



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

Committee for Employment and Learning

# OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Northern Ireland Children's University

3 October 2012



The Northern Ireland Children's University is about extra-curricular activities. It is about children undertaking events that are valuable to them, building up credits of learning and ultimately graduating. We use the language associated with third-level education. We award certificates, degrees and even doctorates at regional graduations to all our little learners, depending on the number of hours they have accumulated.

As the famous Loris Malaguzzi said:

*"The aim of teaching is not to produce learning but to produce the conditions for learning".*

**The Chairperson:** What is he famous for?

**Mr Curran:** Montessori education.

We do not want to scare children. We want to create the wow factor for kids in whatever extra-curricular activities they undertake.

As regards developments to date, the Northern Ireland Children's University is validating learning destinations across Northern Ireland, including South West College's STEM centre. We want to accredit as many learning destinations as possible; for example, the railway museums, the planetarium and the airports. Any places where learning takes place can become an accredited centre where children can build up credits. They might be museums, galleries, rugby or GAA clubs, the Boys' Brigade or the Scouts.

We have regional national partners, including B&Q, the BBC, 'First News', Young Enterprise, and more national partners are coming on board. In 2012, 'The Sunday Times' classified the Children's University as the "university of fun". Over the past five years, the Children's University has been evaluated by the University of Cambridge. We have also worked with Ofsted in England and Wales to focus on what makes good learning.

The evaluation of the Children's University highlighted a number of key points. We believe that the presence of the Northern Ireland Children's University will certainly make a contribution. Being in a children's university significantly improves a child's school attendance. It is also very motivational for young people. At Key Stages 1 to 3, the achievement of children who participate in the Children's University is significantly better than that of non-attenders. The more that children engage with the Children's University, the better their attendance and achievement. That is an evaluation of the Children's University by Professor John MacBeath from the University of Cambridge.

The Children's University provides an environment for self-driven, confident, collegial learning. It provides a safe haven and models of positive relationships. Pupils and teachers testify to life-changing experiences.

This point is important: opportunity costs are high for children in disadvantaged areas who do not attend the Children's University. Certificates, credits, passports to learning and graduations are valued incentives and rewards. With me, I have samples of the types of passports for children and the types of certificates that can be achieved by young people.

University settings help to inspire and raise aspirations for children and their parents. The Children's University has helped to make learning beyond academic studies a reality. Again, this is part of the evaluation by Professor John MacBeath of the University of Cambridge. The genius of the children's university is not only in exploiting the "where", but in asking the "why" and "why not" questions.

In 2011, nearly 100,000 seven-to-14-year-olds and 7,200 five-to-six-year-olds were participating in England and Wales. That accumulated to 2,126,500-plus learning hours, which is quite significant. Since 2009, 160,000 passports to learning have been issued in England, Scotland and Wales. Hopefully, as the Northern Ireland Children's University grows, that number will increase significantly. There are now 1,750-plus public-learning destinations. As I said earlier, we are recruiting and validating learning destinations in Northern Ireland. In addition, 2,900 schools and academies are participating in the learning of the Children's University.

There are 109 local children's universities. We have an agreement with the national organisation that there will be only one in Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Children's University, which we have

established. There are a further 25 expressions of interest. There are also expressions of interest from four European children's universities. There are planned children's universities in the Republic of Ireland, Belgium, Poland and the Netherlands. My understanding is that children's universities will also be set up in Australia and Malaysia.

An example of some of the activities that can go on at school is that students who participate in the Children's University can have their own e-passports. They can monitor their activities online and manage their learning passports. They have their own email addresses and passwords. This is all monitored by primary schools. A student's page indicates how many learning hours he or she has got as well as what is going on with his or her activities. This can be a real motivational factor for young people. They can set up their own profiles and individual avatars.

I have already mentioned the ages — from five to seven. However, children can participate in the Northern Ireland Children's University from age five right up to age 15. There is a volunteering passport with which young people can build up accredited hours if they volunteer in a particular setting or organisation. We intend to widen our national partnerships. I have mentioned the children's university national volunteering programme, which we are trying to start to promote.

A children's 'University Challenge' will also be set up. There will be a big focus on marketing, publicity and sustainability, which includes BBC big screens and fundraising.

We are talking to Stranmillis University College, and we will, hopefully, talk to St Mary's University College, also. As part of their curriculum, they are keen to adopt the validation programme from children's universities. Therefore, teachers will become accredited validators. They will be able to validate children's learning destinations for the Children's University. It is a brilliant way to get children inspired.

From the South West College's perspective, we are in the process of being validated as a designated learning destination. As far as the Department for Employment and Learning's key priorities are concerned, the college strives in its efforts to widen access and participation. We feel that by engaging in the Children's University and being a learning destination, we will start to engage and widen access with young people from quite a young age. You have seen an example of the possibilities with the STEM centre and the work that we are doing there at present.

Raising aspirations is a key priority for the Department. For lots of different reasons, not everybody goes to university. Therefore, it is important that we raise aspirations. As a learning destination and as part of the Northern Ireland Children's University, we will, hopefully, target that agenda.

As a college, we have to ensure that we promote areas that are economically relevant. In our previous discussion, we talked about the challenges of engaging young people in the STEM agenda. By participating in the Children's University, we will be engaging and stimulating interest in STEM, digital media, product design and innovation, renewable energy, science and technology.

As I said, the South West College is a Northern Ireland Children's University learning destination. In each campus, we are developing different areas that will promote the STEM agenda. We have the STEM centre here in this campus. In the Omagh campus, we have the product design centre, which promotes innovation. We have the media centre, which will open in 2013. We have the CREST centre, which focuses on renewable energy, science and technology. That is the plan and strategy by which we intend to engage young people from five to 14 and our existing higher education students in the areas of science, technology, engineering and maths.

That is my presentation, members. Thank you very much.

**The Chairperson:** OK, Liam. Thank you very much. Will members indicate to the Committee Clerk if they want to ask questions while I get the ball rolling? Liam, at the risk of your never talking to me again, I would like to ask you about how much enthusiasm there is for this. We do get PowerPoint presentations, and you have given us the statistics and all the rest of it. Sell the Children's University to me without the PowerPoint. Give me a bit of enthusiasm. Tell me that it is great and brilliant. What is so special about it?

**Mr Curran:** What is special about it is the tied-up thinking. Primary schools and secondary schools do an awful lot of extra-curricular activity. Kids and parents also do a lot of extra-curricular activity. The big selling point about this is getting that activity accredited. It is about getting the activity acknowledged, and that is what the passport is all about. It is also about learning destinations,

whether it be a museum, the local leisure centre or whatever. It is about getting people engaged and thinking about education and learning.

**The Chairperson:** What do they do with the passport, apart from fill it in?

**Mr Curran:** They accumulate hours, and the learning destination, wherever it is, will stamp it.

**The Chairperson:** So, they get the passport stamped and will get a certificate when they accumulate 30 hours or whatever.

**Mr Curran:** They graduate once they build up the credits. It is about widening access to participation. Many kids have parents who never went to university and would never even think of university. It is a long-haul process. It is about raising children and parents' aspirations. It is quite a challenge.

**The Chairperson:** I want to get to a couple of things and then members can ask their own questions. When will this start? You are doing lots of validation at the moment. However, you teased us at the end by saying that there will be big screens from the BBC and this and that. When will it actually kick off?

**Mr Curran:** As you said, we are recruiting the learning destinations. We will then begin to recruit primary schools. We have been talking to the Department of Education, which has provided us with a list of primary schools that it feels would be useful for the university to target —

**The Chairperson:** I am sorry for cutting across you. Members of the Committee are fully engaged in their own constituencies and know their local schools. They will want to know whether they can phone up and say that they want those schools to be involved. How and when will that work? What should we do after leaving this meeting?

**Mr Curran:** We have a website, we are on Twitter, and the office is manned. You can contact the Northern Ireland Children's University. We hope that you will promote the Northern Ireland Children's University to learning destinations or primary or secondary schools in your constituencies.

**The Chairperson:** OK, we can do that. I have got the bit about having destinations that you might go to. One of those is the planetarium, which gave us an excellent presentation that I will cover in Chair's remarks at the end of the meeting. The planetarium is exciting and has the wow factor. It is all very well calling for the wow factor, but how do you intend to explain what is on offer to people before they get to the planetarium or the STEM centre?

**Mr Curran:** That is the role of the learning destination.

**The Chairperson:** How do you talk to the children or parents?

**Mr Curran:** The primary school will do that. The relationship is between the primary school and the learning destination. We validate and promote the learning destinations with the primary schools. We will say to primary schools, "These are the validated learning destinations. Are there any other learning destinations in your area that you would like to be validated?"

**The Chairperson:** The Assembly Education Service at Stormont does an excellent job and brings lots of people to the Building. I suspect that it might be considered a potential learning destination. Should we ask you to get involved or ask the Education Service to get in touch with you? What way does it work?

**Mr Curran:** Yes, we would be delighted to take the details and we will contact the Education Service.

**The Chairperson:** Do I have members' approval for the Committee to write to the Assembly's Education Service to ask whether it could be involved?

*Members indicated assent.*

**The Chairperson:** The Committee is useful for communication purposes. We would be happy to host an event in the Long Gallery, when it is appropriate, to say that this is going on. However, we do not

know the full detail. When you do a presentation, we will need to see a bit of the wow factor; what is exciting, what is going on; this, that and the other. Do I have the Committee's agreement to offer to host a Children's University event at some stage when it is ready? We would be delighted to work with you on that.

*Members indicated assent.*

**Mr Curran:** Thank you.

**Mr F McCann:** Thanks for the presentation; it was interesting. We live in a world of ever-changing education and education methods. Anything that enhances young people's possibilities of advancing must be welcomed. However, principals of primary schools and others are very jealous of their territory. Some might find it difficult to break out into new fields. When you talk about encouraging primary schools, are you talking about going into primary schools and talking to the principals and teachers?

You spoke about the thousands of young people who have gone through, and will go through, the Children's University. Do you monitor them, not only in respect of their success in going through the Children's University but on whether they move on to further education or something else? One thing that the Committee has talked about is the fact that when people go into further education, there is a set series of courses, such as arts, computer studies, teaching, and medicine. Is there a way in which we could encourage people to take up other aspects, such as sciences, because —?

**The Chairperson:** OK, Fra. I think that we have the first question. Just hold on a wee second and give Liam a chance to come back on it.

**Mr Curran:** Monitoring data for participating students would be quite a challenge. I am not aware whether the national Children's University does that, but we could, perhaps, do it as we move forward. I am wearing two hats here. I am a director of the Children's University, but the college is now also a validated learning destination.

As I said in my presentation and have said previously, although the Children's University is about giving credit to students or young people who do things that they enjoy, it is also about trying to encourage young people and schools to engage in the STEM subjects and other areas of economic relevance. We can stimulate that interest at quite a young age. There are other fields and subject areas, but we feel that that is our role in fulfilling this mission. I do not know whether that answers your question.

**Mr F McCann:** I am not sure. This year, 36,000 young people did not get any GCSEs. How does a project such as this start to deal with that number of young people who, at the end of the day, will fall out of the system? That is crucial. I am not saying that the Children's University is tailored to do that. I enjoyed the visit to the planetarium, because you can see what is on offer. It is OK bringing children there, but how do you encourage them to go beyond that, to go beyond the planetarium and into the sciences or engineering? How do you convince them to do that? Primary schools might not be geared up for that, but we have picked up on the issue, and this is an important aspect.

**Mr Curran:** That is a good point. It is about the enthusiasm of the learning destination. When a learning destination is signed up, it has to be enthused and focused about what it is providing. It is not just about going to see the stars. An educational element has to be built around it so that young people can see that, if they study a certain subject, it can take them in a certain direction. It is not only about the wow factor but about focusing on where it can take you.

Sport is a good example. Young people do a lot of extra-curricular activities because they enjoy them. It is about participation in sport. They are encouraged to excel and that is promoted, but they are encouraged in an educational way.

**The Chairperson:** We get that point, Liam.

**Mr F McCann:** I do not disagree with what is being said. Young people will enjoy destinations, which may shape their later lives. However, if we are evaluating the worthiness of projects such as the Children's University, surely we have to think of how it will impact on people's lives five or 10 years down the line.

**The Chairperson:** You can look at that as a study, but the pertinent point is about validating potential learning destinations. It needs to be more than a good day out. How do you translate it from being a good day out to taking it further?

**Mr Curran:** A learning destination needs to have an educational scheme before it becomes validated. Therefore, it needs to have education and outcomes. Armagh Planetarium, for example, would need to demonstrate that, when kids leave it, they have left with —

**The Chairperson:** Fra raised another point that I want to clarify with you. When you come up to the Long Gallery, you will need to address the validation process.

**Mr Curran:** Very much so.

**The Chairperson:** Fra also said that you have this information as an e-passport. It may not be there now, but you already have it recorded on computer, so in five or 10 years' time, it might be possible to do an evaluation or longitudinal study. That may not be your role, but the way in which effectiveness might be measured would be of interest to Fra and others.

**Mr Curran:** I have a validating document here. As part of the validation process, there are questions for the purposes of learning, engagement, participation, impact of assessment, evaluation, and so on. Therefore, there are mechanisms in place for the criteria that would have to be met before an organisation could become a learning destination.

**The Chairperson:** I do not want to interrupt because it is Fra's question, but there is a statistic that 85% — sometimes that percentage is put at 70%, so it is probably somewhere between 70% and 85% — of all learning occurs outside of school, either at home or in another environment. If hard-to-reach communities, for whatever reason, are not getting support, that is a way to tackle the issue.

**Mr F McCann:** I have put the following point to most groups and organisations that have attended the Committee. It concerns me that 36,000 young people will fall out of the system this year, and it will probably be the same scenario next year. We can talk all we like about how we arrive at destinations, plot out and plan. However, the system has failed those thousands of young people, and it will continue to do so unless we can develop a mechanism to encourage young people to get a better education.

**The Chairperson:** We will look at that in our survey. Fra, I know that you were delayed in getting to the planetarium, but at the end, you might have heard representatives from Queen's University talking about their outreach strategy, the wow factor of space and how to target hard-to-reach children. That is the sort of thing that you are talking about in getting young people back into education. Hopefully, such issues are also helpful to you, Liam.

**Mr Curran:** Absolutely.

**The Chairperson:** Maybe it is just me, but I do not see the meat on the bones in your presentation. At least we now know that you exist, we know what you want to do, and we would like to follow up on that. However, there is a thirst for more detailed information, particularly on Fra's point about vulnerable children.

We had a debate yesterday in the Assembly about poor school attendance, and I notice that, in your report, the Children's University encourages attendance. Fra has made his point, and it is in the Hansard report. You might want to read it, and, when we come back, you might want to address those issues.

**Mr Buchanan:** Thanks for the presentation. Undoubtedly, the face of education is changing, which is a challenge. However, selling this idea to schools will move the issue forward. I have not really caught how you intend to promote and sell the Children's University to schools. That is the important issue. A number of schools are set in their ways, and this will be seen as breaking away from that. What will the extra cost be to a school? That is one of the factors.

**Mr Curran:** We have received an initial start-up grant from the national organisation in order to sell the idea to schools.

**The Chairperson:** How much?

**Mr Curran:** It is £15,000. That money is being used to recruit learning destinations. One of our directors is allocating some time to recruiting learning destinations. We have not begun the process of recruiting primary schools because we want the learning destinations to be in place and validated. However, once we have the appropriate learning destinations in place, we will target primary schools directly. Therefore, we will present what the Children's University is all about, the methodology and the ethos, and, hopefully, primary schools will sign up to that.

One of our directors, who is a primary-school headmaster, is very confident that there is a need and an appetite for the Children's University.

**Mr Buchanan:** What will it cost the schools?

**Mr Curran:** The passport will cost a school £3 per student, and there will be an entry fee to the learning destination. For the South West College, we will charge a nominal fee for access to our centres of £1 or £2 per student. I have spoken to the director about that. To our minds, it is not —

**Mr Buchanan:** Do the students attend weekly? Is that the way it will work?

**Mr Curran:** Potentially.

**Mr Buchanan:** So it is a cost per week?

**Mr Curran:** Yes. It depends on the students' activities. They could come to us for a day and build up learning credits for five hours. They could then go to another destination, and so forth, and build it up that way.

**Mr Buchanan:** So we are still unclear about the initial cost to schools. However, that will all come in due course.

Another issue is the board of directors. You said that four directors out of nine have been appointed. By what mechanism do you appoint a board of directors?

**Mr Curran:** Initially, I contacted the chief executive of the national children's organisation. The primary-school headmaster had already been in touch with him. The chief executive arranged for us to meet, and that is how we came together.

As we grow, governance is important. I asked a senior member of the college — the finance director, who is very experienced in corporate governance — to be involved. The headmaster approached the gentleman from National Museums so that we had a core of board members. The core grouping of directors will be based on individuals who have the appropriate skills to make sure that the Northern Ireland Children's University is a success.

**The Chairperson:** You are at an earlier stage than we had anticipated. That is right, Tom, is it not? Collectively, we are interested in what you have to say, but the sum of money, £15,000, is relatively modest in the context of the issues that we deal with. I know that the standard grant is around £24,000. If we are to do something like this, we need to up the ante a bit. You need proper governance, and you need to select board members in a proper manner as Tom suggests. Governance is just one of those things that has to be done. It is also not clear to us that if we go out and talk to schools, they will be interested. As was mentioned earlier, schools are pretty busy. If I may be so bold, we are interested and supportive, but quite a bit of work needs to be done.

**Mr Curran:** Absolutely. If you were misled, that is to be regretted.

**The Chairperson:** We were not misled. We were just anticipating —



**Mr Curran:** We are very much in the early stages, and we have a lot of work to do. However, we are being patient, and we are doing this properly. My presence is intended just to create an awareness of what the Northern Ireland Children's University is. In time, if you come across it, you will be able to promote it as a worthwhile thing to engage with.

**Mr Buchanan:** A lot of questions need to be answered, but we cannot do that yet because we are at such an early stage. We wish the Children's University well. We hope that it will come to fruition and that it will begin to make a difference to our young people because that is what we need. The earlier we catch those young people, the better.

**Mr McElduff:** My question is about the young people who have taken part so far. Is there any breakdown of the socio-economic background of the participants? Projects such as Sure Start and Home-Start are for very young children, but have the parents involved in those projects been advised of the potential of the Children's University?

**Mr Curran:** Not at the moment. However, as I said, we are in the very early stages. We are sure that colleges in England and Wales that engage with the Children's University do so as part of their widening access and participation strategy, and colleagues to whom I have spoken in England say that it works. There is no case data for the Northern Ireland Children's University.

**The Chairperson:** You have heard what a number of colleagues have to say, and we are interested in the issue of widening access. It would be useful to have data from other places. Equally, we want to know about your plan and what you think is a good way to proceed.

**Mr McElduff:** It is really a tee-up for local projects.

**Mr Curran:** Locally, we hope to identify primary schools that have challenges or difficulties with poor attendance or motivational issues among young people and try to get the schools involved to consider the impact of that. We have been given information on a number of schools in the Belfast area, and we are encouraged that we can engage with those schools and get participation with a view to encouraging attendance, improving motivation, and so forth, for the young people.

**Mr Anderson:** I am interested in the board of directors; my colleague Tom raised that issue. How did you arrive at the figure of nine? You have four in position so far, is that right?

**Mr Curran:** Correct.

**Mr Anderson:** I appreciate what you are trying to do, and it looks like a good project if it can take off and you have the resources to do it and engage with schools. Should it not be a top-down approach in the sense that you are starting with four board members and you expect nine? How do you expect to appoint those people and achieve a spread of expertise? What are the criteria? Tom touched on that. Why is the figure nine and not 10 or 20?

**Mr Curran:** My understanding is that we get our guidance from the chief executive and the head office in Manchester. It is a good point. I do not know why that is the figure. I can certainly investigate why that came about and ask the chairperson.

**Mr Anderson:** When are all board directors expected to be in place? To get such an organisation moving, it is surely best, for the sake of good governance, to get those people in place first.

**Mr Curran:** We are doing our best to try to get the right people in place. Membership is voluntary. The members of the current board also have day jobs. It has been made clear that we are very much in infancy. You are absolutely right that we need to get everybody in place so that we can drive the issue forward.

**Mr Anderson:** I wish you well, and I look forward to the outcome.

**Mr Flanagan:** I want to find out more about where the Children's University gets the majority of its funding from.

**Mr Curran:** It is funded by the Department for Education in England. In terms of self-sufficiency, when each learning destination signs up, it pays a £300 fee to become a validating centre, and that lasts for three years.

**Mr Flanagan:** So the Children's University here gets its funding from the Department for Education in England?

**Mr Curran:** No; once we get established, that is a conversation that we hope to have at some point. We have a start-up grant, and the learning destinations that we recruit pay a fee of £300.

**Mr Flanagan:** Where did you get the grant from, Liam?

**Mr Curran:** From the national Children's University head office.

**Mr Flanagan:** How long will that keep you going?

**Mr Curran:** That is a good question. We submitted our business plan to the national organisation, but that is why we are recruiting learning destinations.

**Mr Flanagan:** I know that Barry mentioned Sure Start and Home-Start, but has any contact been made with neighbourhood renewal partnerships, and so on, to see whether there are any potential projects or schemes that could be run in those areas through the Children's University here?

**Mr Curran:** We have not yet made contact. It would be useful to get some insight or detail on that, but we have not explored it yet.

**Mr Buchanan:** I believe that this a good initiative that can and will work for schools and our children. I am a little worried about funding. There does not appear to have been much discussion with the Education Minister. It appears that the Children's University in England and Wales is funded by the Department for Education. There does not seem to have been any interaction there yet.

**Mr Curran:** We have had some discussions with the Department of Education, but not at a very senior level.

**Mr Buchanan:** The concern is that you could make a start with your current funding but then find that you are cash-strapped and have no funding, resulting in the initiative going to the wall. We hope that that is not the way it proceeds, because I believe that there is potential, but the funding issue causes me some concern.

**The Chairperson:** With the appropriate form of words, we might write to the Committee for Education to ask whether it has any information on the Children's University and whether the Minister of Education might be considering it. Does that have the agreement of the Committee?

*Members indicated assent.*

**Mr Flanagan:** Would it be appropriate to write to the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister about the child poverty strategy, the social investment fund, and so on, to see whether this issue falls under its remit?

**The Chairperson:** I am happy to do that.

**Mr Flanagan:** You do not mind using stamps, no?

**The Chairperson:** The internal mail will probably be sufficient. If necessary, if you are volunteering, I can get you to drop the letter round for me.

**Mr Flanagan:** I will be obliging.

**The Chairperson:** Liam, thank you very much for the presentation.

**Mr Curran:** Thanks for having me.

**The Chairperson:** We now understand, although we did not understand before, that you are in the early stages. I am not sure whether my colleagues quite understood that you have taken the initiative and gone off and done something. I commend you on that. It is a good initiative but, as you have heard from colleagues, you might need a bit of help.

**Mr Curran:** Very much so.

**The Chairperson:** We are also keen to move at some pace. The benefit is that you have brought it to our attention. People are interested, and it sounds like a good idea. We would get a wee bit nervous if it is a case of duplication and somebody else is already doing it. Volunteer Now has gold, silver and bronze volunteering awards.

**Mr Curran:** Yes, I am aware of that. I understand your point.

**The Chairperson:** Have you been in contact with Volunteer Now?

**Mr Curran:** Not as yet.

**The Chairperson:** I recommend that you contact Volunteer Now and tell it that we would be interested in how you might work together.

I will leave it with you that we are interested in the concept of widening participation. We get that idea. We have had a quick look at STEM, at how we get a wow factor and all those things. However, the business model does not seem right to us. If it is £300 for three years, it is hardly worth doing for the people who have been validated. As Phil says, that will just about pay for the stamp. If you are going to do it and get people involved, you need to look at the models and tell us that it works elsewhere. You are engaging in what might be a very good idea, but you are totally out on a limb in respect of your funding. Department of Education funding will be tight, and we need to deal with that.

Feel free to engage with members individually after the meeting. I am happy to talk to you about it, and there is also the offer of the Long Gallery event.

I see you Phil. I have a wee note that says that you want in.

**Mr Flanagan:** I was only scratching my nose this time.

**The Chairperson:** You have just bought the 'Mona Lisa'. *[Laughter.]* The offer of the Long Gallery event when you are ready is a big deal. However, you will need to be further down the line and say what you want to do. The members who are interested will no doubt engage in that. We support the general concept, and there is a range of issues. Are you content with that summary?

**Mr Curran:** Thank you very much for the opportunity to come along and present on behalf of the college and the Northern Ireland Children's University. The advice and guidance that you have provided is very helpful. The more friends we have, the better.

**The Chairperson:** I will give Phil the last word.

**Mr Flanagan:** From looking at the map, I see that there is one Children's University in the North. However, the map of the world shows that universities are planned in the South, too. Have you any more information about where those are planned?

**Mr Curran:** University College Cork is interested in setting one up.

**Mr Flanagan:** Is it at a similar stage to this project, or is it a wee bit further ahead or behind?

**Mr Curran:** I think that it is behind.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you very much; I appreciate it. We wish you all the best and we will see what we can do to help.

**Mr Curran:** Thank you very much.