

CAMEo submission to the UK Commons Select Committee's Inquiry into the Social Impact of Participation in Culture and Sport February 2018

This submission and CAMEo

1. This submission is made to provide evidence to the inquiry into the social impact of participation in culture and sport, which seeks to investigate ways in which taking part in the arts, cultural activities and sport can have a positive impact on health, community and education.
2. This submission focuses specifically on the second question posed in the terms of reference: **How can access to cultural and sporting professions be improved to enable greater diversity? How can the Government build a pipeline of talent?** Specifically, we focus on the cultural professions and workforce diversity. We explain how inequalities arise and outline key steps for addressing them.
3. This submission is made by the **CAMEo Research Institute for Cultural and Media Economies at the University of Leicester**. Our particular focus is on how these economies can develop in ways that foreground participation, social justice and sustainability. CAMEo works with academics as well as practitioners and policy-makers and hosts a range of research, knowledge exchange and engagement activities on cultural work, the 'creative economy', arts, media and cultural policy, consumer culture dynamics, and the mediation and representation of cultural and economic life. CAMEo projects on workforce diversity include a *Workforce Diversity Meta-Analysis* for the British Film Institute, the AHRC CLORE Leadership Programme Project *Where am I?* on BAME leaders in UK theatre, a British Academy/Leverhulme-funded project on *Creative Industries, Diversity and Austerity* and, as co-investigators, the AHRC project *Bass Culture* on the culture, history and economy of Jamaican music in Britain. CAMEo researchers have published widely on workforce diversity issues, incl. CAMEo Director Mark Banks' recent book *Creative Justice: Cultural Industries, Work and Inequality* (2017).

Barriers to diversity in the cultural professions

4. Empirical evidence shows that individuals from the following groups are disproportionately less likely to enter cultural professions: women, workers with ethnic minority or working class background, workers with disabilities.
5. Key entry barriers to the cultural professions are (1) precarious and project-based employment resulting from project-based business models; (2) working practices that require considerable flexibility regarding working hours and location; (3) entrenched patterns of material disadvantage, e.g. relating to accessing education or coping with

employment insecurity; (4) Eurocentric, middle-class, white, male and ableist perceptions of talent, i.e. of who 'belongs' to the cultural industries' workforce.

6. These causes of barriers to entry into the cultural professions are deep-rooted and systemic. To attract and retain a significantly more diverse workforce, the cultural industries and professions thus need interventions that are of substantial scope and breadth and can address systemic problems.
7. Where barriers to access result from employment practices and business models, change requires actions that affect all employers across the sector, i.e. that do not allow individual organisations to gain a competitive advantage by not adopting new practice.

Improving access to cultural professions

8. **School level education:** Creative subjects at school level are regarded as inferior to, in particular, STEM subjects. They are under-resourced, and as from 2011 not part of the EBacc. As a result, students are discouraged from pursuing them and vital opportunities to build a skills base and raise career aspirations are missed. To reverse this damaging trend, and as also recommended in the Acting Up! report, the Ebaac should be revamped to recognise the benefits of creative subjects in education, and government funding should be increased for creative subjects and arts-related activities such as theatre trips, which also contribute to arts education.
9. **Apprenticeships:** Building a talent pipeline for cultural professions requires the widening of employment routes into the cultural and creative industry. More efficient funding and delivery infrastructures for apprenticeships can improve access to entry-level paid work in the cultural professions and break up current exclusionary practices such as unpaid internships and hiring through personal networks. Pooled apprenticeship models are particularly important in this regard, as well as other solutions that pool training capacities at inter-employer level. Better infrastructures can build on foundations put in place through, for instance, the sector skills councils Creative Skillset and Creative and Cultural Skills.
10. **Better information about admissions processes and decisions:** Arts and drama schools do not readily supply information on the signals of talent they expect to see at admission stage. Applicants have to rely on informal information about entry requirements and this information is far less readily available to working class youth. Also, admission decisions depend on HE staff's subjective perceptions of artistic 'talent', and those perceptions typically prioritise middle class, white-ethnic and Eurocentric ideas of this vital quality (Banks 2017). Increasing transparency on admission processes and decision-making for arts education is necessary, as is unconscious bias awareness training.

Sustaining careers in cultural professions

11. **Fair pay:** Currently, sustainable employment conditions rely on individual employers' ability and will to finance paid work despite the economic incentive to cut cost by using unpaid/lowly paid work. A commitment to widened participation and diversity in the

cultural professions needs to explore making minimum pay levels mandatory across the cultural and creative industries.

12. **Working conditions and social security:** For currently underrepresented groups to be able to sustain careers in the cultural professions, working conditions and social security in work need to be improved. Effective measures would comprise the reduction of anti-social hours; the introduction of paid parental and sick leave, including in a format accessible to freelancers and self-employed; and a shift from short-term contracts to more stable employment.
13. **Support for freelance workers:** The cultural professions comprise high shares of freelance and self-employed worker with limited/no access to training, business and legal support, or finance and tax advice. Measures to strengthen the position of freelancers, e.g. tax breaks, finance training and business support would contribute to widening access for workers without secure financial backgrounds as well as those without existing networks from were to acquire support and information.
14. **Breaking up the reliance on networks in recruiting:** Mentoring and networking initiatives can only partly and slowly address entry barriers resulting from recruitment into the cultural professions via networks. More effective initiatives would change the recruitment system, e.g. through the introduction of more formal and transparent recruitment processes or selection methods such as blind auditions.
15. **Breaking up Eurocentric white, middle-class, male perceptions of talent:** Although difficult, revising stereotypes of talent is vital for diversifying access to the cultural professions. Initiatives that showcase diverse role models can make important contributions in this regard, as can unconscious bias awareness training. Similarly, artistic work that boldly challenges limiting perceptions is likely to be effective and in keeping with the sector's interests and practices, and should therefore be a focus of commissioning.

Improving evidence

16. Underlying such actions would need to be a body of evidence that is improved in quality and scope and readily accessible for policy-makers and practitioners. Currently there exist significant gaps on workforce data with respect to class, gender, ethnicity, ability, and other diversity characteristics. These shortcomings could be addressed through the following:
 - a) Consistent and sector-wide monitoring systems for key workforce characteristics, preferably designed with a view to international comparability and likely involving collaborations between sector organisations and experienced academic or industry researchers;
 - b) A practitioner-facing database of interventions to increase workforce diversity, preferably including descriptions and evaluations of initiatives;
 - c) Sector-wider funding programmes that funds initiatives and projects relevant to workforce diversity in combination with research on these activities. Such funding programmes could provide concentrated research capacity for a sector in which many businesses or organisations cannot afford interventions or evaluations.

17. Importantly, future research needs to provide joined-up evidence on workforce diversity that takes into account intersectionalities between diversity characteristics that exacerbate entry barriers for the cultural professions.

Further information

For more information on the evidence presented in this submission or CAMEo projects and publications please contact CAMEo Director Professor Mark Banks, mark.banks@leicester.ac.uk or CAMEo Deputy Director Dr Doris Ruth Eikhof, d.r.eikhof@leicester.ac.uk.

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