

# SEDA Spring Conference 2024



**Session Title:** Are Academic Development and Educational Development really the same thing? And does it matter?

**Session Type:** Research paper (20 mins plus questions)

**Main presenter(s):** Dr Tom Cunningham, Glasgow Caledonian University

**Co presenter(s):** N/A

**Session Summary:** Are Academic Development and Educational Development really the same thing? And does it matter?

**Session Outline:** The concepts Academic Development [AD] and Educational Development [ED] are often used interchangeably. The received view is that AD and ED are different names or labels for the same concept. When defining what AD means, for example, Fraser & Ling (2014, p.239) argue that ‘the terms ‘education development’, ‘academic development’ and ‘faculty development’ are used to describe this work.’ The flagship journal for International Consortium for Educational Development (ICED) is the International Journal for Academic Development (IJAD). The call for papers for this SEDA Spring Conference on the changing face of educational development asks for the perspectives of ‘educational / academic developers.’

In this paper I will argue that, contrary to the received view, AD and ED are not different names for the same concept. While AD and ED share many similarities, both conceptually and in practice, they are nevertheless distinctive in terms of their boundaries and scope. Moreover, I will argue we cannot characterise one as the subfield of the other: ED is not a subfield/subset of AD work, and nor is AD a subfield/subset of ED work.

Why should this matter, though? Is it not far more important what we do, rather than what we are called? I will suggest a couple of reasons why it does matter. (1) Evans (2023) argues that the scholarship of AD is at a crossroads, between what she calls the ‘critical’ and the ‘mainstream’ understandings of the field. There are growing voices for a more ‘academic’ and ‘holistic’ approaches to AD (Sturm, 2022; Sutherland, 2018). These conceptual questions have more resonance when framed in terms of AD rather than ED. (2) Bass (2022) argues we will be asked to confront increasingly complex and wicked problems in the years ahead. Understanding the distinction between AD and ED will help us face those problems.

**References:** Randall Bass (2022). Coda: A wicked problems mindset for educational development. *To Improve the Academy: A Journal of Educational Development*. 41(1). doi: <https://doi.org/10.3998/tia.2373>



Linda Evans (2023): What is academic development? Contributing a frontier-extending conceptual analysis to the field's epistemic development, Oxford Review of Education, DOI: 10.1080/03054985.2023.2236932

Kym Fraser & Peter Ling (2014) How academic is academic development?, International Journal for Academic Development, 19:3, 226-241, DOI: 10.1080/1360144X.2013.837827

Sean Sturm (2022) What hope for academic academic development?, International Journal for Academic Development, 27:4, 341-342, DOI: 10.1080/1360144X.2022.2140343

Sutherland, K. (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. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360144X.2018.1524571>