



London Cultural Education Challenge

Action Research Reflections - Cycle Two

Discussion Document

“How do we engage others in conversations about the needs and value of cultural education in London beyond the Challenge partners?”

One London Cultural Education Challenge

A Generational Commitment



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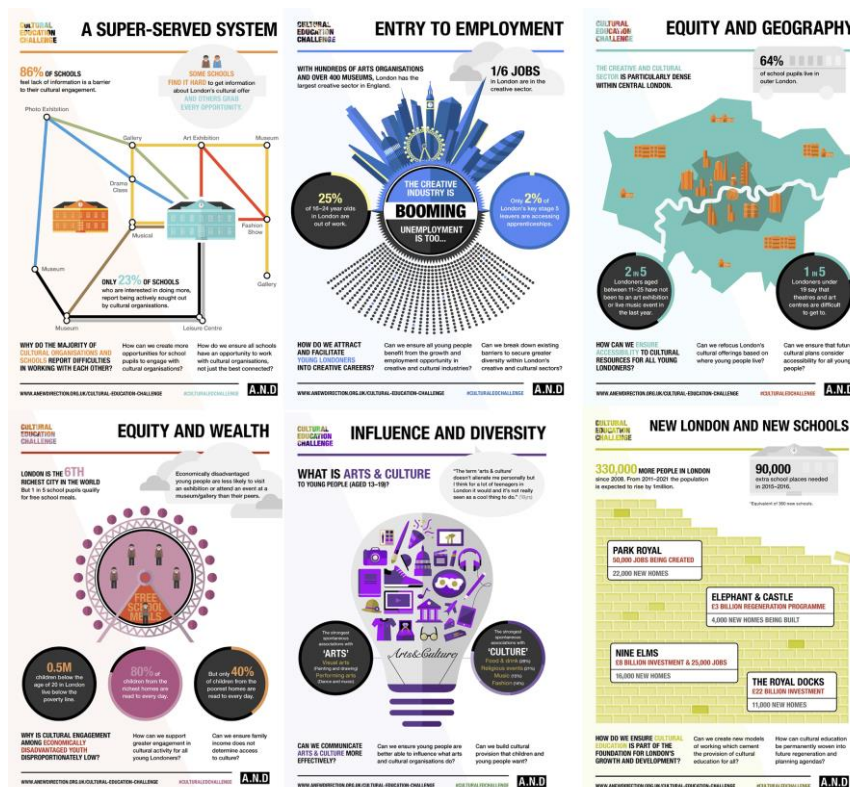
“ Article 31: States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.

UN Convention on the rights of the child

Acknowledgements

Once again, I am indebted to A New Direction and the Challenge partners for their support throughout the year in contributing to the action research process. Particular thanks go to Corinne Bass who has continued to respond to my random questions and requests for information as well as enduring my bright ideas. Without everyone’s support this action research process would not be possible.

Figure 1 The six Challenge Themes



Executive Summary

The quest for an equitable, accessible and high-quality cultural education in London continues. The London Cultural Education Challenge (“Challenge”), a three-year cross-sectoral programme managed by A New Direction (“AND”), is designed to achieve a step change in cultural education in London. As part of a commitment to capturing the learning from the lived experience of the process three cycles of action research are being undertaken during Challenge.

The overarching inquiry question for the programme is:

How do we achieve a step change in the quality and equity of cultural education for young people in London?

This discussion report represents the observations and reflections from the second year of Challenge and responds to a question about how others are engaging with the process:

How do we engage others in conversations about the needs and value of cultural education in London beyond the Challenge partners?

The context in which Challenge is trying to deliver its ambition remains complex and fluid involving multiple influences, institutions, and stakeholders (Appendix One gives a summary of some of the complexity). In recognition of this complexity Challenge has been designed with some boundaries framed by the six themes (Figure One) and funding requirements, but is also flexible, allowing Lead partners to respond to their own changing contexts and new opportunities.

Cultural education in London continues to face a range of issues despite being enshrined in the UN Declaration of Human Rights, and acknowledgements of its value by the Government and Arts Council England (“the Arts Council”). That said the evidence base for the value of cultural education remains contested and in some cases is regarded as weak, as a result new research programmes are now being undertaken to try and address this issue.

In terms of understanding the wider body of knowledge for Challenge the literature review undertaken this year includes four fields of interest:

- Social justice, young people and ‘voice’
- Communities of practice
- Cross sector social-oriented partnerships (“CSSPs”)
- Place-making and culture

The latter two areas have arisen from the activity in year two and reflect the view that Challenge has moved from trying to create a community of practice to more of a focus on CSSPs. Given the breadth of Challenge there is potential for it to contribute knowledge and understanding to all of these areas, and the reflection questions included in this section (Page 23) focus on how the learning is being captured and disseminated.

This discussion document arises out of the agreed action research framework for Challenge and considers:

- Planning: what was intended?
- Action: what was done?
- Observation and reflection: what did we discover as a result of what was done?
- Improvement: what will we change as a result of this inquiry?

The purpose of the action research reporting is threefold:

1. To stimulate practical improvement in the programme and the projects
2. To document the process and any changes that have occurred
3. Inductive theory building and dissemination of learning and any new knowledge that has emerged

The framework for collaborative practice (Figure Six) suggested in year one of the action research appears to remain relevant in year two, with more of a focus on connecting, committing and collaborating as the delivery activity is rolled out. The original aims of the Lead Partners also remain consistent with the addition of a more specific focus on place-making. All the Lead Partners have engaged emotionally and intellectually with the rigors of delivering their Challenge projects and all have welcomed seeing some outcomes for their beneficiaries this year, whether they were young people directly or other organisations and individuals that work with young people.

In reflecting on the action research cycle several themes have emerged in 2016/17:

- A strong, collective desire to understand the learning from Challenge
- The role that serendipity has to play in project and programme delivery
- The nature of working in partnerships, alliances and collaborations
- The nature of the conversations undertaken in engaging others with Challenge
- Thoughts of the future and what legacy might look like

In terms of answering the inquiry question about engaging others, several points have emerged:

- Working cross-sectorally: It was always recognised that Challenge had a big ambition and that was going to require a wide group of stakeholders. Given the six core themes this also meant new partners had to be brought into the conversation
- Connectors and enablers: where Lead Partners already had strong connections, the conversations have been direct. In some cases where the need was to move into other sectors an appropriate point of contact has been important. Someone able to make connections for the projects and the programme
- Awareness of assumptions: working across sectors is not always easy and benefits from high levels of self-awareness to surface assumptions being made and the nature of the conversations being held

- Intrinsic and instrumental: much as everyone wants to make the case for cultural education on intrinsic grounds there is recognition that for some stakeholders an instrumental approach is needed. This requires a level of knowledge about others in the partnership that ensures appropriate language and approaches. The findings of the C&E annual corporates-NGO Partnership Barometer 2016 gives some useful insights into the motivations and perceived benefits of partnering for the different parties
- Events, activities and information dissemination: have all been core aspects of widening the conversation. In several cases Lead Partners have acted as facilitators to enable others to make connections around cultural education
- Social media: warrants a separate mention because this is perhaps the least co-ordinated aspect of the conversation generation in programme terms. It is of course the nature of social media that it is viral and organic and each of the partners have utilised it in different ways. However, an outsider to the programme may find it difficult to navigate the array of storylines
- An open mind: this links to the theme of serendipity and suggests that just by being out in the field and having different conversations, not necessarily Challenge specific, new connections can be made. Some of which will have an immediate benefit and others may not materialise until a later date
- The Golden Thread: to a certain extent it is easier to engage others in conversations about specific projects because they are rooted in a place, or a creative form or groups of young people. The issue for Challenge is developing a clear narrative that would encourage engagement. Devising a shared theory of change over the coming year may help this process and provide a basis for understanding the meaning of 'step change' at the core of the programme

In the spirit of action research supporting on-going improvement in action a number of recommendations have been included focused on AND and the Lead Partners. These are outlined under the recommendations section.

Given what has been learnt in years one and two it is suggested that the final year inquiry question be adjusted from:

How do we continue to make a difference within cultural education?

To

What difference has Challenge made in terms of the delivery of Cultural Education in London?

The original question has at its core an assumption that a difference has been made and while this may be the case the revised question opens up the scope of the action research to exploring the nature of the outcomes and impacts that have been achieved. There is no question that Challenge has engaged a very wide network of partners throughout 2016/17 and that in many cases this has involved complex conversations across organisational and sectoral boundaries. Understanding and plugging into different motives for committing to a high quality and more equitable cultural education in London is an important element of ensuring Challenge achieves its ambition.

The Backstory – Cultural Education Challenge

“ Our population is becoming more diverse. There is growing disillusionment with conventional politics. Digital disruption is all around us. Meanwhile, social inequality stubbornly persists for some. These changes provide an impetus for arts organisations to play a greater civic role. Many are already breaking new ground. But this work often has a low profile and is under-appreciated. The time is right for the arts sector to have a robust, evidenced conversation about what its civic role can and should be. (Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (UK Branch), 2016: 2)

“ The Society is seriously concerned but unsurprised at the continued and significant decline in GCSE numbers for art and design in 2016. The evidence from The NSEAD Survey Report 2015-16 provided a stark warning of the direct effects of government policy on our subject, notably the implications of the EBacc and the choices available for young people at level 2.

(NSEAD, 2016)

“ It has been beautiful seeing the young people grow throughout the year, and people taking notice. It has allowed a lot of children and young people to access the arts. We have been hearing the young people talk about the arts changing their lives.

Challenge Lead Partner

Challenge is concerned with which children and young people are engaging in arts and culture and which are not, and the possible barriers that exist to accessing a fulfilling and life-enhancing cultural education. AND has opened a space for debate and inquiry around the current and future issues facing cultural education and Challenge is part of that process. At the core of Challenge is the desire to explore the extent to which engagement in art and culture throughout childhood contributes to becoming a well-rounded individual, better able to access opportunities and navigate choices as throughout life.

Amidst an ever-changing environment AND recognises there are significant opportunities for the improvement of cultural education and these have informed the development of Challenge to date, such as:

- The predicted growth in the younger population in London
- The pupil premium and fears it is now being diverted to plug school funding gaps
- Potential private sector partnerships
- New forms of enterprise, more of which are accessible to young people
- An evolving creative and cultural sector, having to respond to a changing context

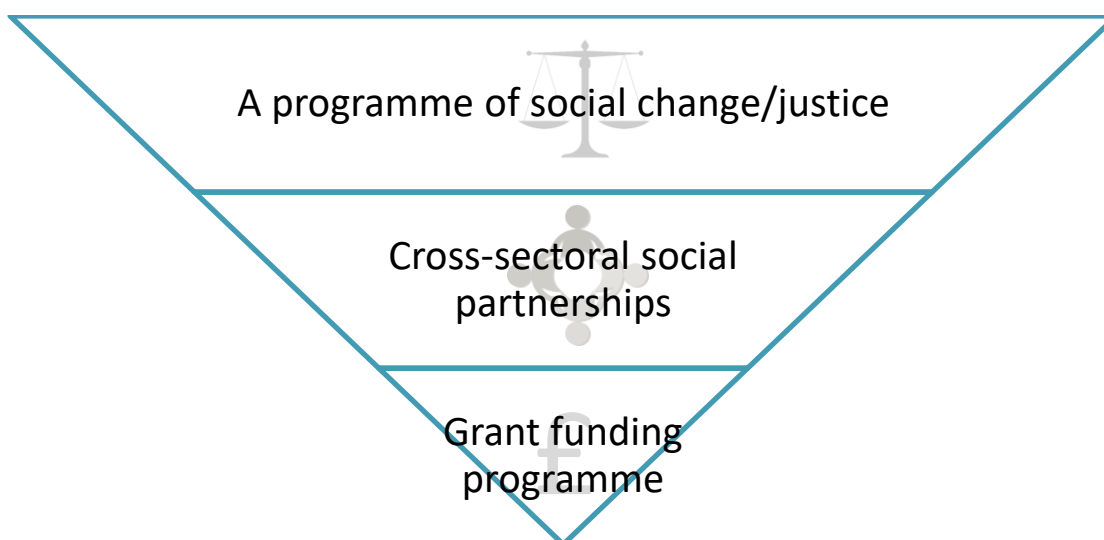
- More scope for collaboration and partnerships as schools, communities and businesses recognise the value of cultural education in creating life skills, building desired attitudes and behaviours and developing a lifelong, lifewide engagement with learning

AND is investing £900,000 over three years in expanding partnerships, generating new resources, exploring the opportunities, and delivering the programme. Challenge is now moving into its third year of delivery. The programme has been conceived to explore how to create a step change in cultural education in London, and AND's background research suggested that Challenge needed to explore six themes:

- Equity and Wealth
- Equity and Geography
- Influence and Diversity
- Entry to Employment
- New London and New Schools
- A Super-Served System

The cycle one action research reflections showed that Challenge had evolved into a programme that was active on three levels (Figure Two). This has continued into the second phase of action research although the intermediate layer that was originally termed as a Community of Practice may now be more appropriately defined as cross-sector social-oriented partnerships (CSSPs). There was some discussion about whether the programme was engaged in social activism and this has been clarified in year two as the Lead Partners and AND are clearly committed to a programme of change in terms of cultural education. In several projects, #Culture Makers, Creative Youth and Creative Croydon, the young people participating are involved in social issues that affect them and their communities directly. This reinforces the intention of Challenge to generate impact at a policy and societal level.

Figure 2 Cultural Education Challenge Programme levels



Feedback on the proposed model developed in Cycle One raised some useful insights. Some participants recognised the layers embedded in the programme but for others the notion that it was rooted in some form of social activism was a new way of thinking about Challenge.

- “ Social justice feels very wide and very far away. Like the pyramid. We’re a small part of a bigger picture.’
- “ Life Chances rhetoric from No.10 doesn’t address any problems in the social fabric.
- “ Why do we have to dress the arts up in economic/health terms rather than for its own sake?

Lead Partners

Comments suggested that this was such a big issue the Lead Partners could only play a small part in effecting change. Concerns were also raised about the instrumental outweighing the intrinsic value of art and that framing Challenge as a social activism programme might exacerbate this.

- “ Opportunities for cultural and artistic activities and the provision of specialist arts educators in school are, in some countries, being eroded in favour of more academic subjects.

Committee on the Rights of the Child, General comment No. 17 (2013)

Concerns about the nature, equity and delivery of cultural education in London described by the UN General comment continue. The operating contexts for schools, local authorities, funders, housing associations, the lead partners, corporate partners, A New Direction and young people continue to change.

There is also an increased recognition of the need to develop a robust evidence base for the value of culture education and a £2.5million partnership project between The Education Endowment Fund (EEF) and the Royal Society for the encouragement of the Arts, Manufactures and Science (RSA) has been launched to research the impact of arts and cultural education. In other words, the overall context and themes that triggered Challenge have remained relevant throughout this second year of action research.

Cultural Education - the context

- “ There should be a minimum level of Cultural Education that a child should expect to receive during his or her schooling as a whole.

For children to leave full-time education without having engaged in the spectrum of Cultural Education...would be a failure of a system which sets out to create young people who are not only academically able, but also have a fully rounded appreciation of the world around them.

(Henley, 2012: 56)

“ All children and young people no matter what their background or family circumstances should have the opportunity to develop their creativity, their relationship with society and to contribute to the economy in ways that are beneficial to them as individuals and to society.

(DCMS & DoE, 2012)

“ Entries for GCSEs in arts subjects have fallen by 46,000 this year compared with last, according to new figures recording England’s exam entries for 2016. The drift away from arts subjects is gathering pace. This year’s loss is more than five times the size of the loss in 2015, when candidate numbers fell by 9,000.

The falling take-up of arts GCSEs has already started to spill over into A levels. There were 4,300 fewer candidates for A level arts subjects this year – a decline three times bigger than the 1,500 recorded in 2015.

(Hill, 2016)

“ According to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) the creative industries are the fastest-growing part of the UK economy, worth £87.4bn a year to the UK economy, and the creative economy as a whole accounts for one in 11 jobs. You recognise this in your commitment to setting an industrial strategy, outlined on Monday 23 January 2017, which puts the creative sector at its heart.

But we struggle to see a link between the Government’s commitment to the creative industries as a central sector for growth with an education policy (the EBacc) which creates an artificial and false hierarchy of subjects, excluding creative, artistic and technical subjects from counting towards key school accountability measures.

(Bacc for the future, 2017)

“ On the surface it seems simple – engage partners who have strong grass roots connections with young people. The problem is those organisations are disappearing fast.

Challenge Lead Partner

If the review of the context for formal education in the first cycle discussion document was less than rosy, the sense within the education, and creative and cultural sectors is that the position has worsened as the implications of the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) take effect and further public sector cuts take hold. The context for Challenge continues to play an important role in the programme's development and delivery and is considered here in two parts:

1. The action context: the position of the programme within a wider network and if this problem has been addressed by others
2. The research context: consideration of the literature that provides a wider understanding of the issues. It locates aspects of the Challenge programme in relation to other research, policy and practice

The action context

“ Trial and error is a relatively effective way to make strategic decisions in settings so ambiguous, novel, or complex that any cognitively intensive effort is doomed to fail. In altogether new situations . . . there may be no good substitute for trying something out and learning from experience.

(Giovanni & Jan W Rivkin, 2005)

In the opening stages of the programme we defined the issues facing cultural education as a wicked problem (Rittel & Webber, 1973) and created some mess maps to try and get a sense of the context the programme and projects would be operating in (Appendix One is an overview mess map).

“ Messes are complex, multi-dimensional, intractable, dynamic problems that can only be partially addressed and partially resolved.

(Ackoff, 1999)

Understanding Challenge in these terms gives it a number of characteristics:

- It has many interdependencies and is multi-causal
- There is no single solution
- It involves multiple stakeholders and interest groups
- It is likely to have a no stopping rule i.e. there is not a clearly defined end point
- It is complex in three ways:
 - Socially: those involved are likely to have different perspectives on the problems, opportunities and resolutions
 - Generatively: it may unfold in unpredictable ways
 - Dynamically: cause and effect can be hard to understand or identify

AND therefore, created a process that was intended to be flexible, that brought in multiple perspectives (particularly young voices) and allowed the programme to develop multidisciplinary and cross-disciplinary partnerships.

The original six infographics (Figure One) provided a useful way of summarising the core themes that AND was looking to address through Challenge, and they continue to provide a useful framework as the programme moves into year three.

Wider environmental factors and trends are an on-going influence on the context in which cultural education is operating. The most significant of these during the last year being Brexit, particularly in terms of the impact it has had on communities and the uncertainty created for organisations in all sectors.

Table 1 Factors and trends influencing the future of cultural education

Factors	Trends
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing demography creating new pressures on services • Austerity budgeting continuing to bring a downward pressure on the public sector • Structural shifts that are opening new roles, powers and alliances • The impact of Brexit on community cohesion • Changing policy landscape for education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LGA predicts that spending cuts will amount to a 27% (or £7.4bn) real terms cut to local authorities across the country from 2010/11 – 2019/20 • London councils estimate that 60% of local authority funding will go on waste and adult social care by 2020 • 23% of schools that have dropped subjects because of the EBacc have cut drama and the performing arts • Youth Unemployment in London was 17.9% in 2015 compared to a national average of 14.4%ⁱ • Two in five schools do not believe that pupils' families involve their children in a wide range of cultural activities • 40% of young people from wealthier social grades visit museums and galleries in their free time, compared to 27% from less well-off ones • £22million has been cut from Youth Services in London between 2011/12 and 2016/17ⁱⁱ • visitor numbers to museums and galleries were up by 2.4% between February 2016 and February 2017ⁱⁱⁱ • London is far behind other regions in England in terms of take-up of state-funded early years provision, particularly amongst disadvantaged 2-year-olds • London school leaders are more likely than leaders elsewhere to report that their schools face a shortage of teachers (56 per cent compared to 37 per cent overall) ^{iv}

Source: AND unless otherwise stated

“ ...there has been a decline in the number of children taking arts subjects; a reduction in arts teaching hours; and fewer teachers employed in schools. Beyond school, informal programmes for young people have suffered due to cuts in local authority funds and services; universities tuition fees are rising; and concern for children’s early years has seemingly dropped off the policy agenda.

(Cultural Learning Alliance, 2017: 2)

A year on and the trends that highlighted the need for Challenge remain and reinforce that attention should be paid to cultural education at the macro, meso and micro levels. Cultural education structures are continuing to change and, in some cases, diminish or disappear. This is an issue that needs a networked and collaborative approach in which a variety of resolutions are tested and applied. In its Culture White Paper, the government stated its recognition of the value of cultural education:

“ We will put in place measures to increase participation in culture, especially among those who are currently excluded from the opportunities that culture has to offer. In particular, we will ensure that children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are inspired by and have new meaningful relationships with culture.

("The Culture White Paper", 2016)

“ In the current climate, any government commitment to culture is an achievement. But the narrowness of that commitment is a strategy in itself. Withdrawal of government support for cultural education from primary, secondary and tertiary state education has consequences.

(Carrington, 2016)

However, as Nigel Carrington demonstrates there has been a mixed response to the White Paper, only the second of its kind, in terms of what it offers cultural education. While Challenge can provide one mechanism for responding to the government’s stated commitment to culture, continued horizon scanning and pressure at policy level around cultural education will be needed.

In terms of who else is working in this field there is the national network of Bridge organisations, and the Arts Council’s National Cultural Education Challenge initiative.

The Cultural Education Challenge asks art and cultural organisations, educational institutions and local authorities to come together to drive a joined-up art and cultural offer locally, to share resources and bring about a more coherent and visible delivery of cultural education through Cultural Education Partnerships.

Arts Council England

Three pilot Cultural Education Partnerships (CEP) have paved the way for up to fifty partnerships nationally by 2018, ten of which will be in London, three of which are those that have developed through the London Cultural Education Challenge to date. The Arts Council also manages a Cultural Education Data Portal designed to provide access to data on culture, children and young people across England.

“ The pilot CEPs have demonstrated enhanced capacity to deliver cultural education to increase the amount and nature of provision. Partners report that CEPs have added value to cultural programmes; enriching and diversifying cultural expertise and experiences. However, partnership working takes time; the impacts on children and young people are largely speculative at this stage and require further evaluation.

(Harland & Sharp, 2015)

Most of the current lead partners have also been working in the field for some time. Several other funders such as Esmée Fairbairn, Gulbenkian, National Foundation for Youth Music and Paul Hamlyn also provide grant funding for projects involving the arts, young people and social justice but none of them are funding anything like Challenge in London.

Creativity, Culture and Education, the Cultural Learning Alliance, and Children and the Arts also work in the field but on an international and national basis. The field is complex wide-ranging, and ever changing, most of the lead partners have experienced dramatic changes in their local circumstances to date. Keeping abreast of the many changes and networks is demanding but AND is working to ensure it is not duplicating other provision. Challenge appears to be offering something distinct in terms of its ambition and approach in the cultural education field in London.

The research context

As with the first cycle discussion document the wider research field has also been considered in brief as part of the review phase of cycle two. The reasons for including a summary literature review are threefold:

- It supports an action research concern with praxis, that is working at the intersection of theory and practice
- It places Challenge within a wider body of work and offers suggestions for how it can contribute to the body of knowledge
- It highlights possible wider connections and dissemination routes that might not otherwise be part of the programme

In considering what has emerged from planning and action during this year, two fields from the last cycle have been revisited and two new fields have become significant:

- Social justice, young people and ‘voice’
- Communities of Practice

- Cross-sectoral social-oriented partnerships
- Place-making and culture

In order to cover the maximum ground, the following are focused on literature reviews within their specific fields to give an overview of the key papers. Given the time lag with academic publishing, where possible the papers are drawn from those published in the last three years.

Social Activism, young people and ‘voice’

“ We define social activism as instances in which individuals or groups of individuals who lack full access to institutionalized forms of influence engage in collective action to remedy a perceived social problem, or to promote or counter changes to the existing social order.

(Briscoe & Gupta, 2016)

Whereas last year’s discussion document focused on social justice, this year the theme has been widened to look at social activism more generally. This is partly because social activism could be seen to encompass a social justice agenda, and partly to respond to the activity of Challenge during 2016/17. In terms of the delivery of Challenge there are a number of instances where the participants are endeavouring to influence the policy and behaviour of other organisations, whether they are local authorities, corporates, or other non-profits. One comprehensive review (Briscoe & Gupta, 2016) looks at this field in detail and provides a useful outline of activism in this context.

In this process activists typically target companies or other marketplace organizations whose practices encroach upon the interests of stakeholders and the larger society, deploying various tactics to gain attention and influence organizational decision-makers and the wider public.

(Briscoe & Gupta, 2016: 2)

From their review of the field they make the case for a differentiation between insider and outsider activists as well as tactics of disruption as compared to persuasion. One finding from the literature that has relevance for Challenge and is something that has been raised during the year, is that of your knowledge base as a primarily outsider network of activism for cultural education. Seeking to influence and persuade across sectors means that Challenge participants and AND have had to grapple with sectors that are unfamiliar in terms of culture, behaviour and language.

The review further draws out issues of resources dependence, which according to the research tends to be more of an issue for insider activism, however in the case of Challenge there are implications given the requirement of the programme to generate significant resources from new sources.

Challenge may therefore be unusual in this respect because it includes both insider (primarily partners within local authorities) and outsider (other non-profit cultural organisations) activists. This suggests that capturing the learning around Challenge is particularly important as part of the strategy of influencing others in terms of the cultural education themes. It also highlights why the programme is taking a more negotiated and persuasive approach than any form of more direct or disruptive action.

In terms of 'Youth Voice' within Challenge this has had a different priority dependent on the nature of the delivery projects, for some (#CultureMakers, Creative Croydon and Creative Youth) it has been at the core of their delivery, for others (Creative Schools) it has been the role of the wider partners to focus on this area. AND has continued to draw on the expertise and involvement of the Young Challenge group to good effect and other Lead Partners also have Youth Panels or Boards.

The research field around the engagement of young people and youth voice is broad but there seems to be a paucity of literature reviews that give an overview or a sense of the current state of research in this area. The most recent found was that of Chana, 2007 and this focuses on 'best practice' literature. The review suggests that young people are keen to make sense of the world in which they live and to understand the local and global issues that affect them. A survey undertaken by Amnesty International in 2006 highlighted the top six issues young people in America were actively engaged with, as:

- Human rights
- Peace/anti-war/discrimination
- Environment
- Education
- Politics
- Community development

Head's (2002) review of young people that were asked what their schools did to help them create a better future highlighted a number of factors around how their contribution could be further achieved:

- Being better informed about current affairs
- Needing positive and negative information
- Knowing their opinions are valued
- Knowing action is taken based on their opinions
- Knowing methods of taking action available to them
- Engaging with environmental issues at local and global levels

None of these points are likely to come as a surprise to Challenge partners but they do suggest that there is scope for the work being done through the programme to be shared within the wider research field. The review lists a wide array of checklists and toolkits designed to ensure the most effective engagement of young people.

“ Most respondents agreed that a combination of local, interagency and political level involvement were required for a successful and sustainable youth participation strategy.

(Chana, 2007: 11)

Communities of Practice

“ Communities of practice are formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavour: a tribe learning to survive, a band of artists seeking new forms of expression, a group of engineers working on similar problems, a clique of pupils defining their identity in the school, a network of surgeons exploring novel techniques, a gathering of first-time managers helping each other cope. In a nutshell: Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.

(Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015)

There is no question that the Challenge Lead Partners and AND have a shared passion and concern for cultural education, understandably the capacity for the community to form as a group has been limited and this has tended to happen within rather than across the projects.

The concept of becoming skilled social learners is still applicable but now seems more relevant to the individual projects than to the programme as a whole. It may be worth considering as Challenge moves into year three what kind of network the Challenge Lead Partners are moving towards particularly as there will be some new projects arriving and some of the current cohort will be finishing.

Cross-sectoral social-oriented partnerships:

“ ...when actors from different sectors focus on the same issue, they are likely to think about it differently, to be motivated by different goals, and to use different approaches.

(Selsky & Parker, 2005: 851)

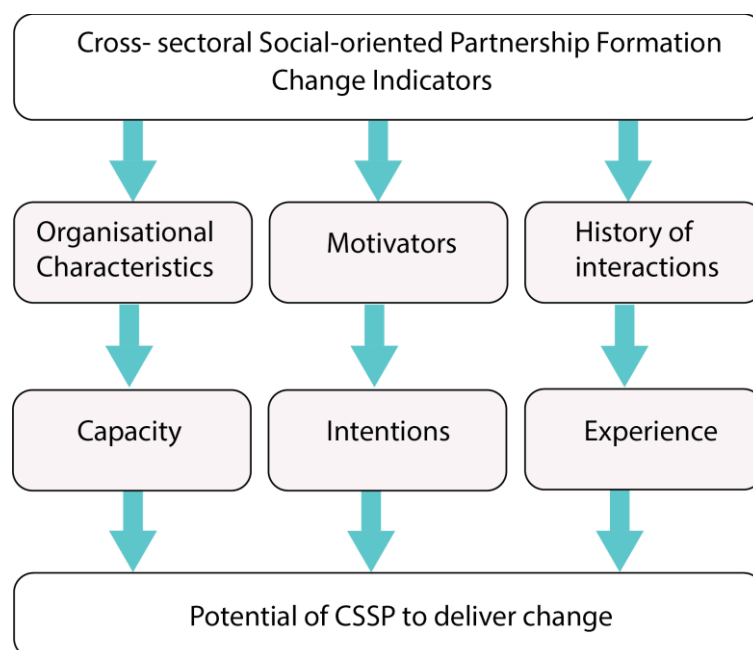
Hearing about the interactions of AND, Lead Partners and the wider partners a number of characteristics have influenced the likely nature of the partnerships, including:

- Size, mission/purpose, confidence and nature of the interactions
- Credibility, ideology and trust
- Reputation

- Motives and reciprocity
- History of working relationships between the partners
- Experience of working in other partnerships particularly with a transformative purpose

These are some of the issues to be taken into account when considering compatibility of change-oriented partnerships. One approach (Seitanidi, Koufopoulos, & Palmer, 2010) suggests that there are three indicators to consider – the characteristics of each partner, the motivation for the partnership and any history of interactions of this kind (Figure Three).

Figure 3 CSSP formation as an indicator of transformative potential (adapted from Seitanidi & Koufopoulos, 2010)



Indicators of whether a nonprofit organisation has the capacity to promote change in a partners are therefore both structural and non-structural (Seitanidi et al., 2010).

The wider Challenge partnerships seem to be either bi-sector (non-profit and public sector) or tri-sector (non-profit, public and corporate sectors). In the tri-sector CSSPs the most common structure is for the local authority to act as an intermediary (or to exert significant influence over the structure of the relationships). These kinds of partnership were a specific intention of Challenge in terms of bringing new partners and resources into the cultural education field.

The annual Corporate-NGO Partnerships Barometer^v provides some useful insights into the attitudes of non-profit and corporate organisations working on cross-sectoral projects. While they are larger scale non-profit organisations than those of the Lead Partners the attitudes resonate in terms of the discussions that have been held throughout the year.

Highlights of the survey-based research show that the reasons for partnering varied across the sectors.

Businesses	Non-profits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 91% said that enhancing brand or corporate reputation and credibility is the leading motive • 68% innovation • 68% access to people and contacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 92% were primarily interested in accessing funds • 77% access to people and contacts • 22% innovation

There is an on-going trend towards strategic partnerships (up by 10% on 2015) although this tends to be a more dominant attitude in the corporate rather than the non-profit organisations (almost 40% of corporates regarded over 70% of their partnerships as strategic compared with 28% of non-profits).

“ The findings therefore seem to confirm that the corporate sector remains ahead of NGOs in understanding the strategic importance and overall potential of partnerships in yielding value for stakeholders.

That said 60% of the non-profit organisations agreed that harnessing corporate non-cash assets can have more of an impact on their mission delivery than just cash. A very significant 92% of corporate respondents felt that their cross-sector partnership had improved their business understanding of social and environmental issues. In the light of Challenge’s ambitions, it is also worth noting that 62% of the corporate respondents felt that their partnerships have helped their companies to change their practices for the better.

The Barometer also highlights that consortia-based partnerships are becoming more prevalent and the majority of respondents felt these would be increasing (63% of corporates and 75% of NGOs). It is currently more common (based on those responding) for corporates to be engaged in consortia working (67%) compared to NGOs (58%).

“ 85% of respondents state that partnerships will become more or much more important over the next three years. Not a single respondent anticipates a decline in importance for partnerships. Pressure on businesses to demonstrate societal consideration (81%) and desire by companies and NGOs to leverage each other’s assets (80%) are the key drivers behind this likely growth.

Place-making

“ Through the creation of networks of innovative schools, cultural and civic organisations, and in places where children and families can play, work and learn, a fabric of pathways become part of a society where everyone can benefit from creative endeavour.

(Donagh, 2016)

“ A over 8.6 million people, London’s population is at a historic high with further growth to 10.5 million expected by 2041. In order to support this growing population, City Hall estimates that London will need to build 1.5 million more homes, 600 more schools and 9,000 more hectares of accessible green space.
(Social Life, 2016)

A concern with the changing London context has been part of Challenge from the outset, but it has become a key point of focus as the programme moves into its third year and a new cohort of Lead Partners arrive. During 2016/17 AND commissioned research from Social Life looking at the implications of the significant re-generation programmes planned across London. These messages are being shared cross-sectorally as evidenced by ANDs presence at the New London Architecture^{vi} event.

The report by Social Life outlines recommendations under the headings: play; learn and create. It calls on those working in the development sector to pay more attention to the creative agenda and the benefits this can bring when integrated into the physical development of London.

“ Our research and experience has emphasised that building collaborative places not only takes an investment of time and financial and non-financial resources, but a willingness for system actors, such as local authorities, to allow their traditional roles and sector boundaries to shift and blur.
(Randle & Anderson, 2017)

The recent report commissioned by Lankelly Trust, which while not culture/creativity specific, highlights the need for a systemic approach to place-making, this echoes AND’s thinking around cultural ecosystems and in turn draws on the AHRC’s report ‘The Ecology of Culture’.

“ An ecological approach concentrates on relationships and patterns within the overall system, showing how careers develop, ideas transfer, money flows, and product and content move, to and fro, around and between the funded, homemade and commercial subsectors. Culture is an organism not a mechanism; it is much messier and more dynamic than linear models allow.
(Holden, 2015)

“ Local authorities are aware of and also recognise the interconnected nature of place-making, as different places jostle in an increasingly competitive marketplace for new investment, visitor spend and prospective employers, councils are becoming ever more imaginative in how they make local areas that people want to live in, work in, do business in and visit.’ LGA/CLOA

In its recent report ‘People, Culture, Place,’ the Local Government Association recognises the value of culture in place-making and showcases ten case studies^{vii} that are illustrative of some of the themes that can be encompassed by creative place-making:

- Learning, engagement and belonging
- Economic growth and regeneration
- Stronger communities
- Cultural planning, strategy and infrastructure
- Cultural infrastructure
- Local talent development

“ Creative place-making sits within a broader and longstanding discourse that goes by many names, including urban renewal or regeneration, revitalization, community building, culture-led regeneration, city-making, place-making, and more.

(Borrupt, 2016: 2)

This highlights one of the challenges of this field in that it is broad, has different interpretations and points of emphasis. It may be helpful for Challenge to think of place-making in terms of Lefebvre’s concepts:

- The perceived or physical: land use, design, physical attributes
- The conceived: the legal, economic and political systems applicable to or within the physical area
- Everyday lived experience: the social, cultural and other activities of daily life

It is argued that of these concepts it is the everyday lived experience that tends to get neglected and that by keeping the three forces in balance there is more potential for social cohesion and social capital. While ‘creative place-making’ as a term appears to be a US term primarily, it has relevance for Challenge in that it is arguing for art and culture ‘to work as partner and catalyst, not at the centre of attention.’ (Borrupt, 2016: 1)

The field of culture led regeneration in the UK has been an area of considerable research and has attracted some criticism primarily because it suggests a silo-based approach and appears to put the element with often the weaker infrastructure at the centre. In encouraging cross-sectoral working Challenge is addressing this shortcoming, however unpredictable that may be on occasion, it is encouraging the bridging of silos of practice and encouraging people and organisations to step up and step out.

“ To appreciate a place and people does not, however, imply an uncritical stance toward it...to act responsibly in the historical moment requires knowledge of that time/place/cultural reality; wisdom to recognise that one never has sufficient information or insight on which to base a ‘rational’ decision; and courage to proceed anyway.

(Borrupt, 2016)

As AND builds its data collection around the development and implementation of Challenge it has the potential to contribute to all these fields thereby extending the learning and working towards the ambition of delivering the step change ambition of the programme.

Reflection questions

- How are the Lead Partners collating their own findings and evaluation around delivering Challenge?
- What success indicators might be appropriate for Challenge by the end of year three – particularly regarding CSSPs? (Is it resilience rather than legacy?)
- Are the tangible outputs from CSSPs clear going forward?
- What channels could be exploited for disseminating the Challenge evaluations that are not being utilised now?
- Is there scope for Challenge to include its own Partnerships Barometer (or partner with C&E to develop something similar) in year three of Challenge?
- What additional research themes might be generated that are not covered here?
- Who else might be involved in sharing the lessons from Challenge?

Learning and improvement through action research

It [action research] seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities. (Reason & Bradbury, 2001: 1)

Action research aims to produce findings that are directly relevant to practice. (Appendix Two gives further background).

It has several characteristics that suggest it has a role to play in understanding the development of Challenge overall:

1. The primary purpose of action research is the development of practical knowing and collective learning
2. It is founded on a collaborative philosophy – research is done ‘with’ not ‘to’ those involved
3. It is rooted in in-depth and critical experience
4. It takes into account different forms of knowing – experiential, practical, presentational, and propositional
5. It aims to develop theory out of action and practical experience

Action research generally takes the form of cycles of planning, action, observation and reflection. It is usual practice for there to be at least three cycles, each building on the last with the aim of continuous improvement.

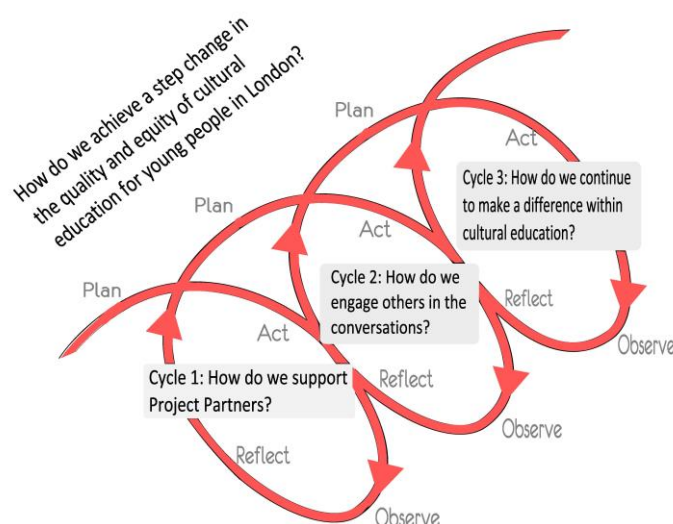
Each of these cycles is effectively a discrete experiment (or, in the case of programmes, a series of experiments), using an action-oriented process as a way of studying change. In discussion with the AND team and the Challenge Group it was agreed that the overarching question for the action research element of Challenge would be:

“How do we achieve a step change in the quality and equity of cultural education for young people in London?”

We also defined three sub questions that are intended to support answering the overarching question. These are being considered in three phases based across the three financial years of Challenge finishing in March 2018. This report is based on Cycle Two and looks at the question of how the conversations around Challenge are extended beyond AND and the Challenge Lead Partners:

Cycle 2: “How do we engage others in conversations about the needs and value of cultural education in London beyond the Challenge partners?”

Figure 4 A summary of the Challenge Action Research approach



As with last year the data collection included attending the ongoing Challenge Partner and Challenge Group meetings, regular updates with the AND team, and a series of interviews with Lead Partners and some of the wider partners. This has allowed for collection of experience in practice and retrospective narratives.

The action research data collection methods for cycle two have also included:

- Documentary evidence: field notes, project and programme documentation, social media and so on
- A wider literature review, based on themes that have surfaced during the data analysis
- Review of social media usage and patterns

Challenge Action Research Cycle Two

This section looks in more detail at the action research cycle, paying attention to the question posed at the beginning of the process.

“How do we engage others in conversations about the needs and value of cultural education in London beyond the Challenge partners?”

Planning for action

During this period the Lead Partners updated their milestone plans and finalised their plans for 2017. In some cases, this meant re-negotiating with AND in terms of the timeline for their projects. AND need to plan for continued support of the existing seven Lead Partners as well as the application process for the second cohort and utilising the final tranche of funding.

AND continued to manage the infrastructure of the programme:

- Meetings with current and prospective Lead Partners
- Meetings of the Challenge and Young Challenge Groups
- Monitoring
- One to one support for the projects

The aims of the lead partners (Figure Five) have stayed consistent but now fall into seven categories with the addition of place-making as a more specific area of practice. Young people remain firmly at the core of project delivery.

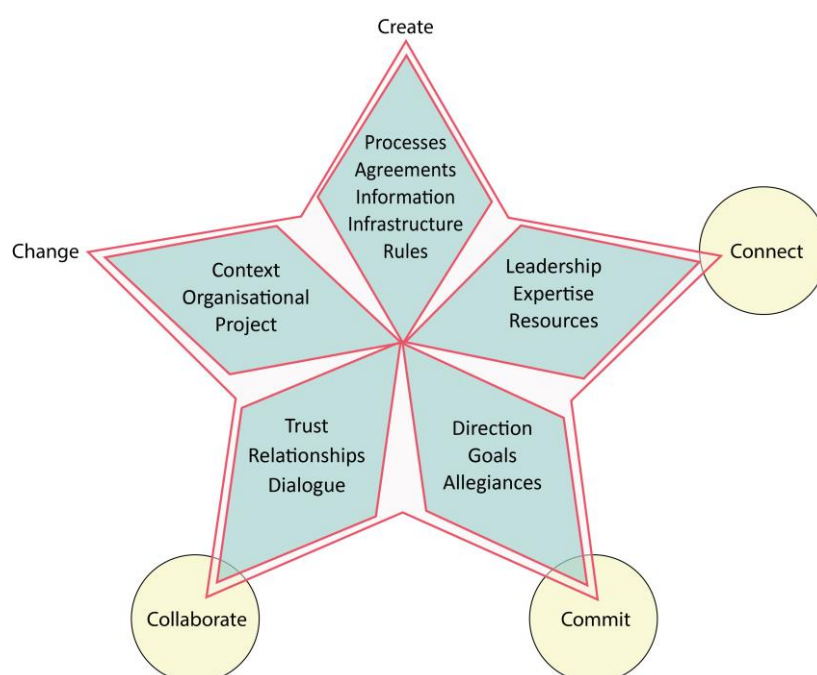
Figure 5 The collective lead partner aims



Action

This second cycle of Challenge has been characterised by delivery, and the elements of the model proposed in the Cycle One discussion document appear to remain of value (adapted from D'amour 1999, Figure Five). However, as the projects have moved into direct delivery three areas have become particularly relevant in terms of engaging others in the conversations about Challenge – connecting, committing, and collaborating.

Figure 6 The Challenge collaborative practice framework

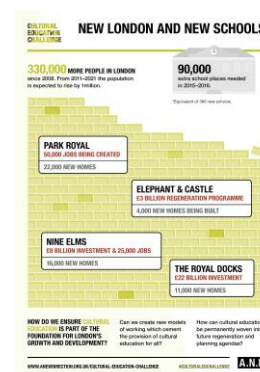


Create

Most of the 'creation' phase for the first cohort of Lead Partners was completed in the first year of the programme in terms of infrastructure building, formalising agreements and relationships and setting out working relationships. However, there have been changes to some of the partnerships including the individuals involved in the projects, and as such it has been recognised that this is an iterative process and there can be a need for re-contracting at various stages throughout the process.

This is seen as a double-edged phenomenon in that it can be perceived as slowing the process down again, but it also contributes to a constant refining of purpose and direction and can help to continually clarify the intentions of the partners/project.

AND has been tasked during this period with creating round two of the process and preparing for a second cohort of applications. Given what has been learnt about the time taken to establish the first set of projects it was decided that this round would be primarily solicited. It was also decided that 'New London and New Schools' would be used as the core theme as this was identified as a gap in round one.



All the projects have experienced a range of highs and lows during 2016/17:

Highs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Idea generation • Engaging people • Research/evaluation findings • Spreading the word • Internal support and recognition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivering events/ programme • Partner support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback – young people • Feedback others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarifying relationships • Finding partners that work the same way
Lows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal challenges • Infrastructure not in place as expected • Funding climate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing multiple partners • Scheduling • Ideas not aligned 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity • Speed of projects • Team changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partners not committing as expected • Communications • Changing context – projects being politicised

Commit

All Challenge participants have spoken about the importance of establishing the purpose of their work and ensuring everyone involved is committed fully to the work. One of the most common sources of frustration was based on commitment, caused by feeling other partners were either not completely aligned or not delivering on their promises.

This has required Challenge and Lead Partners to be clear about what they were delivering and to build a coalition of the engaged. Commitment has been an important aspect of the projects as it relates to reciprocity and has helped Lead Partners understand the motivation of other partners.

Connect

Much of this period has been about embedding the connections developed in the first year, and in some cases connecting with new participants where these have emerged through the projects' development. e.g. Creative Schools has been rolling out its brokering service to schools, London Youth made new connections with Stratford Circus and so on.

For AND it has been about making connections with new applicants as well as extending the conversations to other sectors in order to understand the place-making agendas and potential for cross-sectoral working. Many of these conversations have been enabled by Challenge Group members.

In expanding the Challenge conversations extending the network of alliances has been crucial. This seems to have happened on a trickle out basis, like a pebble in a pond, with relationships starting with people and organisations that are already known – in some cases to the extent that they may have worked together before. Once this first tier is established, appropriate and credible next level partners are identified. In some projects where there are imbalances in power relationships there have been challenges for the Project Leads in terms of timescales, communicating their achievements and having a sense of autonomy over the project.

Collaborate

In order to achieve the ambition of step change it was recognised from the outset that Challenge had to be delivered as a multi-partner project. This gives Challenge an increased ability to deliver at micro, meso and macro levels in relation to cultural education. Collaboration with young people has been a source of motivation and pride for several Challenge projects, where this was part of their remit. As mentioned under the literature review this has developed into cross-sectoral partnerships bringing a diversity of perspectives, resources, structures and priorities.

The Lead Partners from cohort one were asked to describe their stakeholder relationships in terms of proximity. All the projects have multiple stakeholders, and not surprisingly those individuals or organisations where there had been prior relationships were felt to be closest in terms of working relationships. It was noticeable in the conversations, however, that the relationships were regarded as fluid and changeable over time. Some relationships had blossomed and got closer; others (either because of external constraints or perceptions of alignment) had lessened or disappeared completely.

Where last year the role of London Cultural Education Partnerships in relation to Challenge were unclear, several have now become a core part of the lead Partner delivery (e.g. Creative Schools and Creative Croydon). Most felt that the relationship with AND was close or had become closer although a differentiation is still made between AND as a 'funder/investor' and AND as a partner and facilitator. Several partners have drawn on ANDs involvement with events during the period in terms of sharing research, insights, experience and infrastructure.

The Lead Partners also highlighted the importance of individual relationships, with identified people being gatekeepers into other institutions. This highlights a potential weakness where individuals are likely to change over time. All the Lead Partners have experience of working in partnership and some have worked cross-sectorally in the past. Building relationships was felt to be the most challenging with the corporate sector where there is either less experience or there are perceptual and language barriers to be overcome.

Change

It is early in the programme to start talking in impact terms but Lead Partners and AND are noticing changes happening. Individual young people have also been sharing their experiences and the value they have placed on their involvement in Challenge activity.

Some of the interim outcomes have been described as:

- Working with new partners and forming longer term relationships
- Learning to understand and appreciate other perspectives
- Embedding new activity in longer term programming – e.g. this is the first time London Youth has included dance at this scale in its programming
- Understanding the context of changing London particularly in terms of place-making
- Individual CPD
- Growing confidence and activism amongst the young people involved
- Influencing internal organisational change and/or understanding

Several Lead Partners have been reflecting on what is now meant by step change, something that it would be helpful to expand on and capture as Challenge moves into its final year.

Observations

As part of the action research process it is important to acknowledge the lived experience of the Challenge participants to add another dimension to understanding how they have made sense of Challenge in 2016/17. This is drawn from both observation and asking participants some aesthetic based questions Aesthetics give us access to a more sensory way of knowing, categories such as beauty, ugliness, comic and sad are part of our everyday language but they are also evaluative. Beauty attracts and connects us, ugliness repels or offends and often needs confronting, the sad or tragic insights passions and the comic unites us and highlights what is ridiculous or humorous. Ugliness is often the most difficult for participants to discuss in terms of their learning because of its nature as a confronting category.

Beautiful

Beauty has been acknowledged both in terms of the projects and their beneficiaries. All Lead Partners talked about the beauty of seeing young people grow and make significant progress. The joy of seeing the young people get excited and become increasingly engaged. Some have also received feedback from parents and caregivers about them seeing beauty in the progression of their children.

For some it has been about seeing all the hard work of infrastructure building come to fruition and watching partnerships blossom. It has enabled them to do things they might not otherwise have done, and some are now able to see it is both scalable and replicable - the beauty of a plan coming together.

The beauty of commitment has been raised on several occasions as the projects have become clearer about their purpose and their wider organisations and partners have come together around that clarity. It has been important for many of the participants to see that people care and that the work is valued and taken seriously.

In other instances, it has been about helping people grow their autonomy and this has been observed in both young people and other partners, it has been about bringing people together and watching them make their own connections.

Ugly

Ugliness has been described in different ways including frustration, disappointment and anger.

For many this was to do with the nature of their organisational politics and the need to deal with factors that are often outside of the direct control of participants. This has had a direct effect on how the work of Lead Partners has been communicated in some cases and has challenged their autonomy. There have also been issues of trust and being trusted which have felt ugly and uncomfortable, forcing Lead Partners to have some hard conversations.

Trust has come up throughout the process as an important issue and it can be quite fragile in multi-partner working. The fear of some wider partners about any possible negativity has impacted on trust levels and been described as ugly. Some projects have also experienced threats along the way in terms of resourcing and this had led to losing partner individuals and institutions, something seen as both ugly and sad. The apparent fragility of some of the ecosystems that have been involved with Challenge have been seen as a part of an ugly society.

‘Stupid meetings,’ the behaviours of partners not being fully aligned, Lead Partners having to constantly chase for evaluation data and some wider partners appearing to be interested just because of the money or cynically riding on the success of some projects, have also been seen as an uglier side of Challenge.

Sad

Some Lead Partners have expressed sadness about all their ambitions not having been achieved yet, although it is recognised that some of the changes will take longer to deliver. There have also been times in some projects when there was a feeling that people had little interest in continuing and that commitment was ebbing away. This also created a sense of sadness about the work not feeling valued and putting participants under pressure in a way that felt unhealthy.

Sadness was also expressed around the fact that some people had to leave the projects and close-knit teams were broken up. Missed opportunities to share achievements and activities because of challenging inter-partner communication channels has also been sad for some projects.

The most prominent area of sadness raised by all Lead Partners and AND is that some young Londoners are living in difficult and challenging circumstances and that inequality remains stubbornly at the scale it is.

Comic or funny

It would appear that many of the teams and groups spend time together laughing and joking. This is not always because of good humour, sometimes it is provoked by the frustration and apparent ridiculousness of the circumstances some of the Lead Partners have found themselves in.

Often when the young people meet there is a sense of fun and laughter, and the adult partners have also found laughter at the expense of their colleagues as they have watched them get engaged in some of the activities.

There has also been ironic laughter, particularly as Lead Partners have watched internal colleagues turn from initial 'cynics to evangelists' about the work they are doing through Challenge.

One project by a #CultureMaker directly addressed humour on the Portobello Road. And one of the AND team described the delight of whizzing around parts of London in a mini getting to know a possible project.

Reflections

Looking back on the activity phase what thoughts come to mind?

Figure 7 Word cloud from Creative Childhood chapter – Social Life report



Several themes have emerged in reflecting on the Challenge Programme to date:

- Learning: there is a collective desire to understand the learning from Challenge
- Serendipity: its role in delivery activity
- Partnerships, collaborations and alliances
- Different conversations
- Legacy and scaling

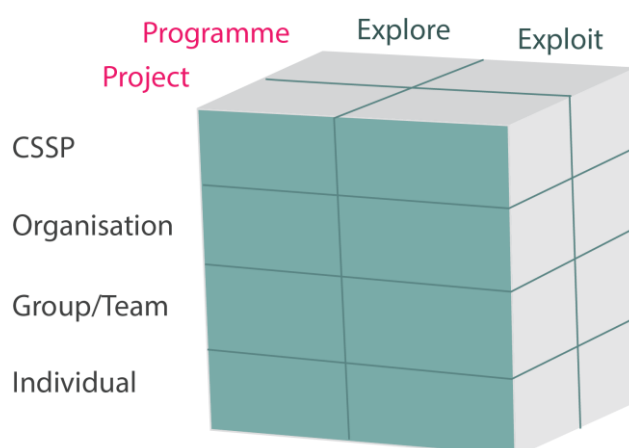
Learning

The desire to understand the learning that is occurring through Challenge has been raised repeatedly throughout the year by all aspects of Challenge, surfacing reflective questions around:

- What do we mean by learning?
- How and where is learning taking place?
- How do we capture our learning and share it with others in a way that might be mutually beneficial?

This suggests that Challenge has created a context where programme participants are interested in understanding practice in action, learning from experience and disseminating learning. In considering the development of Challenge to date what emerges is a complex, multi-dimensional model of learning and knowing (Figure Seven). Given the limitations of two-dimensional representation the Challenge learning approach presented is more of a framework than a full-blown model, and this is something that can be further developed during the last cycle of action research.

Figure 8 Challenge learning: a multi-dimensional model



The first issue is determining the level of analysis at which the learning is occurring, the action research suggests that this encompasses individual, group/team, organisational and CSSP level. It is also concerned with learning across the programme as a whole and within the specific projects.

Reviewing the action undertaken in the last year suggests that implementing the programme and the projects has involved a mix of exploiting current knowledge and experience and exploring new possibilities and opportunities.

Underlying all this is this nature of learning, which given that Challenge encompasses everyone from Early Years to adults has had to engage with both pedagogy and andragogy. There is a further level of nuance that addresses whether the learning is tacit (Polanyi, 1969), implicit or explicit.

It is appreciated that at first glance the complexity of the framework may make it seem less than helpful. That is why it is proposed as a framework rather than a model so it can be used as an overview mechanism for monitoring the kinds of learning that are being captured within the projects and across the programme i.e. are the evaluation processes capturing learning primarily at the individual level of young people, or at organisational level in terms of the Lead Partners.

Reflection questions

- What levels of learning are being captured?
- Are the methods being used appropriate to the nature of learning they are addressing?
- Are there any gaps, if so how can they be addressed?
- How might the different forms of learning be described and disseminated?

Serendipity

If the first year of Challenge was characterised by planning, the second year has been about putting those plans into action. In reflecting on the activity during the year one theme has emerged that is in some ways, by its very nature, hard to describe and that is the place of serendipity. Project leads have described chance conversations, unexpected connections, or simply being in the being in the right place at the right time. In some cases, these serendipitous events have had a significant impact in terms of bringing in new partners or shaping the delivery. In other cases, they have had a more minimal effect, and in others they may not have a role until the beyond the formal end of Challenge.

Given its nature this might not seem like a very helpful concept to highlight. Who knows where or when these serendipitous events will happen or the impact they will have. As the programme includes public funding it may also not seem to be an appropriate strategy for a funding programme to embrace. That said it has been part of the lived experience of the Challenge projects and there may be ways it can be responsibly acknowledged and encouraged in the final year of the programme.

This might include ensuring that there are frequent opportunities for people to meet and connect within and across the projects. NESTA uses an approach called randomised coffee trials where staff members are encouraged to meet up with other staff they have never met before for a 20-30-minute conversation over coffee, something that could be tried within the projects or across Challenge as a whole.

Planning outlines that give a sense of direction but allow flexibility and opportunities for the unforeseen to be developed. Ensuring projects leave spaces in their activities for new aspects to emerge.

Partnerships, collaborations, or alliances

There is an ever growing field of research on inter-organisational working (e.g. Arts and Humanities Research Council, 2013; Cropper, Ebers, Huxham, & Smith Ring, 2008; Hanf & O'Toole, 1992; Huxham & Vangen, 2000; King's College London, 2015) much of which highlights the complexity of this form of collective activity. Some common success factors have been identified, which can be summarised as:

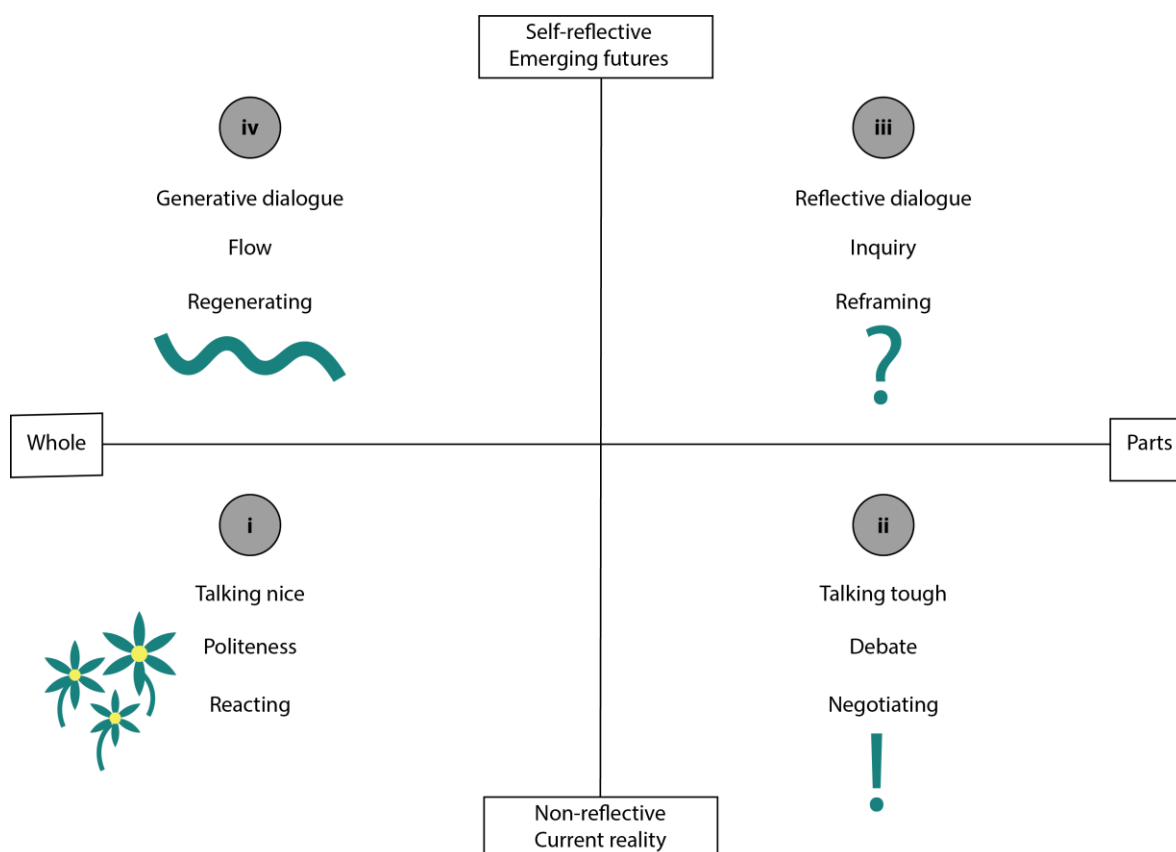
- Selecting the right partners – ensuring participation from complementary organisations, making sure that the right organisations are involved and securing buy-in at a senior level.
- Achieving an effective structure for decision-making (especially where multiple partners are involved).
- Setting goals – ability to set shared goals that matter both to the partner organisations and to wider society/the intended beneficiaries.
- Developing trust and building consensus – to work well together, partners need to understand one another at organisational and personal level.
- Focusing on practical achievements – although it will take time to establish direction and working practices, partnerships need to act and avoid becoming a ‘talking shop’.
- Maintaining partners’ commitment and involvement – partnerships need to sustain impetus, provide leadership and direction, respond flexibly to changing needs, and make sure the partnership is achieving its aims.
- Committing adequate resources – partnerships require sufficient resources to facilitate meetings and other communication, apart from the funding required for specific partnership activities.
- Being able to demonstrate impact – ultimately, partnerships should be able to provide evidence on the difference they make to their intended beneficiaries.

The review by NFER of the pilot National Cultural Education projects confirms the effectiveness of collaborative working but also highlights that it can be challenging and ‘there is no single blueprint for a successful CEP: they need to be locally owned and responsive to local needs, assets and circumstances.’ (Harland & Sharp, 2015: 33) In looking towards year three these success criteria might be a useful mechanism for understanding the effectiveness of the partnerships developed through Challenge.

Different conversations

Challenge has stimulated a range of conversations in order to engage others in its approach. These have ranged from polite introductions to intensive engagement where boundaries between organisations are dissolved. Some Lead Partners have described having difficult conversations in order to make their case or try and move the project forward. These tough conversations have also been prompted by a need to clarify where the work of Challenge sits alongside other initiatives that are taking place.

Figure 9 Conversational fields for change



The Scharmer (2000) model (Figure Nine) is based on the concept that change conversations need to engage with past and present interactions as well as understanding the emerging future. The model proposes that conversations move through the four fields starting from politeness and evolving through to a genuine dialogue. This ideal of a genuine dialogue is something that Challenge and the Lead Partners have been striving to achieve but this becomes increasingly complex when there are more partners involved in the project or programme. Moving from individual to collective agendas is often a challenging process.

Legacy and scaling

All the Lead Partners, particularly those finishing in the next few months are mindful of their legacy and their ongoing commitment to a step change in cultural education in London. In a number of cases the main intention is to scale the work accomplished during Challenge. This will either involve scaling the project as a whole or taking elements and developing them further.

The signs are positive in terms of Music for Change, Creative Schools, Creative Croydon, London Youth and Cultivate that this will be feasible as new partners have already joined the projects and others have made approaches for the activity to be developed in their area.

It might be worth considering what is meant with regard to an appropriate legacy and what comes next for those finishing their Challenge contributions.

Reflection questions

- Resilience: can the Lead Partner/partnerships adapt to future changes and/or build the required level of resourcing?
- Longevity: is there an ongoing commitment to cultural education?
- Engagement: are the relationships built with partners, young people, communities etc., likely to be ongoing?
- Future activism around cultural education: are the project partners likely to continue engaging with the themes raised by Challenge and the needs of cultural education?

What have we learnt about engaging others in the conversation about the value and needs of cultural education in London?

In terms of answering the inquiry question about engaging others a number of points have emerged:

- Working cross-sectorally: It was always recognised that Challenge had a big ambition and that was going to require a wide group of stakeholders. Given the six core themes this also meant new partners had to be brought into the conversation
- Connectors and enablers: where Lead Partners already had strong connections the conversations have been direct. In some cases where the need was to move into other sectors an appropriate point of contact has been important. Someone able to make connections for the projects and the programme
- Awareness of assumptions: working across sectors is not always easy and benefits from high levels of self-awareness to surface assumptions being made and the nature of the conversations being held
- Intrinsic and instrumental: much as everyone wants to make the case for cultural education on intrinsic grounds there is recognition that for some stakeholders an instrumental approach is needed. This requires a level of knowledge about others in the partnership that ensures appropriate language and approaches. The findings of the C&E annual corporates-NGO Partnership Barometer 2016 gives some useful insights into the motivations and perceived benefits of partnering for the different parties
- Events, activities and information dissemination: have all been core aspects of widening the conversation. In several cases Lead Partners have acted as facilitators to enable others to make wider connections around cultural education

- Social media: warrants a separate mention because this is perhaps the least co-ordinated aspect of the conversation generation in programme terms. It is of course the nature of social media that it is viral and organic and each of the partners have utilised it in different ways. However, an outsider to the programme may find it difficult to navigate the array of storylines
- An open mind: this links to the theme of serendipity and suggests that just by being out in the field and having different conversations, not necessarily Challenge specific, new connections can be made. Some of which will have an immediate benefit and others may not materialise until a later date
- The Golden Thread: to a certain extent it is easier to engage others in conversations about specific projects because they are rooted in a place, or a creative form or groups of young people. It has been harder for Challenge as programme to achieve this

What has worked best for Challenge to date?

A number of factors have been highlighted as being positive from the second year of Challenge:

- Delivering a wide range of events, activities and approaches
- AND's relationship with the Lead Partners and their projects
- There has been some sharing across projects, particularly in the relation to the work of the Young People
- Young people having a clear voice where they have been a core part of the project
- Developing the focus on place and commissioning research has brought a clarity to what is required of the second cohort of applicants
- Building wider partnerships, relationships and CSSPs
- Positive outcomes for some young people are already being seen
- The contribution of the Challenge Group expertise is highly valued

What changes were made from last year and what improvements might be made in year three?

Ongoing improvement is at the heart of Challenge. The Challenge Lead Partner meetings, input from the Challenge Group, ongoing monitoring and the action research all serve to highlight and suggest adaptations as the programme moves forward. In terms of the suggested improvements from the first cycle AND responded by allowing more time to develop proposals and, given the timescale for the final cohort of projects, working predominantly on solicited bids.

AND also ensured it provided the necessary resources to support potential applicants and the application process was focused specifically on the New London New Schools theme. This both addressed a gap from the previous round and gave clarity to the application process.

While capacity was raised again as an issue in cycle two given that relationships are more established Lead Partners and AND were open to changes to timelines and milestones. Two areas highlighted last time – building a resource base and engaging senior leaders remain something to address in the final year.

Other suggested areas of improvement or change include:

- Consider the funding timescales; it might have been effective to have provided some existing projects with provisional three year funding in the first instance. This would have allowed for a review process at the end of year two rather than a reapplication
- The overall narrative of Challenge has yet to find a clear focus and there remains a need to co-ordinate the resources being developed across the programme. Challenge has evolved a number of sub 'brands' with the distinctive identities of the Lead Partners and it might be useful to find a mechanism for curating these either as guest blogs, project of the week or through Storify
- The question of the meaning of step change has been raised during this second year and it might prove helpful to define a Theory of Change to start to clarify the nature of the intended change/s

What is surprising about Challenge to date?

Quality has understandably been raised as an important aspect of Challenge throughout the year. The surprising element of this is that while it is laudable it can prove double edged particularly in terms of building a cross sectoral dialogue where some might feel their expertise is being challenged if it is suggested their practices may not be regarded as being of an appropriate standard. This needs delicate handling as relationships are being built.

Another surprising element has been the acknowledgment of serendipity as having a place in delivering the projects. While all the Lead Partners have had a clear project plan and milestones most also recognise there have been chance occasions outside of the plan that have brought in new approaches or have made new connections.

Most have been in a position to pick up on these opportunities as they have arisen. This suggests there is a need for project plans to allow some flexibility to provide for the unforeseen and unknown as a positive as well as a potential risk.

Less of a surprise than a cause for celebration is the benefits that young people have been gaining from the projects. All the Lead Partners have spoken positively about seeing the ambitions of their projects materialising; young people have been experiencing dance for the first time, making their own films, setting up websites, tackling local issues. Young children have been improving their language skills and gaining confidence through music. Creative practitioners have been making new contacts, undertaking CPD and delivering work. Sharing these stories is going to be a crucial part of bringing others into the conversation about the value, needs and importance of cultural education in London.

Looking to Cycle Three

The future – what do we mean by step change?

“ London’s built environment is undergoing massive changes. This presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to build a resilient city that is poised for the future. At present, thinking about the needs for children, young people and families to play, learn and create is an overlooked strategy for building successful places.

(Social Life, 2016)

“ It is not enough to inject a vacant lot with quirky art happenings, or develop an artist live/work collective in an old, dank warehouse district. Before we can envision place-making, we must first acknowledge our legacy of place-taking and seek to establish places of connection, social equity and economic opportunity for everyone.

(Webb, 2014)

The feedback during the action research process suggests that there are two areas that would be useful to plan for as year three evolves. They should help capture more of the learning and provide a means of answering the question about the difference Challenge has made and is making. These are:

- What do we mean by step change?
- What is the story of Challenge?

The suggested ToC (Appendix Four) is intended as a prompt for debate and discussion, and is certainly not designed to be definitive. Ideally, it could be debated with the Lead Partners to get an understanding of their perspectives on step change and what difference they think their projects are making. There are various models of change around activism (such as Green, 2016) that might prove useful for gaining a more depth understanding of what has been happening during Challenge.

In terms of the story of Challenge, this should be enabled by the ToC, which could become a mechanism for finding the Golden Thread (assuming it has not already been found) that runs through Challenge. There is a growing pride developing from the collective experiences of Challenge and these have the potential to build the story. In some ways Challenge is like a crystal, it has many facets and casts lots of different patterns, so part of the issue will be around finding a story that is easily remembered and easily told. Maybe the first step is to find the best storytellers?

Recommendations

A series of reflection questions have been included throughout this discussion document to act as prompts for further action. In addition a number of recommendations are suggested in terms of what changes and improvements might be made going into year three of Challenge:

AND

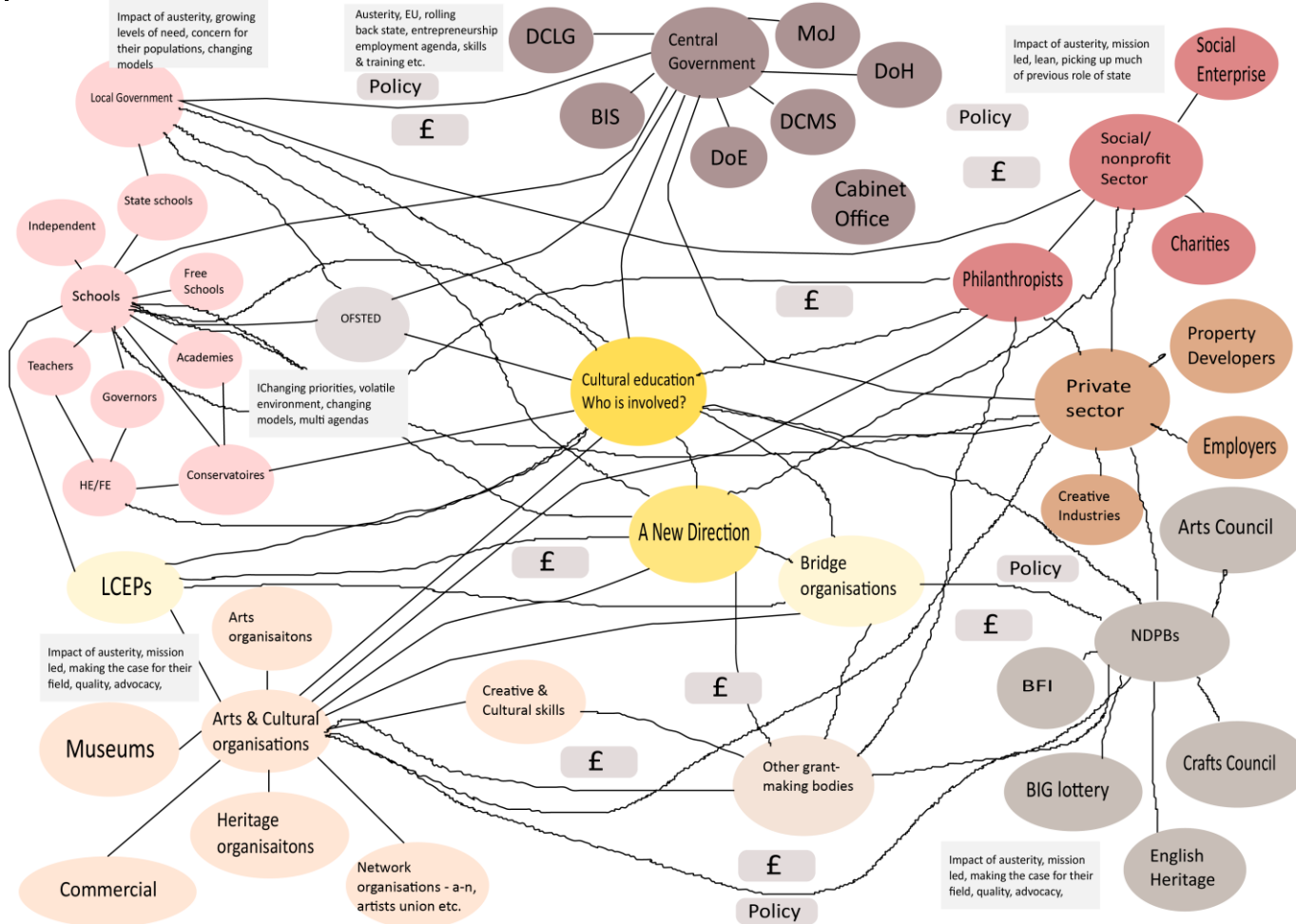
1. Continue to develop the interactive map to act as a curation point for Challenge and to highlight the extent of the partnerships engaged in cultural education
2. Continue to allow flexibility within the delivery of the projects and enable serendipity
3. Update contextual information/research where possible, some of the original research leading up to the development of Challenge (like the BOP report) are now in danger of becoming outdated as the context is changing so rapidly
4. Given that over the next year some Lead Partners are finishing and new ones are arriving it would be a useful time to develop a shared dissemination plan. In doing this it would be worth considering the widest possible network as possible particular possible cross-sectoral networks – this could include academic journals (Youth Voice Journal, Action Research & learning Journal), professional networks, etc.
5. A glossary of terms in use would still provide a useful resource within Challenge and beyond
6. Refine what is meant by step change and open the dialogue with the Lead Partners Now is the ideal team to be finding and sharing the golden thread, which might be facilitated by agreeing the Theory of Change (ToC) underlying Challenge and how this informs future communication strategies (a draft ToC is included at Appendix Four as a starting point for discussion)
7. Consider talking to other organisations working in the social activism/change area such as Oxfam, Greenpeace, or the Network of Social Change, and ask them for insights in terms of their approach

Lead Partners

1. Continue to build the narrative of your particular projects and share your achievements with AND and the wider network
2. Consider how you will gain the most from your time within Challenge and what might you might need to put in place to ensure that happens
3. Consider how best to share your learning – in particular the key themes that are likely to impact your project/s in the coming year
4. Review your ambitions and definitions of a step change and share them with AND to help shape the ToC
5. Consider how you might create opportunities for serendipity to occur

Appendices

Appendix One: Cultural Education Indicative Mess Map



Appendix Two: The Action Research Approach

The goal of such research is to bring about an improvement in their own practice (Birley and Moreland, 1998: 34)

Action research can take different forms but tends to have a number of characteristics:

- It focuses on the connection between knowledge acquisition and action. It is concerned with combining practice and research so knowledge is generated about how and why improvements come about
- Action research is a collaborative partnership between the researcher and those participating in a project or programme
- Results are shared with everyone involved to inform future cycles of action and reflection

As a methodology it can encompass a range of methods but is primarily located within the qualitative domain and as such its rigour is dependent on a number of quality criteria:

- Defensibility
- Educative value
- Trustworthiness

There are several methods built into the Challenge Action Research to ensure the process has been as rigorous as possible:

- Repeating the cycle – repeating the cycle allows practice to build and improve over a period of time. Often the first cycle is concerned with exploring the situation, the second cycle allows for delivery action to take place and the third cycle is the overall evaluation
- Working closely with AND to build the action research approach and apply it in a credible manner
- Ensuring those involved have credibility in their fields and trust is built in the action research process

In terms of data collection there was a process of refinement in agreeing what the action research would focus on and the question for cycle two was adapted following conversations with AND and the Lead Partners.

Data collection has been systematic and sustained throughout the year. Data has been drawn from different sources to allow for cross checking of findings and to draw out any anomalies. Where interviews were conducted they were done so in confidence and contributions have been anonymised accordingly.

The report is being issued in draft form and will be presented to AND, the Challenge Group and the Lead Partners to allow for additional comment and change.

‘Writing, or otherwise reporting the work of the project will often be an individual activity but confirmation must always be collective.’

McTaggart, 1997

A literature review has also been included to aid theory building and demonstrate how the practical findings are located in a wider field. A range of sources were reviewed in appropriate fields. The literature review was developed from the core themes and asked:

- What do researchers know about the theme?
- What gaps are there, if any?
- How does the literature inform or develop our understanding of Challenge?
- How might Challenge contribute to the body of knowledge now or in future?

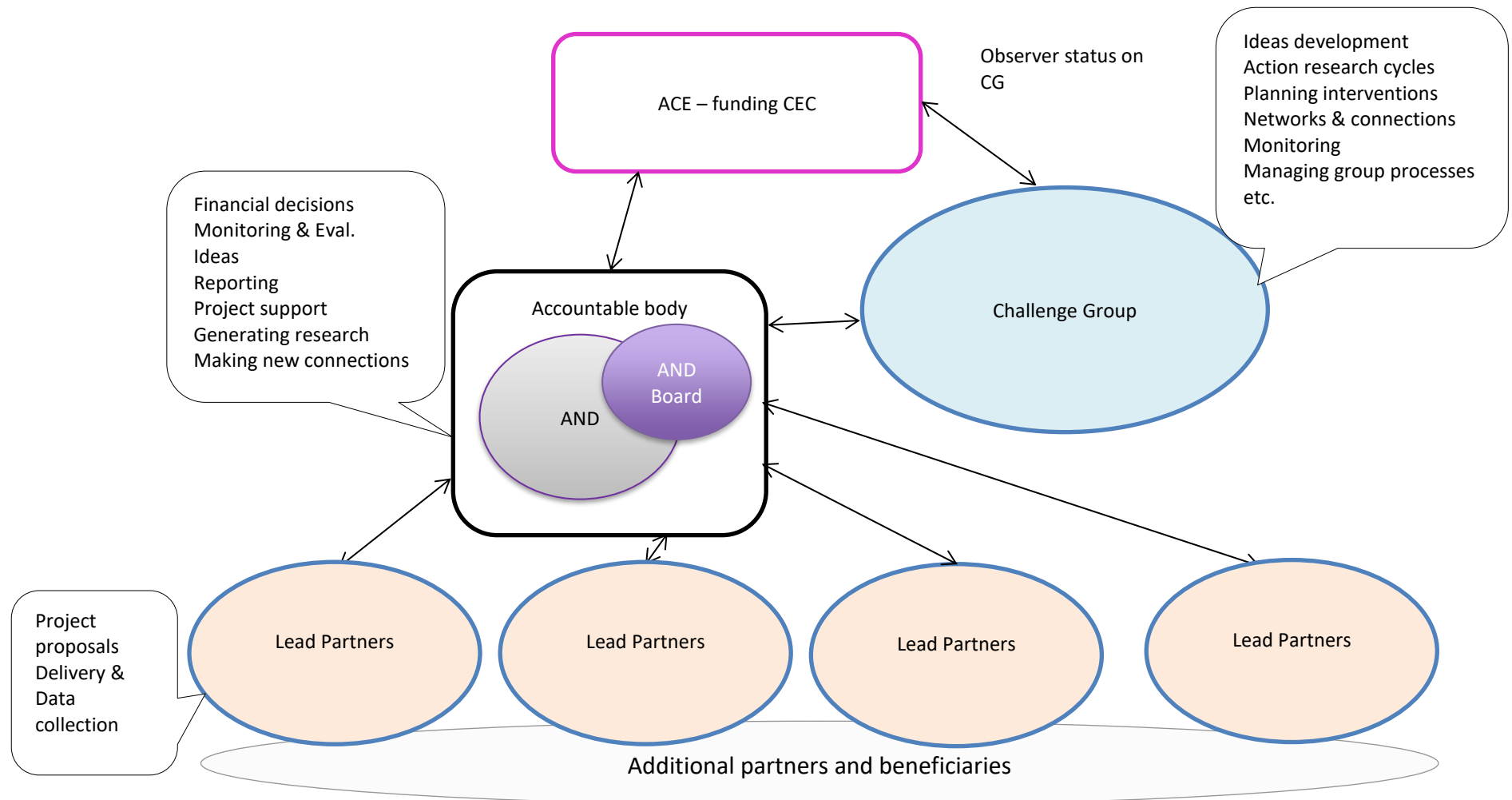
Data analysis has followed a number of steps:

Data familiarisation	Data transcribed where necessary, reading and re-reading the data, mind-mapping initial ideas
Generating initial codes	Coding of key features and organising data – in the initial phase some 62 codes were developed
Thematic analysis	Refining coded data into core themes, developing vignettes
Theme review	Mapping the analysis and checking for anomalies or gaps
Themes defined	Narrative development, themes finalised and written up in an appropriate form

The unit of analysis within the action research is the Challenge Programme as a whole.

In addition to the researcher analysis this report is issued in the spirit of action research as a discussion document and it is expected that feedback from the Challenge network will then be fed into later versions. The aim of the action research has been to generate theoretical rather than statistical generalisations. (Ragin 1991) Issues and alternatives in comparative social research

Appendix Three: Updated Challenge Delivery model - 2017



Appendix Four: An indicative Challenge Theory of Change

Building awareness of the issues confronting cultural education in London	Developing cross-sectoral approaches to delivering cultural education in London	High quality cultural education is widely available in London	Young people are culturally engaged and active citizens
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researching and defining the issues impacting cultural education in London • Considering the possible futures for cultural education in London • Building a coalition • Investing resources • Sharing research • Designing the Challenge programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brokering relationships • Supporting Lead Partners • Building cross-sectoral resources • Focusing on the six Challenge themes • Focus on place-making • Investing resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross sectoral social partnerships on-going and embedded • Continued relationship brokering • Policy influence • Quality thresholds established and sustained • Partnerships with other activists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people are accessing cultural education • Equitable and accessible routes to employment in cultural sector • Widest definitions of culture are in use • Culture and creativity embedded in formal and informal learning • Young people continue as cultural/community activists • Young peoples' voice acknowledged

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Endnotes

ⁱ Source: EY

[http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/Employment_landscape_for_young_people_in_the_UK/\\$FILE/Employment%20landscape%20for%20young%20people%20in%20the%20UK%20-%20final%20report.pdf](http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/Employment_landscape_for_young_people_in_the_UK/$FILE/Employment%20landscape%20for%20young%20people%20in%20the%20UK%20-%20final%20report.pdf)

ⁱⁱ Source: Children and Young People now

<http://www.cypnow.co.uk/cyp/news/2003032/youth-services-in-london-cut-by-gbp22m>

ⁱⁱⁱ Source: DCMS <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/museums-and-galleries-monthly-visits>

^{iv} Source: GLA, 2017, Annual London Education Report

^v <http://www.candeadvisory.com/barometer>

^{vi} <http://www.newlondonarchitecture.org/news/2016/november-2016/regeneration-needs-reset-to-forge-good-placemaking>

^{vii} Further case studies are planned throughout 2017