



**Building
the creative
workforce of
the future**

**A NEW
DIRECTION**

We create opportunity



Image: Francis Augusto

Foreword

London has a strong claim to being the most creative city in the world. Its arts, heritage and open attitude towards different cultures are all key to the city's appeal and to most Londoners' sense of what is special about our city. The commercial creative industries have made a home in London and are an increasingly growing percentage of the city's economy. So why does this narrative ring a bit hollow? For anyone who lives in London the reality is obvious to see; despite the immense excitement and creative vibe, it's a tough city to succeed in. Inequality is endemic, and the creative industries are no exception.

A New Direction commissioned this report out of a sense of frustration. It feels like we have been talking about issues of access, barriers to entry and exploitation in our sector for a long time, but not much has changed. In fact, it can feel like we are going backwards, with it becoming even harder for young people short of economic capital and social connections to get a foothold in the creative industries.

As this report shows, alongside the story of growth in the creative sector is a tale of rising living costs, hidden exploitation and a system struggling to keep up with technical and economic change. Our creative city does not truly exist if it is only a reality for a small part of the population.

A New Direction has run Create Jobs since 2011, working with industry partners to create bespoke training programmes that take talented young Londoners and connect them with the creative sector. Increasingly, we are working across the tech and digital spheres, where we see a growing understanding of the value that an inclusive workforce offers. But we have also seen initiatives and funding come and go and not enough progress made.

Our hope with this report is to bring as much of the available research together in one place in order to allow different stakeholders to engage with the issues from a new perspective. Hannah Casey, the report's author, has made several recommendations for collective action, which we would like to spark a broader debate about what needs to be done, by whom and when.

We cannot wait any longer for change to happen by itself. We need new, joined-up approaches that connect with the reality of people's lives, sharing the burden of responsibility across employers, funders and the education system as well as among communities and young people themselves. We are prepared to be in this for the long term to make sure that the change we effect is systemic and not piecemeal or more of the same.

We are optimistic that this is the moment. Young Londoners are the creative future of this city, and that means it is in good hands.

Holly Donagh

Deputy Chief Executive and Partnerships, A New Direction



Executive Summary

Building the Creative Workforce of the Future

"When the power of digital technology converged to give a much greater reach to [advertising, design, fashion and moving image media], that was the moment the creative economy was truly born". (British Council 2010).

We are living in the age of the creative economy. The creative industries are now worth more to the UK than oil, gas, life sciences, aeronautics and the automotive industries combined. Technology is allowing new industries to flourish, and with them new types of occupations - such as VFX specialists, technical architects and technology evangelists - are developing. Yet whilst the creative economy continues to grow, many young people remain excluded from developing a creative career in London.

This research identifies the main challenges that need to be overcome to ensure the potential of the creative economy is realised in a way that captures the ideas, mindsets and values of London's entire society. It makes recommendations for what needs to be done to ensure that London continues to be a genuinely vibrant and heterogeneous place, where everyone has the same chance of success.

Photo credit: Francis Augusto

The Main Challenges

The UK's creative economy is booming, but global competitors are keeping pace

The creative industries are incredibly valuable to the UK economy, contributing 5.5% of its total GVA, but they are also highly mobile, with many countries competing to house top businesses and talent. Presently, 31% of the UK's tech workforce hail from overseas, of whom 11% are from the EU. However, research suggests that the UK's position as the premier European hub for highly skilled tech workers has started to erode since the Brexit vote, with Germany and France (the UK's closest rivals) having increased their share of the workforce. Further research from the screen industries predicts falls in the number of EU workers living in the UK after Brexit. These predictions come at a time when leaders in the tech and screen industries greatest concern for their future is the availability of skilled workers, with half of start-up founders considering either moving their headquarters to the EU or setting up a European outpost.

Irrespective of whether these trends continue, Brexit could serve as a catalyst to ensure that more young Londoners can access careers in the creative economy. It could present a unique opportunity to reposition London's creative industries as the hotspot for emerging talent. At a time when the creative industries are increasing in importance to our economy, inequality across London is growing, adversely affecting groups such as BAME communities and people with disabilities. Transforming the creative industries to fully reflect London's heterogeneous society can therefore help to secure the creative industries' long-term future whilst simultaneously addressing inequality.

Recommendations

- Move from a location-first approach towards skills development to a centrally led, industry-first approach that can be scaled locally, recognising that all industries have specific skill requirements, networks to navigate and unique cultures. As these elements are inextricable from one another, they should be tackled holistically.
- Reduce the complexity. Creating one consistent point of contact between the creative industries and local communities (see full report for case study on New York) can help improve the efficiency, coordination and strategic growth of the creative industries. This approach should be considered in London, particularly for a sector dominated by SMEs and freelance workers.
- Develop a "Creative London" brand. London, a city that voted to remain in the Brexit referendum, now more than ever needs to redefine its identity, with creativity at its core. If executed sensitively, a brand such as "Creativity Works", which celebrates London's creative industries and its cultural output, will help to redefine the city in a post-Brexit era and help it to remain attractive to foreign investors, creative enterprises and workers.

Representation across the creative industries has not changed since the 1980s

Multiple research reports have proven that representation within the creative industries workforce has remained flat over the past thirty years, with people from middle-class backgrounds dominating most sectors. Each industry has its unique challenges to contend with; for example, women are vastly underrepresented in tech, making up just 19% of the workforce, whereas museums have a female-dominated workforce. BAME communities suffer from underrepresentation in most industries, and people with disabilities are underrepresented across every sector and in all types of work.

Part of the problem is the narrow way in which employers recruit for roles, favouring academic qualifications and work experience above skills-based measurements. A pivotal factor, however, is the important role informal networks play in securing work in the creative industries. This is particularly significant considering that a high proportion of workers in the creative industries have little or no contact with people in lower-paid occupations. Interwoven into this is the expectation of many creative businesses, in sectors such as fashion or visual art, that young people complete unpaid work for long periods of time. In an industry where work experience is so highly valued when securing work, this prices many young people out of a creative career.

Having secured a job, in many cases, pay remains low for the entirety of a creative professional's career; 73% of musicians, artists and performers earn less than £20,000 per annum. In a city where the cost of living has meant that, in the last twenty years, working families have evolved from representing 28% of Londoners living below the poverty line to 58%, a creative career can be simply unaffordable for most young Londoners. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that across some communities parents are wary of their child embarking on a career in the creative industries, leading in part to lower participation on arts courses by young people from, for example, BAME backgrounds, and ultimately furthering the creation of publicly funded culture that does not reflect the tastes, values or experiences of a broad section of society.

Recommendations

- Make financial support available to young creatives. As an ever-more-important part of our economy, supporting young creatives should be considered an investment in the future sustainability of the industry. Schemes that reduce housing and living costs help reduce the financial burden on young creative people and can be executed at a bigger scale than they currently are.
- Introduce London Living Wage. As a bare minimum, the London Living Wage should be paid for all entry-level roles across the sector, and this should be a commitment made by all creative businesses. Looking forward, all creative businesses should strive to offer rates of pay that allow people from different backgrounds to sustain long-term careers in the sector.
- Funders should be accountable. Aligning funding based on diversity standards ensures it is allocated in a way that more proportionately represents the diversity of the population. This will in turn ensure the realisation of projects that better reflect the cultural tastes and values of different parts of society.
- Companies need to understand the demographics they want to hire. The Sky case study (see full report for details) demonstrates how, by taking the time to understand different demographics, recruitment and retention practices can be adapted to help maximise the abilities and growth of different types of people.
- Coordinate careers advice. Careers advice should be strategically coordinated across sectors and schools to ensure all young people and their parents are made aware of the spectrum of opportunities open to them in the creative industries.

Adapting education for a creative future

Whilst the creative industries are increasing in their importance to the economy, there are concerns that the education system is not providing students with enough opportunities to develop their creativity. The current government's education strategy focuses on a siloed, subject-based approach to education that teaches "that common body of knowledge" that is the basis of all modern liberal democracies. Simultaneously, a growing body of thinkers - not least Andreas Schleicher, the Director of the Directorate for Education and Skills at the OECD - are arguing that traditional teaching pedagogies are no longer fit for purpose, and that bodies of knowledge that 20 years ago could have lasted students their entire career will no longer endure in a fast-changing world where future jobs are hard to predict. These theories are underpinned by various research studies, notably from Nesta and Oxford Martin's "Future of work 2030", which demonstrates that the most important capabilities for the future will be abilities such as judgement and decision making, fluency of ideas and originality abilities. When we consider that creativity is defined as "imaginative activity fashioned so as to produce outcomes that are both original and of value", it is easy to understand why, according to a further study by Nesta, creativity is "the most significant predictor for an occupation's chance of growing as a percentage of the workforce by the year 2030".

As universities moved to a more silo-based approach to subject teaching in the 20th century - and as the school system is, in many ways "a protracted system of university entrance" - debates need to be had around how well universities are developing students' creativity and preparing them for work.

Particularly when, according to a recent study, just 23% of employers believe that university graduates have developed the necessary skills for the workplace. Meanwhile, the success of employability programmes such as Flipside, Mama Youth, D&AD New Blood Academy and Commercial Street, amongst others, demonstrate that talented people are not only to be found in the libraries of some of our oldest institutions. Recruiting from different places will not only encourage more diversity in the workplace but also help force the debate around the role of Higher Education in society, either by causing institutions to adapt or through restructuring their role in society.

Recommendations

- Policy makers need to stop looking to the past for inspiration. As the work by Scharmer and Schleicher suggests, pedagogies that focus on learning from the past can no longer be expected to adequately prepare young people for the future world of work. We cannot continue to teach students the same information in the same way and expect different answers to the significant challenges facing the world.
- Schools should be encouraged to approach the curriculum with fresh eyes. As a growing body of evidence mounts surrounding the success of new pedagogies, so does the number of influential voices arguing for the substantiated need to nurture capabilities beyond knowledge in our young people.
- Working as a community, we can ensure all young people get the experience they need. Groups of cultural partners, schools and employers, along with public bodies, can jointly provide mentoring, advice, work experience and bespoke training schemes to ensure every child and young person gets the support they need to find the right path for them. This will take the burden off the education system to work in such a complex ecology on its own.
- Employers need to be more ambitious in who they recruit - and how. With many employers dissatisfied with the skills of university graduates, it is time for employers to broaden their outreach in regards to employment.

Conclusion

On the surface, debates surrounding how we educate young people may seem unrelated to discussions around diversity in the workplace and our collective culture. However, there is a core similarity between the two discussions: that in order to “do well”, the onus is on young people to adopt the norms of the pre-established elite, which they can only hope to change once they have climbed high enough.

There are clear parallels with this approach across the creative industries, in how public funding is spent and careers are accessed. In order to secure a job in the arts, you need to be connected to people in the industry, talk the same language and share similar values. This leaves many creative jobs fundamentally inaccessible to a great deal of young people and has created a culture that encourages exploitative and exclusive working practices that only the wealthy can afford to navigate. However, the alternative scenario, which would put the entire onus on policy makers and businesses to adapt their mindsets, presents its own challenges. It suggests that their carefully curated knowledge and experience is no longer as valued. The only way to change this is for the creative industries and young people to have much better exposure to each other, and to create a shared understanding of how each other operates.

There are examples of where this is being achieved. Programmes such as Mama Youth and Flipside prove that informal training programmes work and are valuable for both young people and creative businesses. Similarly, some of the Mayor’s strategies, such as the Creative Enterprise Zones, Careers Clusters and the Creative Land Trust, make attempts to improve pathways into the creative industries. However, what is missing, and desperately needed, is a more coordinated approach across both London and its industries that will achieve impact at a bigger scale.

To make a significant impact, we need policy makers, educators and creative businesses to develop a shared vision and sense of responsibility for the future growth of their industries. This means taking a long-term and systemic approach with a focus on inclusion as much as on growth. This will help to create sector-wide agreements on what is to be achieved, leading to rapid and more wide-reaching change.



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