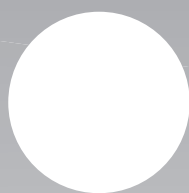


Inter-Action



Exploring best practice
for community dance
with older adults

www.akademi.co.uk/education www.southasiandance.org.uk



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“ Please send me your last pair of shoes, worn out with dancing as you mentioned in your last letter, so I might have something to press against my heart. ”

FOREWORD

*“ Moving to music
appeals to our most
primal instincts:*

*dance has been
a part of culture for
as long as man has
walked the planet.*

*It stimulates
the senses - sight,
sound and touch -
it's great fun and
it's good for our
bodies and minds. ”*

Julia Taylor,

Marks of Time Conference,
Liverpool, 2006

It is a privilege to introduce this timely dossier from Akademi, who for decades have been in the forefront of the South Asian dance development in UK. I reckon this to be the early footsteps of a bold progressive march ahead. In the light of a growing population of older people in Europe, the stakeholders of health care provision are encouraging people to take more responsibility for their own health and wellbeing. This is where art in general and dance in particular can make a positive contribution.

The report of this action pilot project brings to light the value of developing culturally diverse dance provision for older people. It also flags up some of the challenges of taking South Asian Dance based work, to older people within the usual main stream settings: one of the issues being a lack of awareness of what Indian dance can offer in this context. In the past few decades South Asian dance has found its place within the mainstream theatre dance, it is often revered for its spirituality; it is well recognised as a great tool for education.

However the potential of South Asian dance as a mechanism for social change, a provider of health and well-being benefits and as a tool for delivering health targets has not yet been fully realised. It is a comparatively new practice. Dance is making an impact for its role in caring and comforting those with different health care needs, be it physical or mental health. This report can significantly influence future strategies of development and a shift of attitude within the Indian dance profession to align it with the existing practice of dance for health. The excellent film accompanying this report adequately captures the essence of the project, that took place in two very different venues.

Akademi offered the opportunity to two dance artists, both of whom approached the project with excitement and apprehension and felt that they had gained many insights from, in their own words, those who had lived life. The focus of this work is not to lead the participants through the route of technique to performance, rather to give primary attention to the physical and mental engagement and the faith that the rest will follow. A lovely expression from the project with the Bangladeshi community in Camden sums up the spirit of the initiative - “Moner Khushi” - which translates as ‘the happiness of the mind’. In some sense it is the same as the expression Diane Amans introduced at the “Marks of Time” conference (Liverpool, 2006), as “The brightness of being”.

I congratulate Arts Council England and Akademi for initiating this valuable work.

Author, **Bisakha Sarker**

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INTRODUCTION

Akademi works with adults and older people developing their creativity, flexibility and movement through classical dance, music and storytelling. Through our three year Inter - Action programme supported by London Councils and our action pilot research and development project funded by Arts Council England, London we have made valuable progress. We have seen the clear value of this work for older adults from a physiological, psychological, emotional and social perspective and have brokered some important relationships with service-providers in health, well-being and community engagement as well as dance and creative arts organisations.

Akademi was awarded funding by Arts Council England to create a research and learning space for professional dance educators working with older adults.

The project challenged and explored the best practice in engaging older adults in dance and related arts and creative activity. It also explored best practice in working with older adults and best practice in evaluating and reporting the benefits of dance on older adults as a creative physical activity.

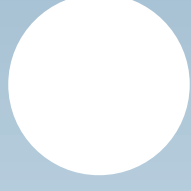
Akademi collaborated with the Bengali Worker's Association in Camden and Nexos Latinoamericanos Dance Company in association with Acton Community Forum in Ealing. The programme worked with these two organisations in order to compare and contrast model approaches and begin to reflect on best practice relevant to differing groups of older adults. Older adults are diverse in a number of ways, specifically looking at the main difference between the Camden and Ealing groups was the focus in Camden on a Bangladeshi elders group, compared to a group with a diverse ethnic demographic in Ealing.

The decision to work in Camden and Ealing allowed two sets of data to be produced which could then be compared. The two sites were geographically separate, consisted of contrasting groups and employed diverse approaches and styles, which facilitated a variety of responses and outcomes. Moreover the initial research focus and related questions were formulated loosely to allow additional questions to emerge and shape the direction of subsequent phases of the project.¹

This has been an exciting collaborative journey for Akademi and we hope to be active in using our findings to embark on a next phase of dance work with older adults, promoting dance in health. Both of these paths of work celebrate South Asian dance as a creative physical activity with a mindful, holistic approach in its education and community work.

1. Cited in Angove, Helen & Bradley, Elsa. University Campus Suffolk "Akademi South Asian Dance UK: Exploring the Best Practice in Engaging Older People in Dance Research Evaluation" p2

Project



OUR PARTNERS

The main role of UCS was:

- to assess good practice for working with older adults.
- to assess and advise on the process of an Academic dance – led research project; exploring the best approaches to working with older adults and the best practice for recording and reporting the benefits of dance for older adults.
- to create a research model for future approaches to an academic dance-led R&D project; useful to Akademi, freelance artists, service providers, arts organisations, funders.
- to assess and advise on key tools for strong evidence-collecting and reporting by an arts organization or service provider.³

Please see the Practitioner Resources section for the UCS Top Tips Sheet on researching & evaluating a community dance project.

The Bengali Worker's Association (BWA) based at The Surma Centre is a long established South Asian community centre at the heart of the Asian community in Camden. The centre has a long standing responsibility to promote social cohesion and active health for their older service users. This was the first regularly run dance programme delivered for (female) older adult service users at the centre.

Nexos Latinoamericanos currently work with a small group of older adults at the Oaktree Community centre in South Acton, Ealing. Nexos Latinoamericanos was established by Margarita Zuluaga who has an ongoing interest in dance therapy. Margarita was interested in the opportunity to explore ways in which to promote dance to the local community and build a sustainable company in the borough for older adults.

Akademi approached **University Campus Suffolk (UCS)** to lead on an action research pilot that would build an academic research & development mode for exploring the best methodologies for reporting on best practice models and their benefits on older adults. Academics and Research Specialists Helen Angove and Elsa Bradley, who lead the BA Honours Dance in the Community Degree Course at UCS, supported Akademi in reviewing the best practice and approaches of working with older adults in dance.

They have created an independent detailed report for Akademi which highlights key findings from the project for both groups. These findings include suggested benefits of dance on health (physical and mental) and analysis of increased social cohesion; increased self-esteem and increased confidence through the dance activity.¹ Findings have been reviewed and collated from feedback from participants, artists and partners (centre managers).

Akademi and University Campus Suffolk hope to extend this partnership into the future by using Akademi education and community projects as case studies in the BA Honours Dance in the Community Degree Course. Students would have the opportunity to actively learn through working collaboratively with Akademi across a project from beginning to end, giving advice and guidance on reporting the valuable benefits of dance on participants beyond the dance sector to the academic and medical professions.

2. These findings are taken from Akademi discussion groups, evaluation forms and interviews with participants, artists and partners.

3. Potentially to be used in future projects with any particular areas of interest (for example dance and health) or target groups across the spectrum.

OUR METHODOLOGY

Each group of participants worked with one Akademi dance artist on a series of six sessions which ran weekly. Sessions were one and a half hours in length and within this time the groups participated in a dance session as well as a discussion group which addressed the six Akademi research threads. Akademi agreed the following research threads with the dance artists in order to explore the meaning of 'best practice' to all involved in the programme:

- Group Histories
- Attitudes to dance
- Provision and Attitudes to dance in local area
- Social dance
- Dance and well-being (physical health)
- Dance and well-being (mental health)

Akademi planned for flexibility within these research threads in order to ensure that the project took its natural course and in so doing highlighted particular areas of development in terms of practice and approaches for the two groups. Similarly, as University Campus Suffolk (UCS), outlined; this allowed the programme to “shape the direction of subsequent phases of the project [with UCS].”⁴

In order to collect findings across the research threads participants followed a model evaluation and feedback process which was accessible to every individual. They fed in to discussion groups, completed written feedback forms and participated in interviews to give a detailed reflection of the programme.

All findings are taken from direct correspondence with group participants, centre staff and Akademi artists. Feedback was gathered from Akademi discussion groups, evaluation forms and interviews with participants, artists and partners.

At the Bengali Worker's Association the majority of the group were unable to read or write in the English language. This group fed back to Amina Khayyam and Habiba Ali in Sylheti, who then recorded their feedback in English and translated for each interview.

It was absolutely vital that the Akademi dance instructor was Sylheti - speaking and could lead the Bengali Worker's Association project in Sylheti. Also Sylheti-speaking, BWA Programme Co-ordinator Habiba Ali supported dance sessions,

4. Angove, Helen & Bradley, Elsa. University Campus Suffolk “Akademi South Asian Dance UK: Exploring the Best Practice in Engaging Older People in Dance Research Evaluation” p2

discussion groups and interviews. Participants at BWA found discussion (verbal communication) more accessible due to their English language and reading and writing barriers.

A photographer documented the sessions while a filmmaker archived the project with interviews from some of the women. In the film they speak about their experience, expectations and achievements from the project sessions and discuss how the workshops allowed the women to express themselves freely.⁵

During exploratory discussion groups with partners and participants Akademi outlined the following priorities:

BENGALI WORKER'S ASSOCIATION:

- an interest in taking part in a programme which was intellectually stimulating as well as physically challenging
- a keen interest in using dance as a creative physical activity in order to address health and fitness
- an increased understanding that dance can help participants keep fit
- a desire to develop hand-eye co-ordination, flexibility and mobility
- an ability to speak their mind and express feelings
- a shared enthusiasm and enjoyment in dance

NEXOS LATINOAMERICANOS:

- an interest in a sustainable dance programme
- an opportunity to meet new people
- an interest in sharing and learning a diversity of dance styles from the participant's personal histories and cultures
- an interest in the use of dance for keeping fit and healthy – both physically and mentally.

Please see Appendix A for Bengali Worker's Association Group Breakdown of Participants.

Please see Appendix C for Nexos Latinoamericanos Group Breakdown of Participants.

5. For a copy of our Inter-Action DVD please contact education@akademi.co.uk; 0207 6913210. Small Eye Films Ltd. (2010-11) Director and Camera Man: William Huntley, Akademi Producer: Jess Linton

PROJECT SUMMARY

It was agreed by BWA, Camden Active Health and Akademi in initial meetings that Akademi dance sessions would be programmed alongside Camden Active Health exercise sessions for the course of the programme, with Camden Active Health Co-ordinators attending sessions to offer the same 'mobile' drop-in health clinics which have proved popular with the service users.

Akademi and BWA agreed the following project outcomes:

- To engage service users (older South Asian adults) at the Surma Centre in more exercise.
- To tackle negative attitudes towards health and fitness activity.
- To engage a larger number of service users.
- To discuss and challenge the cultural attitudes towards working in mixed sex groups.
- To explore the best dance and related arts activity for achieving the project outcomes listed above.
- To develop an effective creative vocabulary and exercise repertoire for older adults.
- To contribute to an evaluation document for developing the best approach to working with older people.

In accordance with the participant discussion group and the initial partner meeting it was decided that this group would explore:

- Social dance: folk dance enjoyed as a group and celebratory dance (for example ; traditional harvest celebrations).
- Dance as a holistic form – particularly South Asian dance with its roots in a holistic approach to physical, mental and spiritual health.
- Mental well-being: dance as a creative physical activity as a form of expression with therapeutic qualities from the physical 'doing' and mental 'exploring'.
- South Asian 'mudras' (hand gestures).
- Mobility- and flexibility- related dance sequences.
- Chair-based activity: both where required by service users but also as an introduction to simple everyday exercises useful to older adults such as stretches, joint mobility and relaxation.

Please see Appendix B for a detailed breakdown of findings from the Bengali Worker's Association Group Research Threads.

The centre were keen for women to be the main benefactors of this programme therefore an all-female group was established so that women could take part – dancing and performing would not be possible in front of the male service-users.

One of the reasons for the centre requesting that we worked with their female service-users was that a majority of the women in the group have various health issues; such as high blood pressure, diabetes, heart problems, arthritis, weight gain and mental health problems; namely depression. Through the partnership with Camden Active Health and the hard work of BWA they were aware of the necessity to keep fit and healthy and that physical activity can help to prevent or lessen the severity of physical and mental health conditions. Dance as a creative physical activity proved to have an extremely positive affect on the women with depression.

PROJECT OUTCOMES

The Bengali Worker's Association (BWA) project outcomes included the following:

- Raised awareness of dance practice.
- Raised awareness of how dance can benefit physically, mentally and spiritually.
- A re-evaluation of negative attitudes to dance an increased appreciation.
- Raised interest in attending regular local dance classes.
- Increased experiences in new and inspiring activity.
- Increased appreciation of themselves and increased motivation to take part in activity to enhance their personal lives.
- Increased appreciation in working with and in groups.
- Increased self-confidence and self-esteem.

After the Akademi project 95% of the group at the Bengali Worker's Association requested that the sessions continue. There have also been requests from male service users at Surma Centre. Amina Khayyam is currently continuing with fortnightly sessions and Camden Active Health continues their mobile health clinic and exercise sessions. The partnership between BWA, Camden Active Health and Akademi was vital in encouraging the participants to take part and be more aware and open to participating in dance.

The women were aware of the necessity to keep fit and healthy and that physical activity can help to prevent or lessen the severity of physical and mental health. The Camden Active Health sessions complemented the dance sessions from a practical perspective by introducing the women to useful warm up exercises and extending the time that they dedicated to dance and movement each week.

Dance proved to have an extremely positive affect on the women with depression. The group were stimulated mentally as well as physically through the dance content and the creative vocabulary that Amina developed with them; vivid story telling; reminiscence work; theatre play. In so doing participants reported that they felt dance "kept [the] mind fresh" and brought "happiness of...mind."

UCS observed that "the interviews with participants from the Camden group revealed a holistic understanding of health which made reference to body, mind and emotion as well as to social and community health."

UCS stress the importance of acknowledging “the ‘lived understandings’ which emerge from the research data as these evolve from complex root systems which are embedded in the socio-cultural background of the participants, the histories of the chosen dance forms and the training methods employed by the lead artists.” An example of this is seen with the Bengali women’s group showing a holistic understanding of health for body, mind and emotion.⁶ At the end of the six sessions the women were more mindful of the links between positive mental health and physical fitness. They also saw the positive effects of actively taking part and keeping open minds.

“From the programme I have gained dancing and exercise. Exercise for my legs and arms and particularly my joints, which is very good for my health. I have a lot of joint pain I have suffered with a long time. I feel it is happiness for my mind, and good for my brain and happiness for my heart. Good for everything.”

Participant
BWA Group

This was a significant finding for BWA and Akademi, marking a shift in their attitudes towards dance and the arts. Previously 29 out of the 30 women felt that they were unable to engage in dance and the arts for cultural and religious reasons. With experience and knowledge of cultural and religious attitudes to dance it was important to build a programme of movement and exercise which interwove dance as a creative physical activity, rather than put dance at the forefront. Since the research and development programme, the group have been keen to continue with the programme. Amina Khayyam felt strongly that it was through the group’s discovery of the mental health benefits they were experiencing through coming together each week and dancing which allowed them to change their perception about dance and grow to not only appreciate it but feel an inherent need for it: “while I am still living ...I will be dancing” (Participant, BWA Group).

We should also add that this project allowed Akademi to observe an interesting shift in the South Asian community in comparison to their establishment in Britain twenty to thirty years ago. Outside of the dance project, it is evident that the group at the Bengali Worker’s Association now see themselves as an integral part of British society. The current South Asian community are increasingly confident with their identity as British Asian women, they embody a unique identity and a desire to explore and learn new things. This may be something which has not been so readily considered and should be at the forefront of our minds as we strive to create accessible and relevant creative learning projects for the diverse demographics of Britain today.

The material used for the sessions was selected carefully to be relevant, “reflecting their everyday lives, their deepest thoughts and desires in order for them to be able to relate

6. Angove, Helen & Bradley, Elsa. University Campus Suffolk “Akademi South Asian Dance UK: Exploring the Best Practice in Engaging Older People in Dance Research Evaluation” p9

everything back into their own life [and find] each and every task very stimulating, interesting and at the same time fun.”⁷ As a form, Kathak dance is versatile and its movements close to the natural way of moving so participants were able to relate to the gestures used, especially in *Abhinaya*⁸ - enjoying using their face and body to express emotions.

While the majority of the women do not participate in any social dance due to their religious beliefs, some of the older women in the group were interested in doing “Dhamail” (Harvest dance) having grown up in villages and seen this type of activity as a fun thing to do amongst women. Dhamail is danced in a circle, which moves in a circular motion as the women share a common rhythm while also singing. It is very hypnotic and can continue for hours. This type of gathering (usually) happens during harvest times or a wedding celebration. This was a very useful tool in bringing the group together and challenging previous attitudes to dance.

This form of social dance gave a half way point between dance as an art form and dance as a physical activity. It allowed Amina Khayyam to leave religion behind and use a personal approach to tap in to individual experience and free expression in the group; “to express their inner thoughts and desires, as never before, to contribute to feeling liberated... One of the most important achievements ... was when they expressed that they all want to be happier and be able to express better - they simply referred to this as ‘monor kushi’ internal happiness!”⁹

It was in fact through this dance that Akademi and BWA could see a significant break through in the group:

“A number of women started doing the Dhamail dance on the last session as a way of thanking me for the workshops, it was the most moving experience I had with them, as this was the first time they allowed themselves to completely let go and express.” (Akademi Dance Artist, Amina Khayyam)

7. Amina Khayyam, lead Akademi artist working with the Bengali Worker's Association.

8. Abinaya has come to mean ‘the art of expression’. The word is derived from the Sanskrit abhi - ‘towards’ + nii - ‘leading/guide’ therefore meaning ‘leading towards’ (leading the audience towards a sentiment).

9. Cited from Akademi Dance Artist Amina Khayyam's Final Project Report, August 2010.

There were challenges that arose from this project which are worth taking in to consideration for future projects. One of these challenges was establishing a focussed learning space in a busy community centre. Where possible agreeing on a regular meeting room which is situated away from outside noise and centre activity makes a real difference to the progress of the group and indeed the speed at which progress can be made with a group. There may have been particular distractions stemming from the male/female divide and working with an exclusive group at BWA.

When working in a community dance context establishing a focus within the group itself can be particularly challenging without added distraction from the learning site. On the whole the women were committed and eager to learn yet in some cases found it hard to channel that energy and eagerness which hindered their concentration at times. Much of your time can be spent re-focussing a group and it is important to think about exercises for encourage this focus. For example, work with rhythm games in a circle with clapping, vocals and stamping the feet, that you can familiarise the group with and use at regular intervals.

From a research perspective the group at BWA was an extremely interesting group to work with; allowing Amina to really explore what this group of South Asian elders was receptive to and what helped to engage them in dance and creative activity. The group do now seem receptive to learning South Asian dance technique but are not yet dedicated to taking part in dance sessions outside of the centre or as additional evening or weekend activity.

PROJECT SUMMARY

Akademi artist Joan Pires led the Ealing project, co-teaching with Margarita Zuluaga, the Director and Dance Instructor of Nexos Latinoamericanos each week.

Akademi, Nexos Latinoamericanos and members of Acton Community Forum agreed the following project outcomes:

- To engage service users (older adults) at Nexos Latinoamericanos in dance linked to active health and well-being: keeping fit and healthy both physically and mentally was one of the main reasons that individuals attended the dance sessions.
- To explore partner dancing and social dances: potentially with an idea of exploring ways to encourage a greater involvement of older males.
- To explore the affect of social dancing on social cohesion.
- To explore a number of styles and approaches and their possible part to play in increasing confidence and self esteem in male and female participants.
- To use the holistic quality of dance as a creative physical activity to discuss the wider benefits of dance linked to active health and mental well-being for older people.
- To engage a larger number of service users.
- To develop an affective creative vocabulary and exercise repertoire for older adults.
- To contribute to an evaluation document for developing the best approach to working with older people.

In accordance with the participant discussion group and the initial partner meeting it was decided that this group would explore:

- Social dance: traditional social dance and folk dance styles from around the globe (for example; Irish folk dance, Afro-Caribbean and South Asian folk styles) enjoyed as a group and as celebratory dance forms.
- Active health and mental well-being: dance as a creative physical activity as a form of expression with therapeutic qualities from the physical 'doing' and mental 'exploring'.
- Dance as a holistic form – particularly South Asian dance with its roots in a holistic approach to physical, mental and spiritual health.
- Chair-based activity: both where required by service users but also as an introduction to simple everyday exercises useful to older adults such as stretches, joint mobility and relaxation.

Please See Appendix C for a detailed breakdown of findings from the Nexos Latinoamericanos Group Research Threads

PROJECT OUTCOME

Nexos Latinoamericanos project outcomes included the following:

- Raised awareness of dance practice.
- Raised awareness of how dance can benefit physically, mentally and spiritually.
- Raised interest in attending regular local dance classes.
- Increased social cohesion in the local area.
- Increased experiences in new and inspiring activity.
- Increased appreciation and perception of dance in different communities.
- Increased appreciation in working with and in groups as well as increased ability to work as a group.
- Increased self-confidence and self-esteem.

Nexos Latinoamericanos saw an increase in the numbers attending the sessions since January 2010. There were five referrals to the project from Akademi project posters which were distributed and displayed prior to and during the course of the six weeks. Posters were distributed to local service providers such as community centres and libraries as well as through contacts in local authority services such as Adult Learning, Arts and Events services. The majority of referrals came from residents seeing posters at libraries and at the Oaktree Community Centre. One participant also saw a poster at their local gym - highlighting public perception of dance's position within the realm of active health and the importance of promoting programmes from grassroots organisations, local services and housing associations up to local authority services. After the project three further referrals were made to Nexos Latinoamericanos¹⁰.

The project promotion namely connected with local older adults from the Afro-Caribbean community. The final project group was ethnically diverse with varying levels of ability and several differing reasons for attending the sessions; for example for developing dance technique, for keeping active or for meeting new people. Joan had to find a way in which to address these diversities and break down cultural barriers.

Joan used folk and social dance to empower each individual to input in to the project. This also supported Joan in building trust and respect from the group, she herself the youngest member of the group. Throughout the project, Joan sought movements from the participants to involve them and give them ownership of the material and the session. Particularly after initial frictions and guarded relationships within the group, sharing their cultural dance and their own movement ideas was a breaking point for the group. They started to bond as well as show signs of increased energy levels and enthusiasm.

In order to overcome initial resistance at working together in contact partner work, Joan started with circle work and mirror work (in partners) so that they could identify with each other and work together without the physical contact. The group also worked with props to create connections without invading each other's personal space.

10. One couple and one male contacted Akademi during the project. Three older adults (two females; one male) contacted Akademi after the Akademi project had ended, having seen project flyers to find out about dance sessions in the borough of Ealing (Acton)

“I don’t want them to see dance as just fitness, I want them to feel brave enough to go out and just explore you know, tea dances, ballroom dance clubs or perhaps go to fitness centres and explore belly-dancing or Bollywood dancing... When I did introduce to them Bollywood dance they all really took to it and they enjoyed it. It was really something novel, it was very challenging because I mixed the Bollywood with dance, with ballroom dancing they already knew. So I could see that perhaps I had given them a taste of what they could explore further.”

Joan Pires

Dance Artist - Akademi

There were evident signs of social cohesion in the group after the project end with participants stressing the importance of “meeting people...the companionship.” Again, similarly to the Bengali Worker’s Association group in Camden participants openly reported how dance “lifts ... spirits” and makes them happy. Another participant claimed: “I love the inter action and the variety of dance.” In building a programme of dance which explored dance from South Asian classical dance, Bollywood dance and Bollywood Ballroom to Ballroom, Waltz, Rumba and Latin the older adults sought to return to the project to be stimulated mentally as well as physically.

Similarly to the Bengali Worker’s Association group in Camden, the Ealing group particularly highlighted the impact that the dance sessions had due to the physical and social aspects of the practice. In exploring social dance styles from around the world which were relevant to each individual in the group experiences and memories were shared which raised self-esteem and re-inspired.

Participants also noted the strengths that South Asian dance had for taking a holistic approach to health and well-being and stimulating mind, body and soul: “I really enjoyed the Asian input, I liked the hand movements (‘mudras’¹¹)... I think it’s very creative and relaxing.” (Participant - Nexos Latinoamericanos, Oaktree Community Centre)

As highlighted by University Campus Suffolk; “participants from the Oaktree Community Centre ... confirmed that the major benefits of their participation in dance were the fitness benefits, but also the social aspects of the practice. They stated that they “come for the fun and the interaction with others and also for exercising, so altogether we live in this area, we travel up here to meet new people, we interact with them, we all dance, have fun and exercise the body” (participants, Oaktree Community Centre).¹²

11. A mudra is a symbolic gesture which can be expressed through the whole body but is renowned in Classical South Asian dance for its focus on intricate poses of the hands and fingers. Hasta Mudras are used to help the dancers to tell the narrative line of the story within each dance. Derived from the Sanskrit: “seal”, “mark” or “gesture”.

12. Reference Angove, Helen & Bradley, Elsa. University Campus Suffolk “Akademi South Asian Dance UK: Exploring the Best Practice in Engaging Older People in Dance Research Evaluation” pp8-9

CONCLUSION

Working with two different groups and methods of teaching was a fascinating project for Akademi. Dance continues to be hugely valued as a creative physical and social activity which provides a space in which we can learn, share and develop.

We have seen the physiological, psychological and social benefits that the dance programme has had on our participants.

The project participants realised the potential of South Asian dance and its ability to stimulate the body and mind. Participants expressed that they found enjoyment in being intellectually stimulated as well being challenged physically. We hope that they can continue to find confidence to take part in dance into the future as well as celebrate South Asian dance as it challenges and crosses boundaries.

We embrace dance as an accessible and innovative approach to keeping fit and healthy and endeavour to promote this throughout all of our work. Working collaboratively with key health agencies such as local authority active health services, hospitals, mental health charities and various specialists in these fields has been an important component in the project. Participants have been educated in the benefits of dance and in return they have freely participated in dance and have personalised our projects; truly making it their own. Whether for physical and mental health purposes, the creative or expressive aspects, participants put high importance on the social elements of the project, coming together, meeting new people and interacting through dance.

Both Akademi artists valued the opportunity to work with community groups who were new to or not previously dedicated to dance and rose to the challenge of engaging them. Both felt that more time would have been preferable and hugely beneficial in terms of connecting with the groups and finding the best way of working with individuals within them. We would like to extend this work and monitor participant journeys further into the future. Amina continues to work at BWA and Joan will return to visit the group at the Oaktree Community Centre.

Working with these groups allowed us to explore the value of community dance from all angles and we hope that we approached the project with open minds in order to observe and learn. The socio-cultural aspects of the art form were particularly interesting to survey.

It is important that strong partnerships are brokered to support this work and to maintain an artistic quality mindful of the overarching reasons for promoting work in this field. Approaches as simple as taking time to ascertain roles and responsibilities, codes of conduct and expectations between artists, project workers and participants can really help. Key partnerships ensure that these projects draw on an extensive pool of skills, knowledge and resources in order to widen our outreach to participants and assist them in accessing local activities, opportunities and support networks over a longer period of time, potentially finding the confidence and skills to initiate their own.

We have found that powerful artistic interventions built around South Asian dance can directly support people to enjoy and achieve, be healthy, challenge, take risks and make a positive contribution. It is important to find the balance between providing a creative space for exercise and promoting dance as a creative art form; challenging participants to embrace these unique qualities. For this reason a holistic approach which enables participants to engage with all aspects of physical health, mental well-being, intellect, creativity and identity is important. Whilst social dance and reminiscence continues to prove an effective and popular approach when working with older adults their capabilities are not restricted and there is a clear eagerness to try new things.

Akademi wish to thank all that have been involved in this project and look forward to sharing paths in to the future.

Jess Linton

Akademi Education & Community
Programme Officer

April 2011

BIOGRAPHIES

AMINA KHAYYAM

Born in Sylhet Bangladesh, Amina Khayyam is a dancer, choreographer and teacher. She started her initial training in Kathak with Alpana Sengupta. Since 1996 she has been learning from one of Kathak's finest exponent Sushmita Ghosh in London, part of which she trained three years at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.

Amina launched her professional career in dance in 2001, debuting at the Southbank Centre. Her performance ranges from classical Kathak, in which, she has received high accolades for her Abhinaya, to multi-media performances such as the principle performer in the Akademi/South Bank's outdoor spectacle "Escapade" (2003). She worked with several companies including Sonia Sabri, and has worked with reputable dance choreographers such as Kumudini Lakhia, Darshan Singh Bhuller and Filip Van Huffel.

Amina's own creations are fast gaining critical stature; her 'Laal Shaari' was selected for ROH2's Firsts. She recently created the dance theatre piece 'Yerma' based on the play by Federico Garcia Lorca as well as also touring 'One', a solo full length Kathak dance piece. Amina is currently in development with a number of new commissions.

She is the Associate Lecturer at the University of Surrey, teaching Kathak as part of a Dance and Culture degree course.

www.aminakhayyam.com

BISAKHA SARKER

Bisakha Sarker is the artistic director of Chaturangan, a Liverpool based company engaged in a diverse range of creative activities to raise the profile of South Asian dance locally and nationally.

She received her Masters degree in Statistics from the University of Calcutta and had worked as the senior research fellow of The Anthropological Survey of India. She is a highly respected performer, producer, choreographer, researcher, educationalist, critic, writer and video maker. She has organised several landmark national and international dance conferences in Liverpool on topics of contemporary concern, pioneering the new style of artist-led conference programming - , such as Marks of Time (Liverpool, 2006) and Dance and Dementia (Liverpool, 2010). She has gained a wide experience of dance, working all over the country in a wide range of situations.

Her innovative work has brought her much acclaim challenging many traditional cultural boundaries along the way. Her rich creativity and passion for dance inspire all who work with her, empowering them in a unique way.

www.cs.nott.ac.uk/~ef/Bisakha

ELSA BRADLEY

Elsa Bradley is Lecturer in Dance in the School of Arts and Humanities at University Campus Suffolk and in the Division of Performing Arts and English at the University of Bedfordshire. She leads modules in The Knowing Body, Dance and Leadership and Dance and Entrepreneurship at both institutions. She combines her work in Higher Education with a freelance career as an Independent Dance Scientist and Dance Educator, working throughout the Eastern region. Elsa is the Dance Scientist for the DanceEast Academy (Centre for Advanced Training) based in Ipswich, developing training programmes for gifted and talented young dancers aged 11 to 18. Elsa has worked across the community, education and professional dance sectors for the last 16 years, including for Norfolk Dance (as Senior Dance Artist), Creative Partnerships, DanceEast, dancedigital, The Royal Ballet and The Birmingham Royal Ballet Education Departments.

Elsa's research interests lie in the field of dance science and she is currently developing postgraduate provision at the University of Bedfordshire with a focus on dance and its role in public health. She is convening an international conference looking emergent research and practice of dance in health across community, professional and mental health sectors. She works closely with Youth Dance England, sitting on the Dance Advisory Group and contributing to nationally significant research in youth dance provision and its effects on sustained participation, health and wellbeing in under-resourced areas in the Eastern region.

HELEN ANGOVE

Helen Angove is Senior Lecturer in Dance at University Campus Suffolk and Course Leader of the new BA (Hons) Dance in the Community. For the last twenty years Helen has worked concurrently in mainstream education (primary, secondary, FE and HE) and in the community sector in a range of capacities including, most recently, an inspiring year from 2008 - 2009 as a dance artist in Somerset as part of the Step Change: Dance for Health project hosted by Take Art.

University Campus Suffolk
Dance in the Community BA
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From 2009–2010 she was an Honorary University Fellow of the School of Education and Lifelong Learning at the University of Exeter through her involvement as a partner researcher with Dance Partners in Creativity (DPC). Helen was also a member of the Professional Standards Working Group reporting to the Dance Training and Accreditation Partnership (DTAP) regarding the development of National Occupational Standards in Dance Leadership. She sits on the Regional Dance Advisory Group for Youth Dance England, East and from October 2011 will join the Board of the Foundation for Community Dance.

Helen is especially interested in the construction and performance of identities, interdisciplinary performance, social and popular art practices and community arts. In the last five years Helen's interest in the ageing dancing body and related issues of agency has led her to explore work currently being undertaken in the fields of gerontology and health and wellbeing. Helen has presented her research at a range of international conferences in Finland, France, Poland, USA and the UK.

JOAN PIRES

A graduate of Laban Centre London, Joan Pires sees herself as a choreographer, performer and Dance instructor. She has choreographed pieces for all sections of society be it renowned artists like the French Aerial troupe Les Passages, Youth Dance England, formal and informal education settings needs and special educational needs groups. Her recent choreography involves a Bollywood Ballroom piece for over 50 year olds. Some of her students go on to join renowned companies like Britain's Got Talent finalists "Flawless", Wang Dance Company. She has worked with a majority of companies like the English National Ballet, Docklands Festival, Greenwich Dance Agency, Akademi of South Asian Dance, The RAD to name a few. Her pieces also vary from outdoor specific work like converting Trafalgar Square into an aerial Bollywood arena, August 2007, to dabbling in the Royal Albert hall with a Bollywood Ballet ensemble, June 2008. Her passion for Dance started at 4yrs in Kenya and evolved in India at 16yrs, when she opened her first dance school teaching Ballet, Creative, Ballroom, Jazz and Bollywood. By 21 years she decided to learn formally attaining her degree in Ballet and Contemporary Dance and finally going on to find a lucrative career in Dance. As a qualified dance therapist she also enjoys working in mental health, with teenage mums, domestic violence victims and borderline dementia patients.

Her moto in life is "dance is the best cure medicine can't buy!"

Resources



TOP TIPS FOR RESEARCH & EVALUATION

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- If possible, involve external/internal researchers as early as possible in the process; ideally in the development stages. This will enable researchers, artists and managers to develop a commonly understood research focus.
- Identify what you want to find out as early as possible and develop research questions and hypotheses collaboratively to ensure that everybody is clear.
- Similarly, ensure that all parties are familiar with and understand key terms, definitions and concepts in the same way. (If opinions differ at this early stage, you can at least address this or agree to a commonly accepted list of definitions). For example; what does the term 'best practice' actually mean to each individual in the group? Ensure that all parties agree before working towards these goals.
- Before you finalise your research questions and hypotheses, undertake a review of the breadth and depth of existing works, literature and practice that has been undertaken in your area of interest. We hope that the bibliography at the end of this report begins to signpost you to useful reading.
- Agree the methodological approaches to data collection which should:
 - match the values of the project
 - address the research question and hypothesis
 - draw upon breadth of methods so that triangulation is possible
 - be, as far as possible, longitudinal to allow the question to be addressed in sufficient depth.
- Ideally use multiple methods of data collection so that if one fails there are others in place.
- If you want to find out whether your intervention has had a particular effect or impact, consider using a control group or better still employ a cross over design¹³.
- If you need to measure aspects of the research, or collect data at particular points, remember to schedule in testing periods or meetings at key periods (especially important if working across more than one group or site). Asking participants the same set of questions at the beginning, middle and end of your project is a basic starting point for ensuring that you are fairly testing. Make sure that these dates match across all groups that you are working with in the project.

13. A crossover study is a longitudinal study (a correlational research study that involves repeated observations of the same variables over long periods of time) in which subjects receive a sequence of different treatments (or exposures). Crossover designs are common for experiments in many scientific disciplines, for example psychology, education, pharmaceutical science, and health-care, especially medicine.

QUALITY ASSURANCE AND CONSISTENCY

- If you are using internal or external researchers, try to employ an additional researcher to check the research methods and protocols to ensure that quality assurance procedures are in place.
- When working in more than one site, put measures in place to ensure consistency of provision. For example; work to the same timings within the projects when measuring and collecting your research data.
- Similarly, aim for consistency within and across groups. The closer the demographic of a group in relation to the research question, the better the data will be. Above all select a group which matches your research questions and hypothesis.
- Ensure consistent choice and application of methodologies OR identify and justify the rationale for using different methodologies – make a conscious interrogation of this.

DATA PROTECTION

- Ensure at all stages that data is stored, transported and employed confidentially – particularly if individuals are identifiable. (see data protection act for details).
- Once the research is completed and written up, ensure that any raw data is destroyed as per the data protection act.

University Campus Suffolk

2011

TOP TIPS FOR WORKING WITH OLDER ADULTS



TRY!

A good method of assessing abilities is using creative forms of dance. Use a narrative, for example; imagery of a “bird flying”. Some participants might just use upper body arm movements; some might jump assimilating flight. Once you have seen what different bodies are capable of then you are in a better position to plan sessions accordingly.



TRY!

If the physical needs are different of each participant let them know that there are alternative ways to carry out the exercises, i.e. use of chair, sit on the floor etc. Some of the best work can evolve from improvisation and free movement. Be flexible with your programme.

HEALTH & SAFETY

- With any group of learners it is important to assess any learning and access needs that individuals may have in the group. For example, older adults may be hard of hearing, have visual impairments or physical disabilities and injuries which affect their mobility, co-ordination or stamina in a dance session. It is recommended that you gather some basic knowledge of the group prior to attending the workshops in order to plan appropriately.
- Akademi recommends asking participants to complete a PARQ* form to evaluate their physical fitness, asking them to outline any health concerns that they think might be affected in taking part in the programme. Alternatively as a minimum gather a profile of the group prior to your first session and don't forget to ask the group to make you aware of any injuries which might be effected in the session.
- Having ensured that your practice is relevant and safe, it is as important to note that physical abilities should not deter you from challenging the participants. We should not assume that older adults are not able to or do not wish to challenge themselves. Determination stands strong!
- Be sensitive to the experiences of your group and allow them opportunities to reach their potential.

COMMUNICATION

- Communication is the key to a successful workshop and building a relationship with the participating group. It is important to be clear and precise when communicating with older adults.
- Remember that forms may be challenging for individuals who have visual impairments, learning disabilities, physical disabilities or use English as second language. Offer assistance and provide support where necessary.
- Meet with the group - and if relevant the centre - before the first session to do an environmental assessment of the group which addresses these needs. For example you might need to deliver the workshop in a community language, or arrange for translators or BSL (British Sign Language) interpreters to co-lead the session.
- Define terminology as a group. This is good practice as technical terminology is not always representative of an individuals' actual ability. For example; a person with a visual

* A PARQ form is a Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire designed to identify any risks in taking part in increased physical activity. (Please see a Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire template further into in the Practitioner Resources section of this booklet)

impairment may be blind or hard sighted. This can also apply to the way you explain movement within a workshop; the direction “step” (for example) may mean different things to different individuals



TRY!

If the workshop is based on a particular Indian dance technique, introduce simple rhythmic patterns using numbers, and then translate the numbers to “bols” (syllables in the Indian “Tala” rhythmic system). This gives participants time to learn and understand the pattern step-by-step.

FACILITATING PARTICIPATION, COLLABORATION AND DECISION MAKING

- When working with older adults in the South Asian community it is possible that some may, for different religious and cultural reasons, feel unable to participate in all the activities. For example; participants may not feel allowed to take part in dance as a performance or in its representation of any living form through the dance narrative.

Try! Look at social or spiritual (religious) dances such as folk dance and seasonal celebrations such as harvest. You might also find participants interested in using dance as a form of exercise to address health and fitness. This can be a useful spring board for possible creative exploration moving on to dance. It is crucial that when choosing materials for the session this is taken into consideration, particularly at the outreach and developmental stages.

- The session should be fun, creative and allow participants to have input.

- Respect the background, culture and religious beliefs of your participants. Do not impose material on them that may offend in any way. For example; do not expect them to wear tight fitting dance outfits or wear inappropriate attire yourself. Design the movement task around their outfits (sari, salwar kameez, hijab etc).

- Always start with very simple exercises, i.e. theatre games; warm up exercises such as clapping to keeping a simple beat in unison. Complicated tasks can put participants off and make them lose interest.

- Working with mudras (hand gestures in classical Indian dance styles such as Kathak and Bharata Natyam) is also often popular choice with older adults in a similar way to story-telling and creative reminiscence work.

- It is important to be equipped with ideas on how to deal with attention spans. Try! Introducing meditation or breathing techniques to help the group find an internal focus as well as group unity.

- Empower the participants to feel that they can provide input into a session as well as learn from you and others in the group. Older adults have a wealth of experience to share.



TRY!

A group warm up by asking participants to recall stories from their childhood. This can be a great way to engage and allow individuals to share and become comfortable as a group by getting to know one another. Keeping the task relevant allows the group to build trust and confidence and be more willing to participate in all other tasks introduced.



TRY!

Talking whilst moving - The simple movements of the waltz could be enough to unleash movements of a past life and trigger memory. These stories gave us further material for exploration of movement and added to the bonding and commitment of the group to attend every session.



TRY!

Mudras (hand gestures) or story-telling through hand gestures and movement to exercise the brain whilst helping hand mobility and eye co-ordination. Overcome co-ordination issues by using voice over music, for example; use simple pedestrian calls “up, down, side, under...” to solve the situation of right and left. Use colour codes or object codes to name the direction. For example, the left side of the room can be renamed “Wall” and the right was “Window.”

MEMORY

- Plan the session according to the groups’ background and abilities.
- Some older adults value the opportunity to talk about the past but be aware that others may wish to guard their private lives. Some may find recalling the past or sharing their present distressing. Ensure the group is in a safe and confidential sharing space and make them aware of this. Do not force individuals to share information.
- Be aware of the varying levels of confidence in emotional literacy (the ability to express their feelings through words) of the group and respect an individual’s willingness to share and step out of their comfort zone. However try to engage the group in healthy debate to develop a confidence and reassurance in being able to make a contribution, share with others, support others and feel supported.
- In diverse groups, devote time to getting to know one another, holding a conversation and recalling memories
- Remember that for individuals with dementia or other mental health problems may find memory recall more of a challenge. Accompanied with hand, eye co-ordination exercises an activity may need plenty of time and support to learn. Don’t be afraid to repeat the exercise. It is recommended that you return to exercises each week in order to help the group learn the work by recognising it in a pattern.

CO-ORDINATION

- Co-ordination can be fun! Especially when you establish unthreatening sessions. Individuals can enjoy having a laugh when things go wrong.
- Some individuals may not be able to co-ordinate a particular sequence of movements but can be given the option to improvise. This is equally valuable for building confidence in dance and movement as well as confidence through developing a skill set.
- Being mindful of ability levels; it is good practice to set a challenge and work on the belief that all is possible with practice. There is a real sense of achievement when a participant completes a sequence!
- Start with simple co-ordination movements but then increase the difficulty, to challenge the group to make it more interesting as well as create a happy and healthy debate.



TRY!

A massage circle; inviting the participant behind to massage their peer's shoulders and upper arms as part of a warm up or cool down.

BALANCE:

- Be sure that the planned ideas for exploring balance in the session are adaptable for any given situation. For example, ensure that tasks can be performed standing as well as leaning against the wall or using a chair as a prop, sitting on a chair or sitting on the floor.
- It can be fun when standing in a circle to use each other as support. This can be a popular exercise for some female groups - non British women or widows who are not used to touch. This gentle activity allows the group to be united and build confidence.

MOBILITY

- Always seek advice from the group before your first session so that you are aware of any chair users or other access needs. This way there are no hidden surprises for you or the group when moving on to specific tasks. All chosen session material should be adaptable in as many different ways as possible for when the need arises.
- If possible meet or observe an established group prior to a session to record interests and characteristics of the group.



TRY!

Exploring new dance styles, new arts and cultures; bringing with them new original and exciting material. Don't be afraid to encourage learning from each other - members of the group can share and will want to share.

CREATIVITY

- Allow the participants to express their own ideas and invite them to share if they know or have done any dance, music etc. Learner-led sessions can be extremely inspiring for all involved.
- Older adults may express themselves better by taking part in a creative exercise. For example, they may respond to stories and are able to relate to the activity more than the physical process of learning to dance. This personal engagement builds an individual's confidence when someone takes interest in them and gives them further motivation to participate and progress.
- In Camden we discovered that the women have a love for harvest singing and dancing known as Dhamail. Even though it is a form of dance and music it was acceptable to them and a way for them to express themselves and feel liberated.
- Originality is a stimulus for learning for older adults who have a wealth of knowledge and experience.



TRY!

Circle work can be very effective to encourage team work. The best way to get the group to participate can be informal discussions; start with something simple - ask a participant to describe what the person next to them is wearing and how they look in their outfit - it breaks the ice and allows them to look at things in details otherwise perhaps would not have noticed.



TRY!

Starting each session with a circle and asking each participant to offer a small movement of how they feel. Allowing the group to copy the movement and empathise and converse with that person through movement. This promotes bonding, unity and also individualism in empowering ones actions to be done by others. It also gives the group and tutor insight into how it might be best to take the session forward and be mindful of individuals.

GROUP WORK:

- Group activities are the best way to help everyone to get to know each other, share their ideas and develop their self-expression.
- Nonetheless, vary tasks to allow a balance of partner work, group work and independent working.

It is also beneficial as the leader becomes part of the group and establishes the group as an ensemble, rather than a hierarchy.

Akademi

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AKADEMI EXAMPLAR SESSION PLAN

Learning site:

Group/Class

Contact:

Age:

Akademi artist:

Number of learners:

Workshop content and information from partner:

Overall learning aims of group:

- To learn about dance; with a focus on south Asian folk dance and Kathak dance
- To recognise the benefits of dance linked to active health
- To recognise the benefits of dance linked to mental well-being
- To leave the programme with a package of useful warm –up, cool-down, relaxation and creative exercises for use in their day-to-day lives
- To challenge their perceptions of dance and the arts

Session number:

Teaching activities:

Learning activities:

Learning outcomes / Learners are able to:

N/A

WARM UP

DANCE

ACHIEVEMENTS

Warm up is a very good way of achieving an internal focus and promotes a good team spirit. It also of course warms up the whole body, internal organs and mind ready for the dance session to follow.

Upper body:

- Warm up with breathing technique to promote internal focus.
- Small, safe movements of the head, neck shoulders, fingers, wrist, arms, torso etc. NB. Ask older adults to do half head and neck rolls and small circling of the shoulders and wrists at a slow pace.
- Use hand gestures / mudras to warm up the joints as well as help with co-ordination.

Technique base:

Repeat materials learnt in session one. Add further movements:

- Copying rhythm patterns created with clapping, slapping of the body and stamping the feet: take this to the next level by allowing the participants to come up with their own rhythm patterns.
- Simple footsteps (Tatkar) in rhythm – walking four steps forwards and four step backward: Right Left Right Left, Left Right Left Right.
- Same footsteps done standing on the spot and also executed in three speeds

- To be able to put complete trust in their partner.
- To work as a team and contribute towards being part of the group: To appreciate group dynamics.
- To develop listening skills within group.
- To develop co-ordination; for example of hands and feet.
- To increase stamina
- To experience enhanced health; an instant 'feel good factor'.
- To understand the benefits of good posture and to achieve good posture.
- To experience mental stimulation

Session number:

Teaching activities:

Lower body:

- To tap in three different speeds, (Help mobilises the ankle area)
- Warm up knees: Sitting on the floor legs stretched out in front, squeeze the back of the knee to touch the floor and release.
- Standing on one leg rotate each leg in figure of eight as if drawing the figure with the knee - this will help mobilise and open up the hip area as well as encourage a good understanding of centring and as a result to achieve a good balance.

Trust game:

Working in pairs: Person A will close their eyes and person B will lightly hold their hand and lead them to walk around the room. Change role.

Using a duppatta/scarf: A will move/dance with a duppatta following a music, when the music stops A will pass the duppatta to B, then B will take over the role of A...

Mental stimulation:

- Using number 1, 2, 3 – each number represent an instruction i.e. 1= run, 2= sit and 3= jump.
- Word game: GO means to stop and STOP means to go. They will walk around the room and listen out for the instruction to act on.

Learning activities:

- A sequence of movement phrases (Hastak) in rhythm.
- Combine both Tatkar and Hastak phrase learnt.
- A simple pirouette exercise using five steps.
- Introduce movements that have clear lines and directions.
- Add all the above to make into a sequence.

Expressional Base:

One person starts to tell a story and the person next to her continues the same story until we go around the group, each contributing to the story to complete.

Example:

- (A) My parents want me to get married...
- (B) We went to look at beautiful fabrics for my wedding outfit...

Learners are able to:

Abhinaya (Expressional dance)

- To be able to express oneself through the face
- To achieve co-ordination through a taught repertoire of sequences using left and right hands simultaneously (and repeated on both sides)
- To use their own imagination and explore their creativity

Date:

Print name:

Signature:

AKADEMI TEMPLATE SESSION PLAN

Learning site:

Group/Class

Contact:

Age:

Akademi artist:

Number of learners:

Workshop content and information from partner:

Overall learning aims of group:

Session
number:

Teaching activities:

Learning activities:

Learning outcomes /
Learners are able to:

Please use additional sheet (on the next page) if required.

Date:

Print name:

Signature:

Session
number:

Teaching activities:

Learning activities:

Learners are able to:

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY READINESS QUESTIONNAIRE

Many health benefits are associated with regular exercise, and the completion of a physical activity readiness questionnaire (PAR-Q) is a sensible first step to take if you are planning to increase the amount of physical activity in your life.

For most people, physical activity should not pose any problem or hazard. PAR-Q is designed to identify the small number of adults for whom physical activity might be inappropriate or those who should have medical advice concerning the type of activity most suitable for them.

Common sense is the best guide in answering these few questions.

If you answered No to all questions you have a reasonable assurance of your present suitability for physical activity.

If you answered Yes to one or more questions and you have not recently consulted your doctor, please do so before increasing your physical activity. Tell your doctor which questions you answered 'yes' to on the PAR-Q form or present them with a copy. After medical evaluation, seek advice from your doctor as to your suitability for:

- 1) Unrestricted physical activity starting off easily and progressing gradually, and
- 2) Restricted or supervised activity to meet your specific needs, at least on an initial basis.

- | | |
|--|-------|
| 1 Has your doctor ever said that you have a bone or joint problem, such as arthritis, that has been aggravated by exercise or might be made worse with exercise? | Y / N |
| 2 Do you have high blood pressure? | Y / N |
| 3 Do you have low blood pressure? | Y / N |
| 4 Do you have Diabetes Mellitus or any other metabolic disease? | Y / N |
| 5 Has your doctor ever said that you have raised cholesterol (serum level above 6.2mmol/L)? | Y / N |
| 6 Has your doctor ever said that you have a heart condition and that you should only do physical activity recommended by your doctor? | Y / N |
| 7 Have you ever felt pain in your chest when you do physical exercise? | Y / N |
| 8 Is your doctor currently prescribing you drugs or medication? | Y / N |
| 9 Have you ever suffered from unusual shortness of breath at rest or with mild exertion? | Y / N |
| 10 Is there any history of Coronary Heart Disease in your family? | Y / N |
| 11 Do you often feel faint, have spells of severe dizziness or have lost consciousness? | Y / N |
| 12 Do you currently drink more than the average amount of alcohol per week (21 units for men and 14 units for women)? | Y / N |
| 13 Do you currently smoke? | Y / N |
| 14 Do you currently exercise on a regular basis (at least 3 times a week) and work in a job that is physically demanding? | Y / N |
| 15 Are you, or is there any possibility that you might be pregnant? | Y / N |
| 16 Do you know of any other reason why you should not participate in a programme of physical activity? | Y / N |

If you answered Yes to any of the above, please give details (use the back of this sheet if needed): _____

Assumption of risk:

I hereby state that I have read, understood and answered honestly the questions above. I also state that I wish to participate in activities, which may include aerobic exercise, resistance exercise and stretching. I realise that my participation in these activities involves the risk of injury and even the possibility of death. Furthermore, I hereby confirm that I am voluntarily engaging in an acceptable level of exercise, which has been recommended to me.

Additional note:

I have taken medical advice and my doctor has agreed that I should exercise.

Participant's Name: _____ **Date:** _____
Signature: _____

Dance Instructor's Name: _____ **Date:** _____
Signature: _____

If the physical needs are different for each participant encourage individuals to explore alternative ways to carry out the exercises, for example; working from a chair or sitting on the floor. Some of the best work can evolve from improvisation and free movement. Be flexible with your programme.



TRY!

Adapting some of your regular activities for chair based sessions – record what works well and what needs developing:

Be creative in assessing abilities within a group. Give individuals the confidence to work to their capacity creatively and physically by setting a creative task to assess them.



TRY!

Take note of which themes and narratives engage your group and record the movements that they produce to help you plan and develop your work.

Use a narrative which will allow individuals to improvise. For example; start with “bird flying”. Some participants might use upper body arm movements; some might use facial expression and vocalisation; some might jump assimilating flight.

Circle work can be very effective to encourage team work. The best way to get the group to participate can be informal discussions or simple movement work. Start with something simple - it breaks the ice and allows them to look at things in detail that they otherwise may not have noticed.



TRY!

How does this approach help you to build trust within the group? What do you learn about individuals and how to progress with your session(s)?

Ask each participant to offer a small movement relating to how they feel. Allow the group to copy the movement and empathise and converse with that person through movement. This promotes team work and group unity as well as empowering individuals as they see their contribution being worked into the group choreography.

Working with mudras (hand gestures) is also often a popular choice with older adults in a similar way to story-telling and creative reminiscence work. Using mudras and story-telling to develop hand and body movement develops mobility whilst working the brain through co-ordination exercises.



TRY!

Use the Mudras worksheet with your group, asking them to develop their own hand gestures for their own personal stories and performance work.

ASAMYUTA HASTA MUDRAS

Pataka
(flag)

This can be used to hide and to show a stranger and fear.



Tripataka
(in three parts)

This means a crown or a tree. It can also mean weapons, lights, flames or fire, arrows or turning.



Ardha-Pataka
(half flag)

This means tender leaves, bank of a river, or flag.



Kartari-Mukha
(scissor face)

This means separation of husband and wives, death and falling.



Mayura
(peacock)

This means vomiting, wiping away tears, sprinkling water from a river and an argument about sacred pacts.



Ardha-Chandra
(half-moon)

This means the moon, meditation, prayer and saluting the Gods.



Arala
(bent)

This means drinking poison or strong wind.



Shukatunda
(parrots beak)

This means releasing and arrow, throwing a spear and revealing a secret.



Mushti
(fist)

This means immobility, firmness and fighting with the fists. It also represents determination.



Shikhara
(top)

This means Madana, God of love.



Kapitta
(elephant apple)

This means milking cows or covering the body with a cloth.



Kataka-Mukha
(bracelet face)

This means plucking flowers or wearing a garland of flowers.



Suchi
(needle)

This means showing 'one'.



Chandra-Kala
(digit of the moon)

This means the crescent moon face.



Padma-Kosha
(lotus bud)

This means exotic fruit.



Sarpa-Shirsha
(snake head)

This means snake or preserving.



Mriga-Shirsha
(deer head)

This means woman or manners according to tradition.



Simha-Mukha
(lion-face)

This means sacrifice. This can also represent a deer.



Ala-Padma
(full blow lotus)

This means longing for their beloved. It can also be used to show joy.



Chatura
(square)

This means wet, grief or aesthetic experience. It can also mean small.



Bhramara
(bee)

This means wings.



Hamsasya
(goose-face)

This means the symbol of marriage or good.



Hamsa-Paksha
(goose wing)

This means showing the number 6.



Samdamsha
(compress)

This means giving sacrifice.



Mukula
(bud)

This means water lily or eating.



Tamra-Chuda
(red-chested cock)

This means writing.

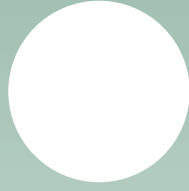


Trishula
(trident)

this means showing three people.



Appendix



APPENDIX A

The Bengali Worker's
Association Site Address:

Surma Centre
1 Robert Street
Camden
London

BENGALI WORKER'S ASSOCIATION GROUP BREAKDOWN OF PARTICIPANTS

Total Number of Participants:	30
Gender:	All Female
Age range:	40 - 80 years
NB. Five participants did not specify their ages therefore the range may vary further.	
Ethnicity:	29 Sylheti Bangladeshi/ one Philippino
Religious Backgrounds:	29 Islamic / one Hindu.
Attendance:	An average of 19 participants attended each week, with a minimum number of 17 in week 4 and a maximum number of 22 in week 3. Eight participants attended all six sessions ¹⁴ .

APPENDIX B

BENGALI WORKER'S ASSOCIATION GROUP RESEARCH THREADS

Findings taken from participant interviews / BWA staff interview / discussion groups / dance artist report.

Group histories

- Ethnicity: 29 Sylheti Bangladeshi/ one Philippino
- Religious Backgrounds: 29 Islamic / one Hindu
- 40-80 years old
- Birth place: 29 Bangladesh/ one Philippines
- Prior to this programme the large majority of the group had participated in very little dance and no social dancing due to the religious beliefs.

Attitudes to dance

- Prior to this programme the large majority of the group had participated in very little dance and no social dancing due to their religious beliefs.
- Having taken part in the dance sessions, participants reported:
 - Positive attitudes to dance.
 - An enjoyment in the creative challenges that the dance sessions brought (which was perhaps something that they wouldn't get from exercise on its own).
 - a new found freedom and ability to escape their identity or their positioning in the society that they grew up in. It allowed them to focus on themselves for a change.

14. Statistics taken from Akademi evaluation and monitoring and confirmed by UCS. Reference Angove, Helen & Bradley, Elsa. University Campus Suffolk "Akademi South Asian Dance UK: Exploring the Best Practice in Engaging Older People in Dance Research Evaluation" p4

Social dance

- Prior to this programme the large majority of the group had participated in very little dance and no social dancing due to their religious beliefs. Some of the older women were interested in doing “Dhamail”, as they grew up in village lives where this type of activity was seen as a fun thing to do amongst women.¹⁵ A number of women started doing the Dhamail dance on the last session as a way of thanking Akademi for the workshops. Amina Kayaam reported: “it was the most moving experience I had with them ... this was the first time they allowed themselves to completely let go and express themselves.”

Dance and well-being (physical)

- A main health concern of the group was weight loss
- The group were keen for information on useful keep fit exercises from Camden Active Health and Akademi to help them with weight loss
- Participants found that family commitments and health issues (such as joint pain, heart problems) often prevented them from keeping up with regular exercise. Weekly exercise classes were often missed and participants reported that they seldom managed to go out for a walk to keep up with the exercise regime. The women are often required to be at home to support the family for the majority of each day and may only have the opportunity to have one or two excursions out of the house in a week.
- Nonetheless, the group were aware of the benefits of dance on their (physical) health and have noticed the difference in their physical health when exercising regularly.

Dance and well-being (mental-health)

- The women participate in activities such as exercise classes but also creative sessions such as sewing classes which are held at the centre on a regular basis. The exercise class has been particularly popular and has been running over the past two years.
- Most of the women suffer from depression. A recurring reason given by participants for their depression was the small amount of time spent out of the home; socialising; taking part in activities of their choice which allow them to enjoy and achieve.
- The group were aware of the positive effects on mental health of keeping active and taking part.
- During the first session the group highlighted a desire to be happier. Women shared that they lacked ‘monor kushi’ (internal happiness). Finding this internal happiness was a main aim for them during the Akademi dance sessions.

15. “Dhamail” is a harvest dance, which is danced in a circle, which moves in a circular motion as the women share a common rhythm while also singing. It is very hypnotic and can continue for hours. This type of gathering normally happens during harvest times or in a wedding celebration.

- After the project, participants reported that sessions helped stimulate them, particularly through the dance exercises, rhythm exercises and theatre games and reminiscence work.
- The group felt a huge sense of achievement when they were able to follow dance instructions and complete exercises. This had a positive effect on their happiness and contributed to improving their mental health due to increased confidence and self-esteem.

APPENDIX C

Nexos Latinoamericanos

Site Address:

Oaktree Community Centre
Osbourne Road
Acton, London
W3 8TY

NEXOS LATINOAMERICANOS GROUP BREAKDOWN OF PARTICIPANTS

Total Number of

Participants: 17

Gender: 16 Female 1 Male

Age range: 45–75 years

NB. Five participants broadly specified as 'over 65yrs'.

Ethnicity: 7 Afro-Caribbean; 6 White-British; 1 White-Irish; 2 White-European (Italian); 1 Brazilian ¹⁶.

Religious

Backgrounds: Unknown

Attendance: An average of 16 participants attended each week.

APPENDIX D

NEXOS LATINOAMERICANOS GROUP RESEARCH THREADS

Group histories

- One participant was formally trained in ballet ballroom, country dance
- One participant had grown up with Celidhs
- Dance learnt through socialising, often as a form of courting
- The majority of the group learnt to dance through observing dance at social occasions
- Participants advised that they had attended dance events when growing up until late adulthood in order to meet male partners or as an event to attend with male partners
- Fewer participants continued to go to social dance events due to having lost partners or not feeling they could go without a partner who was too frail to attend with them.
- Participants mentioned a number of dance styles which they had taken part in and enjoyed: Calypso, Merengue, Twist, Rock and Roll, Waltz, Celidh dancing and Freestyle.

16. As recorded by lead artist. These figures include lead artist (Joan Pires) and Margarita Zuluaga '1 Asian (Indian); 1 Brazilian' – who co-taught to share and learn as specialists in differing dance styles

Attitudes to dance

- Participants viewed dance as: a form of worship, recreation, exercise, an opportunity to be creative.
- It was mentioned that dance may not be considered a profession; theatre also not being a necessity but for pleasure.
- The group shared that they occasionally watch live theatre performances although mostly view any form of performance on television or in church.

Productions

- One participant from the West Indies advised that traditionally for them dance is a social necessity; for cultural celebrations and festivals.
- Participants mentioned Latin American dancing, African drumming and dance seen at parades.
- The group enjoyed watching when opportunity provides itself especially on TV, at public parades or in smaller productions (often church productions).
- Dance was seen in a social context for weddings, anniversaries, public holidays, harvest festival
- Parties are normally held in people's gardens with marquees.
- One Afro-Caribbean participant spoke of dance being performed at funerals.
- This Afro-Caribbean participant also shared memories of an island bus ride tour where guests dance and sing songs as the bus makes its journey across the island.

Provision and Attitudes to dance in local area

- Participants mentioned the following venues for dance in the borough of Ealing: St Austin's Church, The Irish Centre, St Martin's Church (Uxbridge), Salvation Army (Acton), St Bernadettes School (Acton).
- Participants also mentioned active health sessions at: Christ Church (Acton) Keep Fit class, Virgin Active Gym - yoga, gym and water aerobics, Walking, Acton Baths - Aqua Aerobics, Appleton Ruislip House- Yoga and stretching classes.

Social Dance

- One participant had been ballroom dancing from a young age; attending formal classes and dancing competitively.
- The six White - British participants went to Ballroom socials approximately three times a week.
- The two Italian participants also attended Ballroom socials.
- One participant used to learn the waltz as a young adult.
- The other nine participants are not familiar with the style.
- Those participants who did not attend Ballroom dance classes or know about the styles felt that it was too technical.

- The eight participants who attended Ballroom dancing classes and socials went more when they were younger and particularly when they were married.
- One participant born in the West Indies had not danced since being in the UK because of being widowed.
- Some participants felt intimidated joining tea dances with no partner.

Dance and well-being (physical health)

- The group's health concerns were arthritis, shoulder pains, back pain, feet swellings, joint pains, heart problems.
- The group saw dance and physical exercise as a way of keeping joints mobile, keeping flexible, keeping a healthy heart and helping circulation.
- Some were concerned that being active made you more prone to injury (for example sprained ankles) but on the whole saw it as useful for both prevention and cure.
- One participant suggested that keeping fit encourage you to drink and eat healthily; for example drinking water instead of fizzy drinks.
- Weight loss was a concern for the group.

Dance and well-being (mental health)

- The group were aware of the positive effects on mental health of keeping active and taking part.
- The group agreed that keeping mentally active by taking part in dance as a creative physical activity can improve:
 - concentration
 - contentment
 - confidence
 - self-esteem
 - emotional well-being
 - co-ordination
 - your focus (for example; memory and decision-making).

The group also highlighted the benefits that attending dance socials and activity groups can have; allowing them to meet new people; interact with people outside of their homes; keep busy; build their self-confidence and self-esteem.

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For further information on Akademi's Education and Community programme, to work with us or to find out more about the benefits of dance and creative learning projects please contact:

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