

ASSOCIATE

PROFESSOR PAUL CLARKE

“We need our teaching – and the conditions we generate for learning – to be informed and guided by nature, its systems and solutions”

Thanks to his unique insight into the scale of the challenges the world is facing combined with an understanding of what we in education can do about it, Paul Clarke is an important man.

Currently Professor of Education at St Mary's University in London, he is also director of the award winning Pop Up Foundation. He combines longitudinal research with practical action across the programmes he undertakes with schools, communities and businesses worldwide, programmes inspired by 'permaculture'. This a straightforward yet powerful approach that insists on 1) care for the planet, 2) care for each other and 3) that you put back more than you take.

Over the last twenty years Paul has been a sustained critic of the educational performance culture, an approach to educational reform serving neither student nor teacher. But this does not mean that he is an advocate of any fluffy child-centred learning either. What drives Paul is a commitment to an educational system firmly in alignment with permaculture principles.

And he knows it can be done because he's seen it.

Paul's roles have seen him work throughout the world, gathering insights and ideas from the many

communities he connects with, especially the indigenous populations and those in 'wilderness spaces'. For example, a project in the Australian Outback has led him to now work as lead consultant in the ecoliteracy education programme for Indigenous Schools Program in Northern Territory Australia. Through his Pop Up Foundation he is participating with scientists and artists to explore the consciousness of a forest environment over a thirty-year period. He has also worked on reform and futures thinking programmes for the ASCD in the USA, managed school development projects in Hong Kong and China, has undertaken numerous crisis intervention projects in places such as Haiti and East Africa and is supporting the banking community in Geneva to design and develop a permaculture training farm for staff to learn about new forms of connected investment and well-being. That is on top of his work in countries including Iceland, Moldova, New Zealand, India and Indonesia, not to mention Todmorden in West Yorkshire where the Incredible Edible venture he co-founded won a *Breakthrough Project for the 21st Century* award from the Sustainable Development Commission of the UK government.

What all this means is that Paul has a perspective which few others in education today share – and one that very much needs to be listened



to. And it should be heard not just because it describes the very real and very alarming challenges facing us all today but because it also holds many of the answers we need.

In his quiet, unassuming and down-to-earth style, Paul works with school leaders, teachers and young people to help them understand the challenges we face, the part they play in making the situation worse, and the part we can all play in making things better.

For Paul, it boils down to one question - will the children in today's classrooms be able to address the environment and social problems we have created when they are running the world?

And that's an important question.

Books written by Paul Clarke:

- *There is Another Way* (contributor)

Paul has been with Independent Thinking since May 2014.

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