- A strong focus on inclusion and social cohesion
- Overwhelming success on full achievement on the ethnicity target volumes
- Increasingly diverse profile of participants as programme awareness built
- New work in settings which previously had no accessible provision and limited cultural infrastructure.
- All our artists carried a strong ethos of mutual respect and engendered this through all the workshops.
- Many learners showed a positive response to the different aspects of South Asian dance and culture which was presented.

Sustainable Development

- Developed a series of visual arts workshops around the use of recycled and found objects and the theme of how 'disposable' objects are becoming in our society
- Designed an environmental resource for learners, to start to provoke debates about their role is in protecting and sustaining the environment.
- Introduction of adding a 'green statement' to email flyers and newsletters to encourage individual recipients to not print out emails
- Promote use of public transport to learners rather than private travel to programmes and workshops.
- Akademi is fully involved in its carbon footprint strategy and promoted the use of public transport amongst staff and partners as a first means of travel.
- Akademi recycles all materials that are able to be recycled successfully.
- Akademi re-uses resources such as costumes and props from productions in its education work.

Lessons Learned

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For future programmes we have built our capacity to deliver work of this nature, complexity and target group.

We would have the approach of creating an 'operational' post to deal with data and ESF documentation and processes, who would work on quality assurance and data, uploads, reconciliation, contract outcomes and outputs. This would bring an internal audit/monitoring function

We would also create a role for a creative project manager who would work on the programme shape, design, work with artists practitioners, partners, resources and portfolio development. This person would also look at the artistic work and creativity, research, knowledge of the sector and context on the various levels.

We would also have a vocational officer to attend to qualification-base work areas. There would be a shared role in the attendance strategy education management meetings borough and London wide, marketing and recruitment, partnership building etc.

We would like to increase the number of lesson observations, and provide a higher presence and support workers in workshops. More lesson observations and feedback, planning sessions with the artists and key workers together would ensure aims and objectives are being met.

We would like to have examples of systems checked and cross referenced with Akademi management and contract managers from SFA as early on as possible to make sure on right track – get it in writing that we are on the right track

We see that we shouldn't be afraid to work with harder to reach groups who can really benefit and spending the time to build relationships with such groups from the outset is beneficial.

More time with the learners on separate Arts Award and practical sessions as in cohort three was ideal, to ensure adequate time spent on the learners, making the project meaningful, identifying needs and having time and space to sign post.

Akademi is a pioneering organisation that works to encourage excellence in the practice of South Asian dance in Britain, and is currently celebrating its 30th anniversary. Our passion for encouraging excellence in the practice of South Asian dance in contemporary Britain burns as bright as ever. As a dynamic, future-facing organisation our priorities for action change in response to developments in dance and the society in which we live. We actively push the boundaries of where dance can appear by producing performances for unusual places.

For Akademi it means we are widening our offer, engaging with more accreditation and will be developing new qualification based offers, for example in Live Event management so that we can look at further accrediting the learning and training that we currently offer to Level 3 to help up and coming young talented dancers and producers and choreographers to sustain a foothold as cultural workers related skills and understanding of the live production industry.

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We are pursuing peer leadership qualifications for young people at level 2 and 3 and a community arts management course at Level 2 and 3. We are also considering dance leaders awards at Level 3.

We are also interested in exploring the Foundation Learning Tier.

CASE STUDIES

Case Study 1:

Cohort 7 – Henry Compton: Lord of the Flies

Case Studies – October 2009- January 2010

School Profile: Henry Compton

The number of students gaining five or more grades A* to C, including English and Maths:

2008 31%

2009 35%

15 years old

Ethnicity: Black Caribbean

Moderate learning difficulties

Male

Learner 1 is a 15 year old boy of Black Caribbean decent with moderate learning difficulties. He demonstrates a tendency to withdraw from being the focus of activities and does not volunteer information willingly. The learner participates quietly, will respond and contribute with insight and intelligence when prompted, but he will close off if others challenge his point of view or talk over him. He appears to respond quickly to confrontation with other participants.

The learner appears to be at a precarious point where he may be at risk of disengaging from education and positive personal development. There appears to be a need for sustained support to develop and ensure his level of engagement along with his self-confidence and his appreciation of the value of his place within the group.

Through the project there has been a noticeable increase in the confidence of Learner 1. The use of drama exercises especially ensemble building has created a safe space for him to work and when devising he is able to share his creative ideas with his peers without prompting. His communication with the tutors has improved over time and he has increased his eye contact and conversation.

The performance gave learner 1 a huge sense of achievement. The collaborative rehearsal process enabled him to feel pride and ownership over the work. The climatic nature of performance solidified the group dynamic and improved learner 1's peer relationships and diminished confrontational situations.

Learner one completed both his accredited and non-accredited learning aims and enhanced his social and life skills. He is now keen to continue in his learning and is especially excited about future opportunities in the creative industries.

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Case Study 2:

Cohort 8 – Burlington Danes Academy: Shakespeare Bollywood Case Studies – December 2009- March 2010

15 years old
Ethnicity: Mixed Black Caribbean
Moderate learning difficulties
Male

Learner 2 attends the local special needs school, Wood Lane. His interest in drama and his natural aptitude for the subject has led him to study it at G.C.S.E level at the Burlington Danes Academy with the support of his carer.

When Learner 2 started the project he was shy and often did not engage with the rest of the group. He has a tendency to follow the lead of others and did not assert himself or his creative ideas.

During the project there was a noticeable increase in the learner's confidence. He became especially engaged in the devising process which was an area in which he shone. The Individual learning plan gave him an opportunity to reflect on his personal development and set himself goals each week. The learner particularly enjoyed the performance and a scene he devised played an important part in the story, this enabled the learner to recognise his creative potential.

By the final review it was clear that learner 1J had developed strong relations with his peers. These relationships have encouraged him to be more assertive and he is now looking forward to completing his GCSE drama.

Case Study 3:

14 years old
Mixed Black African and White
Moderate learning difficulties
Male

Learner 3 is a quiet learner who engages with the programme and wants to achieve and do well. There is a risk that he could get lost in a group of strong personalities as he appears to require focused support and time to develop confidence in his abilities. He works well by himself but can struggle amongst the noise and energy of a group.

During the physical theatre and storytelling sessions Learner 3 has had the opportunity to contribute creative ideas. Initially his contribution would require prompting but as the group spend more time devising together he is confident with inputting his ideas.

The Arts Award has enabled the learner to shine as the accreditation is based on individual creativity. Learner 3 produced an excellent portfolio in which he was able to express himself and demonstrate his passion for the arts.

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After the final performance it was clear that the learner felt comfortable with his peers and had a great sense of achievement. The development made through the project has stayed with the learner most noticeably he has developed his communication skills and he is keen to continue his learning in the creative arts.

Ends Dec 2010