

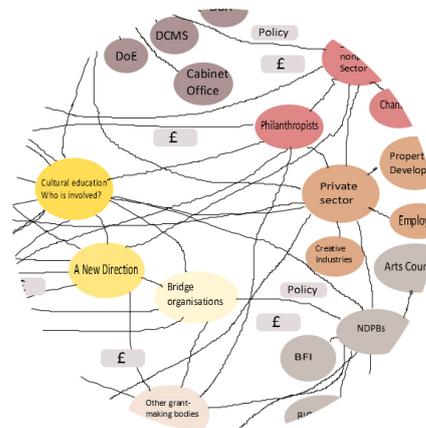
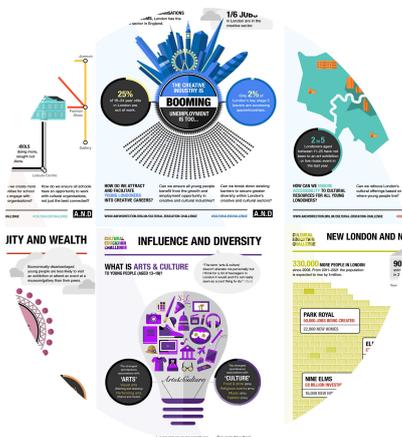


London Cultural Education Challenge

Action Research Reflections - Cycle Three Discussion Document

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

One London Cultural Education Challenge A Generational Commitment



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Executive Summary

The journey, at least this phase of it, has now come to an end. The quest to seek out partners who would join with A New Direction (AND) in achieving more equitable and accessible, high quality cultural education in London is drawing to a close. Over the last three years AND has supported ten Challenge Partner projects in working towards a step change in cultural education in London. AND has been committed to capturing the learning from practice, which has included three cycles of action research. The overall inquiry question for the programme was:

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 third year of the London Cultural Education Challenge (“Challenge”) and responds to the following question for this cycle of action research:

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

Challenge has been delivered at a time of on-going complexity and uncertainty in the external environment. Since April 2017 there has been a snap general election, on-going uncertainty around Brexit, the London Terror attacks, growing calls for accountability around the social media industry, the Oxfam and Save the Children scandals, increasing concerns about young people’s mental health, the Grenfell tragedy and rising knife crime impacting young black men and teenagers in London in particular.

We have also seen the strengthening of campaigns such as Black Lives Matter and Me Too, feminist debates rekindled, young people wanting to engage in politics and social issues, acts of heroism and humanity during the terrorist attacks, a young rapper who only released his music via streaming received Grammy Awards, and advancements in stem cell technology. This tiny snapshot gives an indication of the rollercoaster of change that Challenge, its partners and its beneficiaries are navigating on a daily basis.

As a result, Challenge has been designed with an ambitious purpose, and a clear framework of themes it wants to address, but this has been implemented with flexibility, allowing Lead Partners to respond to their own changing contexts and new opportunities.

Like previous years a short literature review has been undertaken to consider the wider body of knowledge that might inform the learning from Challenge. It is also a means of exploring gaps in that knowledge to which Challenge might contribute. This year the literature review has considered:

- Collaborative Inquiry
- Humour
- Organisational pride

This discussion document is based on the agreed action research framework for Challenge and considers:

1. Planning: what was intended to happen during this period?
2. Action: what was done?
3. Observations and reflections: what did we discover as a result of what was done?
4. Improvement: what will we change because of this inquiry?

The purpose of action research reporting is fourfold:

1. To suggest practical improvement in the programme and the projects
2. To document the process and any changes that have occurred
3. Indicative theory building
4. Dissemination of learning and any new knowledge that has emerged

In cycle one a framework for collaborative practice was suggested based on the activity that had been undertaken that year, this has remained relevant through cycle two and three. This year all elements of the framework have come into play as some projects completed, new projects were started, existing projects moved into their final phase and AND looked towards the next iteration of the programme. This blend of timelines and activities show that the framework needs to be regarded as a dynamic model rather than a linear progression from creating through to change. The aims of Lead Partners and Challenge have remained consistent throughout the year and AND produced its Place Strategy reinforcing the importance of place which came to the fore in cycle two.

In reflecting on this action research cycle several themes have emerged in 2017/18, not surprisingly these have very much been influenced by the programme being in its last year. There has been a focus on dissemination and 'getting the word out', shared learning and evaluation.

In terms of our inquiry question for year three regarding the difference that has been made, Challenge has delivered against the six programme themes to varying degrees. We have discovered that policy and programmes are not static entities that can (or should) be designed and held fast. Part of Challenge's success and the difference it has made for Lead Partners is that it has been able to stay flexible. Some milestones have changed, timelines have changed, individuals have changed, and the nature of the approach has changed for some Lead Partners. Challenge has been able to work with these issues as they have happened and flex accordingly.

Recommendations

AND

1. Continue telling the story of Challenge: there is a great deal of rich knowledge and experience that has been generated by Challenge and through the Lead Partners. This story can be told and retold in many ways

2. Continue embedding Challenge within AND's other programmes: One of the benefits gained this year has been the growing integration with Challenge and ANDs other work. Continuing this approach with Challenge London will deepen the impact
3. Maintain relationships with Challenge partners in both cohorts: It is too early for many of the Lead Partners to think in terms of impact, and while there are resource implications and individuals will change, some form of on-going connection will help keep the story alive
4. Launch the AND resources area
5. Continue disseminating visuals from the projects
6. Utilise the research gained during Challenge: the programme has generated wide ranging insights from collaborate working and group dynamics to youth voice and social activism. There are several academic conferences and journals that would be relevant for the research Challenge could produce
7. Consider creating a Young Challenge Ambassadors Network: or some other form of continuing the connection with the young people that have benefitted from Challenge. This will help feed into a longitudinal impact study
8. Showcasing: Consider bringing together and showcasing the creative work developed during challenge, this could be online or live
9. Challenge Alumni: Develop a Challenge Alumni who might consider acting as mentors for Challenge London projects (this could be connected to the Ambassadors scheme)
10. Explore digital activism as a mechanism for extending the messages of Challenge

Lead Partners

1. Connect to each other via social media and continue to strengthen the network
2. Make your resources developed through Challenge available as widely as possible
3. Continue to share and celebrate your achievements
4. Keep capturing the stories of the partners and young people who have benefitted from Challenge
5. Share information on spin off projects, on-going partnerships and the impacts on young people
6. Explore digital activism further as a mechanism for extending the messages of Challenge

The Backstory – London Cultural Education Challenge

The London Cultural Education Challenge *has* challenged us, but hopefully we have risen to it. There are so many voices calling for recognition of the multiple benefits of engaging with arts and culture and building this into a rounded education. A New Direction's investment has enabled us to focus attention with new resources and fresh energy and to bring our cultural partners with us, as well as to recognise and promote the fantastic work being done already in the borough. (Lead Partner)

Experts say that improving access and increasing participation are no longer enough: communities should be engaged at a deeper level in determining what the arts and creativity mean for them. (Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (UK Branch), 2016: 7)

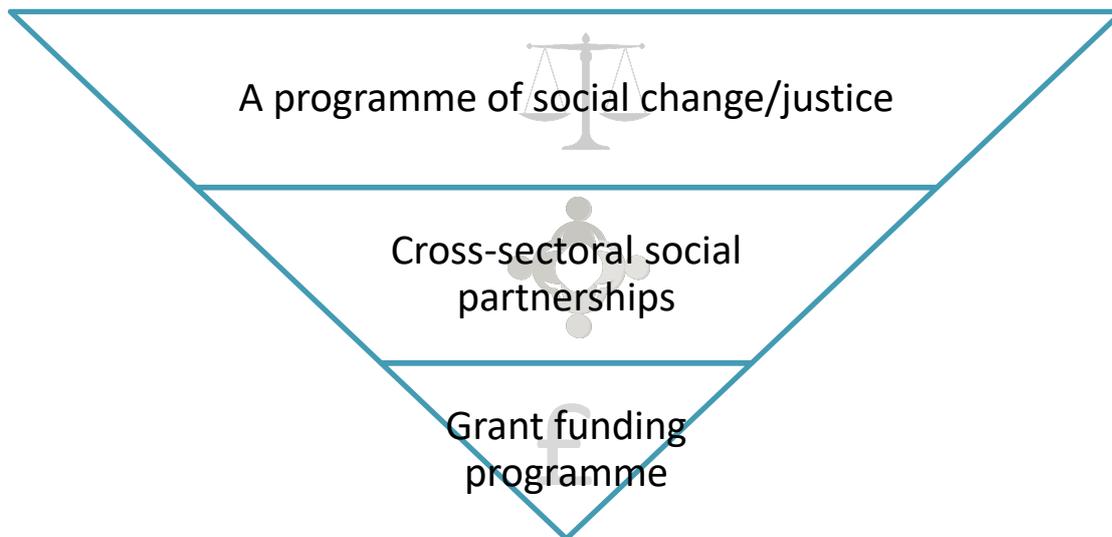
Challenge has continued its work in this, its third and final year. The programme was launched in response to research undertaken by AND coupled with growing concerns about how children and young people were engaging with arts and culture in London. The initial research found a very mixed picture in relation to access to cultural provision. As a result, Challenge was designed around addressing six themes:

1. Equity and wealth: looking at why cultural engagement among economically disadvantaged young people is disproportionately low
2. Equity and geography: concerned with how to ensure access to cultural resources for young Londoners wherever they are based
3. Influence and diversity: looking at how to communicate arts and culture more effectively and that young people have a voice and influence in the cultural sector in London
4. Entry to employment: attracting and facilitating young people into creative careers
5. New London and new schools: ensuring cultural education is part of the foundations for London's anticipated growth and development
6. A Super-Served system: addressing why schools and cultural organisations find it hard to engage with each other

AND has invested £900,000 over three years in support of projects that directly addressed these themes and that could raise match funding to generate additional resources for cultural education. The programme's main ambition being to create a step change in cultural education in London.

The model of a three-tiered programme (Figure One) introduced in cycle one and reviewed in cycle two has continued with projects working across the three levels to differing degrees.

Figure 1 Cultural Education Challenge Programme levels



The Cross-Sectoral Social Partnerships (CSSPs) have continued to evolve and in most cases, these have involved bipartite partnerships across the nonprofit and public sectors. In a few cases there has been private sector involvement, but these relationships have tended to be more distant or mediated by a public-sector body such as a local authority.

Cultural Education – the context

A Child's Right to Cultural Activity

Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of The Child [1989] – Leisure, recreation and cultural activities states that:

1. *State Parties recognise the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely to cultural life and the arts.*
2. *State 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 activities.*

Creative arts subjects are being cut back in many secondary schools in England, a BBC survey suggests. More than 1,200 schools responded - over 40% of secondary schools. Of the schools that responded, nine in every 10 said they had cut back on lesson time, staff or facilities in at least one creative arts subject. Of the schools responding, four in 10 were spending less money on facilities, more than three out of 10 had reduced timetabled lessons, and some reported having fewer specialist staff. ⁱ

The bigger picture for the arts subjects in schools is one of a perfect storm of changes in school accountability, and cuts to funding in education and local authorities. These all used to support arts activities for children and young people in and out of school. Up and down the country these activities, including youth clubs, school trips to museums and theatres and summer art projects, can no longer be afforded. ⁱⁱ

The previous action research discussion documents highlighted the volatile and uncertain external environment in which Challenge was being delivered. The perception of this environment amongst partners is that it has continued to worsen and that the overall purpose and ambition of Challenge remains as valid after year three as it was at the beginning. The context for the programme continues to play an important role in the programme's delivery and is considered here in two parts:

1. The action context: the position of the programme within a wider context
2. The research context: consideration of the academic and theoretical literature that provides a wider understanding of the issues raised by Challenge. It locates aspects of the Challenge programme in relation to other research, policy and practice

The action context

Collaborative arrangements are also seen as critical means to gain access to fragmented and local knowledge, mobilize dispersed resources, and build up legitimacy through the construction of common purpose and communal problem-ownership. Knowledge is frequently described to be not only shared but also created in collaborative settings greatly expanding the possibilities to address wicked problems in a more comprehensive fashion. (Daviter, 2017)

At the outset of Challenge we defined its ambition to achieve a step change in cultural education as being a response to a wicked problem (Rittel & Webber, 1973). We saw the challenges that were confronting cultural education as:

- Having many interdependencies and being multi-causal
- Having is no single solution
- Involving multiple stakeholders and interest groups
- Likely to have a no stopping rule i.e. there is not a clearly defined end-point when a solution is implemented
- Being 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

This complexity was illuminated through a series of Lead Partner and programme mess maps (Appendix One shows the overview mess map developed in year one). This process highlighted the interconnectedness, encouraged the group to think from the perspective of the others in the system and to gain some understanding of what achievements would be feasible.

Messes are complex, multi-dimensional, intractable, dynamic problems that can only be partially addressed and partially resolved. (Ackoff, 1999)

In some ways defining the challenges facing cultural education in London as a wicked problem and a 'mess' might not be seen as especially helpful, it raises the question of how you start to address something so intractable. The Challenge programme has evolved several features to address this. It has been as flexible and adaptable as possible, it has sought to involve as wide a range of perspectives as possible (including young people), it has invested new resources, and has sought to develop a multidisciplinary and cross-disciplinary network. It has also been notable that in this year Challenge has dovetailed further into other AND initiatives to maximise both resources and impact.

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 a snap General Election, the on-going uncertainty around Brexit, and the London terror attacks all of which have had a range of impacts on communities and organisations in all sectors.

Table 1 A snapshot of factors and trends influencing cultural education in year three

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 up new roles, powers and alliances • The impact of Brexit on community cohesion • Changing policy landscape for education • Technological impacts on behaviour, work and learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 57% of disadvantaged 2 year-olds in London accessed their free part-time place, compared to 68% nationallyⁱⁱⁱ • £22m has been cut from youth services since 2011, closing 30 youth centres, with at least 12,700 places for young people lost • London Boroughs bid for the Mayor’s Borough of Culture awards • London’s Poverty Profile shows that 58% of Londoners in poverty live in working families. This equates to 1.3 million people – a 50% increase over the last decade • 42% of London’s largest property developments due to complete have a focus on culture • The draft London Plan 2017 states that Boroughs should seek to ensure that Opportunity Areas and large-scale mixed-use developments include new cultural venues and/or facilities and spaces for outdoor cultural events • AND/KCL report on Caring for Cultural Freedom is released – highlighting importance of safe spaces and adaptable partnership working • General election held and Conservatives win but lose majority • London’s population will swell to 9.1 million by 2020, having grown at twice the rate of the rest of England. Yet by 2020 London boroughs will have experienced a 63% funding cut^{iv}

Source: AND unless otherwise indicated

The research context

As with the first two cycles of action research the wider research field has also been included in this year’s review. This brings together theory and practice, places Challenge action research within a wider context, and highlights possible connections that might not otherwise happen. It asks if Challenge can either benefit from or contribute to the existing body of knowledge.

Several areas like young people voice and activism have continued and were covered in the discussion papers for previous years. Three new themes have emerged this year:

- Collaborative Inquiry
- Humour and fun
- Organisational pride

Collaborative Inquiry

In the early stages of Challenge there was some discussion about the possibility of Challenge developing a Community of Practice (Wenger, 1998). Given constraints of time, workloads, resources and a focus on set up and delivery this proved difficult to create in the early years. In year three there has been a stronger sense of Lead Partners identifying with the group and the work of their peer Lead Partners.

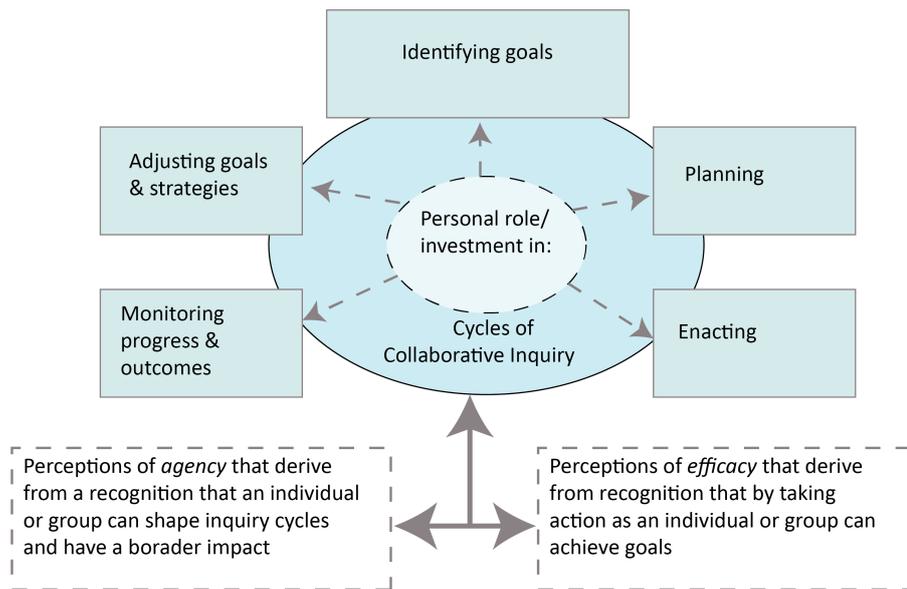
Reflecting further on this final year it may be more appropriate to now think of Challenge as a programme of collaborative inquiry. Inquiry driven approaches have a goals-based focus, can have a systemic change purpose and are frequently used in educational settings.

...teachers engaged in inquiry are more likely to try new ideas, take risks, and persist through growing pains that inevitably accompany innovation. (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2001)

The actions of the Challenge Partners suggest that being part of Challenge encouraged them to take on projects they might not otherwise have done and that the peer support enabled them to work through the more difficult aspects of their activities. Collaborative inquiry can be described as individuals acting together with intentionality within authentic activity. (Butler, Schnellert, & MacNeil, 2015) This approach maps neatly onto an action research framework as it allows for the framing of the inquiry and a process for reviewing what then happens in practice. It is also noteworthy that each of the projects became defined in terms of a research question (Appendix Two).

Research suggests that important factors in this process are agency and efficacy (Figure Two). That is participants need to feel they have some capacity to exercise control over their activity and engagement, people 'who feel they have a meaningful voice/role in the activity are more likely to participate.' (Butler et al., 2015: 9) This is linked to efficacy, which is the sense that participants have of their ability to achieve their goals in particular circumstances.

Figure 2 Relationships between agency, efficacy and inquiry in professional development (adapted from Butler et al., 2015)



Challenge has provided a platform for Lead Partners and AND to explore issues of agency and efficacy and to work towards making a difference to cultural education in London. Lead Partners have expressed their frustration about the occasions when their agency has been limited, which has then had an impact on their ability to achieve their aims.

Humour and fun

One of the skills which we all acquire, to varying degrees, is that of employing humour to help deal with the problems of multiplicity and contradiction, incongruity and incoherence which are built into our organized patterns of social action. (Mulkay, 1988)

Humour in work environments is seldom neutral or trivial (Barsoux 1996); on the contrary, it is frequently purposeful (Vinton 1989, Porcu 2005) (Vivona, 2014:3)

It has not been uncommon for Challenge Partner meetings to have an element of light-heartedness and for there to be laughter and smiles. Lead Partners have reported that this has also been a feature of many of their group meetings and activities, and particularly their work with young people.

While this may seem like a frivolous matter there is a body of research that highlights the importance of humour in the workplace; a search of a single journal, 'Organization Studies' revealed 131 entries under humour. It has been linked to handling ambiguity, engagement and resistance. Laughter and joking can give insights into a group's culture, its behaviours and what is acceptable or important to its members.

Early in year three Challenge Partners were asked to create a storyboard for Challenge including villains, heroes, obstacles and so on. The exercise generated a great deal of laughter and had a sense of being playful, but it was evident from the feedback that some significant issues had also been discussed. In this instance humour and laughter had helped find some group cohesion as Lead Partners shared common ground and debated common foes.

This links to the notion that humour, and laughter are mechanisms that can support individual and collective engagement. Research suggests that engagement has three antecedents (Rich, Lepine, & Crawford, 2010):

- The work is meaningful (psychological meaningfulness)
- That the environment is regarded as safe and supportive (psychological safety)
- That individuals feel emotionally stable, have good levels of confidence and have some sense of agency (psychological availability)

...fun creates enjoyment and camaraderie, and thus engagement at the team, unit or organizational level. (Plester & Hutchison, 2016: 11)

It seems that fun and engagement are often interrelated and regarded positively, and that Lead Partners were open to experiencing it as part of the Challenge process. Equally, some Lead Partners related how they would not have been able to engage young people if fun and humour had not been part of the culture.

Finally, it is worth noting that several Lead Partners have also spoken of instances where 'gallows humour' has been employed, often when projects have hit barriers and it is a means of expressing exasperation and disbelief. This is obviously a particular type of humour and is worth looking out for in groups because it tends to denote 'very threatening circumstances, situations that are too serious to be funny.' (Triezenberg, 2004) This can act as a mechanism for diffusing something that is emotionally troubling, but is also context specific and as such it may not be understood by others outside of the experience.

Organisational pride

The Lead Partners sit around the table at one end of the room that is now synonymous with our meetings as a group. Microphones are in place to capture what is to be their last discussion as a group. Initially there is a little reticence to speak; perhaps the unfamiliar formality is a bit off putting. Aply led by Corinne the conversation soon starts to flow as individual accounts of the various projects are shared. Listening to the stories the experiences recounted are moving and inspiring. What is evident is the immense pride in both what was attempted and what has been achieved. Each positive account sparks a memory for another Lead Partner and the collective story of achievements grows. Action Researcher

Pride is one of the most intense experiences in work life (Katzenbach). And work itself is a source of pride. (Hodons, 1998). (Lu & Roto, 2016)

Regardless of whether we work within more formal evaluation structures we are naturally evaluative, and pride is one of the emotion-based mechanisms we use to determine how well we have achieved our goals. Pride can be based on how well we complete a task or project, how well we work or the people we work with. If we have pride in what we do 'it can be empathized by others' (McIntosh) and contribute to future success. This creates what has been described as a 'closed loop of energy' (Katzenbach, 2003)

"...better performance contributes to business success, and recognised business success instils a strong feeling of pride, which fuels better performance."

Challenge has enabled a climate for the sharing of achievements which in turn has created a wider sense of pride in collective. On hearing everyone talk at the final roundtable there was a sense of movement between self/project pride and group pride (Zander fuller etc. 1972). One Lead Partner also felt that involvement in Challenge had enhanced the reputation of their organisation and generated a wider organisational pride.

The importance of sharing the achievements of Challenge on as wide a platform as possible arguably goes beyond metrics and measures. It can sustain the pride that has been developed, which can in turn spur Lead Partners and their partners on and maintain the ambition of the programme beyond its completion date.

"People feel life has more meaning when they are motivated by cherished goals, aware of self-improvement, involved in healthy interpersonal relationships, and loyal to their beliefs." (Lu & Roto, 2016: 1)

Reflection questions

- Has AND felt it had the agency to deliver the programme it had intended? If not, how could this be addressed in the Challenge London programme?
- What channels could be used for disseminating Challenge achievements that are not being used now?
- How might AND and Lead Partners use an inquiry-based approach going forward?
- Are there aspects of the work that AND and Lead Partners are most proud of? Are these reflected fully in telling the story of Challenge?
- How are young people's stories being shared?
- What were some of the funniest moments of Challenge?

Learning and improvement through action research

A young girl after taking part in the workshop said; ‘This is the best day of my life!’ ... I have proved to myself that I can do something when my mind is set to doing it. (Challenge participant)

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 Three gives further background). It has several characteristics that suggest it has a role to play in understanding the development of Challenge overall:

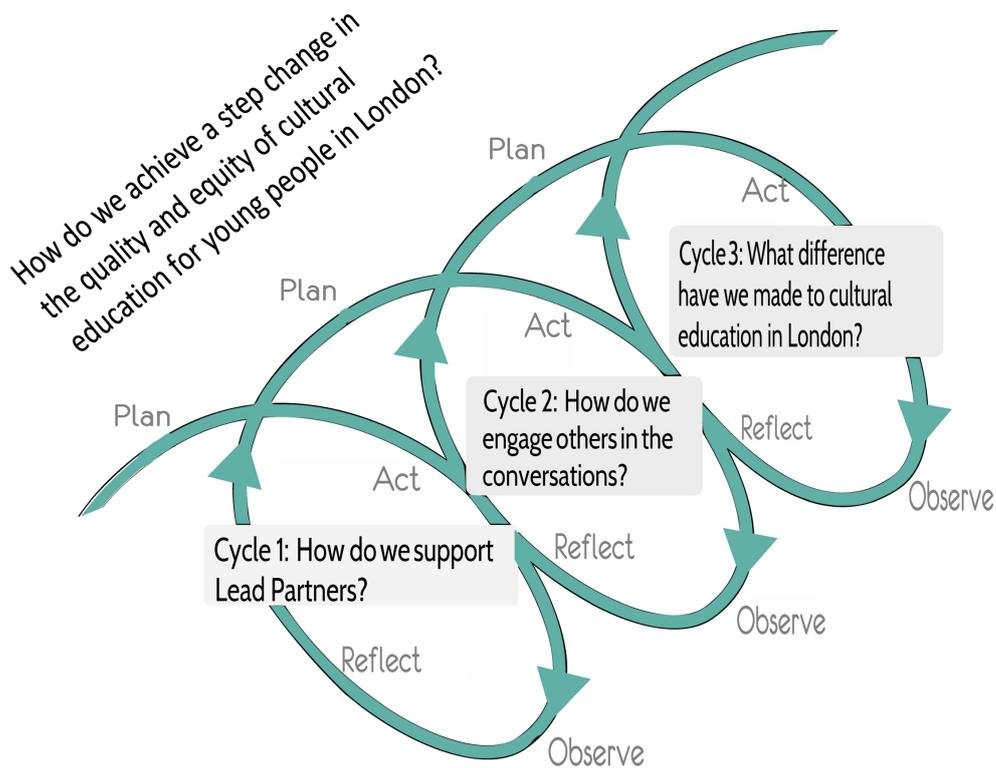
1. The primary purpose of action research is the development of practical knowing and collective learning
2. It is founded on a collaborative philosophy – research is done ‘with’ not ‘to’ those involved
3. It is rooted in in-depth and critical experience
4. It considers different forms of knowing – experiential, 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 were intended to support answering the overarching question. These were considered in three phases based across the three financial years of Challenge finishing in March 2018.

Figure 3 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 three 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

London Cultural Education Challenge Action Research Cycle Three

This section looks at the year three action research cycle in more detail, paying attention to the question agreed in April 2017:

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

Planning for action

Year three of Challenge could be characterised by varying time lines. Two projects came to full completion, three new projects were admitted to round two and AND was thinking ahead to what might follow. Several projects were awarded extensions to their original projects from round one applicants. This meant that everyone was working to slightly different timescales while maintaining their overall programme connections.

Cohort 1

Projects to be completed in Year Three:

- Croydon Music and Arts: ‘Creative Croydon’
- Ovalhouse: ‘Creative Youth’
- The Barbican Centre: ‘Creative Schools’
- Enable Leisure and Culture: ‘Cultivate’
- Westway Trust: #CultureMakers

Projects completed in Year Three:

- London Youth: ‘Getting Ready Dance’
- Creative Futures: ‘Music for Change’

Cohort 2

- Uxbridge College: ‘Our Hayes. Our Heritage.’
- Institute of Contemporary Art: ‘ICA x Peabody Housing Trust x Kingston University’
- Lewisham Education Arts Network (LEAN): ‘Bellingham Partnership’

Action

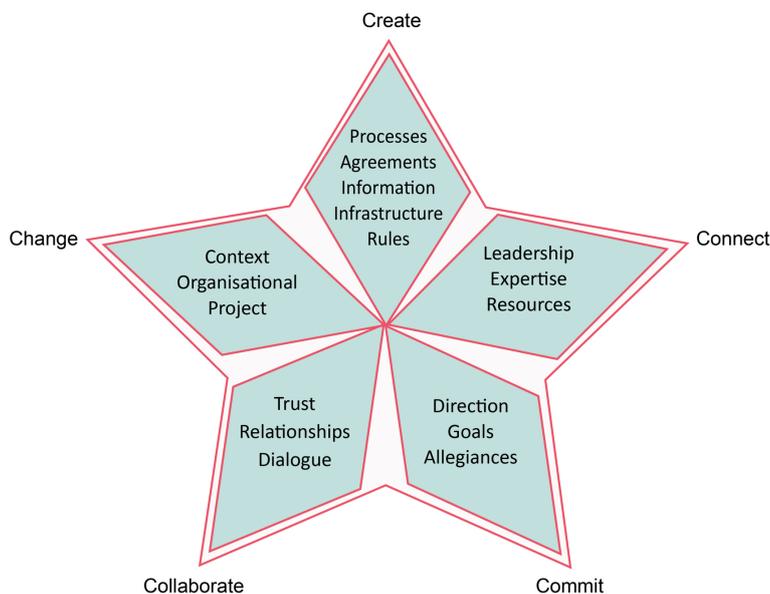
The regular meetings are a great way of hearing about work and sharing practice.

I’m finding the partners meetings more supportive and useful than I’d imagined.

As the programme developed it became clear that completely handing over power/decision making to the students was quite a new concept for the school, and staff and would benefit from training before the programme to ensure buy in and shared understanding of approaches.

We have been receiving a lot of project applications from young people hoping to run projects on fairly sensitive issues...we have been asking external organisations to support us to ensure we are giving the participants sensible guidelines to follow. (Lead Partners)

Figure 4 The Challenge collaborative practice framework



Given the various timelines of the projects and programmes in play in year three all aspects of the collaborative framework (Figure Four) have been touched on in different ways. For the new projects there was a focus on all five elements as they had to achieve both set up and delivery phases in the year. The solicited nature of these applicants meant that for the most part their partnerships were in place beforehand.

For the Cohort One projects that were continuing there was more emphasis on the commit, collaborate, change elements as they were looking to build on what had already been created and to see the outcomes it was having.

AND was also working across all five elements as it supported existing Lead Partners, inducted new Lead Partners and considered the design for Challenge London. It was also focusing on the 'change' aspect of the framework in terms of starting to assess what had been achieved and what level of ambition should be carried forward into the successor programme.

Observations

It has been really, really powerful to be able to say you don't know us but we have something we think might interest you. We have resources and want to connect. (AND)

The sharing was so moving, and moving for lots of different reasons. It was very particular - about that community. (AND)

Throughout the action research process, we have tried to access and understand the lived experience of Challenge participants. This gives an added dimension to understanding how those involved have made sense of the programme. This awareness has been gained through observation, meeting with participants and annually discussing a set of aesthetically 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

It has been beautiful seeing the journeys and discovery of the young people – seeing their progression.

Seeing young people develop and the wider ripples it causes, touching parents, carers, families and their extended networks.

It has been beautiful seeing people talk about the programme with pride and confidence, sharing their experiences and achievements.

It has been lovely to see the generosity and how people have been happy to share their experiences.

Watching students who may struggle with school engage and thrive; it's really lovely to see. (Lead Partners)

As in previous years the elements that people have valued as being beautiful are primarily relational. Challenge participants have found it beautiful to see the young people, or partners, or team members blossom and flourish.

Some beauty was also found organisationally as the work became more embedded in Lead Partner and other partner organisations. In one case this was felt to have had an impact on the overall reputation and respect generated for the organisation. It was beautiful for some to see team members grow and take ownership of the programme in new ways.

The importance of having an artefact has also been seen as something beautiful, the impact of the infographics and what they came to stand for. They became the communication tool that was intended but also provided a tangible golden thread for the programme.

Some of the events and sharings were regarded as beautiful and emotionally moving as empowered young people demonstrated their achievements and shared their stories. Pride and confidence has been mentioned by AND and Lead Partners as important elements in this third year.

Place-making has also been seen as something beautiful, seeing how young people have responded to regeneration issues in their area and still feel able to make it their place.

Ugly

The environment has not got better, if anything it's worse. There's been a tidal wave of rubbish and sometimes it feels like we are sitting with our finger in the dyke. (AND)

There have been a few odd moments of political stress which heightened anxiety.

The nitty gritty of the money. (Lead Partners)

Ugliness has been experienced internally and externally to the partners and the programme. In some cases, this has been the disappointment and frustration of organisational politics and the programme not being fully embedded by the end. For others, it has been exasperation with external politics and watching an already challenging environment for young people become even more embattled.

Others felt there were moments of tension and difficulty that could have been resolved if issues had been surfaced earlier and discussed more openly. For some Lead Partners this felt like having progressed projects to a certain point someone else might then step and decide it would not happen as planned. Several participants mentioned the issue of communications and surfacing tensions as early as possible.

Several Lead Partners experienced organisational change and the loss of team members, which felt ugly and 'spikey' at the time. Some events were perhaps not so much ugly as stressful, such as short lead times, or changing circumstances placed more pressure on teams. In a few cases partnerships did not work as intended and having to recognise and manage this was at times felt to be ugly.

The impact of money was seen as something that could get ugly in terms of how it coloured relationships, heightened power dynamics, or was simply regarded as lacking at the level that was needed to deliver on ambitions. Equally, redevelopment and regeneration issues were also seen as double edged, on the one hand they could be bringing new opportunities but on the other they could be regarded as exclusive and damaging to resident communities.

Sad

It was sad when people were not flexible and promises they had made were not honoured. (Lead Partner)

The difficulties with some of the projects and their partnerships. (AND)

Feelings of sadness generally arose from those factors people also found ugly. Most participants talked about experiencing profound sadness when hearing the stories of young people about both their personal lives and their areas. Some Lead Partners were saddened to hear the negative opinions some young people had of their local area.

In many cases sadness was about endings and saying goodbye, this might have been key individuals or team members leaving, or partnerships not working out as planned. In some instances, this also meant having to let go of aspects of a project and losing people who had been part of things from the beginning.

Money was also mentioned as being linked to sadness, the nature of the matched funding and leverage being seen as a source of anxiety and adding an additional layer of complexity that could be stressful. Everyone understood it was part of the programme, but it was not always easy to manage and might have excluded some worthwhile projects.

Comic/funny

The young people's group was very giggly, it was a safe space to offload and sometimes felt therapeutic. (Lead Partner)

A couple of projects run by the young people had humour as an integral part of their project but for the most part aspects that were funny were about people working together. One Lead Partner highlighted the importance of fun and humour in attracting and retaining young people; there was a clear sense they would not have come if that were not part of the culture.

While it was hard for people to recall specific moments, it was generally felt that meetings offered the opportunity for laughter, even if it was out of exasperation. There was also a sense of gallows humour having its place because it offered a safe way of expressing anxiety or frustration.

As in previous years participants have found humour in seeing colleagues humiliated through their engagement with activities organised by young people, whether it was dancing or singing or trying to show their 'youthfulness'!

Reflections

If we want to authentically empower the children and young people we work with, this has to be transparent from the start.

Don't be tied to what you think it should be, be ready to flex and change

Be aware of your own perspective and be ready to change your lens (Lead Partners)

Thank you for bringing us young people together because these opportunities are too rare. (Challenge participant)

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

Dissemination

Much of the activity in year three reflects the fact that Challenge was in its final year and most of the projects were coming to an end. The focus of discussion has been around getting the word and sharing the achievements of the programme and projects. In many cases Lead Partners have used social media but not all made an obvious link back to the wider Challenge Programme. Some secondary partners were only aware of the projects they were directly engaged with.

All partners have used digital activity to differing degrees, for some this was directed and developed by the young people themselves. It was not always easy to find the content without prior knowledge of Challenge or the respective projects. The ICA project has been particularly successful in developing a cross London network of young artists. Digital activism has not been a major feature of Challenge and this is something that might be reviewed for the programme's successor.

Learning

Shared learning and developing links with other Lead Partners continued to be a feature this year. The Lead Partner meetings had an increased sense of collective learning even among those Lead Partners who were still relatively new to the group. The group appeared to have more of the characteristics of a Community of Practice than had been generated in the first two years.

It is not possible to be definitive about what has created the shift, but it seems reasonable to infer:

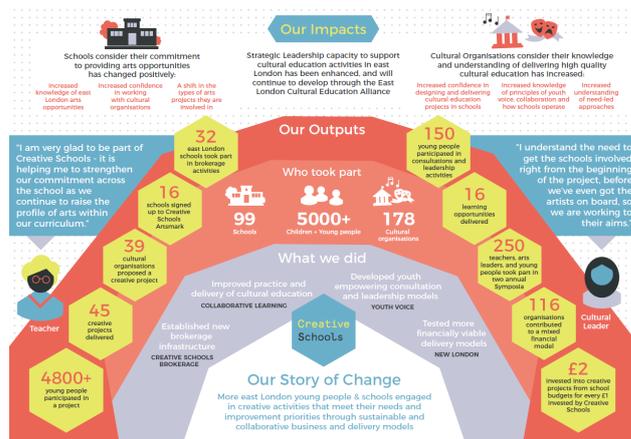
- Moving into delivery allowed for the sharing of tangible experience
- Confidence in the programme and group achievements has grown
- Challenge has matured, and Lead Partners were clearer about process
- Pride in achievements has supported collective motivation to share experiences and outcomes

Lead Partners have recognised and responded positively to the ongoing support provided by AND. Challenge has also become more embedded in AND as members from across the team have provided support. This has allowed connections to be made with other areas of AND's work like the London Cultural Education Partnerships (LCEPs), Arts Mark, and employment.

The support sought from AND has been pragmatic but has also been based on its strategic role across the sector and a view that it can provide a conduit to other networks. Lead Partners are keen to have their learning disseminated to as wide an audience as possible.

Evaluation

Figure 5 Creative Schools story of change



Evaluation has been a consistent theme this year as the Lead Partners have wrestled with analysing the achievements of their work. Tools^v have been shared and several independent evaluation reports have been produced as well as the ongoing monitoring by AND. The evaluators were not connected across the programme although some attended Challenge

Partners' meetings. A range of approaches have been used across the programme including impact assessment, action research, and summative and formative evaluation.

Lead Partners have experimented with different approaches, helped young people think about evaluation their projects and have tried to find creative ways to engage people with evaluative activities.

There are several criteria that AND could now use to produce an overarching view of the various evaluation reports produced (adapted from the OECD/DAC criteria):

- Relevance: the extent to which the purpose of the programme remained valid
- Effectiveness: the extent to which Challenge delivered against its aims and its ToC
- Efficiency: the extent to which outcomes delivered in a timely and cost-effective manner
- Impact: the changes Challenge delivered
- Sustainability: the degree to which the benefits will continue beyond the programme
- Originality: the degree to which Challenge has helped develop novel and new approaches to cultural education

Given the range of evaluative approaches and outputs it would be useful if these were included as resources on the AND Challenge webpages. This is also a good time to reflect on the Theory of Change (Appendix Four) and how Challenge has delivered against the intermediate outcomes and proposed impact.

What have we learnt about the difference that Challenge has made?

The changes that Challenge was intended to make have been considered against the six themes that have framed the programme.

Figure 6 What have we learnt regarding the Challenge themes?

Theme	What have we learnt?
1. Equity and wealth: addressing why cultural engagement among economically disadvantaged young people is disproportionately low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broaden definitions of culture • Understand and adapt to the limitations young people face • Digital networks as mechanisms for engagement (ICA project)
2. Equity and geography: concerned with how to ensure access to cultural resources for young Londoners wherever they are based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking work to young people (Croydon’s Bendy Bus) • Providing safe ways for young people to travel • Recognising disparity in infrastructure • Including projects from across London in Challenge • Working with Lead Partners, developers and local authorities to increase cultural infrastructure in underserved areas

Theme	What have we learnt?
3. Influence and diversity: looking at how to communicate arts and culture more effectively and that young people have a voice and influence in the cultural sector in London	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting resources directly in the hands of young people and supporting them to run self-directed projects • Providing infrastructure support to young people to give them access to systems • Sharing models of practice
4. Entry to employment: attracting and facilitating young people into creative careers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are often low levels of awareness • Careers advice services are under pressure and are also not aware of opportunities • Need for relevant experiences for young people
5. New London and new schools: ensuring cultural education is part of the foundations for London's anticipated growth and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to support existing cultural infrastructure in those areas • Building cross-sector relationships and dialogue • Continue supporting tri-sector projects • Share resources and learning from Challenge about CSSPs
6. A Super-Served system: addressing why schools and cultural organisations find it hard to engage with each other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to build greater cross-sector understanding • Approaches need to be quite localised and personalised • Creating brokers/partnership roles helps build connections

We have also discovered that policy and programmes are not static entities that can (or should) be designed and held fast. Part of Challenge's success and the difference it has made for Lead Partners is that it has been able to stay flexible. Some milestones have changed, timelines have changed, individuals have changed, and the nature of the approach has changed for some Lead Partners. Challenge has been able to work with these issues as they have happened and flex accordingly.

Where they were the main focus Lead Partners have described the difference that has been made to the young people involved, this has surfaced in a number of ways:

- Some young people have undertaken activities they might never have been involved with before
- Others have connected with cultural organisations in a way they might not otherwise have done (equally cultural organisations have learnt a lot about working with young people who would not usually access their services)
- Some have taken Arts Awards
- Young people have developed and led their own projects
- Young people have had the opportunity to be more self-directed in terms of cultural education projects at school

- Some young people have used cultural activity to express themselves and to find a voice to express issues that are important to them
- Some have gone on to further education, and moved into employment in the cultural sector

All of which reflect the desired outcomes and impact highlighted by the Challenge themes. Areas of learning are also clearly reflected in the advice that Lead Partners would give others working in the cultural education field:

- Ask children and young people what they think and start with meaty evidence. The work should be needs based and evidence led
- Get constant feedback and use different platforms for communication
- Be clear about what your barriers are – where are partners based in relation to schools and young people
- You need to have flexibility and a responsive approach, things change, sometimes at a moment's notice
- It takes more time than you think, and your timelines don't always align with young people. They are volunteers and need to be recognised as such
- Make it as simple as possible

What has worked best for Challenge this year?

There are a wide range of positives to take from the third year of Challenge activity:

- New Lead Partners have been successfully integrated into the programme
- Support for the Lead Partners continued and has been regarded positively
- There has been more sharing across the Lead Partners as activity has matured
- Challenge is included on the AND interactive map
- There has been positive engagement with young people across London
- Young people have been given a voice and safe spaces to engage with the issues that are important to them
- Completed projects have continued to develop the work initiated through Challenge e.g. London Youth has now integrated a cultural offer into its main programme
- AND has continued to connect across sectors
- Challenge has expanded, through the new Lead Partners, into areas of London not previously included
- Continued flexibility of Challenge allowing for adaptations
- Challenge settled more comfortably into an activism role

What changes were made from last year?

- New Lead Partners started their projects
- Existing Lead Partner projects continued to evolve and adapt to their operating contexts
- More of the AND team became involved in Challenge

- Efforts were made to start telling the story, including Lead Partner guest blogs on the AND website
- Adoption of the Theory of Change, which has been discussed at several Lead Partner meetings
- Additional secondary partners including housing associations, London Boroughs, schools and colleges
- Work on AND's Place Strategy was also embedded in Challenge

What is surprising about Challenge this year?

It has been good to see how quickly the new Lead Partners have adapted and integrated to the programme. This may in part be due to the more established nature of some of the projects but has also been facilitated by Challenge having matured and systems and structures being better understood.

There has also been a growing sense of the collective strength and community in the network. For most of Lead Partners Years two and Three have been focused on delivery, so many of the frustrations and disappointments of the earlier set up phases has dropped away. A stronger collective has also in part been enabled by Lead Partners being integrated into other AND programmes and activity this has given them several contact points with each other and AND.

At an individual level participants in Challenge have experienced personal surprise and in some cases delight as young people have taken ownership of the work and started to use their 'voice.' People have also been surprised at how chance meetings or conversations have then built into something more. Although the adaptability of Challenge has become more familiar for some in this third year, there have still been surprises that AND has been willing to make adjustments.

Recommendations

AND

- Continue telling the story of Challenge: there is a great deal of rich knowledge and experience that has been generated by Challenge and through the Lead Partners. This story can be told and retold in many ways
- Continue embedding Challenge within AND's other programmes: One of the benefits gained this year has been the growing integration with Challenge and ANDs other work. Continuing this approach with Challenge London will deepen the impact
- Maintain relationships with Challenge partners in both cohorts: It is probably too early for many of the Lead Partners to think in terms of impact, and while there are resource implications and individuals will change, some form of on-going connection will help keep the story alive
- Launch the AND resources area
- Continue disseminating visuals from the projects

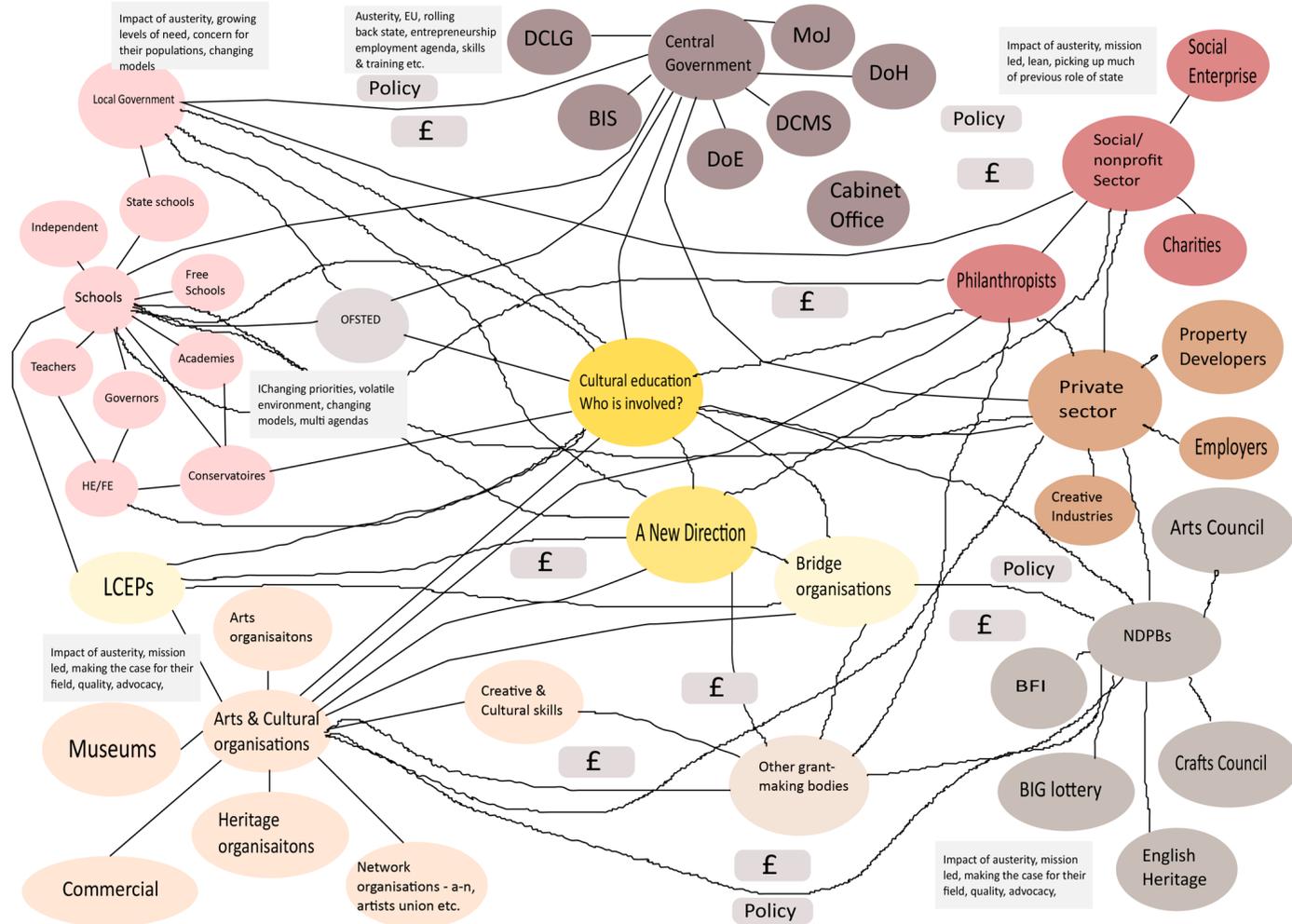
- Utilise the research gained during Challenge: the programme has generated wide ranging insights from collaborate working and group dynamics to youth voice and social activism. There are several academic conferences and journals that would be relevant for the research Challenge could produce
- Consider creating a Young Challenge Ambassadors Network: or some other form of continuing the connection with the young people that have benefitted from Challenge. This will help feed into a longitudinal impact study
- Showcasing: Consider bringing together and showcasing the creative work created during challenge, this could be online or live
- Challenge Alumni: Develop a Challenge Alumni who might consider acting as mentors for London Challenge projects (this could be connected to the Ambassadors scheme)
- Explore digital activism as a mechanism for extending the messages of Challenge

Lead Partners

- Connect to each other via social media and continue to strengthen the network
- Make your resources developed through Challenge available as widely as possible
- Continue to share and celebrate your achievements
- Keep capturing the stories of the partners and young people who have benefitted from Challenge
- Share information on spin off projects, on-going partnerships and the impacts on young people
- Explore digital activism further as a mechanism for extending the messages of Challenge

Appendices

Appendix One: Challenge indicative mess map



Appendix Two: Challenge Partners research questions

Challenge Lead Partner	Programme name	Research question	£	Progr. Length yrs.
Croydon Music and Arts	Creative Croydon	How can we ensure young people's voices are heard in decision making?	75,000	3
Ovalhouse	Creative Youth	How can housing associations, local cultural partners and young people work together to address barriers to cultural engagement and broaden young people's horizons?	128,600	3
The Barbican Centre	Creative Schools	How can creative organisations create a combined force when working with schools?	170,000	3
Enable Leisure and Culture	Cultivate	What makes a place, and how can children and young people contribute to building it?	115,000	3
Westway Trust	#CultureMakers	How can a rich, local cultural ecology best support young people's progression and development?	140,000	2
London Youth:	Getting Ready Dance'	How can youth settings respond to demand for high quality dance provision, and get young London dancing?	67,685	2
Creative Futures	Music for Change	How can creative activity in early years settings prepare the under 5s for starting school?	50,000	2

Uxbridge College	Our Hayes. Our Heritage	How can discovering local heritage enable conversations about community, place and identity in a time of development and change?	25,014	1
Institute of Contemporary Art	ICA x Peabody Housing Trust x Kingston University	How should a cultural organisation, a housing association and a higher education institution collaborate to support access, agency and progression in communities across London?	25,000	1
Lewisham Education Arts Network (LEAN)	Bellingham Partnership	How can we organise resources and opportunities around the renovation of an incredible local community building to make sure every child has the chance to take part?	27,000	1

Appendix Three: Challenge action research approach

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

Action research can take different forms but tends to have several 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. 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 discussion documents were all issued in draft form and were 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 several steps:

Data familiarisation	Data transcribed where necessary, reading and re-reading the data, mind-mapping initial ideas
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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 Four: 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

Appendix Five: References and citations

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Endnotes

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ⁱⁱ <https://culturallearningalliance.org.uk/what-is-the-current-state-of-the-arts-in-schools/>

ⁱⁱⁱ 3 Department for Education, 'Education provision: children under 5 years of age', June 2016

^{iv} <https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/our-key-themes/local-government-finance/government-spending-plans/autumn-budget-2017/representation>

^v http://www.creativepeopleplaces.org.uk/sites/default/files/Evaluation_in_participatory_arts_programmes.pdf

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