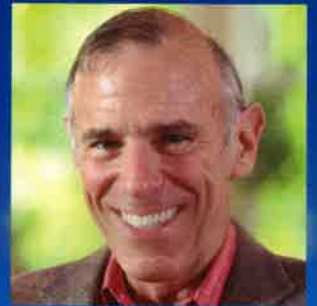


EducationWorld

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3 STEPPING STONES FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT



Tony Wagner, Learning Policy Institute, USA



Lucy Crehan, UK, author of Cleverlands

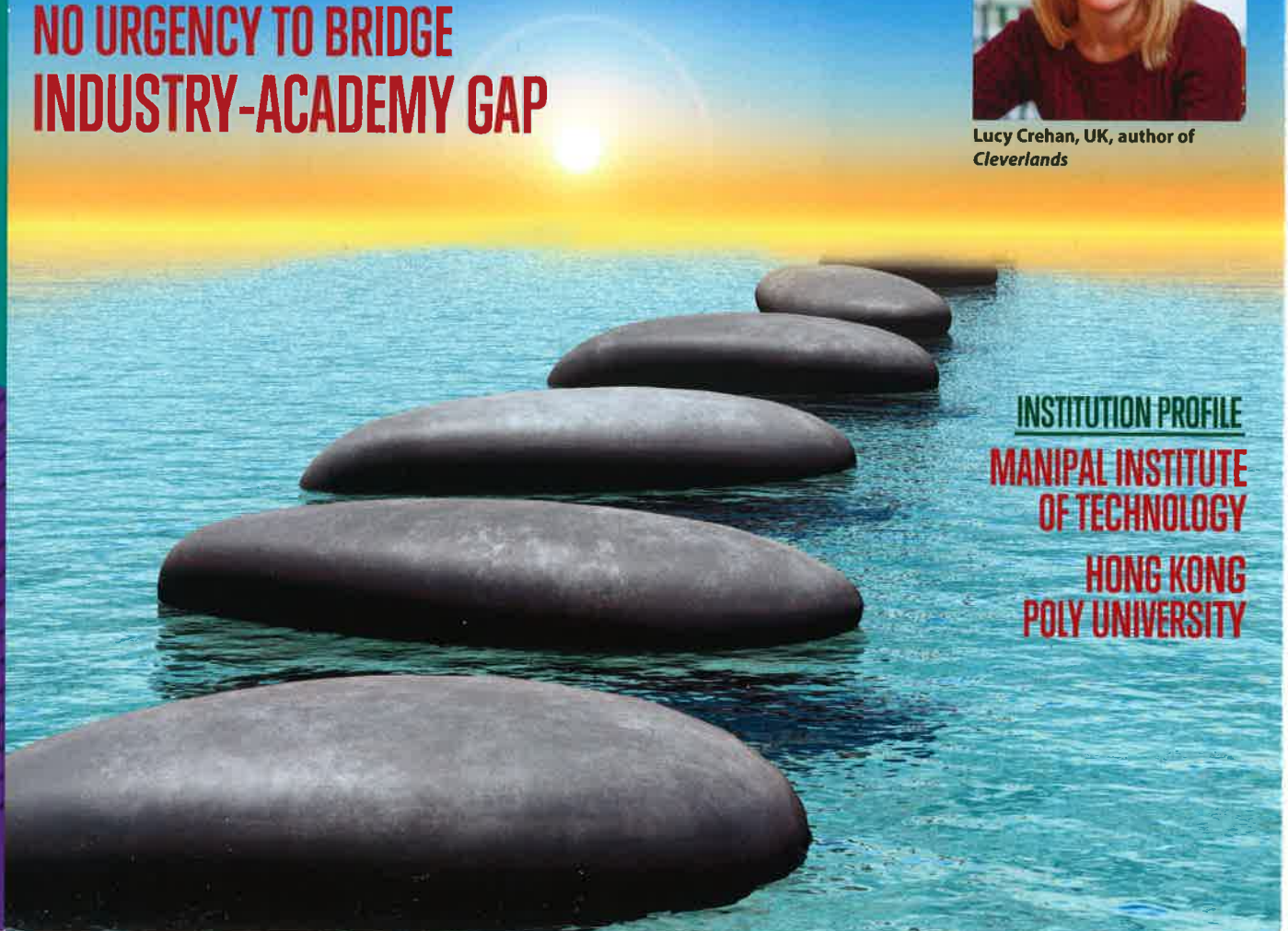
SPECIAL REPORT

NO URGENCY TO BRIDGE INDUSTRY-ACADEMY GAP

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national cohorts who write PISA every three years, provide a unique 'leadership track' for innovative leader-teachers and assign them specific responsibilities for whole school improvement. In Shanghai as well, aspiring principals receive extensive curriculum design and in-service institution leadership training.

Sceptics contend that unless there are radical shifts in government policy, schools cannot introduce meaningful school reform initiatives *suo motu*. However, while it is undeniable that overhaul of old policies governing syllabi, examinations, teacher certification and school regulation is helpful, macro education reforms are not a precondition of school improvement programmes which can dramatically improve learning outcomes in K-12 education. Learning outcomes in schools within the same socio-economic strata vary widely because of choices leaders and teachers make. Teachers can, and do, decide how to introduce a concept, what activities to choose, and what questions to pose to children to assess

their comprehension. Similarly, school principals can, and do, decide how much time they spend in classrooms observation and in teacher training and development programmes. Those decisions make a big difference in how well children learn.

MANY EDUCATIONISTS believe that organisation restructuring and innovation is the privilege of well-resourced high-end schools earning substantial tuition fees incomes. This belief is misplaced. Rote learning used to be the norm in over 3,000 mainstream schools before they implemented the XSEED teaching methodology and whole school change management programme. Located mostly in small towns, these schools are constrained by inadequate infrastructure, state-mandated syllabuses and under-trained local teachers. However, today over 1 million children in these schools absorb concepts through experiential learning, free exchange of ideas and analytical questioning.

They apply theoretical knowledge to solve challenging real-life problems and get assessed on their skills. As a result, they fare better in examinations, communicate with confidence and are ready to derive the full benefit of higher education which presages success in increasingly complex workplaces of the 21st century.

Every child in India, whether in Noida or Villupuram, deserves good quality globally comparable education. Therefore, every school, elite or affordable, must strive to deliver this implicit promise of educational institutions and teachers. The three stepping stones of school education reform — redesigned curriculums, improved teacher training and development programmes, and conscious development of instructional leaders — is an excellent way to start the process of delivering this mostly unfulfilled promise to India's neglected but high-potential children.

(The author is an alumnus of the Harvard Graduate School of Education and vice president of XSEED Education)

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