

**Asia Institute Tasmania
University of Tasmania**

**Dare to Dream:
Comparative Lessons on
Building Cultural Capital
from Children's University
Tasmania and Children's
University Asia-Malaysia**

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Executive Summary

The *Children's University* is a social franchise. Its goal in Tasmania is to raise the educational attainment and aspirations of children, particularly those living in low socio-economic areas. This project supports that aim and sought lessons from Children's University Asia-Malaysia.

This is also the first inter-country analysis of the *Children's University*. Malaysia has been a very successful Asian tiger economy and the country's educational performance is on an upward trajectory. Raising educational attainment in Tasmania is a key policy priority. Are there lessons from Malaysia?

Children's Universities all over the world aim to provide the cultural capital that school children may lack. Cultural capital is a concept introduced by Pierre Bourdieu. It refers to cultural competences, either in the embodied sense of valued lifestyles or in the institutionalised sense of educational credentials. This concept shows how social inequality is reproduced through the education system. While all modern societies espouse the values of equality, and aim to offer every child the same chance to excel, the playing field is still not level. This unevenness, according to Bourdieu, is influenced by the family background of the children. Some children, he argued, have the types of cultural capital valued by education systems, others do not. The *Children's University* acknowledges this fact, and attempts to help children build their cultural capital through extracurricular activities at "Learning Destinations". These activities range from attending a school holiday course on coding to visiting a museum, trying out sporting activities, to taking an excursion to the Parliament.

In Malaysia the program evolved without significant institutional backing from government or the tertiary education sector. This report compares Tasmania and Malaysia using data drawn from in-depth interviews, and a review of the literature, reports and resources. We argue that the concept of cultural capital provides a relevant (but not comprehensive) lens through which to consider educational inequality. We argue that the *Children's University* provides a mechanism through which the transmission of values, habits and attributes supportive of learning can be fostered. By re-imagining the role of tourism sites - as a resource that can support educational aspiration and attainment - the *Children's University* can tap into local social, cultural, and economic resources.

Fundamental to the approach in this study is the "extreme-comparative" approach. This approach draws out prominent features between Children's University Tasmania and Children's University Asia-Malaysia. And then by seeking to understand the program logic (the context, mechanism and outcomes) the research clarifies how *Children's University* works, for whom, and in what contexts. Our extreme comparative approach regards the two field sites as significantly different. The comparison illuminates internal biases in conceptions of fun in learning and structural differences in implementation and the role parental engagement.

In spite of the shared goals in Tasmania and Malaysia, their models function rather differently. Through the extreme-comparative approach, four issues emerged. The first is on playful learning and purposeful learning. In Tasmania, the emphasis is on playfulness and enjoyment. In Malaysia, the activities are geared towards achieving future goals for the children, even though the participants may end up enjoying the activities and hard work. The second is on assessing the students in *Children's University* activities. The assessment in Malaysia is more formal and rigorous. Such an approach is frowned upon in Tasmania because it is considered too serious and intimidating to the young participants. Related to the first two issues, the third is on the different parental engagement styles in the two places. The program in Tasmania offers a structure for many parents to organize weekend and holiday activities for the whole family. Families visit places that they may not otherwise attend. In Malaysia, the parental engagement is at the level of paying for the activities, and receiving feedback on the progress of their children. Finally, the last issue points to how the imagery of travel has inspired *Children's University* programs and how they generate excitement in the activities. With

the activities taking place in different places and contexts, the Learning Destination can be found anywhere. What this also means is that tourism places have great potential as resources to serve the local community to raise educational aspiration and attainment.

Consequently, this report gives seven recommendations:

- 1) Re-evaluate the *Children's University* understanding of fun and playful learning. The dichotomous positioning of fun/play and testing/assessments in Tasmania may be false and may not be helpful. The Malaysian case shows that more demanding learning can also be fun, particularly if the students find the learning meaningful and even purposeful.
- 2) Following the Malaysian experience, further reflection on the measurement of learning outcomes should be carried out, especially to establish the relationship between the Learning Destination validation process and learning outcomes.
- 3) Even though parental engagement styles are different in Tasmania and Malaysia, participation in *Children University's* programs hinges on accessibility. Fortunately, the *Children's University* in Tasmania has a much wider network with many public Learning Destinations. Children's University Malaysia are envious of the network because the variety of Learning Destinations offer many more options and opportunities to the children. This network in Tasmania should be expanded, so that even more opportunities will be accessible to regional areas.
- 4) Following the issue of accessibility, strategies have to be found to ensure that parents, especially if they have limited cultural and economic capital, do not self-exclude from engaging with their children in learning experiences. This may require some reframing in the promotion of the activities.
- 5) Learning cultures differ. The *Children's University* in Tasmania identify creative ways to not just evaluate the learning outcomes of their participants but to provide these participants with some kind of tangible results. At the moment, the reward and recognition occurs at an annual graduation ceremony where perseverance (total number of hours) and engaging in a variety of experiential learning activities are valued. Receiving smaller "rewards" through assessment may be motivating.
- 6) The travel narrative is attractive to children and parents. The narrative accentuates the fact that schools, libraries and other unusual sites can be destinations. Just as importantly, tourism places should engage with local children by devising programs for them, so that they are Learning Destinations for residents.
- 7) The Tasmanian tourism industry, relevant government agencies and the Peter Underwood Centre collaborate to identify mechanisms to support the tourism industry to engage in an educational transformation project in Tasmania in ways that harness the strengths of the industry and the potential of Tasmanian children. This could include, for example, workforce development initiatives, targeted marketing and promotional campaigns, and educational resource/content development.

I Introduction

The political economy of globalization locates education as a key commodity, an area of national contestation and competition, and a platform from which to develop better health, employment, and social understanding (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007, p. 240). This project is situated within the wider goals of the *Making the Future Partnership* between the State Government and the University of Tasmania. It aims to contribute to raising educational aspirations and attainment through the *Children's University*. We note that in a context of widening inequality in Tasmania and globally, the *Children's University* can only be part of a larger solution.

Education is regarded as having a transformative power. This report draws upon Bourdieu's sociological concept of cultural capital in a study of the *Children's University*. The research identifies informal learning as a rich site where aspiration, parental engagement and educational success can be fostered – if the barriers (social, economic and cultural) to participation can be removed. Bourdieu has highlighted the ways in which education, rather than being transformative, may function to reproduce inequalities and reinforce hierarchies of privilege.

Cultural capital refers to cultural competences, either in the embodied sense of valued lifestyles or in the institutionalised sense of educational credentials (Bourdieu, 1986). Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital has enabled researchers to view capital as a resource – one that provides scarce rewards and under certain conditions may be transmitted from one generation to the next (Lareau & Weininger, 2003).

Pierre Bourdieu and his colleague Passeron considered the effects of children's stock of cultural capital upon their accumulation of educational capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). The work of Bourdieu offers tools to consider the effect of the *Children's University* upon the cultural capital of its participants and the ways in which it mobilises and represents particular resources related to culture and certification.

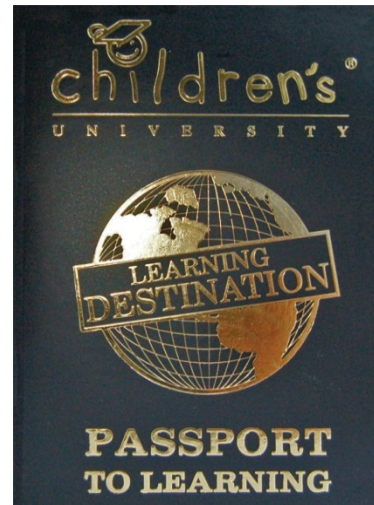
Children's Universities are part of a flourishing global movement – and an emergent literature is developing primarily focused on their impact on student performance (Hamshaw, 2015; Harrison, Adam, Skujins, 2017; MacBeath, 2013). The *Children's University* aims to promote social mobility by providing high quality out-of-school-hours learning activities to children aged 7-14. It targets children and young people facing socio-economic disadvantage to ensure that every child, irrespective of parental means, has access to quality extracurricular learning activities (See attachment A *Ethics Policy*).

There is a significant body of literature that identifies the significance of extracurricular participation on educational outcomes, and the ways in which access and opportunity to engage in extracurricular activity is impacted by socio-economic characteristics (Cummings et al., 2012; Goodman & Gregg).

It is important to distinguish between *Children's University* the product and children's universities the concept. The *Children's University* is a licenced, trademarked product and is currently implemented in the United Kingdom (UK), Australia, Malaysia and China. In Europe, children's universities have developed independently.

When a child becomes a member of the *Children's University* they are given a 'Passport to Learning' in which they record their participation in activities at Learning Destinations (Picture 1). After completing 30+ hours of validated learning, their achievement is celebrated at a formal graduation ceremony, a significant cultural experience itself. The *Children's University* builds a bridge for parents and guardians to expose children to diverse cultural experiences.

Picture 1: Children's University's Passport to Learning



The theory of change underpinning the *Children's University* seeks to raise aspiration and attainment in learning. These ideas of raising attainment and engagement (through its proxy, attendance) and 'improving' attitudes is further described by MacBeath:

"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?" (MacBeath, 2013).

This research is the first inter-country analysis of the *Children's University*. Using a pragmatist world view (problem-centred, real-world, practice orientated) the project wraps a realist comparative analysis around *Children's University*. We deploy an extreme-comparative approach for drawing out prominent features between Children's University Tasmania and Children's University Asia-Malaysia. And then by seeking to understand the program logic (the context, mechanism and outcomes) the research clarifies how *Children's University* works, for whom, and in what contexts.

Our extreme comparative approach regards the two field sites as significantly different. The comparison illuminates internal biases in conceptions of fun in learning and structural differences in implementation and the role parental engagement.

In Malaysia, where the policy settings mandate extracurricular activity there is evidence of difference in participation types and levels between different ethnic and socioeconomic groups. A recent study in Penang (a state in Malaysia) suggests that extracurricular activity is influenced by ethnicity, educational status of parent, income levels, and level of schooling (Jelani, Tan, & Mohd-Zaharim, 2015).

The children and families who participate in *Children's University* are encouraged to engage in objectified and embodied forms of cultural capital – visits to museums, historic houses, libraries – as well as sporting, music and other experiences. We explore whether, how and in what ways *Children's University* is influencing the acquisition and mobilisation of cultural capital. We identify and recommend an expanded role for tourism sites as Learning Destinations.

2 Existing Body of Knowledge: Literature Review

In educational studies, Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital' is one of the most significant in the last few decades. His study explains how social inequality is reproduced through the education system.

While all modern societies espouse the values of equality, and aim to offer every child the same chance to excel, the playing field is still not level. This unevenness, according to Bourdieu, is influenced by the family background of the children. Some children, he argues, have the types of cultural capital valued by education systems, others do not. Bourdieu's work helps us understand why this is so.

Bourdieu observed that the educational system presupposes the possession of linguistic and cultural competence, which only some students possess.

[Education] is in fact the most effective means of perpetuating the existing social pattern, as it both provides an apparent justification for social inequalities and gives recognition to the cultural heritage, that is, to a *social* gift treated as a *natural* one (Bourdieu, 1974, p. 34).

It has been highlighted that the educational system may function to legitimize social inequalities because it (incorrectly) assumes the same starting points for all children (Sullivan, 2002b). Educational attainment is then viewed as the result of individual abilities and gifts (or the lack of them). By assuming that everyone has the same cultural capital resources upon which to draw and observing that children from higher socio-economic status backgrounds tend to have higher levels of educational attainment, educational credentials serve to reproduce and legitimize social inequalities, as these children are made to think that they deserve their place in the social structure (Sullivan, 2002a). Bourdieu saw the educational system as a whole and universities in particular as sites of exclusion where children and adults learnt their place.

English & Bolton (2016) observe that Bourdieu's work paints a fairly bleak picture of an education system that is deeply biased and highly resistant to change. But, there is a less pessimistic approach to his work. Cultural capital is not fixed. It is valued differently in different circumstances, settings, or fields (Gottlob, 2010, p. 27). The concept of cultural capital provides a useful lens within which to understand the seeming intractability of educational inequality.

2.1 Three types of cultural capital

Bourdieu mapped out three types of capital: social, economic, and cultural (Bourdieu, 1986). It is the third that this study is concerned with. Culture is a complex concept. In order to organize the complexity, Bourdieu identified three interrelated dimensions to cultural capital: embodied, objectified and institutionalised (Moore, 2014).

Embodied Cultural Capital focuses on the socialization aspect of cultural capital. Unlike tangible objects, embodied cultural capital is transmitted as a learned behaviour. It includes linguistic skills, mannerisms and social presentation. For example, the way one speaks - such as with a recognisable accent - is an example of embodied cultural capital.

Objectified Cultural Capital refers to a person's material property. Objects that a person owns, where they live, the types of things they seek out or collect constitute cultural capital in its objectified state.

Institutionalised Cultural Capital is contained in the institutional and formal recognition afforded to people, such as academic credentials, professional qualifications or formal positions in society (Picture 2). The credentials that are associated with institutionalised cultural capital, such as a degree from a prestigious university, can be used and exchanged for economic capital.

Picture 2: Children's University's Graduation Certificate – a form of institutionalized cultural capital



2.2 Cultural capital – how it is operationalized

The concept of cultural capital has been operationalized by several different researchers to consider a wide range of factors that influence education outcomes.

Parental engagement

Lareau's (1987) examination of the influence of class-related cultural factors on the parents' compliance with teachers' requests for parental participation in schools is relevant to our research given the key role that parents play within the *Children's University*. Lareau conducted a qualitative study involving two first-grade classrooms located in two different communities. The participants include a white working-class community and a professional, middle-class community. The study reveals that both sets of teachers at the different schools considered parental involvement as indicative of the value which parents placed on education. During the study Lareau observed that working-class parents primarily placed the responsibility of education upon the teachers whereas the middle-class parents consider the process of educating to be a shared, collective experience.

A study of parental involvement in Norway highlighted that in the same way as children enter schools with different capital, parents are also differently equipped in terms of economic, social and cultural capital in their interactions with school, and that these differences may determine the quality and degree of their involvement in school (Karlsen Baeck, 2005, p. 218). A different study focused on mothers in the United Kingdom described how middle-class parents, who had experienced success at school, were more self-confident in asserting their opinions where there were "disagreements or tension between home and school, displaying certainty, self-assurance and an ability to counter opposing viewpoints, all aspects of cultural capital" (Reay, 1998, p. 77). In contrast, the working-class mothers were doubtful and anxious in their interactions with school staff, and their approach was apologetic and tentative. "It was cultural capital, which facilitated this weaving in and out of different roles, and provided the middle-class mothers with options that were not open to their working-class counterparts" (Reay, 1998, p. 77).

It is important to understand differences in parental involvement among different groups of parents because parental involvement is a powerful determinant of the educational success of students (Sanders & Epstein, 2000).

Gottlob concludes:

There is no magic strategy bullet to increase student achievement. Instead, we have to focus on building on the cultural capital of the community and helping parents gain the cultural capital they need to navigate the educational system. Schools need to work with, and in the context of the community. There has to be give-and-take and a mutually respectful relationship between them. It is imperative that schools find the way to build on the assets of the community to create genuine partnerships that benefit students, parents, and the community at large (Gottlob, 2010, p. 98).

Extracurricular activity and learning

Learning, of course, occurs outside formal educational institutions. Self-directed learning, learning that is voluntary and beyond the formal curriculum, is also part of a process of cultural transmission. The acquisition of cultural capital is thus an ongoing socialization process.

Kisida, Greene and Bowen suggest that children can be activated to acquire the type of cultural capital valued by educational systems and thus compensate for family background characteristics. Their study is based on a large scale study of an art museum educational program operating across a set of American schools. Exposure to the institutional culture of the museum was seen to produce 'cultural consumers' who were then 'motivated to acquire new cultural capital' (Kisida, Greene, & Bowen, 2014, p. 281).

Seow and Pan (2014) in their literature survey identify three frameworks to explain the impact of extracurricular activities (ECA).

'First, the zero-sum framework posited that ECA participation has a negative effect on academic performance because students were devoting more time for their ECA activities at the expense of their academic studies. Second, the developmental framework theorized that ECA participation has a positive effect on academic performance indirectly as a result of the non-academic and social benefits associated with ECA participation. Last, the threshold framework hypothesized that ECA participation has a positive effect on academic performance up to a certain point beyond which participation leads to negative academic outcomes (Seow & Pan, 2014, p. 364).

Seow and Pan noted a study which found that the students' performance declined the higher breadth and intensity of ECA participation which, it is argued, is due to the stress of balancing the competing demands. Other studies showed a positive association between test scores and time spent on ECA, but at the highest participation levels, test scores declined.

It is important to observe that measures of cultural capital are imperfect since they are limited to describing behaviors, (e.g., participating in activities) rather than other type of cultural "signals" such as attitudes, preferences, or credentials (Bamford, 2014, p. 32).

2.3 Conclusions

We conclude by noting that while everyone has cultural capital, the education system may privilege some forms of cultural capital over others. This, according to Bourdieu, can account for persistently uneven educational outcomes.

The ways in which informal learning, in the form of extracurricular activities, can support the twin goals of raising educational aspiration and attainment and increasing parental engagement in children's learning are key considerations of this study.

3 An Overview of Children's Universities

In this section, we will introduce the concept of the children's university, which is different from *Children's University*, a social franchise, founded in the UK. There are other children's universities than *Children's University*. Children's University Tasmania and Children's University Asia-Malaysia have the licence to use the model, name, and products such as passports. Also in this section, we will provide the contextual differences between Tasmania and Malaysia in relation to how their *Children's Universities* function, and the broader social, political and educational context.

3.1 The children's university concept

During the last thirty years children's universities have emerged into a developing global movement. The features of children's universities have evolved to reflect the particular socio-political contexts in which they exist. We define them as a *Children's University* if they share the following common features:

- voluntary student participation;
- part of an informal learning system – that is they are not part of the formal education system;
- focused predominantly on 7-14 year olds;
- aimed at fostering curiosity and expanding an understanding of future educational options.

The emergence of children's universities has occurred against a policy backdrop of reforms to exert greater national control over schools. In Australia, the UK and Europe children's universities objectives align with the strategies of universities to present themselves as socially inclusive institutions. In Australia, a national reform agenda and funding initiatives aimed at enhancing human capital has included efforts to set high targets for participation in higher education, particularly among students from low socio-economic backgrounds (Higher Education Review, 2008). The emergence of outreach activities such as children's universities in Australia's regional universities can be situated within these broader international and national policy trends. In Europe the positive media attention and interest that events such as children universities graduations attracts, assists universities to appeal to the communities in which they operate (Gary & Dworsky, 2013). It is the same here in Tasmania.

In Europe, typically, children's universities activities include science-related lectures, workshops and hands-on tutorials which take place as holiday programs, after-school activities or at weekends. The activities are designed and led by academics and may also involve university students. The impact of children's universities in Europe remains to be proved, nonetheless, children's universities result in over 350 000 attendances on university campuses across the year (Gary & Dworsky, 2013). A not-for-profit network "EUCU.NET" has developed. It has over seventy members from academic institutions across Europe who have adopted a charter, describing the means/aims and objectives of children's universities.

3.2 Children's University Tasmania and Children's University Asia-Malaysia

The model of children's university that Malaysia and Tasmania adopted evolved from an initiative in Birmingham in the 1990s. Activities are not designed or led by academics, and the focus of interest extends beyond science-related topics. The Children's University Trust, unlike the EUCU network does not rely exclusively on co-ordination by universities. Local authorities, education business partnerships, other charities and groups of schools are engaged implementing the program. The

Children's University Trust was formed in 2006 and registered as a charity in 2007. Ten years later there are over 80 centres working with over 1,000 schools. Over 100,000 children in the United Kingdom participate each year.

Malaysia was the first to adopt a novel 'social franchise' agreement with Children's University Trust UK. 'Social franchising', focuses specifically on the Children's University 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.

In 2013 there were expressions of interest in the model from over fifteen countries (MacBeath, 2013). Children's University Trust presently has agreements in place in Australia, Malaysia and Ningbo in China. The University of Adelaide has a head agreement with the Children's University Trust and has negotiated international membership sub-licence agreements with other universities in Australia (Charles Darwin, Newcastle, Edith Cowan, and Tasmania). In Australia close to 5000 children have graduated since the program commenced; a significant growth in program reach.

Children's University Tasmania and Children's University Asia-Malaysia negotiate high-level consent from the government agency with jurisdictional responsibility for education and then negotiate directly with schools in order to promote and implement the program.

Participants are given a 'Passport to Learning' in which they log participation in quality-assured activities that they take part in outside of school hours at validated Learning Destinations. After the children accumulate 30+ hours of activity they are eligible to participate in a university-style graduation ceremony in celebration of their achievement.

Learning Destinations must have passed the *Children's University* a quality assurance process, 'Planning for Learning' developed by Professor John MacBeath at Cambridge University. The Children's University Tasmania team, working at the Peter Underwood Centre validate the activities. A Learning Destination can range from a museum to a farm as long as the activity connects with *Children's University* learning and has realistic links to a university program.

Children's University Tasmania was officially launched in Tasmania in July 2015 by the Peter Underwood Centre for Educational Attainment at the University of Tasmania. Children's University Asia-Malaysia is implemented through the Di Purba Centre for Professional Excellence in Malaysia. It commenced in 2013.

Table 1: Comparison between Children’s University Tasmania and Children’s University Asia-Malaysia

	Tasmania	Malaysia
Licencing arrangements	Sub-licence with the University of Adelaide	Sub-licence with CU Trust UK
Products and merchandise	Purchased from University of Adelaide	Passports purchased from CU Trust UK, graduation certificates modified by CU Asia-Malaysia
Government consent	Head of Agency and School Principal	Ministerial and School Principal
Learning Destination	150+ mix of public and private for profit services	No public Learning Destinations
Restricted Learning Destination	100+ delivered by mix of school staff or external providers and validated by CUT staff	Delivered by CU Asia-Malaysia
University Affiliation	University of Tasmania licenced to implement. Employs team, convenes graduation ceremonies, holds events (open days, school holiday programs)	No formal university affiliation. At various times academics from universities based in UK officiate (eg. University of Aberdeen).
Funding Sources	University of Tasmania, Tasmanian Community Fund, Private donors, Salvation Army, Rotary	Nil
Indirect/in-kind funding support	Department of Education (school coordination, dissemination)	School provides site for leadership, language, social science program.

3.3 Demographic and educational characteristics of the two sites

National context: Over the past ten years the school systems of Australia have been reformed in order to achieve greater national consistency (see comparison table below). Reforms have been far reaching in scope and impact and have included the national curriculum, standardised national assessments in literacy and numeracy, national standards for teachers and principals, and a revised national model of school funding (Savage 2016). These reforms have largely been driven by concerns about the changing role of education in a globalising world and economy.

In Australia, the national curricula were fully endorsed by State and Territory Education Ministers. Nonetheless each state and territory Government Authorities may implement the Australian Curriculum differently (About the Australian Curriculum, 2017). Extracurricular activities are not mandated as part of the curriculum although they are frequently delivered within school settings.

Table 2: General differences in the education scene in Tasmania and Malaysia

	Tasmania	Malaysia
Educational Strategic policy	<i>Learners First: Every Learner, Every Day</i> 2018-2021	<i>Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025</i>
Legislative environment	<p>The <i>Australian Education Act 2013</i> (last amended June 2017). It is supported by the <i>Australian Education Regulation (2013)</i> and is primarily concerned with funding and compliance arrangements.</p> <p>The <i>Tasmanian Education Act 2016</i> and associated regulations and instructions seek to make available to every Tasmanian child a high-quality education that helps to maximise the child’s educational potential and provide the foundation to lead a fulfilling life and contribute to the Tasmanian community.</p>	<p>The <i>1996 Education Act</i> created a national education system in order to achieve national aspirations. It is founded on the National Philosophy of Education in Malaysia, which is an on-going effort towards further developing the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner, so as to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and harmonious, based on a firm belief in and devotion to God. Such an effort is designed to produce Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable and competent, who possess high moral standards, and who are responsible and capable of achieving high level of personal well-being as well as being able to contribute to the harmony and betterment of the family, the society and the nation at large.</p>
Curriculum	<p>The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) produces the Australian Curriculum.</p> <p>The rationale for the introduction of the Australian Curriculum centres on improving the quality, equity and transparency of Australia’s education system.</p> <p>The <i>Shape of the Australian Curriculum</i>, guides the development of the Australian Curriculum. The most recent version of the <u><i>Shape of the Australian Curriculum v4.0</i></u> was approved by the ACARA Board in late 2012.</p>	<p>Section 18 of the <i>Education Act 1996</i> provides for the Minister to prescribe a National Curriculum to be used by all schools in the National Education System. The National Curriculum is further defined in the <i>Regulations (1997)</i> as an educational programme that includes curriculum and co-curricular activities which encompasses all the knowledge, skills, norms, values, cultural elements and beliefs to help develop a pupil fully with respect to the physical, spiritual, mental and emotional aspects as well as to inculcate and develop desirable moral values and to transmit knowledge.</p>
PISA scores, 2012-2015 (higher better)	<p>Science (500 → 483) Reading (485 → 476) Mathematics (478 → 469) (general decline)</p>	<p>Science (420 → 443) Reading (398 → 431) Mathematics (421 → 446) (upward trend)</p>

Tasmanian context: National policy imperatives are reflected in local political and policy debates in Tasmania. There is a high-level consensus on the centrality of education as a policy lever to achieve broader social, economic and well-being goals. Indeed this consensus contributed to the creation of the Peter Underwood Centre where the Children’s University Tasmania is based.

Since 10 July 2017, the main legislative framework for Tasmanian education systems are the: *Education Act 2016*, Education Regulations 2017, Ministerial Instructions, and the Secretary's Instructions.

Despite agreement on the transformative power of education, the persistence of the community's 'wicked problems' and the comparative and continuing underperformance of Tasmania in areas such as gross state product, labour market participation, productivity levels, health and wellbeing outcomes, and life expectancy highlights the complexity of the issues (Eslake, 2016).

Tasmania is home to 112,884 children and young people. The majority (around 70 per cent) of children in school in Tasmania are educated through government schools (*Health and Wellbeing of Tasmania's Children, Young People and their Families Report*, 2017)). The Children's University Tasmania uses Socio-economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) to determine which government schools to partner with to implement the program. As low values indicate higher disadvantage, the overall disadvantage in Tasmania (961) is higher than Australia overall (1,000).

Children in Tasmania grow up in a range of family situations, with the percentage of children in single parent families and blended families higher than the national average. Tasmanian families also have higher levels of socio-economic disadvantage than the national average.

As noted above, the challenge of improving educational outcomes is not unique to Australia, and is an issue of concern internationally. For example, the Organisation of Economic Co-operation (OECD) and Development has directed the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) since 2000. PISA measures 15-year olds' knowledge, skills and preparedness especially in reading, mathematics, and science. The test enables comparison across OECD member and partner countries. In general, Australia has higher PISA results than Malaysia for science, reading and mathematics, literacy. However, Australia has experienced a general decline in the results while Malaysia shows an upward trend in all three of the literacies. Tasmania shows a lower PISA results (except for reading, which was higher than the Northern Territory by 2 points) than most states and territories (Ramsay & Rowan, 2013) Australia's place in the relative rankings has declined. Tasmanian young people are falling behind students on the mainland and performing well below international averages in maths, science and reading.

Malaysian context in contrast: Legislative and normative dimensions of extracurricular learning differ between Malaysia and Australia in several important respects. In Malaysia education policy and legislation is also regarded as a key policy lever to achieve the socio-cultural and economic goals of the state. Interestingly, the national curriculum includes provision for co-curricular learning. The *Education Act 1996* is founded on the National Philosophy of Education and aspirations of Vision 2020. Co-curricular activities are compulsory and essential to the education system in Malaysia (Maimunah, 1999). Engagement in Children's University Asia-Malaysia is positioned as enhancing the types of skills and attributes that enhance leadership, public speaking and confidence within the school setting.

In Malaysia, a proportion of educational, employment, business and asset ownership opportunities are reserved for the indigenous Malays. In a small scale study in Penang, in the context of policies that privilege indigenous Malays, other ethnic groups were found to be more willing to participate in extracurricular activities in order to increase their limited opportunities in both the educational and employment sectors (Jelani, Tan, & Mohd-Zaharim, 2015).

Nonetheless, as in Tasmania, having sufficient economic capital influences decisions about participation, with families with larger number of children in a household being less willing to spend on extracurricular activities because it is regarded as a non-basic necessity (Jelani et al., 2015, p. 127). Children in low household income families are less likely to participate in extracurricular activities because those activities involve fee-based lessons or classes (Jelani et al., 2015, p. 127). The higher the educational attainment of the parents, the more likely children are to engage in extracurricular activities because those parents also have a higher disposable family income and a

better understanding of the benefits of extracurricular activities (Jelani et al., 2015, p. 128). (See *Appendix B Comparison Table*).

These contrasting circumstances will be examined in the analysis section of this report.

4 Research Design and Data Collection Methods

Malaysia was chosen for our comparison because we want to address the fundamental issues that come with the extreme-comparative methodology (see next section). Furthermore, Children's University Asia-Malaysia is the first international social licence holder, and has taken a different development trajectory.

4.1 Extreme-comparative methodology

This project uses an extreme-comparative methodology, that is, the two sites are perceived as markedly different, and by comparing them, the study is able to identify deep assumptions and structural differences in the two places. Such an approach is particularly appropriate when a study wants to draw out broad circumstantial lessons, and to accentuate societal issues that need to be discussed. In this case, we are looking at informal learning within the educational systems of Australia and Malaysia. As this study will point out later, there are stark differences in the educational aspiration of the populations, in the principles of learning and in the idea of 'fun' in learning.

There are three steps in our extreme-comparative methodology. These steps highlight the three advantages of this design. The first step is to identify and address deep assumptions and structures in society. The advantage of this is to force us to think of the issues holistically. In this case, we look at the relationships between the education system, social stratification, and informal learning.

The second step is then geared towards creating unexpected options, and avoid focusing on microscopic operational challenges. For instance, we will be addressing issues of what activities are considered fun to children in both societies, and the need to rethink what makes learning fun in both places. This is important for developing the strategic vision for the *Children's University*.

The third step situates the challenges structurally. The big questions will force us to tackle the issues holistically and may eventually suggest unexpected and creative solutions that involve shaping society in the direction that is desired by industry, policy-makers, government and the people – that is to raise educational aspiration and attainment in Tasmania.

4.2 Comparative approach

Pearce (1993) points out that comparative research faces three general interrelated issues. First, a comparison is only sensible if it is based on clearly understood problems. Second, there must be conceptual equivalence. Third, the studies must pay attention to contextual factors. Pearce offers a framework to conceptually structure comparative research, which this study uses as a guide.

Common Research Problem: This project is the first part of a larger and longer one. It is thus exploratory but departs from existing research on the *Children's University* in terms of its scope and objectives. Existing research is concerned with the impact of the program on children's attendance, attainment (literacy and numeracy), and aspirations (Hamshaw, 2015; Harrison, Adam, Skujins, 2017; MacBeath, 2013).

In terms of the first criterion of a clearly defined problem, this study addresses the common research problems by addressing these three research issues:

1. Investigating the role of the *Children's University* in Tasmania and Malaysia in their respective education systems
2. Analysis of the impetus, implementation model, and impacts of the program in Tasmania and Malaysia
3. Identification of varying practices in Malaysia and Tasmania to provide recommendations to Children's University Tasmania on enhancing its program, and offer some lessons to program providers in Malaysia.

Conceptual Equivalence: Cultural capital. Besides focusing on *Children's University* in both places, we employ the concepts of cultural capital in framing our understanding of the two sites. As discussed in the literature review, different types of cultural capital are needed in different societies, the concept is universal. Society is stratified, and children's family background matters when it comes to educational attainment.

Contextual Factors: This study emphasizes contextual factors in order to highlight the contrasting differences between the two cases. The common starting points for comparison are their many similar ideals, goals and purposes. However, because these places have different social, economic and political environments, they implement *Children's University* differently. The choice of *Children's University* strategies also reveals the functions these programs serve in society, together with the assumptions embedded in their respective education systems.

4.3 Notes on data collection

Clearly defined problems, conceptual equivalence and drawing out contextual factors are the three criteria that form the comparative framework of this paper. Further to this comparative conceptual framework, data were collected in both places in similar ways.

Participants were invited to participate in the research based on their professional involvement in the implementation of *Children's University*. Learning Destinations in Malaysia and Tasmania were selected on the basis of their type, for example, a free public service such as a library or public gallery, and a private for profit service. The choice of participant groups supports a comparison of context, mechanisms and outcomes in each country. In total, we conducted four interviews in Malaysia, and nine in Australia. The researchers conducted interviews in Malaysia during field studies in October 2017 and in Tasmania between September and November 2017. Because of research ethics considerations and the small groups of people working in the context of the Children's Universities, we will not be providing more specific details on the individual participants. Interview participants worked either directly for the *Children's University* or at validated Learning Destinations. Their relevant background information will be provided when we cite them. The participant quotations in this paper come from unstructured in-depth interviews conducted by the researchers. In addition to the interviews, the researchers collected other types of data, including attending Learning Destinations.

In terms of research merit and integrity, unstructured in-depth interviews is a style of interviewing that emphasises the expertise of the interviewee, in contrast to structured interviewing, where the power lies with the interviewer. In-depth interviews reflect interest in understanding other people's experiences. In order to build trust the researchers shared information about their personal connections with the topic under study. The interviews were conducted in English.

Indicative questions for participants included:

- How long has the program been delivered in the region?

- How did you come to know about the program?
- Describe your role in implementing the *Children's University*?
- Please describe what has happened as a consequence of *Children's University* that you are really pleased with?
- What number of graduation ceremonies have been held? What are the distinguishing features of the ceremonies?
- How has the program evolved as the years of implementation have progressed?
- How do you gain support for program implementation?
- What are the challenges/successes in the establishment phase? And in the implementation phase?
- What works well? Why?
- What is more challenging about implementation? Why?
- What was the impetus for the establishment of the *Children's University*?
- Who are the partners/stakeholders essential for implementation?
- How do you collect impact data?
- How do you disseminate and promote information about the *Children's University*?

5 Analysis/Discussion

The extreme comparison approach employed here has allowed us to not only identify stark differences in contexts but also to draw lessons that have broad implications. These lessons can be divided into four areas: attitudes towards playful and purposeful learning; nature of parental engagement; rethinking local tourism and cultural practices of learning.

5.1 Playful Learning/Purposeful learning

Children's University in both countries can be regarded as mediating and supporting the shifting boundaries between and formal and informal learning. However, it does so in quite different ways. A number of clear differences emerge in our extreme comparative analysis about the concept of fun in learning.

Fun is a core element of the *Children's University* Tasmania. Indeed, the *Children's University* Australia web landing page features a map of Australia and invites people to 'Enter the University of Fun' (*Children's University* Australia.). The Peter Underwood Centre website identifies that the program has a strong emphasis on the value of a range of different learning experiences and environments. In many respects, *Children's University* in Tasmania can be characterised as playful learning.

A number of researchers frame the idea of play across a series of binary oppositions, for example, play is not school; play is not imposed; play has no extrinsic validation (Sefton-Green et al., 2015). Fostering curiosity and creating opportunities for children and young people to have fun in learning are key objectives of the *Children's University* UK Trust social franchise. But we characterise *Children's University* Asia-Malaysia implementation model as 'purposeful learning'. It is 'purposeful learning' because it incorporates independent assessments of skill/knowledge acquisition and it seeks to develop a discrete suite of skills, such as leadership, or public speaking. This does not mean that it is not fun or enjoyable for the students.

In Malaysia, in the top tier school, in which *Children's University* Asia-Malaysia is being delivered the researchers were advised that non-attendance is not an issue for the school (KLLD1). Nonetheless, with the support of the Ministry for Education, the school has given permission to *Children's*

University Asia-Malaysia to implement the program on site on weekends. The impetus to deliver the program is not to address learning inequalities and contribute to broader socio-economic goals of raising educational aspiration and attainment as is the case in Tasmania. Rather, our findings suggest that the program is about boosting skill sets that cannot be found in the curriculum.

In Asia the emphasis now is “my child must learn something different to what the school is teaching”.... public speaking skills, language skills, finishing skills, if [there are] extra skills then I will send my child to you to do your program.... It is not in the school curriculum so they are happy with that, like the English language and the public speaking skills, practical skills they love that one. That is the one because when they leave school these are things that will carry weight. (KLI)

Picture 3: Place where students learn public speaking in a Malaysian learning destination



In Tasmania, the implementation model aims to ensure that there are a wide variety of no-cost/low cost Learning Destinations and activities. Cost and transport are regarded as significant impediments to participation. This awareness stems from the ‘capabilities approach’ (Nussbaum, 2003). This approach posits that development should be understood as the enhancement of people’s freedoms to do and be what they have reason to value. A capabilities approach has been applied to education by various researchers and theorists (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007). Attention is focused on the subtle barriers – including self-exclusion through adaptive preferences – that may lead to non-enrolment and disengagement even when places and opportunities to participate in learning are available (McCowan, 2011, p. 296).

In Malaysia in contrast, the cost of participating in their *Children’s University* program is intentionally higher than other activities, such as Tae Kwon Do, “because it is high level teaching” (KL2). One interview participant reported that the learning process in Malaysia within the *Children’s University* involved a similar model or approach that they would adopt with adults in corporate training (KLI).

Furthermore *Children’s University* participants in Malaysia frequently have their activities assessed prior to receiving a stamp in their passport. The interviewee indicated that they are focused on, “Quality control, total control. Otherwise it is just a certificate of no value. In my whole career, 50 years in education...I will never sign a letter or passport or a certificate until I know it has value there” (KLI).

In contrast in Tasmania, the Learning Destinations and *Children’s University* employees do not formally ‘assess’ the quality or standard of learning at an individual level. Learning Destination activities are assessed at a macro level through a validation process; children’s performance in activities in is not. In Tasmania, the children simply need to participate. Time on task is rewarded at the graduation ceremonies. Children can only count ten hours in any one activity so are incentivised to try new things.

Interviews in Australia revealed a view that testing would “defeat the purpose of what we are trying to say with this program, that learning is fun, it’s about exploration, adventure, participation.....and that you have to find what you are passionate about. More tests do not make better learners.” (CU2). A common view is that the *Children’s University* “actually allows them to take on learning that’s fun and involves play that’s not connected to schoolwork” (CU3).

Table 3: Play, fun and assessment: Two contrasting approaches

	Tasmania	Malaysia
Time at Learning Destinations recorded	Yes	Yes
Learning assessed	No or informally	Formal
Emphasis on playful learning and fun	Yes	Serious learning considered as fun
Learning Destinations validated	Yes	Yes
Wide variety of experiences available to participants	Yes, as deliberately planned	Limited, and deliberately planned

Key Findings:

The dichotomous positioning of fun/play and testing/assessments in Tasmania may be false and not helpful. A more nuanced approach could be developed informed by insights from the Malaysian experience.

The validation process for Learning Destinations in Tasmania consider the benefits of including a mix/ emphasis on a selection of assessed activities.

5.2 Parental Engagement *Children’s University*

Parental engagement in children’s learning is a fertile area of research. Emerson et al define it in the following terms, stating that parental engagement consists of partnerships between families, schools and communities, raising parental awareness of the benefits of engaging in their children’s education, and providing them with the skills to do so (Emerson et al., 2012, p. 7).

Parents levels of educational attainment have been shown to influence the likelihood of children engaging in extracurricular learning (Lareau & Weininger, 2003). Children whose parents have a higher level of educational attainment were more likely to engage in extracurricular activity compared to those with a lower level of attainment. Parents capacity to enrol children in

extracurricular activities involves not only an economic impost – it also requires parents to invest time, transport children and in some cases they also need to stay and supervise or engage in activities themselves.

Children’s University in Tasmania is well supported by the parents of the children who are involved. They often take them to activities and participate themselves as a family group, attend graduation ceremonies, and assist in keeping track of accumulated hours in passports.

Nonetheless, in Tasmania, there has been an unhelpful discourse about attitudes to education. In a provocation, published in the *Griffith Review*, Jonathon West pointed to the results of a small scale survey to argue that:

..... not only did education undermine many Tasmanians’ sense of identity, which they greatly valued, and place them at risk of becoming separated from their community, but education was believed to make them less-likeable people.

One upshot of this finding is that much policy aimed at encouraging young Tasmanians to become better educated was founded on an erroneous assumption: that Tasmanians would want to be better educated if only they could, and their failure to do so must be due to lack of economic means. All policies therefore aim mainly to reduce the economic burden of education (West, 2013).

Such narratives fuel a deficit approach that undermines broader efforts to raise aspiration and attainment. In Malaysia, parents are also engaged in supporting their children’s education. In Penang, for example, large proportions of household expenditures are set aside for children’s private tuition - it has been identified as a top three spending priority (Jelani et al., 2015).

The *Children’s University* aims to inspire and raise aspirations for children and their parents (MacBeath, 2013). It is premised on a strengths-based view that recognises that all parents have aspirations for their children – but not all parents and children have access to the particular resources (economic, social, cultural) to assist in navigating the educational systems to achieve their goals. In Tasmania, the *Children’s University* tries to inspire and encourage parents to go to validated Learning Destination activities. This does not seem to be necessary in Malaysia because the target participants are different.

Table 4: Quotes showing contrasting parental engagement methods in *Children’s University* activities

Tasmania	Malaysia
<p>CUI: The other thing it does give that may be is a gap is it provides a structure for parents to understand how and what to engage in with kids outside of school, because we validate the quality of learning of programs of say public Learning Destinations. We had feedback from one student who said and I think it summed it up for a lot of students was now we didn’t ever use to do anything on the weekends but now we go to the website and we go well what’s happening this weekend and what can we do that’s <i>Children’s University</i> activity for this weekend. So it actually helps inform parents about some great activities that they can get involved in and it gives them a structure so that was all that was my last</p>	<p>KLI: this is voluntary it doesn’t work that way. So those who can afford to come, come.</p> <p>KL2: So I guess the Chinese and the Indians can afford to come</p> <p>KLI: They are the ones who are looking for education so they don’t mind paying all the time.</p>

<p>two cents worth. But I think that is important as parents struggle sometimes with knowing what to do.</p>	
<p>CU2: Some of the comments we have got back are that there are families that have come into town that haven't actually been into town for five years. Their children have never visited town with their parents. So, when they have travelled in - to either attend a graduation ceremony or they have come into do work at a Learning Destination such as the Art Galley or the Libraries - we hear parents saying, "Wow oh look how town has grown. I haven't been out of my community for five years." When you hear statements like that you start thinking okay this is exactly what we want to see. We want to see communities that don't travel outside their own community to do learning with their children and engage with their children. So, we are seeing that impact occur and that is a huge impact for those families and for those children.</p>	<p>KL1: In Asia, it's competition. Very competitive. ...they are competing with everybody. Jobs are so scarce in Asia and population so big. They are fighting everybody, they run, run, run, run. They want to be different. And we support them. Otherwise they will never compete in the world.</p> <p>KL2: If we see a child not improving we tell the parents, we call them up and chat and say he is not attending properly. You want to play chess take it seriously, you want to play hockey you take it seriously if you want to be a scout be a top scout a career scout become a queen's scout not just you walk around then I am a scout.</p>

A small scale study in Penang, Malaysia found that higher educated parents are more likely to send their child to extracurricular activity than non-tertiary educated parents. This could be a consequence of their understanding of the value of these activities and their capacity. In the same study, it also found a divergence in the types of preferred extracurricular activity amongst ethnic with Chinese families favouring music and arts, while Malay households were more inclined towards religious studies (Jelani et al., 2015). In both Tasmania and Malaysia participation in extracurricular activity is influenced by factors such as socio-economic status, levels of parental educational attainment, and in Malaysia, ethnicity.

The influence of ethnicity and race is important given the multi-racial composition in Malaysia where affirmative action policies such as the New Economic Policy reserve opportunities for the Malays. This contributes to a highly competitive context for non-Malays for the limited number of opportunities in both the educational and employment sectors – which suggests the motivations amongst non-Malays to invest in extracurricular activities may be influenced by the broader policy context.

Jelani et al advocate measures to introduce more supplementary non-academic areas into the curriculum in order to address the social inequalities with regards to educational opportunities. Noting the distinguishing features between the 'purposeful' learning associated with Children's University Malaysia and the emphasis on 'fun' in Children's University Tasmania we can draw a distinction between Malaysia's emphasis on private tuition for academic subjects in contrast to more playful learning. Parents in Malaysia regard extracurricular activity as important for children's success and as preparation for adult life – stressing competition and accomplishment.

Key Findings:

Using our extreme comparison methodology, we have found that the implementation of similar strategies across Tasmania and Malaysia inappropriate. Nevertheless, funding and policies to support the equitable distribution of opportunity to participate in extracurricular learning do affect both places. The *Children's University* in Malaysia has the same ambition to support socio-economically disadvantaged members of society but they do not have the resources from funding bodies to do so. As a result, access to their activities are determined by parents' ability to afford the cost and their perception of whether those activities will benefit their children.

As one of our participants, CU3, said, “the accessible and the inaccessible, of what is and is not ‘for us’”, the voluntary manner that activities in Children’s University Tasmania are geared may still carry inherent self-exclusion barriers for parents and children to participate in activities. This is also the case in Malaysia.

We suggest that Children’s University Tasmania collaborate with Learning Destinations to pro-actively address barriers to participation.

Parental engagement is essential. Without public financial support, the case in Malaysia shows that the use of “market forces” and the angst arising from (perceived or otherwise) competition, enables certain segments of society to use the *Children’s University’s* activities to encourage a better future of their children. Arguably, it does not bring about a more equitable society.

5.3 Culture – practices of learning.

The “Tiger Mother” is often seen as a caricature in Asian societies even though Amy Chua was referring to her Chinese migrant background in the USA (Chua, 2011). While many Asian parents are cognizant of over-pressurizing their children, the perception that Asian schools are pressure cookers remains, and is quite real. Tiger parenting prioritizes schoolwork above all else and all other activities are geared towards winning awards and improving the child’s future. Parents display their affection by not just demanding excellence in school and outside school activities but also by providing the avenues to these achievements. Amy Chua, the Yale psychology professor who popularized the idea through her autobiography, points to the psychological control Tiger Mothers have over their children, by managing the child’s self-esteem and pushing them to achieve more (Cheah, Leung, & Zhou, 2013; Chua, 2011).

Children’s University Asia-Malaysia is arguably perpetuating the Tiger parenting phenomenon. Leisure activities are considered learning opportunities. As mentioned, the weekend offers a window of opportunity to learn more. Such an approach is not considered appropriate for many in the Australian context but some questions can still be asked about the different approaches to implementation in Malaysia and Tasmania.

Different societies have different perspectives on childhood, and the kind of experiences children should have (Ember & Cunnar, 2015). In Australia and Malaysia *Children’s Universities* have adapted to, and reflect, the local views of childhood and education. Views and values on childhood and education are embedded in the social system of the community. While it is not meaningful to just transplant social practices across cultures, it is healthy to reflect on our cultural imagining of how our children should be brought up in relation to learning.

The Tiger Mother phenomenon stems from many factors, including seeing children as investments for the future. In this context fun should also be fruitful and productive thus ensuring the success of their children in the future. Attitudes towards learning and children also transmit values and habits.

Table 5: Two contrasting views on the learning

	Tasmania	Malaysia
Fun comes first versus fun will hold you back	CU3: I think our holiday programs that we run ourselves are really valuable because they bring the children and families onto Campus for example doing fun things and opening the doors of the University to families that may have	KLI: “In Asia, it’s competition. Very competitive. The parents will tell me in the face, “If my child doesn’t get anything out of it, she [the child] is not interested. She must use your

	never been anywhere near a University. I think that is really valuable.	certificate to increase her chance for an overseas job or go to university.”
Self-drive vs discipline	CUI: If it was compulsory it wouldn't work, we are celebrating the fact that these kids are choosing to invest their own time and energies into things that they want to learn about.	KL1: “We have a lot of students but most of them drop out because they have to work. This is not just about fun. It's real serious business. You come late to class, or you come late for the seminar, I don't sign the passport.”
Moments of pride	LD4: We had a boy from Cosgrove that came that was very disengaged, and he designed a 3D design and printed it out. What a joy that he could show that he could take back to his family to say that he could actually do something.	KL2: “We can see that our students are beaming with pride because they have acquired general knowledge that their other classmates do not have. They can tell you the capital of Australia.”

As in the cultural capital argument, the way *Children's University's* programs are run also transmit values.

The graduation ceremony is a moment of pride. It caps off an achievement. The paths to graduation in Tasmania and Malaysia are different. The Tasmanian approach tries to be an alternative to formal learning, while the Malaysian approach affirms diligence and achievement.

Table 6: Two contrasting views on children and their future relation with their parents

Australia	Malaysia
Experience is a foundation for learning – children should have the opportunity to participate in a wide variety of experiences.	Children's happiness is important and they will be happier later in life if they study hard.
Children should become financially independent when they are adults, and can support their own families.	Children should become financially independent when they are adults, and can support their own families and possibly also their parents.

Key Findings:

The following questions hope to provoke some serious discussion on how *Children's University* approach its program. Should there be assessments in Australian as in Malaysia? The Malaysian approach is - if it is not tested and subjected to a quality assessment it has no value.

The emphasis on fun in learning at Children's University Tasmania seeks to give children the opportunity to learn in a range of contexts, experience new places, visit university and attend their own graduation ceremonies. Is there an underlying cultural attitude that if it is not fun, then it is too hard?

Picture 4: Children's University's Tasmania Town and Gown Procession 2017: institutionalized cultural capital



5.4 Local tourism

Tourism studies have concentrated on visitors. That is only to be expected. Discussions about the local community are often on the social and economic impacts of tourism. Touristification is a big challenge, and local stakeholder groups must be consulted.

There are also studies on domestic tourism, that is, visitors who come from another part of the same country. There are hardly any studies on tourism industries serving the local community beyond providing jobs and revenues.

Residents are tourists in their own place. While many residents have the local knowledge of the community, such as local stories, knowing how to use the public transportation system, and speaking the vernacular, not all of them know the local histories or have the same level of general localised knowledge.

The *Children's University* project highlights an avenue for the tourism industry to be more pro-active in using their social licence. While many of them serve visitors, they can use similar resources to serve residents. They can become Learning Destinations, and not just tourist destinations.

Picture 5: At a Malaysian learning destination, children are reminded of literary greats



In Tasmania, there are two types of validated *Children's University* Learning Destinations. The first is public Learning Destinations, such as Port Arthur Historic Site or the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery. The second is Restricted Learning Destinations, which are on site at schools but are outside the curriculum and class-time. For example an after school dance troupe, or lunch time coding club. The activities are delivered either by teachers employed within school or by external groups. In Malaysia public Learning Destinations are not engaged as Learning Destinations, and participants are recruited across several schools. They then attend one school on weekends for activities.

There are two types of local tourism destinations. The first is making events and courses into destinations. Prentice and Andersen (2003) point out that events are considered creative destinations. People attend the events, not because of the physical place but because of the event content. The Children's Festival at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery is an example of event content that drives visitation. Learning content, in this context, can also be a Learning Destinations (Picture 5). What that means is that it can be a mobile, or portable destination. For example, the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery has an outreach program for schools. They provide a box that contains items and information that teachers can use in a classroom. The museum becomes a mobile supporter of learning. Currently, this is used to support formal learning within the curriculum. However, there is an opportunity to develop content that supports informal learning. Another example is the way in which *Children's University* uses schools as the site for its programs. It is the course or content that attracts the participants.

The second type of local tourism destination is having local children visitors. This is the common approach, as many schools organize excursions to these places, and some museums have child-friendly activities. But not all tourist attractions cater to children. Many tourist experiences in Tasmania incur costs and fees – such as entrance to national parks. The economic and cultural barriers to children's participation in local tourism and informal learning opportunities need further analysis. It is evident that even where people in lower socio-economic communities have access to tourist destinations, there are barriers to visitation. MONA, for instance is located in Glenorchy and

is free to Tasmanian residents but that may not be sufficient to encourage visitation (Booth, O'Connor, Franklin, & Papastergiadis, 2017).

This is a similar problem faced in Malaysia, as reflected in these quotes (Table 7):

Table 7: Similar views on the workload of teachers

Tasmania	Malaysia
<p>CUI: There is different levels of engagement from Principals and Teachers and that can depend on all sorts of things, their own workload is probably one of the biggest factors.</p> <p>LD3: We are working on getting that to have some educational outcomes as well but the trouble is that anything that has an educational outcome is something that is quite a long process and we need something that is short and sharp.</p>	<p>KLLD: We give the <i>Children's University</i> the space to use for their classes. They give a talk during assembly to tell our students about their activities. Our teachers do not plan or are involved in the activities. They are already very busy. If teachers spend three hours on the weekend in school, we have to pay them.</p>

Key Findings:

Bring key parts of the tourist site to the schools while remaining aware of the limited capacity for teachers to do more in schools. Aim to develop content and outreach activity to support informal learning, separate from the curriculum, use the schools as the site but not the delivery mechanism. Find/fund other community based partners to support activities.

Not all Learning Destinations in the *Children's University* programs are tourist attractions but they show how tourist attractions can contribute to shared societal goals, such as raising educational aspiration and attainment. During off-peak tourist seasons, they should consider doing more to engage with school children. Children are local tourists. Very importantly, pro-active attempts must be made to develop inclusive practices that engage all locals. The build-and-they-will-come approach does not work when families lack the cultural capital and the confidence to visit. Cost is not the only barrier.

Tourist attractions can also become learning resources and destinations for the local community. This has already been done in some libraries, where they organize courses during school holidays. Instead of just being a place for borrowing and browsing books, libraries now have activities that interest children, such as coding and 3-D printing. The re-packaging of knowledge and creating experiences for children is required.

Even though tourist attractions are not all geared towards the education of children, they are natural partners for the *Children's University* project. They would need assistance – professional and financial – in developing themselves into Learning Destinations. The Malaysian case is the extreme of the *Children's University* taking over that responsibility entirely. They deliver, market and sell their activities to parents keen to enhance their children's life-chances.

6 Recommendations

The narrative of travel is a tool used by the Children's University around the world to stimulate the imagination of locals. Tourism – a growing industry on the island of Tasmania, is a rich resource that can be drawn on in creative, fun and engaging ways to enhance the lives of its residents and in this context, school children and their parents. The benefits of learning through tourism experiences can be harnessed to support the broader social and economic goals of improved educational attainment for children and young people who live in Tasmania.

The Children's University is also about the adults. As previously discussed parents, carers and home environments are influential agents on the levels of educational engagement and attainment achieved as has been well documented. Parents from low socio-economic status backgrounds, in common with other parents, have aspirations for their children's future. Yet, parents may need assistance to access Learning Destinations and develop the type of cultural capital that supports their visions for the future. This is the case in Malaysia although the Children's University is not pursuing that goal rigorously.

Finally, there are social and cultural benefits for local children and families participating in local tourism experiences. This study demonstrates how tourism resources are used for local and community development. Tourism policies often aim to bring tourism benefits to local society but this is easier said than done (Ooi, 2013). This study shows one potential mechanism that tourism can be encouraged to serve the social and education needs of local society.

Aside from these more general observations, this study has drawn lessons from the extreme comparative method. There are four areas that stood out: Fun and purposeful learning, parental engagement styles, cultural practices of learning and local tourism. We present our recommendations accordingly.

We acknowledge that the Malaysian and Tasmanian contexts are very different. But the comparison raised issues that should be discussed at policy levels. We do not seek to change educational policy, nor do we have the power to change family and learning cultures but we have discovered real innovations in how the policy discussions could be framed.

Recommendations for the Children's University of Tasmania include:

1. Re-evaluate the *Children's University* understanding of fun and playful learning. The dichotomous positioning of fun/play and testing/assessments in Tasmania may be false and may not be helpful. The Malaysian case shows that more demanding learning can also be fun, particularly if the students find the learning meaningful and even purposeful.
2. Following the Malaysian experience, further reflection on the measurement of learning outcomes should be carried out, especially to establish the relationship between the Learning Destination validation process and learning outcomes.
3. Even though parental engagement styles are different in Tasmania and Malaysia, participation in *Children University's* programs hinge on accessibility. Fortunately, the *Children's University* in Tasmania has a much wider network with many public Learning Destinations. Children's University Malaysia are envious of the network because the variety of Learning Destinations offer many more options and opportunities to the children. This network in Tasmania should be expanded, so that even more opportunities will be accessible to regional areas.
4. Following the issue of accessibility, strategies have to be found to ensure that parents, especially if they have limited cultural and economic capital, do not self-exclude from engaging with their children in learning experiences. This may require some reframing in the promotion of the activities.

5. Learning cultures differ. The *Children's University* in Tasmania identify creative ways to not just evaluate the learning outcomes of their participants but to provide these participants with some kind of tangible results. At the moment, the reward and recognition occurs at an annual graduation ceremony where perseverance (total number of hours) and engaging in a variety of experiential learning activities are valued. Receiving smaller “rewards” through assessment may be motivating.
6. The travel narrative is attractive to children and parents. The comparison accentuates the fact that schools, libraries and other unusual sites can be destinations. Just as importantly, tourism places should engage with local children by devising programs for them, so that they are Learning Destinations for residents.
7. The Tasmanian tourism industry, relevant government agencies and the Peter Underwood Centre collaborate to identify mechanisms to support the tourism industry to engage in an educational transformation project in Tasmania in ways that harness the strengths of the industry and the potential of Tasmanian children. This could include, for example, workforce development initiatives, targeted marketing and promotional campaigns, and educational resource/content development.

Picture 6: Graduation!



Appendix A: The Children's University Ethics Policy

1. Introduction

The Children's University™ is a charitable organisation offering children aged 7-14 (and 5 to 6 year olds with their family) an exciting and innovative programme of high quality learning opportunities outside school hours, with a focus on rewarding participation, raising aspirations and encouraging engagement with learning.

This policy sets out the **principles** and **values** we stand for and the **aspirations** and **outcomes** we promote. It also looks at how the Children's University keeps all of these in mind when dealing with other organisations.

2. Principles and Outcomes

The following principles and values are at the heart of the Children's University:

- We seek to:
 - promote **social mobility**;
 - target children and young people facing **socio-economic disadvantage** and in areas of **deprivation**;
 - ensure that every child, **irrespective of parental means**, has **access** to quality out-of-school-hours **learning activities**;
 - support young people to become **confident, independent learners** by encouraging engagement with learning;
 - promote **independent learning** through voluntary participation and support young people to foster **a love of learning**;
 - **inspire** and **raise aspirations** for children and their parents;
 - **enhance achievement** and promote a variety of intelligences in the learning process;
 - increase **participation** in and of the **wider community** and provide an environment for children to make the most of their abilities and interests;
 - promote the **personal, social and emotional development** and mental health, and to safeguard the well-being, of young people on its courses; and
 - monitor, record and **accredit learners' achievements** , within our framework.
- We believe learning shall be as **child directed** as far as possible and encourage **voluntary participation** in out of school learning.
- The Children's University™ targets the 7-14 age range because this is a

crucial stage for children in forming an attachment to **personalised learning** and aspiring to learn.

- We think children should be able to make **choices** about their **learning**, to move at different paces, to discover and pursue particular interests and the Children's University™ **supports** them in all of these things.
- The Children's University™ seeks to **bridge the primary/secondary divide** and to provide a **continuity of learning** that is highly valuable in this vulnerable transitional phase
- The Children's University™ fosters the **'hard skills' of educational accomplishment** through course design and teaching arrangements that allow children to participate and progress at an appropriate level irrespective of age.
- We also aim to develop the **'soft skills'** of making **choices, growing in confidence, self-belief**, learning how to get the best from oneself and for others, taking charge of one's learning, and contributing to - as well as benefiting from - a **learning community**.
- We believe participation in the **expressive and creative arts** makes a core contribution to children's personal and social development and this informs all of our provisions.
- The CU Trust will promote provision that supports the **development of children's well-being**, as there is widespread concern with regard to the **emotional well-being** and mental health of the young

3. **Public Service**

- 3.1 The Children's University is a charity and so has a duty to be transparent and accountable, and always to act in the interest of our beneficiaries (in other words children and young people).
- 3.2 Although we are not strictly a "public body" we try and act in line with the principles of public life:
- **Selflessness:** Our officers should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.
 - **Integrity:** Our officers should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.
 - **Objectivity:** In carrying out business, including making appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, our officers should make choices based on merit.

- **Accountability:** Our officers are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their position.
- **Openness:** Our officers should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.
- **Honesty:** Our officers have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in any way that protects the best interests of the Children's University.
- **Leadership:** Our officers should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.]

4. **Ethical Fundraising or Sponsorship**

- 4.1 As we grow the Children's University increasingly finds itself offered opportunities to raise funds from third parties. It is good not to have to rely on government funding and this gives us much greater independence.

In line with our principles the Children's University will not accept funds where (in the judgment of the Board of Trustees) this would significantly damage the effective delivery of our mission, because acceptance might:

- Harm our relationship with other benefactors, partners, visitors or stakeholders;
- Create unacceptable conflicts of interest;
- Go against the Children's University objectives which are to increase children's ability to make well informed choices about their health, education and wellbeing. Children's University will not seek funding from any company nor accept donations for purposes that are inconsistent with these objectives.
- Materially damage our reputation; or
- Detrimentally affect the ability of the Children's University to fulfil its mission in any other way.

5. **International Expansion**

- 5.1 We have recently entered a social franchise arrangement with organisations in Australia, Malaysia and China. We will always be very careful about the regimes we engage with but our priority will always be to help children and young people and this means we will consider dealing with countries or governments that may not have perfect ideological credentials.
- 5.2 We also recognise that things change over time and we will therefore keep our commitments under review. The sort of issues we will address on a continuing basis are the organisation's record on:
- Human rights;
 - Child protection;
 - Military activities;
 - Equal opportunities;
 - Child labour;
 - Trade unions;
 - Alcohol;
 - Tobacco;
 - Pornography;
 - Contraception
 - Animal testing;
 - Environmental;
 - Genetic engineering.
- 5.3 We do make it a condition of engagement that any organisation or government we deal with adheres to Children's Rights under the European Social Charter and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. We also require partners to commit to our core principles and values. We give these promises "teeth" by including in an enforceable contract.

6. Compliance and Contact for Queries

The Chief Operating Officer of the Children's University shall have responsibility for compliance and oversight of this policy, and will report to the Board of Trustees or a committee of the Board, as deemed necessary, on an annual basis.

Appendix B: Comparison Table

	Tasmania	Malaysia
Strategic policy	Learners First: Every Learner, Every Day 2018-2021	Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025
Legislative environment	<p>The <i>Australian Education Act 2013</i> (last amended June 2017). It is supported by the <i>Australian Education Regulation (2013)</i> and is primarily concerned with funding and compliance arrangements.</p> <p>The <i>Tasmanian Education Act 2016</i> and associated regulations and instructions seek to make available to every Tasmanian child a high-quality education that helps to maximise the child's educational potential and provide the foundation to lead a fulfilling life and contribute to the Tasmanian community.</p>	<p>The <i>1996 Education Act</i> created a national education system in order to achieve national aspirations. It is founded on the National Philosophy of Education in Malaysia, which is on-going effort towards further developing the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner, so as to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and harmonious, based on a firm belief in and devotion to God. Such an effort is designed to produce Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable and competent, who possess high moral standards, and who are responsible and capable of achieving high level of personal well-being as well as being able to contribute to the harmony and betterment of the family, the society and the nation at large.</p>
Curriculum	<p>The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) produces the Australian Curriculum.</p> <p>The rationale for the introduction of the Australian Curriculum centres on improving the quality, equity and transparency of Australia's education system.</p> <p>The <i>Shape of the Australian Curriculum</i>, guides the development of the Australian Curriculum. The most recent version of the <u><i>Shape of the Australian Curriculum v4.0</i></u> was approved by the ACARA Board in late 2012.</p>	<p>Section 18 of the <i>Education Act 1996</i> provides for the Minister to prescribe a National Curriculum to be used by all schools in the National Education System. The National Curriculum is further defined in the <i>Regulations (1997)</i> as an educational programme that includes curriculum and co-curricular activities which encompasses all the knowledge, skills, norms, values, cultural elements and beliefs to help develop a pupil fully with respect to the physical, spiritual, mental and emotional aspects as well as to inculcate and develop desirable moral values and to transmit knowledge.</p>
PISA 2012-2015	<p>Science (500 → 483) Reading (485 → 476) Mathematics (478 → 469) (general decline)</p>	<p>Science (420 → 443) Reading (398 → 431) Mathematics (421 → 446) (upward trend)</p>
Licencing arrangements	Sub-licence with the University of Adelaide	Sub-licence with CU Trust UK
Products and merchandise	Purchased from University of Adelaide	Passports purchased from CU Trust UK, graduation certificates modified by CU

		Asia-Malaysia
Government consent	Head of Agency and School Principal	Ministerial and School Principal
Learning Destination	150+ mix of public and private for profit services	No public learning destinations
Restricted Learning Destination	100+ delivered by mix of school staff or external providers and validated by CUT staff	Delivered by CU Asia-Malaysia
University Affiliation	University of Tasmania licensed to implement. Employs team, convenes graduation ceremonies, holds events (open days, school holiday programs)	No formal institutional affiliation. At various times academics from universities based in UK officiate (eg. University of Aberdeen).
Funding Sources	University of Tasmania, Tasmanian Community Fund, Private donors, Salvation Army, Rotary	Nil
Indirect/in-kind funding support	Department of Education (school coordination, dissemination)	School provides site for leadership, language, social science program.
Growth ambition	15% growth in participation YOY	Indonesia, India, Sri Lanka

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