

# CoachED UPDATE

## JUNE 2021

Enhancing the quality of conversations in education communities

**TIME TO READ: 3MINS+**  
**AGENCY & COACHING**

Short Read



**Agency** is a much-used term in education, but how well do we understand this concept and how does it relate to our efforts to support the development of educators, and to coaching? This month's Curious Convos webinar guest, Professor Mark Priestley outlines the 'ecological' view of teacher agency [in this short blog post](#). In the book [Teacher Agency](#) that Mark wrote with Gert Biesta and Sarah Robinson (2015) the authors propose that agency is not something that people possess but something that they achieve. According to the 'ecological' view, agency emerges dependent on the quality of the engagement of individuals with "temporal-relational contexts-for-action" (p.23) rather than as a quality of the individuals themselves. It follows then that **effective coaching** could enable the **achievement of agency** for teachers by facilitating thoughtful and deliberate engagement with their own **contexts-for-action**. This way of thinking about agency is appealing because it acknowledges the background experiences that shape us as educators and the immediate contextual influences that are the backdrop to teachers' professional work, as well as our human desire to be self-directed learners. The 'ecology' in this definition of agency is summarised as "a configuration of influences from the **past**, orientations towards the **future** and engagement with the **present**" (p.25). It is not hard to make links here with the Solutions Focus coaching principles and techniques that underpin the Growth Coaching approach.

The work of Priestley et al also prompts us to consider our understanding and experience of the related concepts of autonomy and self-efficacy which are often cited as desirable outcomes of coaching. Where autonomy can be seen as an attractive and empowering outcome of coaching, to some, the term can initially suggest complete independence and freedom

from external influence or constraint. This is rarely the case in education – instead we more often have 'freedom within form'. Similarly, self-efficacy – the belief in one's capacity to act on challenges – is undoubtedly a worthy goal of coaching. However, there is a difference between belief in our own capacity and the degree to which contextual conditions enable us to take this action. This is where ecological agency is a helpful concept because it draws our attention to our 'contexts for action'. A skilful coach will help a coachee to build a greater sense of self-efficacy, through strengths-based and solutions-focused approaches, and to exercise agency by helping them to identify ways forward and next steps that are within their control.

In their chapter, 'Coaching for Agency: the power of professionally respectful dialogue' for *Flip the System Australia* (Netolicky, Andrews & Paterson (Eds), 2018), Queensland educator Jon Andrews and GCI's Chris Munro argue that what we are really striving for when we coach teachers and school leaders is to enable them to exercise agency. Drawing on the ecological approach, they consider how coaching can facilitate and sustain teacher agency over time, ultimately resulting in a critically engaged profession able to respond to the complex needs of our students and school communities.

**References:**

Andrews, J., and Munro, C. (2018). Coaching for Agency: the power of professionally respectful dialogue. In, D. M. Netolicky, J. Andrews & C. Paterson (Eds.) *Flip the System Australia: What Matters in Education*. (pp. 163-171). London: Routledge.

Priestley, M., Biesta, G., and Robinson, S. (2015). *Teacher Agency: An Ecological Approach*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Resources

- Professor Mark Priestley outlines the 'ecological' view of teacher agency [in this short blog post](#).
- Read more from Mark Priestley in [this article](#).
- In case you missed it, our new interactive magazine format of our GCI Insights publication was recently published. It can be accessed [here](#).



Upcoming Programs



**NEW PROGRAM: VIDEO PEER COACHING**

Our first program to be jointly developed with the Instructional Coaching Group is now up and running. [The Video Peer Coaching](#) program has already been delivered to school groups across Australia and has been very well received.

The program draws on the extensive knowledge and experience of both GCI and ICG and is specifically designed to help teachers and educators work reciprocally and collaboratively to improve their teaching practice. It offers the opportunity to enhance and build on existing classroom observation and instructional coaching arrangements. By learning to have coaching conversations that involve reflecting on video, teachers can ground their goals in reality and keep the process non-evaluative, rigorous and safe.

Hear about the program from GCI's Ben Calleja and ICG's Jim Knight in [this webinar](#).

Register [here](#).

**REGISTRATION FOR THE FOLLOWING ONLINE AND FACE-TO-FACE PROGRAMS IS CLOSING SOON:**

**o Online:**

**Introduction to Leadership Coaching**

Commencing Wednesday 21 July (Sydney, Aus) for 6 weeks

**Introduction to Leadership Coaching (Intensive)**

July 5, July 6, July 7 (6 x 2hr workshops over 3 consecutive days)

Be sure to **click on the dates** to visit the registration pages!

**Understanding Coaching in Education**

Commencing Monday 19 July (Sydney, Aus) for 6 weeks

[Click here for NZ courses](#)

**o In Person:**

**Coaching Accreditation Program 2-day**

[Aug 3/4 Geelong](#)      [Aug 17/18 Hobart](#)

[Aug 11/12 Wagga Wagga](#)      [Aug 26/27 Perth](#)


[Aug 12/13 Sydney](#)

**Introduction to Leadership Coaching 2-day**


[June 24/25 Perth](#)      [Aug 19/20 Melbourne](#)

[June 24/25 Kalgoorlie](#)      [Aug 3/4 Sydney](#)

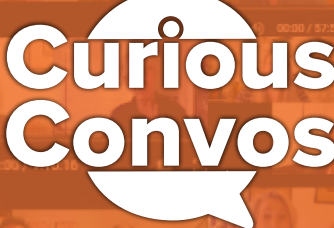
Complimentary Professional Learning



**Mark Priestley**



**Jasmine Miller**



**Curious Convos**

**Teacher Agency**

Thu 17th June - 9am BST, 4pm AWST, 6pm AEST.

**Curious Convos Webinar: Teacher Agency**

Thu 17th June - 9am BST, 4pm AWST, 6pm AEST

Our guest this month is Professor Mark Priestley of the University of Stirling, Scotland. Mark is Professor of Education and the Director of the Stirling Network for Curriculum Studies, an international network set up in 2016 to connect curriculum scholars, policymakers and practitioners. His research interests lie in the school curriculum – theory, policy and practice – and especially the processes of curriculum making across different layers of education systems. Mark advises three national governments (Ireland, Scotland, Wales) on curriculum matters. His publications include *Teacher Agency: An Ecological Approach* and *Curriculum Making in Europe: policy and practice within and across diverse contexts*.

Mark will discuss the concept of teacher agency with Jasmine Miller, a GCI Senior Consultant based in Scotland. Jasmine is a certified coach, qualified teacher and researcher, and a former Principal of two schools for children and young people with Autism.

Click [here](#) to register for the webinar.

Coming Soon



## 7TH COACHING IN EDUCATION CONFERENCE

Connect with us on social media

#CoachED2021



## GOING GLOBAL: CELEBRATING INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

21 & 22 September 2021

This year will see our 7th Coaching in Education Conference go online for the first time!

The conference has as its theme **Going Global: Celebrating International Perspectives**, and it is this global perspective that is one of the big pluses of hosting an event of this kind virtually.

We are genuinely excited by the possibilities that this format offers. Building on the quality and reputation of our previous face-to-face conferences, this year you will have the opportunity to:

- Learn from practitioners making an impact in different systems and different educational settings all over the world
- Hear the latest thinking from more global thought leaders from the US, UK and Australia
- Avoid the dreaded conference 'FOMO' feeling. All keynotes and presentations will be recorded and available to view both during and after the event so you don't need to miss anything
- Experience a conference program designed to enable access across international timezones with recurring live workshops
- Network internationally with colleagues you would normally never get to meet
- Experience a professional virtual conference environment custom-built for this event

**Keynote Speakers**

**Professor Dianne Vella-Brodrick**

Gerry Higgins Chair in Positive Psychology, Deputy Director and Head of Research at The Centre for Wellbeing Science, University of Melbourne (Australia)



**Professor Ellie Drago-Severson**

Professor of Education Leadership and Adult Learning & Leadership, Teachers College, Columbia University (USA)



**Dr Jim Knight**

Senior Partner, Instructional Coaching Group and Research Associate, University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning (USA)



**Dr Mark McKergow**

Co-Director of The Centre for Solutions Focus at Work (UK)



**Indicative Program**

The conference program will be delivered in four three-hour blocks and will include:

- Opening Address: Prof. Christian van Nieuwerburgh and John Campbell
- Keynote Speakers: Dr Jim Knight, Prof. Dianne Vella-Brodrick, Prof. Ellie Drago-Severson, Dr Mark McKergow
- Stories from the Field (Implementation)
- Stories from the Field (Research)
- Concurrent Live Workshop Sessions (Repeated once) to suit varying levels of expertise, role and interest. More details coming very soon.
- Scheduled networking discussions
- Closing Address: Prof. Christian van Nieuwerburgh and Prof. Rachel Lofthouse

[Register Here for Early Bird and Group Rates](#)

[Click here to visit our Conference webpage](#)  
Full program coming very soon!