

What does it mean to be an educational developer?

Natasha Kenny, PhD, CEC, ACC

Senior Director, Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning

EDCC-CDPC, April 10, 2025

What matters most?

What drives you to do what you do?

Educational Development

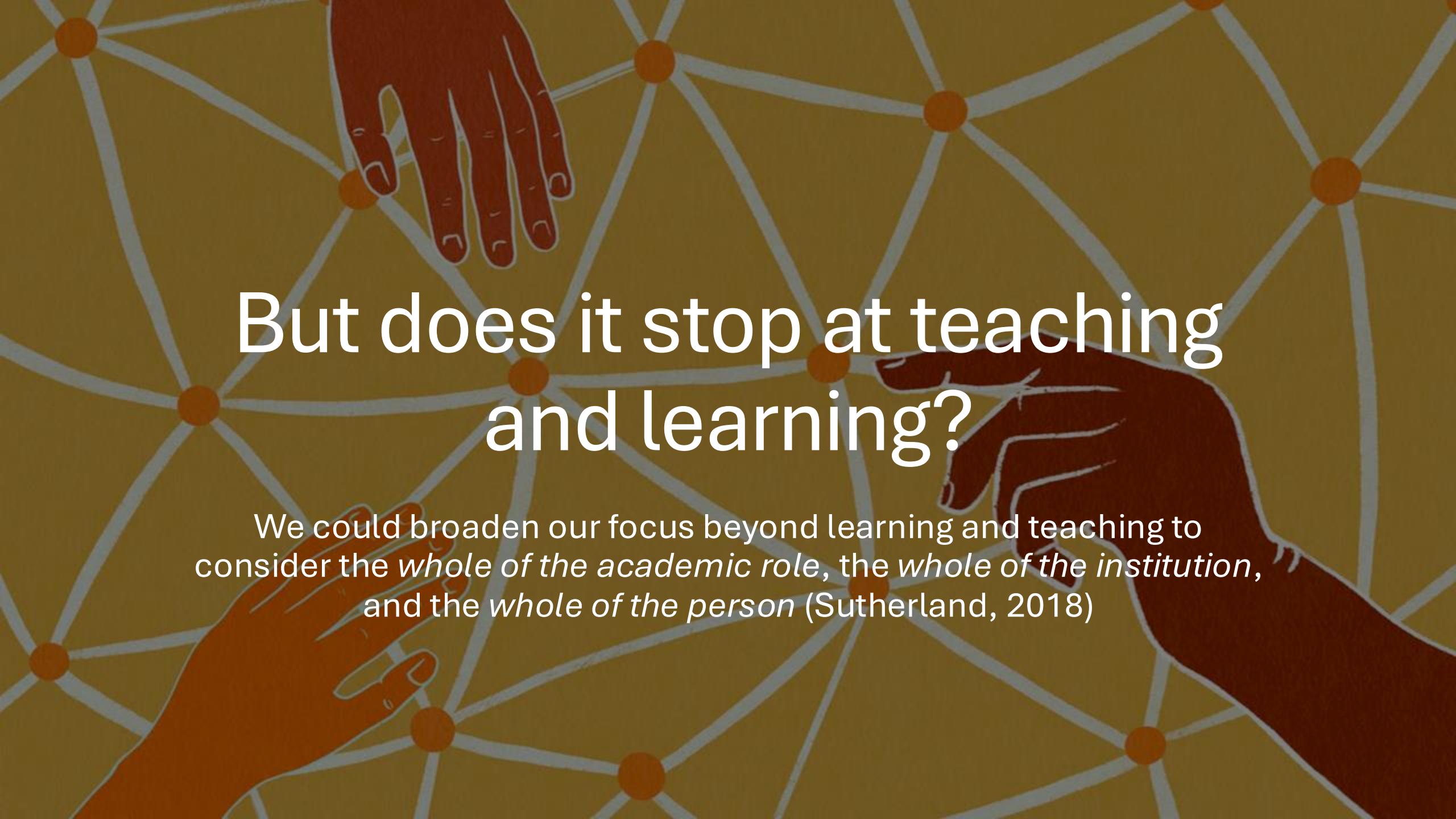
- Focuses on postsecondary contexts
- Sits on the margins or fringes
- Varies by institutional contexts
- Spans a wide range of approaches
- Works across multiple levels
- Field of practice, leadership & scholarship
- Builds expertise and capacity for learning and teaching

Gibbs, 2013; Green & Little, 2013; Harland & Staniforthb, 2003; McDonald et al., 2016; Kenny et al., 2017; Taylor & Rege-Colet, 2010; Timmermans, 2014; Taylor et al., 2022; Taylor, 2005



Educational development

“...is about the creation of conditions supportive of teaching and learning
(Leibowitz, 2014, p. 359).



But does it stop at teaching and learning?

We could broaden our focus beyond learning and teaching to consider the *whole of the academic role*, the *whole of the institution*, and the *whole of the person* (Sutherland, 2018)



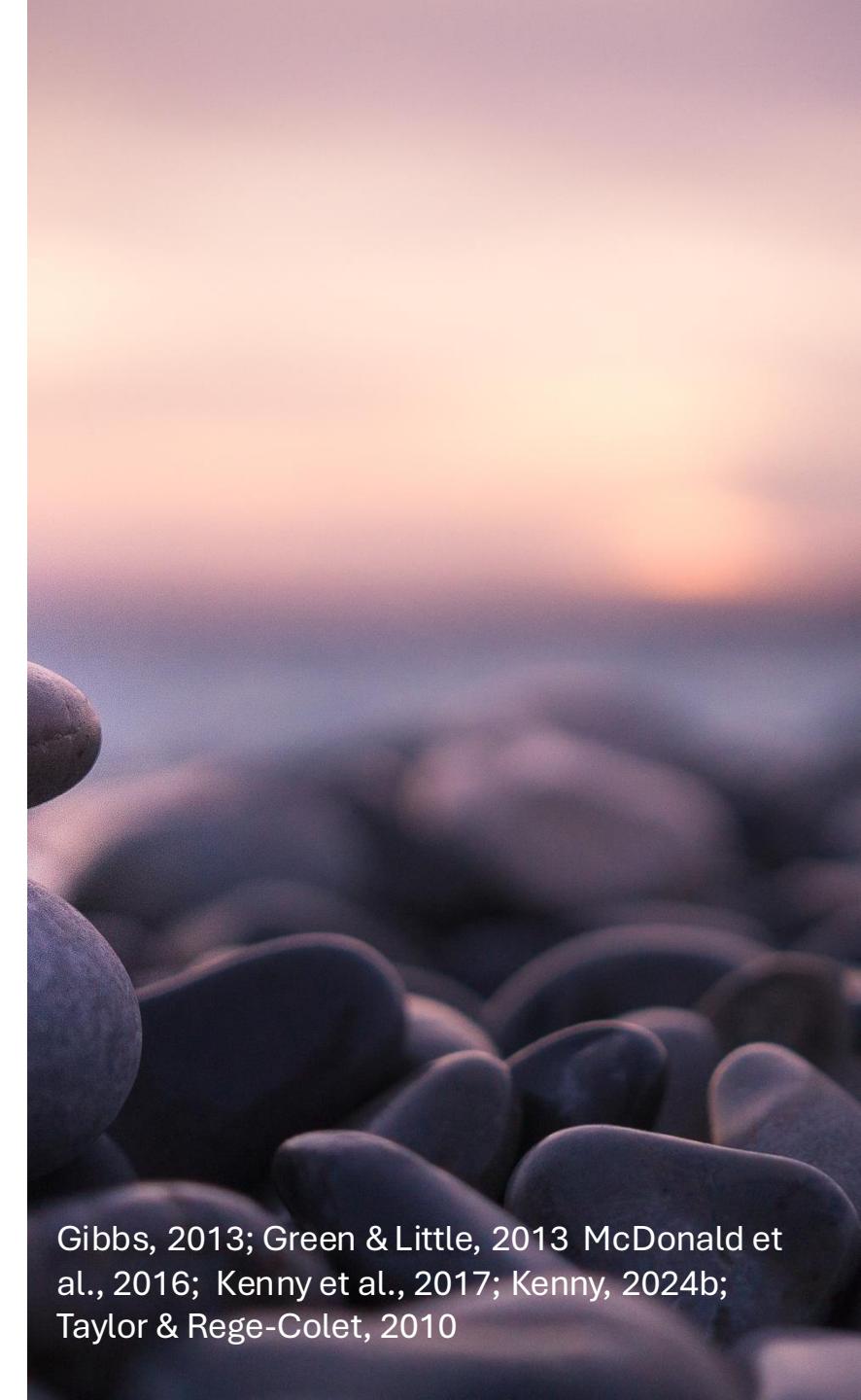
How do I see educational development?

A human-centred approach to strengthening teaching and learning practices, communities, and cultures across multiple organizational levels.



(Some of) Our verbs

- Advocating
- Advancing
- Brokering
- Building
- Collaborating
- Consulting
- Connecting
- Creating
- Evaluating
- Designing
- Disseminating
- Facilitating
- Integrating
- Leading
- Producing
- Researching
- Reflecting



Gibbs, 2013; Green & Little, 2013 McDonald et al., 2016; Kenny et al., 2017; Kenny, 2024b; Taylor & Rege-Colet, 2010

What do educational developers do?

What are some activities that you engage in?

- Developing teaching and learning expertise
- Partnering with students
- Leading communities, conferences, networks
- Integrating and advancing educational technologies
- Facilitating/consulting on curriculum processes
- Strengthening educational leadership
- Building relationships & connecting with community
- Influencing microcultures & significant conversations
- Providing expertise & supporting strategic priorities, teaching awards and grants
- Influencing policy, reward & recognition
- Disseminating research & scholarship
- Advocating & knowledge sharing across the sector

Micro

Meso

Macro

Mega

Ongoing reflections

How do we move beyond Western/Eurocentric frameworks,
perspectives and world views?

A photograph showing the silhouettes of several people's heads and shoulders against a sky transitioning from blue to orange and yellow. Each person is holding a lit sparkler, with bright sparks flying off the sticks. The overall mood is celebratory and reflective.

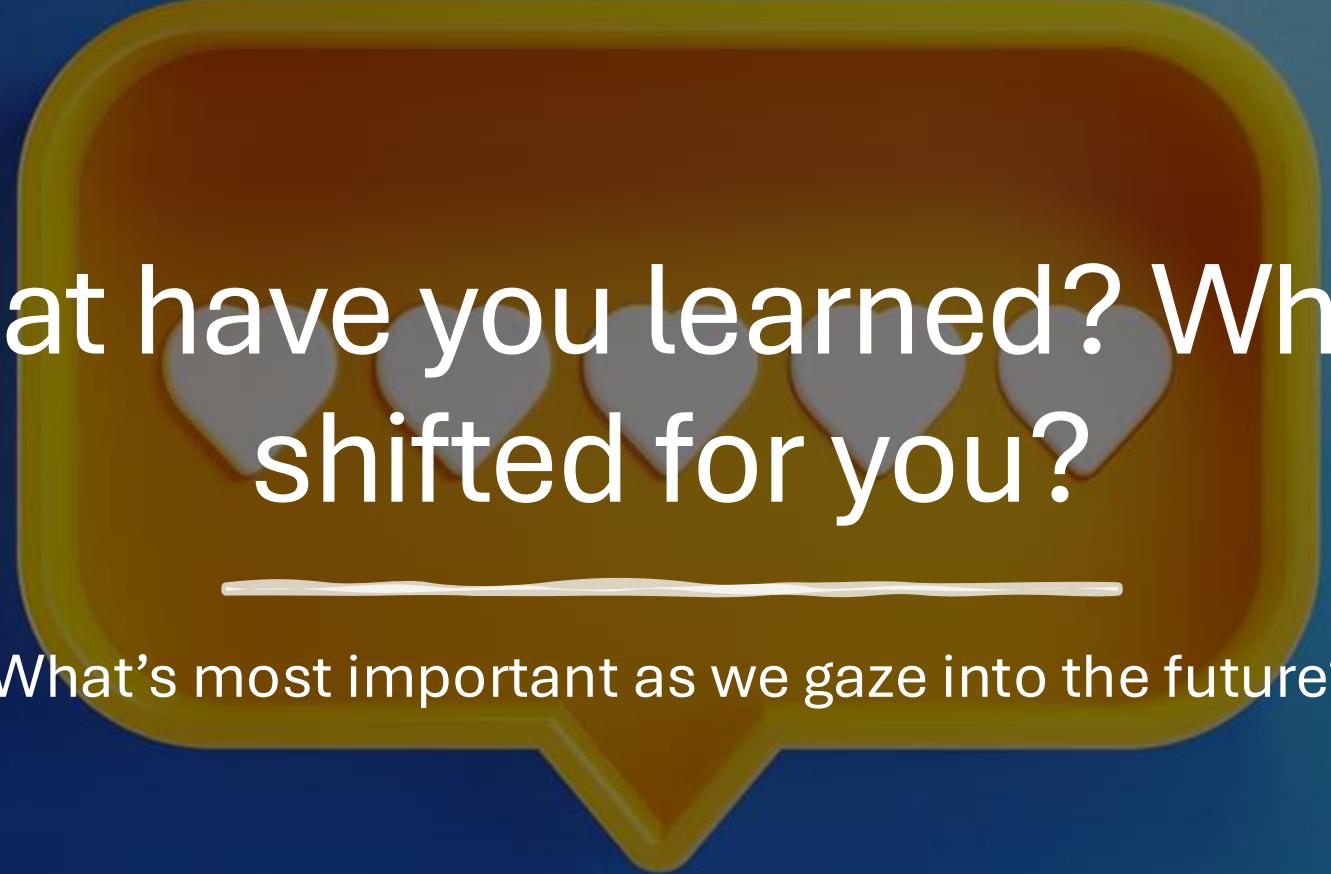
What core values, principles or
beliefs guide our practice?

Values

- Adaptability
- Collective Capacity
- Collaborative Relationships
- Human-centred
- Learning-focused
- Scholarly approach
- Truth, Reconciliation and Indigenization
- Equity and Inclusion
- Critical Reflection

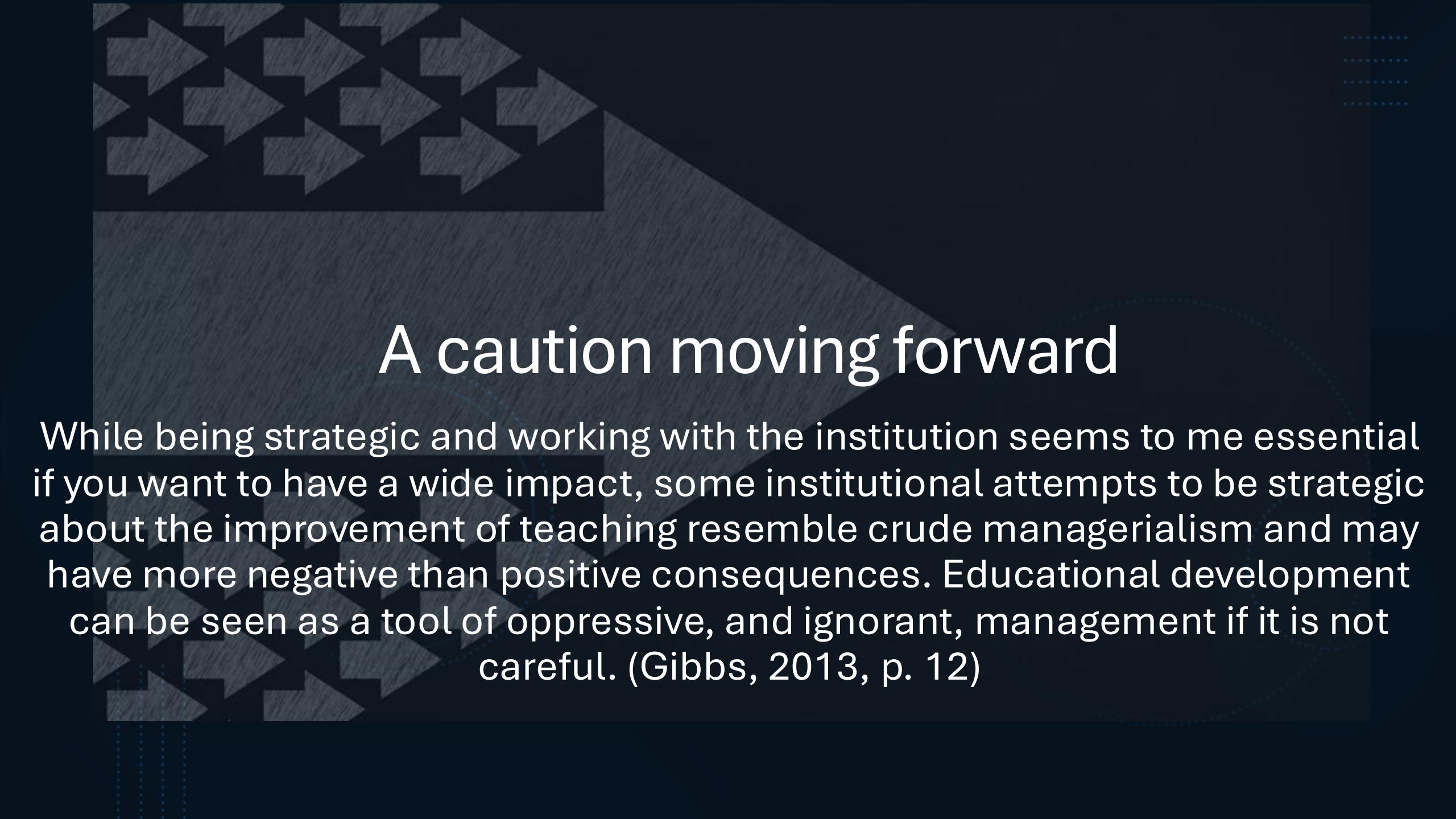
Kenny, 2024a; Kenny, 2024b; McDonald et al., 2016; Raffoul et al., 2022; Taylor & Rege-Colet, 2010; Timmermans, 2014





What have you learned? What's shifted for you?

What's most important as we gaze into the future?



A caution moving forward

While being strategic and working with the institution seems to me essential if you want to have a wide impact, some institutional attempts to be strategic about the improvement of teaching resemble crude managerialism and may have more negative than positive consequences. Educational development can be seen as a tool of oppressive, and ignorant, management if it is not careful. (Gibbs, 2013, p. 12)

References

Flanagan, K., Stowe, L., Martineau, C., Kenny, N., and Kaipainen, E. (2024) The Land and A.I.R.: revisioning experiential learning on a Canadian Campus. *Experiential Learning and Teaching in Higher Education*. 7(3). Retrieved from <https://journals.calstate.edu/elthe/article/view/4149>

Gibbs, G. (2013). Reflections on the changing nature of educational development. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 18(1), 4–14.

Gill, S., & Thomson, G. (2017). *Human-centred education: A practical handbook and guide*. Routledge

Green, D. A., & Little, D. (2013). Academic development on the margins. *Studies in Higher Education*, 38(4), 523-537.

ii' taa'poh'to'p: Indigenous Strategy. (2017). University of Calgary. <https://www.ucalgary.ca/live-uc-ucalgary-site/sites/default/files/teams/136/17-UNV-106752-Indigenous%20Strategy%20progress%20event%20booklet-publication- digital.pdf>

Harland, T., & Staniforthb, D. (2003). Academic development as academic work. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 8(1-2), 25-35.

Kenny, N., Popovic, C., McSweeney, J., Knorr, K., Hoessler, C., Hall, S., ... & El Khoury, E. (2017). Drawing on the principles of SoTL to illuminate a path forward for the scholarship of educational development. *Canadian Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 8(2), n2.

References

Kenny, N. (2024a) *From learning-centred to human-centred education*. <https://natashakenny.ca/2024/11/20/from-learning-centred-to-human-centred-education/>

Kenny, N. (2024b) *What does it mean to be an educational developer*. <https://natashakenny.ca/2024/11/24/what-does-it-mean-to-be-an-educational-developer/>

Leibowitz, B. (2014). Reflections on academic development: What is in a name? *International Journal for Academic Development*, 19(4), 357-360.

Lindstrom, G. (2022). *Ethical space of engagement in curriculum development processes: Indigenous guiding principles for curriculum development projects*. Accessed at: <https://taylorinstitute.ucalgary.ca/resources/indigenous-guiding-principles-for-curriculum-development-projects>

McDonald, J., Kenny, N., Kustra, E., Dawson, D., Iqbal, I., Borin, P., & Chan, J. (2016). *Educational Development Guide Series: No. 1. The Educational Developer's Portfolio*. Ottawa, Canada: Educational Developers Caucus.

Raffoul, J., Ward, J., Calvez, S., Kartolo, A., Haque, A., Holmes, T., Attas, R., Kecheog, J., Kustra, E., & Mooney, J. (2022). Institutional structures and individual stories: Experiences from the front lines of Indigenous educational development in higher education. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, 18(1), 163-172.

References

Roxå, T., & Mårtensson, K. (2009). Significant conversations and significant networks—exploring the backstage of the teaching arena. *Studies in Higher Education*, 34(5), 547-559.

Roxå, T., Mårtensson, K., & Alveteg, M. (2011). Understanding and influencing teaching and learning cultures at university: A network approach. *Higher Education*, 62(1), 99-111.

Simmons, N. (2016). Synthesizing SoTL institutional initiatives toward national impact. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 2016(146), 95-102.

Sutherland, K. A. (2018). Holistic academic development: Is it time to think more broadly about the academic development project? *International Journal for Academic Development*, 23(4), 261–273.

Taylor, K. L. (2005). Academic development as institutional leadership: An interplay of person, role, strategy, and institution. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 10(1), 31-46.

Taylor, K. L., & Rege Colet, N. (2010). Making the shift from faculty development to educational development: A conceptual framework grounded in practice. In A. Saroyan & M. Frenay (Eds.) *Building teaching capacities in higher education* (pp. 139-167). Routledge.

Taylor, K. L., Kenny, N. A., Perrault, E., & Mueller, R. A. (2022). Building integrated networks to develop teaching and learning: The critical role of hubs. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 27(3), 279-291.

Timmermans, J. A. (2014). Identifying threshold concepts in the careers of educational developers. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 19(4), 305–317. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360144X.2014.895731>

Copyright and attribution

This document is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons – Attribution Non-Commercial License 4.0 International (creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0), which permits sharing and adapting of the material, provided the original work is properly attributed (see recommended citation below), any changes are clearly indicated, and the material is not used for commercial purposes.



Recommended Citation

Kenny, N. A. (2025, April 9). *What does it mean to be an educational developer?* [PowerPoint slides]. EDCC – CDPC Monthly Connection Meeting, Canada.