

Impact case study (REF3b)

Institution: Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance
Unit of Assessment: 35 (Music, Drama, Dance and Performing Arts)
Title of case study: Dance for Health and Wellbeing
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)

Trinity Laban’s research into the effect of dance on health and wellbeing has generated interest and citation at UK Government level, enhanced the public consciousness of the benefits of dance and has had secondary impacts in terms of providing a model for other studies. It has enhanced the professional practice of dance artists and teachers beyond the academy. Participation in dance is now perceived as a viable method of enhancing physical and psychological health, in part due to Trinity Laban’s research in this area. The impacts of this research relate primarily to public awareness and public health, particularly in relation to younger people.

2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)
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As both a physical activity and a creative artform, participation in dance provides a non-competitive form of exercise that has demonstrable positive impacts on both health and wellbeing. Dance can also be a vital way of engaging young people, especially girls, into physical activity. Trinity Laban is known internationally for its research in dance and performance science, and a significant historical strand of this research has been conducted in the relationship between arts participation and health and wellbeing. Besides academic avenues of dissemination, Trinity Laban’s research has raised awareness of the value of dance as a means of improving physical and psychological health. Trinity Laban has led five research projects to investigate the impact of creative and contemporary dance on specific areas of physical fitness and psychological wellbeing among secondary school aged young people. All led by Emma Redding, these projects were formed through groups of Trinity Laban performance science researchers, post-docs, and PhD students. Through a series of experimental studies, 715 young people have participated in creative and contemporary dance programmes and were measured before and after the dance intervention, as well as during periods of follow-up.

The first study, the **NRG Dance and Health Project** was undertaken in 2005/6 in collaboration with Hampshire Dance (a regional dance organisation), and was funded by the Joint Investment Fund for the Arts [R1]. The study took place in the SHIPS region of the county. The effect of creative dance on specific areas of physical fitness and psychological wellbeing of 11-14 year old school children was measured. Findings demonstrated that creative dance has an overall positive impact on both these measures, and in both male and female participants.

The second study, which took place in 2009, was funded by the **North Kent Local Authorities Arts Partnership (NKLAAP)**, and was entitled *dance 4 your life* [R2]. The study examined the physical and psychological effect of dance on young women aged 14 yrs and was situated in secondary schools across the North Kent region. Findings showed a statistically significant improvement in levels of self-esteem among students who had taken part in dance classes and clear benefits of dance on physical health, with statistically significant improvements in aerobic capacity and upper body strength among participants. The study demonstrated that teenage girls are receptive and positive towards dance as a physical activity, even at an age when statistics show many begin to drop out of physical activities.

The third research study was entitled **NRG2 Dance and Health Project**, and took place in 2010 [R3]. This study extended previous research undertaken by Trinity Laban in that it explored the physical and psychological impact of creative dance comparatively versus more traditional school-based physical education. The study took place amongst a cohort of young people in under-resourced areas of West Sussex, looking specifically at gender differences. The physical areas

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assessed were aerobic capacity, flexibility, and upper body strength. In terms of psychological wellbeing, attitudes towards both dance and general physical activity were examined. Findings showed that the physical and psychological wellbeing of the girls in both comparative groups improved after the intervention, while no change was found in the boys in either group. Girls who participated in the dance classes greatly improved their aerobic capacity and flexibility and also felt significantly more competent and intersubjectively empathetic to their peers. The significance of all of these studies is that they utilised a scientific methodology to measure the benefits of dance making on certain cohorts, and as such were the first of their kind in the field.

All three studies studied young people, but the methodology proved readily transferable and subsequently led to commissioning by the **Thames Gateway Dance Partnerships** in order to undertake a fourth study of the effects of dance on the health and well-being of older adults [R4]. Similarly, the fifth and final study, entitled **Changing Perceptions**, examined the provision and progression routes for young disabled dancers, and was funded through **Dance 4** by the **Department for Education** [R5]. The project addressed various calls from Government for a clearer signposting of dance provision and opportunities for young people with disabilities. A significant outcome of the research was the most comprehensive directory of provision across the UK, which is now accessible online. The two-year project culminated in a Continuing Professional Development programme launched in March 2013.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

[R1] Trinity Laban & Hampshire Dance. (2007). *NRG youth dance and health project 2005-06*.

[R2] Trinity Laban & North Kent Local Authorities Arts Partnership. (2009). *Dance 4 your life: A dance and health project*.

[R3] Blazy, L., & Amstell, S. (2010). *NRG2 youth dance and health*.

[R4] Connolly, M. K., & Redding, E. (2010). *Dancing towards wellbeing in the third age: Literature review on the impact of dance on health and wellbeing among older people*.

The Research Reports [R1-4] can be retrieved from the following URL:

<http://www.trinitylaban.ac.uk/study/dance/dance-science/dance-science-research>

[R5] Trinity Laban & Dance 4 (2013). *Changing Perceptions*. Retrieved from <http://www.dance4.co.uk/young-people/project/cat-centre-advanced-training/news/2013-04/changing-perceptions>

Accounts of the findings of [R1-R5] can also be found in the following journal articles:

Quin, E., Redding, E., Quested, E. & Weller, P. (2006). The effect of an eight-week creative dance program on the physiological and psychological status of 11-14 year old adolescents: An experimental study. In R. Solomon, & J. Solomon (Eds.), *The 16th Annual Meeting of the International Association for Dance Medicine and Science, West Palm Beach, Florida, USA, 2006: Proceedings*. 256-260. International Association for Dance Medicine and Science.

Quin, E., Frazer, L. & Redding, E. (2007). The health benefits of creative dance: Improving children's physical and psychological wellbeing. *Education and Health* 25(2), 31-33.

Connolly, MK., Quin, E. & Redding, E (2011). Dance 4 your life: Exploring the health and well-being implications of a contemporary dance intervention for female adolescents. *Research in Dance Education*, (12)1. 53-66.

Aujla, I. J., & Redding, E. (2013). Barriers to dance training for young people with disabilities. *British Journal of Special Education*, 40, 80-85.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Trinity Laban's performance science research has provided the most robust evidence of the impact of dance on the health and wellbeing of young people, and hence that dance is a viable alternative to sport in its ability to enhance physical fitness. In this section, we trace a trajectory of impact that commenced with the underpinning research that comprised project reports, research in peer-reviewed academic journals and presentations at international conferences. Subsequent to this, and crucially, the research was cited by several Governmental sources, received national awards, and contributed to the securing of secondary impacts, through the subsequent funding provided by several schemes to undertake further studies into dance and health, and with similar non-academic beneficiaries. Trinity Laban also carried out a wide-ranging programme of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) using the underpinning research as a resource guide for dance practitioners and teachers in community and other settings. The end result has been that the underpinning research can claim a key role in a multi-factor process that has led to an increased participation in many forms of dance and an enhanced public awareness of its health benefits. The combination of a number of factors, including no doubt the increase in popularity of television dance shows, has made dance more popular than ever. As some background to this, a recent survey for the *Dance Proms* estimated that 1 in 5 British adults (21%) currently participate in some form of dance and just over 1 in 8 adults (13%) have taken part in a dance class in the last five years [1].

Initial Governmental interest in the underpinning research dates back to 2006, and subsequent policy shifts aimed at widening participation in dance nationally can be traced back to this interest. The then Minister for Public Health, Caroline Flint, MP and the Minister for the Arts, David Lammy, MP gave keynote addresses at the launch event for the NRG Dance and Health project in 2006, endorsing the relevance of the work to improving public health and cultural education policy. Margaret Hillier, MP for Hackney South and Shoreditch, referenced Trinity Laban's research in the introduction of a House of Commons debate on teacher qualifications [2]. Further Governmental citations of the underpinning research included Tony Hall, then Chief Executive of The Royal Opera House, who was commissioned in 2006 to author *The Dance Review: A Report to Government on Dance Education and Youth Dance in England* [3]. In 2007, David Lammy launched the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) Dance Forum Group and extended an invitation during that year to Trinity Laban's performance science researchers to present findings. The NRG Dance for Health underpinning research also received a certificate of commendation through the *Royal Society of Public Health Awards* in 2010 and was shortlisted for the Times Higher Award for *Excellence and Innovation in the Arts* in 2007. Subsequent to the initial studies, Emma Redding and colleagues have been regularly invited to comment in the media, including for: BBC Radio London; in national newspapers; The Dancing Times; Dance Dynamic; Dance Australia; Dance UK News [4].

In terms of demonstrable impacts during the REF assessment period, an important step was the publication in 2008 of the Government Response to the Tony Hall review. Hall had recommended the development of a strategy, in partnership with key agencies, to enable dancers to become teachers, via CPD at all levels, and the setting-up of nationally agreed qualifications. In response, the government again referenced Trinity Laban's activities and underpinning research as a key factor in the resulting formation of several national agencies that answered to this recommendation, such as Youth Dance England. This is reinforced by evidence from its Director, Linda Jasper [5]. Secondary impacts on other researchers working in a community arts context was that public awareness generated from this first study led directly to the securing of funding for the two subsequent projects aimed at non-academic beneficiaries: the *VitaliSE Step Change* and the *Go Dance Report* which was commissioned by a consortium of dance organisations and providers throughout the Eastern region of England [6]. The underpinning research was also crucial evidence that led to the award of an Arts Council England grant to the London Thames Gateway Dance Partnership Organisations (2008-2010), and including Trinity Laban, entitled 'Healthy Communities', which resulted in three large scale community arts intervention projects, including with the elderly, that aimed at the enhancement of health and wellbeing in several London boroughs, including Hackney, Bexley, Lewisham and Tower Hamlets. The underpinning

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research has also influenced policy for a large private health provider, via a citation in a BUPA Health Report of 2011 [7]. This research has also led directly to an increased awareness of the health benefits of dance through a programme of CPD led by Trinity Laban's Learning and Participation staff, which has included briefings and presentations aimed at dance artists, teachers and young people at: NESTA Dance Science Day (2011); NDTA conference (2011), the Youth Dance England residential *U Dance* event (2011); *Pulse* project (Lewisham Borough Council funded dance training days for teachers 2013).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

[1] Survey conducted by YouGov, who interviewed 2058 UK adults (aged 18+) between 28 - 31 October 2011. Retrieved from: <http://www.rad.org.uk/article.asp?id=484>

[2] *“Crucially, for girls it [dance] is one of the main focuses of physical activity, and a report which is due to be published shortly, by Hampshire Dance and Laban provides the first ever statistical evidence showing that dance has a positive effect on both the physical fitness and the psychological health of children aged 11 to 14 years”*. Margaret Olivia Hillier, HANSARD, 28 Feb 2007: Column 929. Dance Teachers (Qualifications and Regulation) 12.33 pm.

[3] *“There also needs to be research into the impact of dance on children and young people both from a health perspective and in relation to dance’s fundamental impact on numeracy and literacy. Lessons should be learned here from sport. The Laban Hampshire dance science experiment which looked at the impact of dance on young people’s health is a first step in the direction of demonstrating the power of the art form physically and cognitively”*. Hall, T. (2007). *The dance review: A report to Government on dance education and youth dance in England*. Department for Children, Schools and Families. Retrieved from: <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/7463/1/dcsf-00908-2007.pdf>

[4] Examples here include: Redding, E. & Irvine, S. (2006). Young people: new areas/focus for dance research. *DanceUK News*, 62; Frazer, L., Quin, E. & Redding, E. (2007). We all know that dance is good for you, but can we prove it? *Animated. Making Dance Matter*, 21-23.

[5] *“Trinity Laban’s dance science research has demonstrated that dance can improve the health and well-being of young people. This has led to greater public awareness of the benefits of dance as a healthy physical activity for all. Their research culminated not only in academic publications but importantly, a new UK qualification into safe and effective dance practice (accredited by Trinity College London), a programme of Continual Professional Development events delivered at national conferences for dance teachers and an interest from Government Ministers, MPs and Lords who have cited the research in public debate. Dance is now considered a viable alternative to sports in addressing issues around obesity, which has led to greater opportunities for young people across the UK. This increase in provision and public awareness is in part due to Trinity Laban’s dance science research”*. Linda Jasper, signed evidence available on request.

[6] VitaliSE Step Change, Dance for Health Project. Retrieved from:

<http://elsaurmston.files.wordpress.com/2013/06/dance-up-vitalise-step-change-evaluation.pdf>

Go Dance Report 2012. Retrieved from:

<http://www.ucs.ac.uk/SchoolsAndNetwork/UCSSchools/SchoolofArtsandHumanities/staff/DanceInTheCommunity/Go-Dance-Report-2012.pdf>

[7] BUPA Health Report. Trinity Laban’s research into the impact of dance on the health of older adults was cited: *“reviews have drawn together evidence of the health advantages of dance for older people. These reviews offer compelling evidence that dance programmes for older people can have significant health benefits”*. Bupa. (2011). *Keep dancing: The health and well-being benefits of dance for older people*. Retrieved from:

<http://www.bupa.co.uk/jahia/webdav/site/bupacouk/shared/Documents/PDFs/care-homes/general/shall-we-dance-report.pdf>