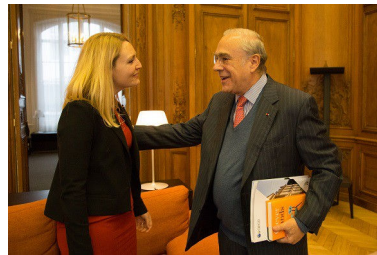


Lucy Crehan: “Cleverlands: Lessons from top performing education systems”

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Lucy Crehan: “Cleverlands: Lessons from top performing education systems” 1 | Lucy Crehan with OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría

Lucy Crehan is a qualified teacher, an education explorer, and an international education consultant. She taught science and psychology at a secondary school in London for three years before turning her sights to research and policy, completing a Masters in Education at the University of Cambridge, and setting off on an ethnographic, educational exploration of the world’s ‘top-performing’ education systems. She helped out and observed in schools in Finland, Canada, Singapore, Japan, New Zealand and Shanghai, spending a month living with educators in each place.

Good afternoon and thank you very much for coming to hear me speak this afternoon. It is such an honour to speak at the OECD. Much of my work depends on the OECD; I have used PISA to identify what are the top performing education systems that I then went to have a look at. I began my education and my career in England as a teacher. I taught science in a secondary school in a challenging part of south west London. Teaching is a challenging job, particularly in the first few years, but I felt that not all of the challenges were a result of the difficulties that some of the children brought from their home lives with them into the classroom.

Some of the challenges were as a result of policy, government policy and how that was being interpreted by the headteacher at my school. Just to give you an example, we have quite an intense accountability structure in England, headteachers are therefore sometimes fearful for their jobs based on exam results. So as a result we had pictures of some students in the staff room – not all students but the ones on the C to D grade borderline, the ones that mattered to the school, the ones that we were paying extra attention to because they were the ones that would make a difference in the data.

These kinds of experiences made me become interested in policy and the huge effects that policy can have in the school and in the classroom. So I went to study for a Master’s Degree in education and read many of the wonderful reports produced by the OECD and had a look at some of the country publications, focusing on what policies seemed to correlate with high performance in PISA. But I did not feel that I could get a deep understanding of what that actually meant and looked like in the classroom; what it actually felt like as a teacher, and how each of those policies interacted in a particular cultural context to affect how children are learning and how teachers are teaching.

So that was my question. At the time I was in my mid-twenties I did not have any adult responsibilities, so I thought I would take the opportunity to go and have a look at countries around the world and see what it is like in those schools.

Lucy Crehan: “Cleverlands: Lessons from top performing education systems” 2



People listening attentively to Lucy Crehan's presentation

Short biography

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On returning from her trip, Ms Crehan published a book – *Cleverlands* – recounting her findings, which was named one of *The Economist*’s ‘books of the year’ within a week of its release, and has been described by Professor Dylan Wiliam as “a truly important contribution to educational scholarship”. She spent a year at Education Development Trust as part of a team advising governments on education reform, where she spent several months in Brunei working on a teacher coaching reform programme. She has also been involved in a research project on teacher career structures with IIEP UNESCO, writing a book on the existing literature and theories, and conducting case studies in Scotland and New York. Ms Crehan has advised the UK government as part of a working group on teacher workload, and spoken about her work at conferences in eight countries. She now works as a freelance education consultant and is conducting research for her second book.

More information about her work is available here: lucycrehan.com

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