



UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE

Faculty of Education

Evaluating provision, progress and quality of learning in the Children's University 2012

Professor John MacBeath



Fourth Report to the CU Trust
January 2013





Key findings – The ten ‘A’s

1. Attendance

Children who participate in CU activities have, as a consequence, better attendance records than children in the same school who do not participate. This has been a consistent finding from 2007 to the present.

2. Attainment

There is evidence that not only do CU-engaged children attain more highly than their non-CU counterparts but that there is a positive correlation between the length of time children are involved with CU activities and their performance in tests and exams.

3. Achievement

Achievement also encompasses what has been realised by the CU Trust itself, measured by its growth and outreach over five years.

4. Attitudes

Changes in attitudes for Children’s University attendees has been a consistent finding over the last five years.

5. Adventure

Surmounting obstacles, testing yourself against more ambitious challenges, has been shown to encourage determination and perseverance.

6. Awards

Children’s University awards have their own special currency, as parents and children attest to the excitement of learning in new ways and in new contexts. Passports play a vital role.

7. Agency

Agency may also be applied to the Children’s University itself, an agent of change in a systemic sense, in respect of changing local management, initiative and innovation and, in a deeper sense, affecting the way in which we come to understand and evaluate learning.

8. Aspiration

To be able to succeed in other contexts, to visit places beyond one’s own immediate neighbourhood, to see the inside of a university for the first time is demonstrated in the data as extending horizons of the possible.

9. Adaptability

The value of Children’s University is also measured by adaptability - of children and young people, of teachers and schools, and of the educational system itself.

10. Advocacy

Perhaps the most significant measure of advocacy is the spontaneous adoption of the Children’s University by people and organisations in other countries. That it has such international appeal and relevance is hugely significant.

Evaluating provision, progress and quality of learning in the Children’s University - 2012

is published on behalf of CU Trust by the Children’s University

ISBN: 978-0-9561319-8-0

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About the author



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John MacBeath is Professor Emeritus at the University of Cambridge where he held the Chair of Educational Leadership from 2000 to 2008. He is currently Projects Director for the Commonwealth Centre in Education.

From 1997 to 2001 he was a member of Tony Blair's Task Force on Standards and in 2001 he received the OBE for services to education.

For two decades he has researched learning in and out of school, learning in museums, and study support, and since 2007 has worked with the Children's University in both a consultancy and evaluation capacity.



Acknowledgements

The success story of the Children's University is owed to a number of key people who have not only kept it alive but grown it into a major national, and now international 'movement'. This is primarily owed to the imagination, and apparently unlimited energy, of its Chief Executive Ger Graus, and the core Manchester team. Ger would be the first to attribute the CU's longevity and impact to Andrea Wood, who has been his 'Radar' and has also been an invaluable support to me in the evaluation. Thanks too to Triinu Onton who continues to try, after three years, to keep Ger in order. And a debt is owed to the work of an expanding team of indispensable people - Lynne Upton, Director of Learning, Caroline Gilbert, Fundraising Manager, Richard Barry, Learning Consultant and Michelle Box, Acting PA to the Chief Executive, stepping in to cover during Andrea's maternity leave.

Ger and the team have benefited hugely from the encouragement and backing of Dr Sandy Bradbrook, Chair of the Trustees, and the Board - Sir David Winkley, Richard Howard, the Rev Sarah Hayes, Professors Mick Waters and Sonia Blandford, Alec McGivan and more recently Jock Brown and Dr Anita Bhalla.

Thanks too are owed to the many Children's University's Patrons and friends, including Lord Lingfield, Dr James Bradburne, Shami Chakrabarti, Julian Lloyd Webber, Dr Tessa Stone, Hilary Robinson and Robert Muchamore, Sir Peter Lampl, the Reggio Children's President Professor Carla Rinaldi and to the first CU Trust Chancellor Michael Morpurgo.

And last, but really in first place, are the amazing people in CU centres everywhere who made it happen and are continuing to do so - and that includes the children who are the Children's University! They did the evaluation for me.



The evaluation

The Children's University, or CU, is so self-evidently a 'good thing' that an evaluation of its impact might seem redundant. However, the purpose of an external evaluation is to take a more objective, or at times sceptical stance. It questions the nature of the taken-for-granted, and problematises the 'good', and the assumptions which underpin it. It concerns itself with evidence and attempts to derive measures which are rigorous enough to discriminate among the 'almost good', the 'good' and the 'excellent'. As such it serves a summative as well as a formative purpose. It summarises achievement and progress but also points ahead to implications for the future. This evaluation too tells its own story, drawing on a large body of evidence to identify:

- The level of student participation in Children's University activities, differences by region and schools, schools' clusters, and the nature of incentives and rewards
- The 'added value' for children who participate in Children's University activities in terms of achievement broadly defined, curricular-based attainment more specifically defined, and attendance

- The value of the Children's University in enhancing dispositions, self-efficacy and motivation to learn
- The contribution of the Children's University 'curriculum' in extending and enhancing knowledge and skills
- The role and contribution of school senior leaders, teachers and other school staff in encouraging student participation
- The role, validation and impact of Learning Destinations
- The extent to which Children's University centres evaluate their own quality and effectiveness and uses made of quality assurance frameworks
- The quality assurance process
- The nature, contribution and impact of the Children's University (CU) Trust's central management team

This fourth evaluation covers the period 2011 to 2013 but also includes an overview of the Children's University (CU) Trust's first five years: April 2007 to January 2013.



Executive summary

Ten measures of success – The Ten ‘A’s

1. Attendance

Children who participate in CU activities have, as a consequence, better attendance records than children in the same school who do not participate. This has been a consistent finding from 2007 to the present. This applies to both authorised and unauthorised absence. Two explanations are offered by children themselves. One explanation - which might be termed ‘strategic’ - is that school attendance gives access to CU activities.

“Frankie has had an amazing time, he jumps for joy when he knows it is Tuesday. He has made lots of friends and can’t stop talking about it.”
(Parent)

A second explanation is that by virtue of being in the CU, children are happier and more fulfilled in their school work. 83% of children agreed/strongly agreed with the statement ‘I now feel much more confident about my class work.’ 75% agreed/strongly agreed that ‘I pay more attention in class since being in the CU.’

2. Attainment

‘Attainment’ is generally taken to refer to gains made that can be measured by standardised tests or ‘value added.’ These may be seen as ‘extrinsic’ indicators, that is, they do not necessarily have any lasting value but are a required passport to other places, work, further and higher education, and employment.

In the 2010 evaluation of the Children’s University¹ we saw that achievement is significantly better at

ages 7, 11 and 14 for children who participate in the Children’s University compared with non-attenders. Evidence on attainment, however, comes from a range of sources and shows considerable variation among different forms of provision. It therefore requires an effort on the part of schools to attend to, and sustain, the links between engagement with learning in and out of the classroom. Where this occurs **there is evidence that not only do CU-engaged children attain more highly than their non-CU counterparts but that there is a positive correlation between the length of time children are involved with CU activities and their performance in tests and exams**, as the following data from Sheffield illustrates.

Participation	English Level 4+	Maths Level 4+
Non-CU	67	67
30+ hours	81	82
65+ hours	82	81
100+ hours	85	84
Sheffield	77	78

3. Achievement

Achievement is a bigger and ultimately more sustainable concept than attainment. It may include what is learned and tested within a national curriculum but it extends to a wide variety of emotional, social and cognitive accomplishments, with a life beyond schools, beyond tests and exams and beyond easy measurement. Achievements are often defined in breadth of interests, as children engage in a variety of activities, from chess to rock climbing and drama. But achievements are also defined by a depth of expertise in any one of those areas of interest for example.

¹ ‘Evaluation of the Children’s University 2010 – Third Report’, Professor John MacBeath, University of Cambridge, January 2011 (ISBN: 978-0-9561319-4-2)



Achievement also encompasses what has been realised by the CU Trust itself, measured by its growth and outreach over five years, in relation to:

- The number of centres – 90 in England and a further 26 across other parts of the British Isles
- The number of children – 136,000 of which 125,000 are aged 7 to 14 and a further 11,000 are 5 and 6 year olds
- The number of schools and academies – 3,000 in England alone
- The number and variety of public Learning Destinations – 2,200
- The uptake of Passports To Learning – 250,000
- The number of allied Higher and Further Education Institutions - 100
- The range and quality of partnerships
- The affiliation of other countries
- The awards won nationally
- The significant move towards financial sustainability

Achievements of the Children's University (CU) Trust have also been recognised in prestigious national awards and nominations.

4. Attitudes

Changes in attitudes for Children's University attendees has been a consistent finding over the last five years. The evidence comes from children themselves, and from parents, teachers and co-ordinators. It is evidenced in anecdotes, spontaneous endorsements, interviews and from surveys, the results of which have varied little over the years, although they are influenced to some extent by geographic location and length of association.

90% of students agree/strongly agree with the statement: 'I love learning new things.' Many spontaneous written comments refer to the range of personal and social benefits:

"These activities are not only fun and keep you out of mischief but they make you like school more, help you get on better with other people and give you more confidence to do your class work and your homework."
(13 year old boy)

5. Adventure

Ad-venture, venturing forth, is defined in the dictionary as 'to engage in hazardous and exciting activity, esp. the exploration of unknown territory', and as 'an unusual and exciting, typically hazardous, experience.'

By definition adventure involves risk. For children, the nature of risk outside of curriculum and classroom is of a different order to risk of failure or humiliation inside the class. For the adults who work with children, the more adventurous the initiative, the greater the risk of failure. However, initial failure is more likely to be seen as intrinsic to the activity and as a motivator to do better rather than being seen as demoralising, attended by sanctions and often resulting in emotional withdrawal. **Surmounting obstacles, testing yourself against more ambitious challenges, has been shown to encourage determination and perseverance,** as exemplified in outdoor activities such as abseiling and rollerblading. 87% of children agreed/strongly agreed with the statement in the CU attitude survey: 'I'm not afraid to try things out even if I fail.'





6. Awards

According to their own testimony, gaining awards for participation is not the primary motivation for children to engage in CU activities. Nonetheless, awards are valued by students because they endorse, make visible and celebrate what has been achieved. While marks and grades may not always provide the occasion for sharing with parents, **Children's University awards have their own special currency, as parents and children attest to the excitement of learning in new ways and in new contexts. Passports play a vital role**, the value attached to them borne out in the low loss rate, comparing very favourably with the 'real' adult equivalent.

In response to the statement: 'It is important to me to get credits so I can take part in graduation ceremonies', 84% of children and young people agreed.

7. Agency

Agency refers to the power to act, a recognition that making a difference is in your own hands. We talk of 'agents of change', acting individually or collectively rather than as passive acceptance of what others dictate. One of the more worrying findings of school effectiveness research is that a sense of agency diminishes as children attend school, as conformity and obedience tends to be valued more highly than initiative, individuality and idiosyncrasy. Although 'agency' is not a term that is within their vocabulary, the sense of power and purpose is expressed in the following quote from an eleven year old boy:

"I don't have to wait for teachers to tell me what to do or to stop me doing things 'cos I just do things myself and find out things by myself and sometimes with other people too. I like having responsibility actually."

A sense of agency can also be applied to teachers and other adults who express similar sentiments to their pupils, taking initiative rather than waiting for permission, liberated from 'the constraints of targets and testing' as one teacher put it. **Agency may also be applied to the Children's University itself, an agent of change in a systemic sense, in respect of changing local management, initiative and innovation, and, in a deeper sense, affecting the way in which we come to understand and evaluate learning.**

8. Aspiration

For many children, particularly in homes and areas of acute disadvantage, their view of the future is often bleak and uninspired. It may be reinforced on a daily basis by peers and parents and by their classroom experience. To influence aspiration often seems beyond even the best teachers. **To be able to succeed in other contexts, to visit places beyond one's own immediate neighbourhood, to see the inside of a university for the first time, is demonstrated in the data as extending the horizons of the possible.**

"After I visited the university I thought for the first time maybe I could do that one day myself. I really didn't know before that what a university was."
(10 year old girl)



The growth in attendance at university lectures is a further measure of aspiration beyond the limitations of neighbourhood and community, and a measure too of the CU itself, creatively discontent with the tried and tested.

9. Adaptability

The value of Children's University is also measured by adaptability - of children and young people, of teachers and schools and of the educational system itself. Defined as 'the ability to adapt to new situations and new challenges' it is tested at the following levels of impact.

In respect of children and young people, the ability to adapt to the challenges of new contexts for learning is much of its attraction, re-adapting in new ways and with a new outlook on learning and on classroom learning ('learning in the wild' and 'learning in captivity'). The evidence comes from responses to questionnaires and from testimony in written statements and in interviews.

Perhaps one of the most salient features of personal and social education is to learn to get on with others who are different from you and to adapt expectations and attitudes. As one twelve year old boy put it:

"It makes you enjoy school more and get on with your pals better because you understand them better and meet people who are different from you and like different things from you."

Adaptability at teacher and school level is evidenced by openness to change and

willingness to create opportunities for learning beyond the classroom. As activities expand and new ideas gain momentum year on year there is evidence of schools becoming more creative and adventurous in what they offer and in respect of the partners with whom they engage.

For Learning Destinations, adapting to the needs of young visitors, offering structured learning experiences has required flexibility and adaptability, while validation has required new perspectives and new appreciation of what a site such as a museum can promise.

The embrace of the Children's University by universities, and in many instances by the support of their Vice Chancellors has been shown in making premises available, investing time and goodwill and participating in graduations.

While there is some evidence of teachers tailoring their teaching to the experience that children have beyond the classroom, this remains one of the major priorities for the CU in the future. For the benefit of learning beyond the classroom to be realised teachers need to be informed and alert to children's renewed self-confidence and their history of experience beyond the national curriculum.

Responsiveness and adaptability are also vouchsafed by a range of quality assurance processes which monitor and advise centres, encouraging and supporting CU's own self-evaluation and capacity building.



10. Advocacy

Like adaptability, advocacy works at a number of levels, as children enthuse their friends, as CU managers, co-ordinators and teachers extol its benefits, and as the CU Trust, in all its aspects, acts as a (inter)national voice through partnerships and communities, learning partners and Learning Destinations. While the leadership team, and the Chief Executive in particular, are tireless advocates, it is through the tangible gains and the voices of children and young people that the CU is sustained and enhanced. Capturing learning experiences, testimonials

and graduations in photographs, videos and on the CU website are all powerful forms of advocacy, giving access to good ideas and imaginative invention.

Perhaps the most significant measure of advocacy is the spontaneous adoption of the CU by people and organisations in other countries, less an outcome of purposive advocacy by the Chief Executive or others than the transparent value of CU activities and achievements. **That it has such international appeal and relevance is hugely significant.**



Main report

Key findings: Exploring the data

1. Participation and impact

Participation and impact are two key measures of the success of the Children's University. Both are more complex than they appear at first sight. At one end of the participation spectrum is attendance at CU activities. A more ambitious measure is the active engagement of pupils as agents in their own learning. Further along the participation spectrum, the most ambitious of measures is the active contribution to the provision of activities not only for oneself but also for the benefit of one's fellow pupils.

Impact is an even more layered construct. It is measured by three inter-related aspects – knowing, feeling and doing. It is concerned with questions such as:

- Do children know more as a consequence of participation?
- What value might we place on that enhanced knowing?
- Do children and young people feel differently as a consequence of their participation – about knowledge? About themselves? About school?
- Are they able to do things they couldn't do before and how are those skills valued by themselves and others?
- Does the CU experience widen children's conceptions of learning and ignite a desire to be more adventurous and self-directed?

Impact also goes beyond the individual child. It has a systemic quality. It raises further questions such as:

- To what extent does the out-of-hours experience affect learning and behaviour in the classroom?
- To what extent does it enhance teachers' understanding and approach to pedagogy or to pupil participation?
- To what extent does it impact on the ethos and culture of the school?
- To what extent does it have an impact on the agencies and Learning Destinations which children visit?
- To what extent does it engage, or re-engage, parents with their children's learning, homework or study?
- To what extent is there an impact on policy at national and local level, or possibly, internationally?
- To what extent does it enhance our understanding of learning, motivation and context?
- To what extent does it improve a child's ability to work with others (in a team) and open their minds to their future place and contribution in work and in society?

1.1 Participation indicators

A range of numerical performance indicators may be used as baseline measures of provision and participation:

- Number of Children's Universities and rate of growth
- Number of children participating in CU activities
- Number of CU-engaged hours by children



- Number and growth of Learning Destinations
- Number and growth of CU lectures, masterclasses and seminars
- Number of Passports To Learning issued
- Number of schools/academies engaged with CU
- Number of Higher and Further Education institutions working with the CU
- Number of validators engaged in quality assurance of CU activities and centres

On all of these measures there is evidence of substantive investment and growth. From the modest beginnings in 2007 with nine local CU centres by the end of that year, there were, by January 2013, 90 local CUs and 3,000 schools and academies in England. These accounted for 105,000 children with a total of around 2,625,000 hours of engagement by 7-14 year olds. In addition there were a further 11,000 5 and 6 year olds who participated with families or carers for 115,000 hours.

By the end of 2012 there were more than 2,200 public Learning Destinations, covering a wide range of sites such as museums, art galleries, theatres and theatre companies, parks, stately homes and urban trails, with 1,250 trained CU validators to assure quality of learning provision. By the same date 100 Higher and Further Education institutions were allied to the CU and by January 2013 250,000 Passports To Learning had been issued.

As the nature and structure of CU centres changes, provision becomes increasingly diverse. While this may challenge attempts to create some form of uniformity, it can also be seen to be a singular strength, as centres are sensitive to their local contexts and clientele and, with greater

autonomy and individuality, are able to respond more flexibly to emerging demands and initiatives.

Many CU sites that were formerly constituted in partnerships with local authorities have been developing into charities, foundations and trusts in their own right, bringing with them a range of new, and in some cases, innovative, governance arrangements.

1.2 Impact indicators

An easily quantifiable measure of impact is the extent to which CU-engaged children attend school in comparison to their non-engaged peers. Since comparative data of this kind have been gathered the evidence is unequivocal. With little exception, 'added value' attendance at school is evident across the board and across time. Differences between the two groups (CU and 'control' group) range from 0.4% to 6.4%. While within this range there is a consistency of difference between the two groups term by term, year by year and by CU site, attendance figures at the lower end do not meet the rigorous statistical criteria of significance. On the basis of these criteria, in some CU areas for which evaluation data has been gathered there are highly significant differences between the two groups. Blackpool, Chesterfield, Doncaster, Leicester, Stoke, Sheffield (all areas designated officially as 'deprived') and Warwickshire are the most consistently effective in these terms.

Stoke may be taken as an example to illustrate the nature of the data, and the nature of 'significance', showing where it falls short, and evidencing apparent fluctuations term by term and year by year.



Table 1 Attendance by term and year – Stoke CU % differences for CU and non-CU

Year	Numbers	Term	Difference authorised	Difference unauthorised	Total
2008	13	Term 2	1.3	1.6	2.9
2008	13	Term 3	0.6	1.7	2.3
2009	13	Term 1*	0.9	0.9	1.9
2009	19	Term 2	2.2	0.8	1.8
2009	17	Term 3	2.6	2.2	4.8
2010	17	Term 1	2.8	2.5	5.3
2010	33	Term 2	1.3	2.0	3.3
2010	33	Term 3	1.4	1.7	3.1
2011	32	Term 1	2.6	2.6	5.2
2011	32	Term 2	1.9	1.7	3.6
2011	32	Term 3	2.1	2.1	4.2

*not statistically significant

In this Stoke example, in all but one term, differences in attendance between CU attenders and their non-attending peers reach statistical significance, although from a teacher's or a child's point of view, 'significance' has a more common-sense meaning. Across the CU sites the individual testimonies from children and parents tell their own story:

*"Sometimes I think I'll just stay in bed when I'm not feeling well but I get up and go to school because I hate to miss Children's University."
(10 year old boy, Chesterfield)*

*"Frankie has had an amazing time, he jumps for joy when he knows it's Tuesday. He has made lots of friends and can't stop talking about it."
(Parent, Slough)*

*"I used not to like school very much before but now I actually don't mind because I feel more confident in myself."
(11 year old girl, Rotherham)*

1.3 Attainment

The simplest of measures, and carrying the highest stakes, is performance on tests and exams. Do CU-engaged children do better than expected as a consequence of their involvement in the Children's University?

The impact story begins with numbers but then looks below the waterline to examine the quality of experience and commitment.

In 2010¹ a major evaluation reported on attendance and attainment data from over 3,000 pupils, matched against children who did not attend CU. The results were unequivocal, demonstrating the value added by CU participation for children across the ability ranges including SEN and highly able children. The two key headline findings were:

- Achievement is **significantly** better at Key Stages 1 to 3 for children who participate in the Children's University compared with non-attenders.
- The further children engage with Children's University, the better their attendance and achievement.

¹ 'Evaluation of the Children's University 2010 – Third Report', Professor John MacBeath, University of Cambridge, January 2011 (ISBN: 978-0-9561319-4-2)



These two key findings may be illustrated by data from a number of individual sites. Sheffield CU is a good example as its data examines both added value for CU participants as well as in relation to the number of hours of CU involvement.

1.3.1 The Sheffield story

Sheffield provides a compelling story of CU's contribution to achievement at every level. The impact analysis in 2011 compares Y6 (age 11) and Y11 (age 16) CU participation data with academic performance in KS2 SATs (end of primary tests in England) and GCSEs, drawing on attainment data and Fischer Family Trust (FFT) estimates. This is a large sample, encompassing 38 primary schools and 6 secondary schools in the North East and East Community Assemblies, and includes some of the most deprived districts within Sheffield where, historically, attainment has been below the city average.

At Key Stage 2 Y6 CU pupils met, or were within a few percentage points of, their Fischer Family Trust (FFT) estimates for both English and Maths, significantly greater than the non-CU group which fell approximately 10% below their FFT estimates. The number of pupils in these CU schools achieving Level 4+ in English and Maths, the national expectation in England, is significantly greater for CU than non-CU pupils, and in all cases exceeds the Sheffield local authority average, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 - Attainment in English and Maths: CU and non-CU students compared

Participation	English	Maths	English & Maths
	L4+	L4+	L4+
Non-CU	67	67	59
CU	78	79	72
Sheffield LA	77	78	70

As Table 3 shows, the longer the engagement with CU activities the higher the attainment.

Table 3 - Attainment by number of hours of CU engagement

Participation	English L4+	Maths L4+
Non-CU	67	67
30+ hours	81	82
65+ hours	82	81
100+ hours	85	84
Sheffield LA	77	78

The 'value added' for children with special education needs is dramatic as shown in Table 4:

Table 4 - Attainment for children with special education needs - CU and non-CU children compared

Participation	English L4+	Maths L4+
Non-CU	37	40
30+ hours	56	60
65+ hours	62	62
100+ hours	73	68

Key Stage 4

The percentage of Children's University students achieving 5 A*-C including English and Maths at GCSE (44%) is significantly higher than the non-CU students (24%). The percentage of Y11 CU pupils achieving 5 A*-C including English and Maths was 7 percentage points higher than the FFT estimate, increasing to 12 percentage points for 5 A*-C in general.

1.3.2 Reports from other CUs

Unsolicited testimonies from individual schools include the following:

"Our data shows a direct correlation between success out of the classroom and performance in school, particularly



for boys. Of thirteen boys in Year 6, twelve completed at least one module for Children's University, some as many as six, during the latter part of KS2. The progress they made during their time in KS2 averaged 13.4 points across reading, writing and Maths. For some of these boys, particularly those who achieved lower Level 2 or Level 1 at KS1 the progress they made was more dramatic and they averaged 13.8 points in the three areas. The improvements in self-esteem seen as a result of completing Children's University modules directly translated into improved performance in the classroom."
(Headteacher, primary school)

"I really want to take the attitude that success out of school equals success in school. With the high percentage of boys at Lapworth (70%) this has been invaluable in raising standards across the school."
(Andrew Smith - headteacher at Lapworth Primary)

"Unofficially, 94% L4 + in English and Maths beating 79% target. All 94% have been engaged in CU since I started."
(Richard Machin – former headteacher, All Saint's CE Junior)

A more impressionistic set of data from a Warrington survey of 40 parents and carers whose children had graduated in 2012, found that 29 parents said that their children were doing better at school. 35 thought that their children had discovered new interests and acquired new skills or knowledge. Highlights

for parents included the broadening of horizons and heightened aspirations for the children, as well as the recognition that their children received. As one parent commented: *"That 'university' is for her."*

Headteachers and teachers from all schools in the Warrington survey reported raised self-esteem and confidence in participating children; three out of four had also observed raised aspirations and improved skills of co-operation and collaboration, empowering the children to take responsibility for their learning.

In Marish Primary School, Slough CU, the headteacher Gill Denham credits CU with the dramatic turnaround in the school's improvement following its Ofsted designation of 'special measures' eighteen months before her appointment. Validation by Ofsted and celebration in local newspapers had been hugely encouraging for staff, parents and students in Slough.

As the headteacher explains, the key to raising standards and a highly positive Ofsted report was the raising of aspirations of not only children but their teachers, with the CU playing a major role in demonstrating that children could achieve beyond expectation and enjoy learning for themselves. With a higher than average proportion of children with special needs and with English as a second language, extension of activities beyond the classroom has proved particularly significant. There are currently 60 CU validated club activities a week, attended by over 80% of pupils, accounting for 11,000 hours in the first ten months of 2012. It is



made explicit in the teachers' contract that their engagement with children is both in and out of the classroom.

While at Marish Primary School the £2 per hour charge provides a minimal source of income, its primary purpose is as a token of the value parents and children place on CU activities, the main source of income being through the use of pupil premium. Together with close collaboration with childcare services this also helps to provide breakfast for the large number of children on free school meals. Marish's success has provided a magnet for other local primary and secondary schools to become involved and to raise their aspirations and engagement.

1.4 Attitudes count

Attainment data has been complemented by repeated attitude surveys which tend to come to similar conclusions as to what is particularly valued and what is regarded as high priority by pupils. In the following table, the left-hand column shows the percentage of children agreeing or strongly agreeing with the given statement. The right-hand column shows the 'very important' rating. While the extrinsic motivator of awards is high, it takes third place to the intrinsic rewards of learning. This data is almost identical to responses from previous iterations of the questionnaire, showing not only the reliability of the instrument but the consistency of views of values and priorities.

Table 5 - Percentage of children agreeing/strongly agreeing and rating importance of these aspects of CU

Question	Statements	Very satisfied	Very + very very important	Gap
16	I get help when I'm stuck	92.9	76.5	16.4
19	I love learning new things	90.3	77.4	12.9
18	I get to work with and get help from my friends	89.0	67.4	21.6
21	I'm not afraid to try things out even if I fail	86.6	73.7	12.9
24	It is important to me to get credits so I can take part in graduation ceremonies	83.8	74.6	9.2
20	I now feel much more confident about my class work	82.9	71.9	11.0
17	I get time to work on something I'm enjoying without interruption	78.1	70.3	7.8
22	I pay more attention in class since being in the CU	74.8	72.9	1.9
23	We get lots of opportunities to learn in places outside school	72.9	64.3	8.6
25	I am getting better results on tests or exams since being in the CU	71.8	69.9	1.9



1.4.1 The most enjoyed

There are four items which are ranked at the top of the table with a 90 per cent or above satisfaction score. All suggest some form of transfer of skills and of confidence to meet the challenges of work in the classroom.

- I now feel much more confident about my class work
- I pay more attention in class since being in the CU
- I am getting better results on tests or exams since being in the CU
- I'm not afraid to try things out even if I fail

Three top-rated items

These aggregated results conceal to some extent the different cultures and priorities of different CUs. Table 6 below, with satisfaction ranking of items from six CUs, including Service Children's Education schools in Germany, shows two things:

- a) a consistency of priorities which reflect the impact on classroom learning
- b) differing emphases in different sites on learning beyond the school and classroom

Table 6 - Ranking of top three statements by six CUs

CU	Top three statements
Colchester	I get help when I'm stuck I get to work with and get help from my friends I love learning new things
Coventry	I get help when I'm stuck It is important to me to get credits so I can take part in graduation ceremonies I'm not afraid to try things out even if I fail
Middlesbrough	I get to work with and get help from my friends It is important to me to get credits so I can take part in graduation ceremonies I am getting better results on tests or exams since being in the CU
Plymouth	I get help when I'm stuck I get to work with and get help from my friends I'm not afraid to try things out even if I fail
West London Academy	It is important to me to get credits so I can take part in graduation ceremonies I'm not afraid to try things out even if I fail I get to work with and get help from my friends
Service Children's Education	I get help when I'm stuck I love learning new things It is important to me to get credits so I can take part in graduation ceremonies



Table 7 - Lowest ranked items on satisfaction: 2010 and 2012

Over the last two years there has also been consistency on the three lowest ranked items.

Statements	October 2012	March 2012	2010
In CU we often go on trips to places outside school to learn new things	24	23	24
I have a learning passport and use it a lot	12	24	23
I talk to adults about how, when or where I learn best	25	25	25

These ratings are relative to other sources of satisfaction but are not negative. They do, however, point to issues that need to be revisited. Going to 'places outside school to learn new things' is an important element of CU and varies significantly from place to place.

In relation to this there is one change in satisfaction rating that stands out - the use of the Passports To Learning. The relative priority given to learning passports is a significant, and encouraging, shift in perceptions and in the value attributed to the use of passports. This does, however, differ according to the individual CU site.

Table 8 - I have a learning passport and use it a lot

Ranking in early and late 2012	2012 October	2012 March
Colchester	12	21
Coventry	20	
Middlesbrough	22	
Plymouth	13	
West London	10=	8=
Service Children's Education	7=	11
Birmingham		1=
Blackburn		1=
Blackpool		25
Chesterfield		25
Leicester		25
Liverpool		25
Nottinghamshire		10=
Rotherham		20=
Sheffield		25
Slough		12=
Stoke		19=
Warwick		25
Overall	13	25



The most important

Asked to rate the statement in terms of importance the following criteria are those rated most highly:

- I love learning new things
- I get help when I'm stuck
- It is important to me to get credits so I can take part in graduation ceremonies
- I'm not afraid to try things out even if I fail
- I pay more attention in class since being in the CU
- I have a learning passport and use it a lot
- I now feel much more confident about my class work

These ratings are very similar to the aspects of CU which children find most satisfying. These qualities of CU do not always coincide as the gap between satisfaction and importance differs, sometimes significantly.

The gap measure

Comparing how CU students rate satisfaction and importance, and the differences between them, provides a 'gap measure'. This works in two directions, on the one hand where ratings of satisfaction/enjoyment are higher than the perceived importance, on the other hand where perceived importance is rated higher than satisfaction/enjoyment. This latter gap measure may be more significant as it points to aspects of CU which children aspire to but also may be seen as leaving room for improvement in practice.

The biggest gap (less important than enjoyable) is in relation to the following:

- I get to work with and get help from my friends
- I get help when I'm stuck
- I love learning new things
- I'm not afraid to try things out even if I fail
- I now feel much more confident about my class work

That students rate importance lower than satisfaction does not mean that these aspects are not valued. It is explained by the very high ratings for satisfaction and in part by the skewed importance scale which at the positive end discriminates between 'very important' and 'very very important'.

The biggest gap (more important than enjoyable)

Where pupils rate the importance of activities significantly higher than the satisfaction rating there are clear implications for practice. The largest importance-satisfaction gap (19.7 percentage points) is in relation to the statement 'In CU I get help in planning the next steps in our learning.'

The other five items with a significant gap are:

- Things I learn in CU help me to learn better in class
- My teachers encourage me to get involved in CU activities
- In CU I assess my own progress
- In CU I am told how I am doing compared with before
- I have a learning passport and use it a lot

On the second of these bullets above there is a message which has been consistent over the years - the need for teachers to be both more informed about CU and to be more enthusiastic advocates.

Quite distinctive differences emerge when data is examined by individual centres. For example, in relation the statement 'In CU I get help in planning the next steps in our learning', the importance-satisfaction gap ranges from 1.5% to 32%:

- In Colchester the gap is 23.9
- In Coventry the gap is 1.5
- In Middlesbrough 32.0
- In Plymouth 20.0
- In West London 21.5
- In Service Children's Education 6.4



2. Beyond curriculum: no-one ever failed a museum

The term ‘curriculum’ brings immediately to mind a core of timetabled subjects, the staple diet of schools. In school, engagement and achievement are measured primarily by the children’s ability to master curriculum content through nationally moderated assessments in age-related tests and exams.

The CU curriculum is a much less easy thing to either describe or assess. It is not, as Steven Pinker, the Harvard College professor describes the statutory curriculum, ‘ruthlessly cumulative’, in which failure to engage or grasp essential building blocks of the subject leaves the learner behind, often unable to re-engage or catch up with what has been missed. ‘Failure’ is often explained by frustration and opting out when re-engagement becomes too ‘hard’ and competing with others takes place on an uneven playing field. Perhaps the most salient of differences between the mainstream curriculum and that of the CU is between a curriculum tradition which reaches back centuries to the trivium and quadrivium of the Middle Ages and a set of activities rooted in present and future interests.

Figure 1 - Curricula compared

School curriculum	CU curriculum
Standardised	Wide-ranging
Pre-determined	Spontaneous
Hierarchical in value	Equality of value
Sequential	Multiple entry points
Competitive	Collaborative
High stakes	Low stakes
Norm referenced	Criterion referenced
Classroom bound	Beyond the classroom
Teacher led	Student led
Elitist	Democratic
Tradition	Innovation

The contrasts in the above table highlight not only the essential differences between what David Perkins, Professor of Teaching and Learning at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, has termed ‘learning in captivity’ and ‘learning in the wild’, but what it takes for the intrinsic motivation of a learner to be unleashed. A highly significant feature of the curriculum of the CU is its being student-led, in terms of activities proposed and sometimes initiated by young people themselves.

Testimonies from eleven year olds in Warwick emphasise some of the differences in lessons. Children recognise the inhibitions of their talents: *“I was being creative because I don’t normally.”* And the fragmentation of learning within timetable structures: *“[In CU] it is longer, we can do more complicated things and it’s more fun!”* And without the attendant distractions – *“[It’s] more fun because children do not mess about.”*

“You do get better at learning things because all the things you do in Children’s University are about learning, and you’re not rushed or made to write everything down or get marks, so you just get better at learning anyway.”

In Nottinghamshire children spoke about the multiple benefits of CU – personally, socially, and in terms of improved relationships with teachers. The term ‘opportunity costs’ refers to the benefits of being in one place rather than somewhere more anti-social:

“These activities are not only fun and keep you out of mischief but they make you like school more, help you get on better with other people and give you more confidence to do your class work and your homework.”



“You also get on better with your teachers when you are in clubs or you go away with them on a trip and they are more like friends rather than just teachers.”

It might be seen as unfair to describe the school curriculum as ‘elitist’ but it has, since its Platonic origins, rested on assumptions of ‘academic’ and ‘non-academic’ subjects and on a differential ability to master the most high status subjects, high achievers are sometimes referred to as the ‘talent pool’ – a limited commodity. By contrast, there is an inherent equality and validation in activities, from violin playing and chess to sport and drama and the values to be gained from a visit to an airport or a museum - in Florence’s Palazzo Strozzi Director General James Bradburne’s famous dictum, ‘No-one ever failed a museum.’

2.1 Lectures

Lectures are a unique feature of CU activities almost everywhere. For example:

- *How insects see the world* - Professor Peter Smithers
- *Polar Exploration* – Anthony Jinman
- *A year in Madagascar* – Jeremy Sabel
- *Marine Photography* – National Marine Laboratory
- *Pyromania* – Professor Roy Lowry
- *The truth behind Finding Nemo* – The National Marine Aquarium
- *Geology* – Professor Iain Stewart (presenter of BBC’s Journeys from the Centre of the Earth)

On Saturday mornings the superstore B&Q offers workshops for young people across the British Isles, called *Kids Can Do It*. At Manchester University, under Professor of Biomedical Egyptology Rosalie David, children can take part in courses including *Making a Mummy*, *Ancient Egyptian Gods* and *Writing in Hieroglyphs*, as well as the Egyptian number system and Egyptian jigsaws.

3. Education without walls

The concept of ‘Learning Destinations’ is owed in part to innovative ventures such as ‘schools without walls’ – the recognition that much of what there is to learn lies outside schools in the community, in public places and in restricted sites which engage and stimulate thinking and insight – ‘seeing anew’. Rather than a destination being seen as an end point it is very often the beginning, igniting interest in something previously unknown and perhaps, in the past, even regarded with suspicion or prejudice.

The sophisticated CU website is a valuable addition, with its map and zooming feature that provides exact locations on a detailed local street map, and an accompanying description of what the site offers. The imagination that is demonstrated in some CUs, exploiting the hidden potential of local and national sites such as a snail farm outside Canterbury, artistic roller skating in Great Yarmouth, the Custard Factory in Birmingham or a cemetery in Plymouth are exemplary for those CUs which rarely venture beyond the physical boundaries of the school and with provision that may be little more than extra-curricular activities.

“My favourite Learning Destinations are the museum and the library because I love the books and the Summer Reading Challenge and the different activities in the ‘make and do’ part, especially the egg search. The best CU lecture was Pyromania because I enjoyed it when he set fire to the biscuit and murdered the jelly baby! I have a bronze certificate and a silver one too. I will get my gold certificate at the next graduation ceremony. I feel great about that.”
(Alva Allchurch, age 8)



In Chesterfield, residential visits are a valued aspect of CU. Three nights spent in a residential centre, engaging in a range of problem-solving activities, proved, for some young people, to be a high point of the school year. They added that it was ok, actually even encouraged, to have an all-night ‘readathon’.

Volunteering, aimed at young people aged 15 and over, is another pathway to certification and CU awards. Volunteers collect evidence of their engagement and achievements in their Passport to Volunteering which supports the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and which may even provide evidence for the new Higher Education Achievement Record.

The quality assurance issue for Learning Destinations as they proliferate is to be able to endorse the learning experience that is offered, and ensure that there is a structure and focus on learning which goes beyond superficial engagement or passing interest, and beyond a stamp on a passport. A more challenging issue is to identify how what is learned is carried back into schools and classrooms and how what is learned is embedded within a wider repertoire of learning dispositions. The fact that aside from public Learning Destinations, which are publicly accessible, there are also restricted Learning Destinations, often restricted to pupils from a particular school attending CU-validated after-school activities, ought to over time make the learning link between school and CU more clear to all.

This is obviously an issue that is beyond the scope of a national evaluation but falls within the remit of the validation teams, local CU managers and co-ordinators, workshop activities, teachers and students’ own self-assessment. That a Learning Destination is validated for three years is an important statement signalling that its ‘license’

depends on external validation. Keeping records of activities and how those are evaluated is an important element in ensuring transparency of provision and achievement on both sides of the partnerships – learning sites and classroom sites.

3.1 What’s in a name?

‘Selling’ engagement with the CU and with specific activities is one key to its success and growth. Teachers and young people talk of some of the disincentives and barriers to engagement, resting in some cases on low self-confidence, preconceptions and prior experience. Getting children interested in fencing in Rotherham, for example, was as nine year old Fraser explained, a disincentive because he thought it was about building fences!

Shakespeare 4 Kidz, a CU Learning Destination, raises the question, ‘What’s in a name?’

“Over the years, we’ve found that the only two words in the company name that are a barrier to people fully engaging with our work are ‘Shakespeare’ and ‘Kidz’ Some people get upset with ‘4’ instead of ‘for’ or ‘Kidz’ with a ‘zed/zee’ – does that really matter? Should we call ourselves ‘The Shakespeare Company for Children and Young People Who Want To Learn About Shakespeare and Be Entertained by His Stories in a Way That Everyone Can Enjoy or Understand?’”
(Julian Chenery, Chief Executive, Shakespeare 4 Kidz)

The purposes and principles which underlie the work of Shakespeare 4 Kidz offer a transferable model for other forms of CU activity:

- To create a stimulating and accessible session in which we support the work done in the classroom while offering a unique approach to



understanding the text through pupils' practical interaction with skilled professional actors

- To create a safe environment in which every pupil will feel that their contribution is valued
- To demystify Shakespeare; making his work accessible whilst staying true to his style and content
- To lay the foundation for further enthusiastic study of the work of William Shakespeare

The emphasis on inclusion means providing something for everyone - for example, some pupils take part in the story and represent characters, whilst others join in with group activities related to the story. All pupils are encouraged to contribute ideas throughout and join in some scenes.

Lucy, aged 8, who is intrigued by the name MacBeath, is able to rhyme off a list of Shakespeare plays, stopping after six, saying she does know more. Macbeth, Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet and A Midsummer Night's Dream have all been performed and/or watched in Rotherham with the Shakespeare 4 Kidz company.

Juliet, aged 7, describes playing the role while the less than gallant Romeo admits ungracefully that he was 'unfortunately' her lover. Getting into the spirit of the Shakespearean age is enhanced by the Tudor banquet in which children describe there being 'tons of medieval food, like chicken pie, and there are jokers and jousting.'

A prevalent theme in children's accounts is the self-confidence they have gained from playing

a part in drama, addressing an audience and pushing themselves out of their comfort zone, as in the Glee Club activities in West London:

"I love Glee 'cos sometimes you get a bit nervous and scared but you don't have to worry because no one will laugh and it's basically that you get to express your own feelings and when you go to Children's University you get awarded with a certificate so it tells you how good you have been doing and it makes you appreciate yourself."
(Shae)

"I've really enjoyed Glee Club because it builds your confidence and kind of makes you act more and it'll be your social life and make you more confident in the real world."
(Sumner)

To be able to speak publicly has helped young people to speak out in class and to be unafraid to put their hand up and ask for help, or to admit that they didn't understand.

"Before, if I was stuck I wouldn't have asked for help. Now because of CU activities I know more about what I'm actually good at and what I'm not so good at and when I need to ask for more help."
(Amy, aged 9)

The following accolade from Professor Mick Waters, formerly Director of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority England and CU Trust Trustee emphasises the voluntary and active nature of learning in the CU:



“Children’s learning is best when they do the natural things and we help them to cross thresholds as a result. They make, do and mend, they have adventures, they produce plays and shows, play instruments, speak different languages, and they grow things, care for creatures and have collections. All of these are gateways that teachers make into turnstiles to a brighter future. The Children’s University is committed to offering children a brighter future by showing them how learning can be a challenging but enjoyable way to organise time and can make the changing horizon irresistible.”

The compilation of case stories from individual CU sites makes an important and continuing contribution to our understanding of local practice and the variety of forms it may assume. In Doncaster College, for example, children suggest Learning Destinations and the CU will try to meet those requests but with the caveat, ‘We can’t do Disneyland or bungee jumping.’

Students in Doncaster College act as mentors to local CU children as well as offering courses in drama and floristry and extending Learning Destinations such as a detective trail at Doncaster Minster. Doncaster College funds transport for children to come into the college or visit one of the external Learning Destinations. Bringing parents in to support their children’s learning also *“creates permission for adults to get through the doors and back into learning.”* The principal, George Trow, sees the Children’s University as a strategic lynchpin of Doncaster College’s community cohesion.

4. An occasion for celebration: graduations

Graduations have proved to be a high point in the life of the CU. They are formal occasions for celebration and showcasing CU’s impact on children’s motivation and achievement. The presence of parents who would rarely turn out at school in such numbers is indicative of an impact which goes beyond the individual child.

Refreshments following the ceremony give the chance for parents and children to talk to staff, to representatives of Learning Destinations and, as in West London Academy (WLA) for example, to view the WLA CU displays of events that have taken place over the course of the year. The whole ceremony is photographed and filmed – prior permission being sought. Photos are then made available to parents on the academy’s website, while the DVD is sold on a cost basis to parents.

Visiting Liverpool University for the graduation helped to raise children’s sights and to see university as a possibility that had never previously been entertained.

“After I visited the university I thought for the first time maybe I could do that one day myself. I really didn’t know before that what a university was.”

In Redcar and Cleveland, where only four schools have not been engaged with CU, and which boasts 91 public Learning Destinations, the enthusiasm for certification and graduation has seen over 700 certificates being presented! As the CU manager testifies:



“This year, for the first time, we were able to present some of the new CU awards at Certificate, Diploma, Degree and Postgraduate level. Some of the young people receiving these awards had recorded over 400 hours of learning – a tremendous achievement. They are all determined to continue until they reach Doctorate level!”

The enthusiasm is also expressed by young people contributing their own ideas:

***Dear Sir,
I think that there should be a platinum award rather than a 2nd gold, because platinum is more grand than gold. After platinum I think there should be Iridium, because that is only found in asteroids. When I grow up I want to work at the Large Hadron Collider.
(email to Ger Graus, Chief Executive, CU Trust)***

The impact of graduations is expressed in the numbers of parents attending and in the ‘buzz’ from seeing their children graduating.

Teachers and headteachers have also expressed their enjoyment and pride:

“It was a real pleasure for all of those involved in CU to see all of the children, not just from our own schools but the other schools too, having such a great time and revelling in their own and others success!..... we are looking forward to sharing this success with the other children at school to hopefully spur them on!!”
(Headteacher, Rugby)

‘Revelling in success’ captures a key objective of the CU together with a telling corollary – revelling in their own and others’ success. Its key message that, away from the competitive environment of the classroom children and young people are able to be more altruistic and share a concern for their peers?

5. Partnering for learning

Creating and sustaining partnerships is an essential aspect of the Children’s University. The term itself is significant as it implies a reciprocity and mutual benefit. It also resides on trust as, with such a small core team at the centre, it is the partners who are responsible for sustaining the momentum. It is also crucial that the CU works closely with organisations whose aims and principles reflect the core purpose of ‘creating inspiring learning opportunities for children.’ With this guiding aim it is then possible to identify opportunities and areas of intervention in which collaboration will yield the greatest returns, not simply to their respective organisations but to the children and families whom they target.

Learning partners are the key to broadening the range of learning opportunities open to young people. It is implicit, and made explicit, that they share the CU mission to create an excitement about learning, to encourage inquisitiveness, leading to exploration, characterised by both breadth and depth, engaged through a variety of contexts and requiring a broadened repertoire of ‘intelligences’ and ‘learning styles’. Learning partnerships exist locally, regionally, nationally and now also internationally.

Strategic partners are also vital in lending status and authority to the achievement of young people. Again, it is the reciprocity of benefits that shape the partnership. For young people the gain is measured



by their introduction to a university, the broadening of their horizons, the raising of their aspirations and the previously unforeseen possibility of a university education. For the university it informs and puts them in touch with places which have often been beyond their compass and enhances their mission to communities in need.

Partnerships may also act as Learning Destinations. So, for example, a partnership with the Reading Agency and the Summer Reading Challenge brings with it local libraries as Learning Destinations. Partnerships with Lambeth CU and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) also provide Learning Destinations, problem-solving activities, exploratory trails and workshops.

'The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being', is one category used in Ofsted's new 'Inspection Framework for Schools'. This is exemplified in the recent inspection of Town Field school in Doncaster.

"Inspected in September 2009, CU activities were considered to be an example of excellent practice and accepted as evidence under the category 'The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being', The Ofsted team was very interested to hear about our children's engagement with Children's University and was impressed with how this extra-curricular study provision had enhanced learning. We were able to demonstrate how this enriched our curriculum and how it improved pupils' attitudes to learning and raised their aspirations. It was graded as outstanding. We were delighted that

Ofsted recognised the contribution that Children's University makes and hope to continue strengthening our partnership even more!"
(Helen Bellinger, headteacher)

On the Doncaster College side it is said that the CU has become 'embedded in the College's DNA'. Lecturers and support staff are involved in the design and facilitation of modules. Students and volunteers act as mentors for the children, and in the Drama course, students even help teach CU children as part of their course. A volunteer model encourages tutors to approach students to see if they would like to help with a club or module. Children are keen to learn from the students and to ask them questions about college life, what they are learning and what their aspirations are.

There is an understanding that the CU in its current form is not a revenue generator on an annual basis. It is seen, rather, as an investment in the future – a marketing and social responsibility cost. As the principal says:

"CU gives [the children] a special experience that could open doors later in life, and a broader experience than children [usually] have at school."

The following insightful comment from a Doncaster Children's University attendee refers to the college's countless students who regularly act as mentors:

"I think the students were kind but stern at the same time which was better than just stern or kind."



5.1 International partners

Partnerships with international individuals and agencies are growing at such a rate that by the time of publication there will be new CU sites in places still to be enlisted. The international pioneer was the Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi in Florence, its affiliation owed to its Director General Dr James Bradburne, who has been a consistent and faithful supporter of the CU and is also one of the CU Trust Patrons.

Army garrisons in Germany have been among the first of sites in other countries to be affiliated to the CU Trust. Exploring learning sites beyond the confines of the garrison has been exemplary and very positively evaluated by children, parents and army staff, from the Kunsthalle in Bielefeld to the Spielmuseum Soltau and from the Heinz Nixdorf Museum in Paderborn to the Lippisches Landesmuseum in Detmold.

The Netherlands has been the first country outside of the British Isles to formally establish a CU. The CU Nederland, launched in October 2012, started in Rotterdam, supported by the Erasmus University of Rotterdam and a national not-for-profit organisation, CED-Groep.

With a confirmed start date of 1st January 2013 the University of Adelaide in partnership with the South Australian government and the Department for Education and Children, will be leading on developments Australia-wide.

In Malaysia too negotiations are ongoing to establish a CU in partnership with the Di PURBA Centre for Professional Excellence, the Malaysian government and other providers such

as Nottingham University in Kuala Lumpur. A partnership of Lasallian schools in Singapore is also developing its thoughts on CU provision.

Interest has been registered from the Republic of Ireland, Estonia, Portugal, Italy, China, India, Indonesia, Belize and the USA. The China Science and Technology Museum in Beijing has already been added to the list of international Learning Destinations.

6. Quality Assurance

Assuring quality in contexts as diverse as urban trails, museum visits, lectures, cemeteries and outdoor pursuits such as canoeing and rock climbing, is of a completely different order from the routine assessment of what has been learned on a specific subject, or of what is capable of reproduction on a given day in a given time period on a paper and pencil test.

Assuring quality relies to a large extent on the nature of assessment at local level, by supervisors, teachers, CU managers and co-ordinators or by agencies which validate experience by a stamp on a passport. Inevitably there is wide spectrum of practice and much of what is validated is essentially about participation or the amount of time invested. The emphasis on quality assurance may be seen as the discriminating factor between routine extra-curricular activities and activities which require reflection, discussion and evaluation of what is being learned and what merits a passport credit towards graduation. This is incredibly difficult to standardise or control but does benefit from two seminal documentary sources which set out criteria at individual and organisational level.



'Planning for Learning - A Framework for Validating Learning' sets out what is described as 'a rigorous process of self-evaluation and planning, to ensure that the highest quality of learning is provided in all Children's University learning activities and in all activities accredited by the CU'. It is a vital set of guidelines and provides a quality assurance template. The challenge is to help teachers and other facilitators to use it on a systematic and 'rigorous' basis without compromising the vitality of engagement and enjoyment. The companion volume 'Planning for Excellence' focuses on organisational systems and structures. It is an important complement to 'Planning for Learning' as it focuses on structures and processes which need to be in place to frame and enhance the quality of learning.

In Warwick the CU manager made the point that the more Learning Destinations you validate the easier it becomes, as you become more aware of issues, ways of asking tricky questions and learning new ways of working and then passing on this knowledge to other Learning Destinations and to Children's University validators.

Discussion as to how many stamps should be awarded for each distinct area of activity and when a stamp is merited is critical in 'not devaluing the currency!'

7. A family event

Attendance at, and evaluation of, conferences is one interim measure of success. The fifth annual conference, which took place on 10th and 11th December 2012, was attended by 177 participants, a fourfold-plus increase since the 2008 conference's 39 attendees. The feedback

from participants has been virtually 100 per cent positive with numerous superlatives such as 'inspired', 'superb', 'amazing', 'brilliant', 'stunning', 'wonderful', 'first class' – plus six 'fantastic's and "the best conference I have attended in 33 years of being involved with teaching/children's services!". Some other responses include:

"Just to say thank you to all who organised, worried, contributed and worked so hard - it was a fabulous conference. I, together with many, returned home 'buzzing'!"

"Yet again the CU conference was very enjoyable and as always totally professional and yet at the same time it feels like a big family event. It is so well organised and that we come away really having learnt more and having many of our questions answered means it is time very well spent. All the speakers were very informative and inspirational. It was great to hear the young people's views and their confidence was enviable."

"Undoubtedly, the CU conference is the one which exceeds all others in terms of every delegate's potential to contribute, pick up new ideas and feel part of a burgeoning extended family."

Many were quick to give the credit to the CU Trust central team.

"The individual CU managers and of course all of you at Head Office are a fantastically motivated group of people. The buzz



definitely rubs off and was manifestly obvious in the attention to detail with which the conference was organised."

"I feel privileged to have been invited to attend the conference as local CU Chancellor. A particular masterstroke for me was the presence (and testimony) of the young people for whom we are doing all this!"

8. Project funding and inward investment

Since 2007 the total income of the CU has been £8,564,265. Over two-thirds of this has been through non-government funding (£5,788,059) with over 4 million being money locally generated as a result of CU grants to local centres. Just over one and a half million pounds has been awarded to local 64 local CUs for start-up, or expansion, funding. This has enabled all of these 64 centres to become self-sustaining.

Table 9 - Funding sources 2010/11

Funding sources 2010/11	Pounds
Department for Education (for centres)	400,000
DFE (for central office costs)	350,000
Nationwide	52,258
Fidelity Foundation	83,830
Membership fees	96,225
Passports to Learning and other sales	80,470

Costs

The main outgoings are in the form of grants to support funding activities of CU centres, paid on the basis of need, size, start-up and expansion and in relation to CU centres' own capacity for raising income. The total expenditure on 30 CUs in 2011 was £469,580 or £15,653 per award of grant.

Table 10 - Income 2007/8 to 2011/12

	2007/8	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Grants	23.9	49.0	13.3	0.0	11.4	21.3
Public support	75.0	49.0	73.1	80.8	52.9	65.3
Corporate sponsorship	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.2	1.2
Lottery	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Earned income	0.0	1.6	13.6	19.0	28.5	11.8
Donations	1.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2
Bank interest	0.0	0.5	0.03	0.14	0.09	0.2

Expenditure breaks down as shown in Table 11:



Table 11 - Expenditure 2011/12

Expenditure 2011/12	Pounds
Salaries, social security and pensions	199,938
Office rent and service charge	16,352
Printing costs	37,670
Professional fees	17,525
Fundraising and strategy*	35,000
Evaluation, passports, certification	81,473
Website licensing, design and development	16,688

*Additional DfE grant

Table 12 - Forward planning

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2012-16	2007-12
	%	%	%	%	Total %	Total %
Grants	0.0	17.1	17.7	16.3	13.5	22.3
Public support	73.5	34.1	25.3	23.2	36.5	68.3
Corporate sponsorship	0.0	11.9	12.7	16.3	11.0	1.2
Lottery	0.0	5.5	3.8	3.5	3.2	0.0
Earned income	26.5	31.7	38.6	37.2	34.3	11.8
Donations	0.0	0.0	1.9	3.5	1.6	0.2
Bank interest	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.02	0.2

9. Planning for the future

Plans for the future, as conceived by the Chief Executive, the CU Trust Board of Trustees and team, involve continuing, expanding, raising standards and embedding evaluation on an ongoing basis.

Continuing

- To expand CU provision, providing access for 5 and 6 year olds, focusing specifically on family learning, including carers; working in partnership with organisations from the voluntary, community and business sectors – this will include providing ‘virtual’ CU learning

environments for, amongst others, looked-after children.

- The CU Volunteering scheme including the Passport To Volunteering CU-wider; (inter)nationally and locally taking a lead in governments’ ‘Big Society’ and ‘National Citizenship’ agendas and achieving greater synergy with the Higher and Further Education sectors.
- Training and support for (inter)national CU centres through (inter)national and regional meetings, annual conferences, enabling peer, web and Skype mentoring and sharing of good practice.



- CU training specifically in the areas of Planning for Learning, Planning for Excellence, the E-Passport and the CU Volunteering scheme.
- To generate income and procure funding through membership and a range of other sources to offset the increases in costs essential to its growth. The appointment in 2012 of a CU fundraising manager, plus deployment of publicity and marketing consultants are planned to add significantly to the CU Trust's capacity-building.

Widening

- The CU network of partnerships to enhance the quality of provision for children, particularly in respect of Learning Destinations and CU lectures, masterclasses and seminars wherever Children's University development takes place.
- Research and evaluation, through the University of Cambridge, the Department for Education and other agencies worldwide, whose combined work will continue to contribute to the CU Trust's profile, including broadcastable visuals as public evidence.

Publishing

- International, national and local newsletters and examples of "...what works...?" in 'Case Stories' in areas such as: CU management; curriculum innovation; higher and further education partnerships; international CU partnerships; leadership and management in CU schools and children's involvement in directing their own learning, and evaluation.

Raising

- Aspirations, improving attainment and achievements specifically in English, Mathematics and ICT in the first instance of the most able 9-14 year olds through the introduction of the Children's University Challenge (CUC) centres in partnership with the Sutton Trust and to be run in partnership with Higher Education and Teacher Training Institutions through existing local CUs. The CU Trust will actively seek to procure external funding and support to bring this to fruition. In future years, the CUC programme will seek to extend its provision beyond the original 'core' provision.
- The profile of the work of the Children's University and further progress the development of the CU Trust's international presence in particular through 'social franchising', focusing specifically on the CU Trust's core principles, aims, objectives, anticipated outcomes, quality assurance and delivery of the Children's University framework within (inter)national, regional and local contexts.

As well as its major presence in England, new developments will be taking place in Scotland in 2013 in collaboration with the University of Strathclyde and Queen Margaret University, in Northern Ireland and the Isle of Man and in Wales. Further international expressions of interest have been received from and/or developments are planned in the following places:

- Estonia
- Italy (2014)
- Portugal (2013)
- Republic of Ireland



- Australia (2013)
- China (2013/14)
- India (2013/14)
- Indonesia
- Malaysia (2013)
- Singapore (2013)
- Sri Lanka
- Republic of South Africa
- Belize
- USA (2014)

10. Challenges

Succession, sustaining and capacity building

The success of CU sites has very typically rested on the enthusiasm and commitment of key people, willing to persist in the face of adversity, ‘true believers’ and advocates. There are now many examples of succession and capacity building efforts which cope with the departure of key personnel. The issue becomes particularly salient in Service Children’s Education where there is high mobility of staff within schools and within the garrisons. Risk succession planning there is acknowledged as paramount and exemplary.

Financing and cost benefit

“It should be acknowledged that sustaining financial commitment is sometimes challenging to achieve in the face of other school commitments.” This plea from one school finds echoes from other places where prioritising funding is a recurring issue. CU funding may, as in some cases, represent a ‘lost leader’, important enough to be cross-subsidised from elsewhere but this does not represent a long-term solution. While the centre has been alert and receptive to financial

stringencies, and DfE funding in England has been an invaluable source, centres have to become self-sustaining and invest efforts in generating new funding sources, seeking new and creative ways to support activities. In this respect networking, conferencing and learning from leading-edge practice is a vital.

Building bridges

The major challenge, consistent through the life of the CU, has been the need to make integral the links between learning in, and out of, the classroom. For some, this has not been an issue, but the evaluation also finds evidence of places where teachers, classroom assistants, or parents are unaware of what is the CU ‘is’, what it achieves, what opportunities are open to children and how it feeds back into the classroom. This is, in part, explained by relentless pressure on curricular coverage, targets and testing, and a failure to appreciate the self-confidence and self-efficacy that arises from being successful and feeling valued. Despite the advocacy, publicity and website development there remains scope for local and grassroots as well (inter) national celebration of achievement.

The USP and quality assurance

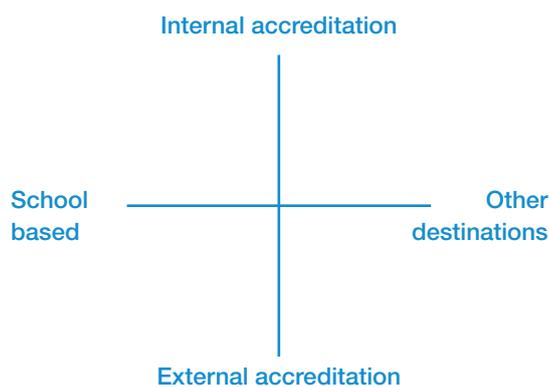
How would advocates of CU describe its Unique Selling Point (USP)? In what way is it distinctive from extra-curricular activities? In interviews and focus groups in the course of the evaluation, some children and young people in both primary and secondary schools did not associate after-school activities or excursions out of school with the CU. There are naturally overlaps and areas of common concern but its ‘branding’ and added value has



to be made apparent to children, parents and teachers. Volunteers and quality assurance agents can play a formative role in this area.

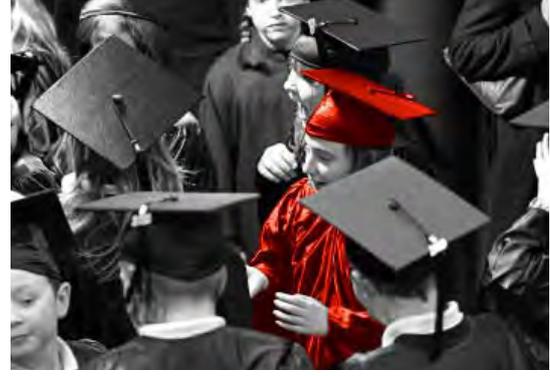
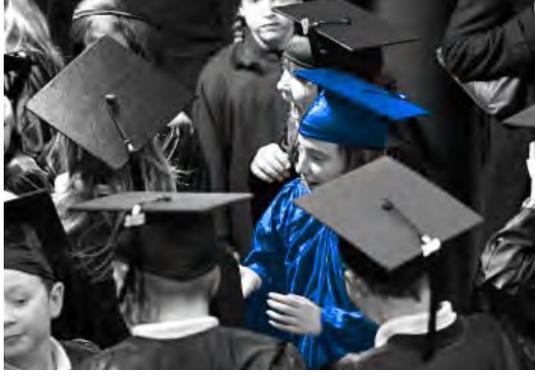
In its documentation and on its website the CU Trust is clear about what it sees as its USP: it is the clear link between its mission, values, aims and policies on the one hand and its quality framework on the other hand, which in turn allows for local contextualisation in its delivery within collectively agreed perimeters. This USP forms the corner-stone of the CU Trust's future 'social franchise' development. The CU Trust also recognises that getting the message out there is a work in progress.

The quadrant below might be used as a template to interrogate the location, nature and rigour of validation of various activities.



A question of balance

The genius of the CU, its sustainability, growth and quality, is owed in large part to the balance between the centre and the periphery, the (inter)national and local initiative. Keeping the Manchester team small is in sharp contrast to other out-of-school ventures whose capital has been consumed by staffing costs and infrastructural costs. It explains the willingness of the DfE to continue to support the CU Trust when withdrawing funding from less cost-effective enterprises. It is natural that local CUs will seek support from the Chief Executive, Ger Graus, in person and call on him for both trouble-shooting and celebration, with attendance at graduations being almost dutiful, however enjoyable. To him much of the success of the Children's University is undoubtedly owed. To borrow two metaphors, it may be difficult to keep a good man down or to teach old dogs new tricks, but selection, prioritisation and distributed leadership are a necessary recipe for survival as the Children's University continues to grow apace.



“There are skills such as problem solving, communication, collaboration, experimentation, critical thinking and creative expression. These skills become curricular goals in themselves and the objects of new assessment methods. Perhaps the most significant aim is for students to be able to create their own learning goals and plans—to establish what they already know, assess their strengths and weaknesses, design a learning plan, stay on-task, track their own progress, build on successes and adjust to failures. These are skills that can be used throughout a lifetime to participate in a learning society.”

(UNESCO, 2012, page 17)

***“University of fun
A brilliant way to get children inspired.”***

The Sunday Times



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ISBN: 978-0-9561319-8-0
