

The Impact of Sports Leaders UK Awards and Qualifications

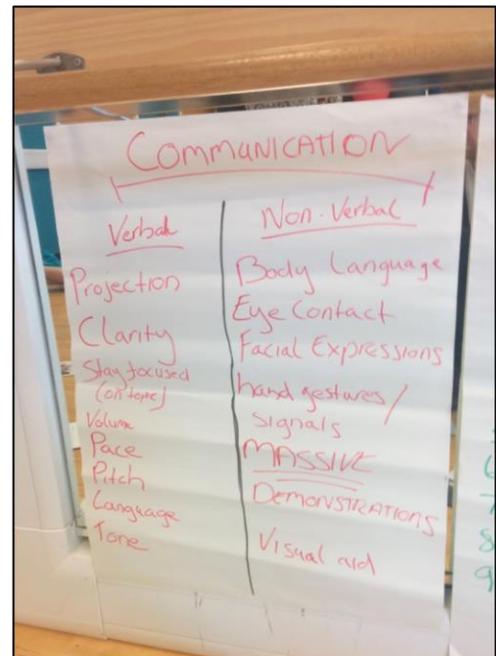
YDance case study

About the case study¹

YDance (Scottish Youth Dance) is the national dance organisation for young people aged 3 to 21 in Scotland. Alongside providing dance programmes for children and young people, YDance works to promote dance within the education sector and provides opportunities for young dancers to develop their skills. The organisation’s vision is to ‘offer every child and young person in Scotland the opportunity to realise their potential as individuals through dance’. YDance works across all of the local authority areas in Scotland working with a wide range of young people and children.

About the Sports Leaders UK courses

Sports Leaders UK Level 1 and Level 2 Awards in Dance Leadership are offered by YDance as part of their Active Girls programme, supported by SportScotland. This initiative aims to inspire and motivate teenage girls to be more physically active through dance and in 2013/4 592 teenagers achieved a Sports Leaders UK award across 21 local authority areas in Scotland². YDance offers individuals a one day ‘taster’ session, usually held in schools, followed by a four or five day course for those interested in learning and developing their leadership skills. The Level 1 Award includes a range of theory based and practical activities including exploring what makes a good leader, how to motivate others, structuring and planning a dance session and developing creative tasks and games.



Impact of the courses on learners

For the learners, the Sports Leaders UK dance leadership courses offered an opportunity for teenagers to develop their dance skills and learn new dance styles beyond those that are taught in schools. However, there was also an important role for the leadership component: some learners spoke of how they were already leading groups of young dance students and wanted to improve the way they led these groups:

“I teach classes with younger kids sometimes and doing this course would mean that I’d be better at it and maybe able to take classes on my own as well”

¹ This section is based on information from YDance’s website <http://www.ydance.org/> and Annual Review 2013/14 http://issuu.com/ydance/docs/annual_review_201314/0

² Information provided in YDance Annual Review 2013/14 http://issuu.com/ydance/docs/annual_review_201314/0

Learners spoke of how, through the Sports Leaders UK courses, they developed skills in leading and communicating with other young people and children:

“I didn’t realise how different it would be with primary school children, the different ways you have to talk to them, and different ways you have to approach them and the different dances you have to do to benefit them. It gave me so much knowledge and lots of confidence. As we progressed we learnt so much more and on the last day we had an assessment and I could feel the difference in me, knowing what words to use and the pace for teaching dancing. That was a big thing”

The development of confidence was a key area highlighted by YDance staff and learners.

Tutors described how involvement with dance leadership took some learners on a ‘personal journey’ as they grew in self-confidence. This was highlighted as a particular impact for learners who initially were more ‘quiet’ and withdrawn. A key part of this ‘journey’ for learners was the encouragement and support provided by tutors which helped to create an enjoyable and motivating learning environment.



Photo: Y Dance and Photographer Paul Watt

The opportunities the awards gave for self-reflection were seen as an important part of the courses. After assuming a leadership role in a session, learners on the course are encouraged to reflect on ‘what I did well in my session’ and ‘what I can improve on’ (including skills, qualities and values). One of the tutors highlighted how important it was for young people to reflect on how the courses had benefited them and to be able to articulate that learning.

Staff felt that the learning and skills developed as part of the dance leadership courses are transferable and that individuals can use them to help progress into university, volunteering and employment. Progression into further qualifications was one area particularly highlighted. Commenting on whether the courses had helped secure a place at college, one learner said:

“Definitely! I just had so much to say in my personal statement. I keep in touch with YDance teachers on Facebook all of the time. They gave me tips before my audition”

Learners are encouraged to come back to YDance to share their experiences of how they have used their leadership skills in their lives since completing the courses. Staff reported that learners are highly positive about how they have been able to transfer the learning and skills into other areas of their lives. Staff gave examples of how sports leaders have

progressed into paid employment, including former learners who after university became tutors for the Sports Leaders UK awards.

Impact of the courses on the organisation/wider community

YDance staff involved in delivering and verifying the Sports Leaders UK awards highlighted how they provided a useful and adaptable framework for YDance to deliver high quality courses on leadership in dance to young people in Scottish schools. The awards have enabled YDance to reach large number of teenagers across local authority areas and the organisation has been recognised as a 'high achieving centre' by Sports Leaders UK.

YDance noted in particular the importance of the Level 1 accreditation in helping to encourage both schools and teenagers to get involved in the courses. The Level 1 Award in Dance Leadership sits within the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) and completing the course gives teenagers six SCQF credits. The Sports Leaders UK awards have also helped YDance to increase the amount of extracurricular dance delivered as well as increasing the numbers of dance related volunteers, two key outcomes for their programme.

As part of the Level 2 Award in Dance Leadership, learners are expected to deliver ten hours of leadership in the community. Both YDance staff and learners felt that the course helped to foster interest and involvement with volunteering, including assisting and running local dance clubs and classes. The Active School Manager for the region noted that of the 224 individuals who volunteer with Active Schools, around 100 of those were former Sports Leaders. Commenting on this, one learner who recently completed Levels 1 and 2 Award in Dance Leadership with YDance said:

"I think it definitely gets people into volunteering. There were 14 who did the course and we got involved in three different clubs, one after the other and everyone got into volunteering after that. I definitely think that it does get you into it. I still do clubs with four other girls that did it. It is 2 years later and we are still taking the clubs"

Key issues/challenges

The YDance staff reflected positively on the impact of the Sports Leaders UK courses on learners. However, they also highlighted some challenges in their delivery. The lack of accreditation for the Level 2 Award in Dance Leadership which does not fit within the SCQF framework was highlighted as a particular issue. Staff felt that this made the award difficult to 'sell' to schools and learners. It was also noted that the leadership content of the courses did require significant adaptation to fit around a dance programme.