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Authenticity in Academic Development: The Myth of Neutrality

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Authenticity in academic development: the myth of neutrality

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Academic developers are often positioned as intermediaries who wield value-neutral tools – languages, models, and techniques – in service of decidedly non-neutral institutional goals. We challenge the value of perpetuating the ideal of the neutrality of academic developers and their tools by examining the ways in which our resources and approaches produce imbalances of control, power, and authority in a consulting relationship. We suggest that the values embedded within the practices of academic development lead developers, and the people they help, to act inauthentically. By recognizing the improbability of neutrality in academic development work, the authors seek to open the way to constructive reflection, intentional practice, and ethical consulting choices.

Keywords: academic development; authenticity; consultation; higher education; neutrality

Introduction: the myth of neutrality

Descriptions of the work of academic developers portray them as ‘go-betweens’, agents, communicators, and mediators. They act as a medium through which change occurs, problems are solved, and agreements negotiated. The role of an academic developer varies significantly across the higher education (HE) sector and individuals in these posts undertake a plethora of tasks depending on their role and position within an institution. There have been many publications that have considered the approach an academic developer will take to his or her work depending on the organizational context and the perceived purpose of the work being undertaken (e.g. Boud, 1999; Gosling, 2009; Land, 2001). This paper contributes to this body of work by focusing on the level of one-to-one interaction with teaching staff/faculty members (herein referred to as academics). This type of interaction is referred to as the consultancy relationship in the USA and for the purposes of clarity this term will be used throughout to describe this aspect of academic development work. It is at this level of work that academic developers are most likely to perceive and present their work as neutral. For example, in Land’s (2001) orientations to academic development, those focused on operating at the level of the individual teacher/practitioner were more likely to be discussed by academic developers as collegial, developmental and based on fostering critical personal reflection. It is also at this level of interaction that academic developers are guided by the assumption that

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neutrality and objectivity are worthy values to pursue so as to preserve the agency and free will of the teacher, avoiding conflict with academic freedom and aligning with the belief that a change will persist and evolve when it is owned by the person implementing it.

US developers Dee Fink and Kathleen Brinko suggest that by probing, integrating, clarifying, summarizing, collecting data, and 'serving as a catalyst', the academic developer provides the means by which a university teacher decides what to do about a teaching problem (Brinko, 1997; Fink & Bauer, 2001). It is the teacher who makes changes after a careful, informed critique of his or her practice, facilitated by an objective, non-judgmental developer. In many of our interactions as academic developers we aspire to 'value-free', 'non-prescriptive' interactions. This is arguably more possible in contexts such as North America where performance assessment is rarely a part of developers' work, but is still espoused in other national contexts, although less explicitly, in interactions outside formal teaching certificate programs (Boud, 1999; Land, 2001). Lee and McWilliam (2008) set out two extreme sets of propositions describing academic developers with opposing statements such as 'we are your teachers' vs. 'we are your colleagues', 'we are responsible for improving the quality of teaching and learning' vs. 'you are responsible for improving the quality of teaching and learning', and 'we are above you' vs. 'we are below you' or even 'we are beside you'. In these dichotomized extremes, an academic developer striving for neutrality would align him- or herself with the latter proposition in each pair, being careful not to position him/herself with a particular ideology and attempting to remain positionless in the binary between the institution and the individual academic.

In her description of the components of an instructional consultation, Brinko (1997) portrays the academic developer as a data gatherer who provides feedback to a teacher about teaching problems. In this widely accepted construction of the consultation process (see also Fink & Bauer, 2001; Wilkerson, 1988), whether the developer makes a diagnosis or simply acts as a facilitator, the developer's role is highly instrumental, a means to an end. Lewis (1997), another US developer who has written extensively on the topic of the techniques of academic development, positions the classroom observer as a focusing lens, an objective observer who sees what the teacher does not see or notice. Lewis considers the classroom observer a unique source of information about what happens there, information not available from any other source. Lewis and Brinko's influential accounts of the proper role and tasks of the academic developer project the image of the developer as an instrument that enhances vision. The image is at the same time countered by an admission of its impossibility, due to human subjectivity and bias. Developers are encouraged to compensate for their frailties and biases by putting aside their personal notions of what it is right or wrong to do in the classroom, by being descriptive rather than judgmental, and by not participating in the class (Lewis, 1997).

In addition to this presentation of the developer as neutral, the tools the developer uses are often conceived in the same way. As resources used or approaches employed to carry out a specific function, tools are often viewed as value-neutral. Tools are conceived as a means to an end and have no moral agency of their own. In order to adequately describe a tool, though, we must include both its specific purpose and the overarching goal of its use. For example, the purpose of a teaching observation may be to collect information about the environment, interactions and resources used in a particular teaching experience. The goal, however, may be to

collect evidence of meeting professional standards (as in a teaching certificate program), provide information to inform a discussion between the observed and observer (as in peer observation), unearth issues that may be causing problems in the classroom, or provide evidence on which the observed will reflect to develop his or her understanding of teaching and inform future teaching opportunities. While the purpose may appear benign on its own, when coupled with the goal, the departure from neutrality becomes evident.

In this paper, we question the general notion of a developer or his or her tools as able to act or be used in a value-free way and examine the ways in which our resources and approaches produce imbalances of control, power, and authority in a consulting relationship which the developer must be aware of in order to interact authentically. We define authenticity as referring, 'to an inner self that can recognize performative demands and act knowingly and mindfully in response to them' (MacKenzie, McShane, & Wilcox, 2007, p. 47), drawing on Ball's (2000) definition of performativity. We agree with Felten, Little, and Pingree (2004), when they warn against the widely held illusion that a consultation can be 'value-free, neutral, unimpeded, or not substantially shaped by power dynamics' (p. 182), and argue that authenticity and ethical interaction, not neutrality, should be the ideal we pursue. We will consider seven mental models employed by developers in their consultations with academics and discuss how conscious consideration of a developer's orientation (Land, 2001), allegiance, and intention can assist in the achievement of more authentic one-to-one interactions with academics. We will end by exploring these ideas in relation to a common development tool, the teaching observation.

Mental models and the neutrality of the developer

In order to explore the myth of neutrality in academic development further, it is useful to discuss the variety of approaches a developer may take to a consultation with an academic. We start by describing a range of mindsets the developer may employ in approaching a consultation (Table 1). We then consider what each of these mental models says about the developer's orientation, allegiance, and intention in any given consulting interaction.

Regardless of the developer's self-concept, the developer's sometimes intentional but frequently unconscious selection of a mental model of the consulting relationship determines how the developer will actually carry out his or her function. A mental model is a conceptual structure that we build in order to describe and predict the way things work in the world based on what we learn through experience and training (Norman, 1988). We are constantly testing and refining our mental models of ourselves, of devices, and of our relationships with each other and the environment. In the field of academic development, mental models depict the various forms that a consulting relationship might take, and delineate the roles of the actors, their responsibilities, the source of authority underpinning action, distribution of power, and appropriate behaviors. Personal and professional values, experience, client characteristics, and institutional culture and policies influence the consultant's model. The models represent an imbalance of control, power, and authority that the consultant may or may not be able to mitigate. The developer uses the model to explain the approach to his or her client, to identify activities in which the dyad will engage, and to choose the types of instruments that might be used in the course of the relationship.

Table 1. Mental models of the consulting relationship.

Mental model	References	Description
Doctor/patient	Schein (1969), Tilles (1961)	The client is deficient in some way and seeks to become whole. The consultant possesses diagnostic skill, a broad knowledge of remedies, and a good 'bedside manner'. The model implies that good health (i.e. good teaching) exhibits universally recognizable and verifiable characteristics. The consultant prescribes a course of action that will enable the consultee to meet a minimum standard.
Seller/purchaser	Schein (1969), Tilles (1961)	Relationship in which a product, such as an instructional material, is to be created or a strategy or practice learned. The instructional consultant has expertise that the 'purchaser' needs, usually for a specific purpose that the buyer has already determined. Need, envy, or sometimes external coercion drives the mutually beneficial exchange of 'goods'. Power balance is restored through purchase.
Counselor/ counseled	Dalgaard, Simpson, and Carrier (1982)	Emphasizes the consultant's role as facilitator. The client retains authority and control and shares the responsibility to engage honestly in the process. The model accepts an unequal balance of power, tilted toward the client, which is never equalized. The consultant focuses on asking the right questions, presents options, and assists the client in examining the consequences, but the choice of action is left to the client.
Researcher/subject	Nyquist and Wulff (2011)	Inequality is inherent in the relationship, with the client and his or her students as subjects, and the client a phenomenon interacting in and with an environment. Imbalance is neutralized by professing that neither party will have answers until evidence is collected and analyzed. Once study is completed, the consultant might adopt a Counselor model of interaction, the patient/doctor model, or, depending on the personal relationship and the research interests of the dyad, the co-inquiry model.
Co-inquirers	Skinner and Welch (1996), Peer Review of Teaching at IPFW (2005)	Both parties are engaged in investigating answers to their own questions and assist each other through reciprocal critical reflection on multiple aspects of their practice. As in the researcher/subject model, conclusions must be based on evidence. Equality of control and authority, complementarity of expertise, and power sharing are implied.
Challenger/ defender	Blake and Mouton (1983), as interpreted by Brinko (1997)	In order to successfully challenge the defender the consultant must be viewed as an expert in the topic under discussion. In this model, authority, power, and control are contested and, through continued contest, remain in balance.
Critical friend/ seeker	Brookfield (1987), Handal (1999)	The developer enables the teacher to look at his or her actions from an unfamiliar vantage point and interprets his or her behavior in new ways. Underlying this model is the notion of what it means to be a 'true friend': mutual respect, forgiveness of faults, tolerance for idiosyncrasies, shared commitment to teaching well, and respect for scholarly critique. Friendship neutralizes inequalities in the relationship. Critical friends may also engage in reciprocal critique.

When making a conscious choice of model, the academic developer will be influenced to some extent by who he or she is and the organizational role the developer has been asked to, or perceives he or she should, play. We are not suggesting here that these are fixed approaches but instead are implying that in any given consulting relationship a developer may select any one. We are also not espousing any particular model as each relationship may be a valid and appropriate choice in particular circumstances. What is inherent in these models, however, is a clear positioning of the developer in relation to the academic. If neutrality is defined as not aligned with a particular group or ideology, this clear positioning is decidedly non-neutral.

To further demonstrate how the positioning of the developer leads to non-neutrality, we have created a simplified set of categorizations that describe this positioning in relation to an orientation, an allegiance, and an intention for each mental model (Table 2). The first column is built around Land's (2001) polarization of academic development practices having an aim of domestication, where the developer is concerned with supporting conformity to institutional goals or professional or societal norms, or liberation, where development practice challenges or changes such prevailing goals or norms. In domesticating, a developer would ally him- or herself with the institution or nationally or regionally agreed professional standards (such as the UK Professional Standards Framework) in an effort to support their implementation or adherence to policy or to ensure the achievement of professional standards, attempting to remedy any practice that fell short.

In practicing liberation, a developer would find his or her allegiance with the individual academic, supporting the academic to find his or her own way, irrespective of the normative culture in which they were teaching and in doing so experience transformative learning in developing themselves and their practice.

Table 2. Orientation, intention, and allegiance for the mental models.

Developer role	Intention of consultancy interaction	Developer's allegiance	Consultant/developer perceived as
Institutionalizer	Domestication, implementing policy	Institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expert in teaching • Administrator • <i>Not a peer</i>
Professionalizer	Domestication, remediation, or development	Professional standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expert in teaching • Non-expert in content • Expert in a consulting model • <i>Not a peer</i>
Responder	Liberation, enhancement, and transformation	Individual academic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer expert in teaching • Peer expert in content • Fellow scholar

While it may be possible for the intention and role of the developer (column 2) to change during the course of the consultancy relationship, we envision these categories being mutually exclusive, with a developer focusing on one of these outcomes (the implementation of a goal or norm driven by the institution or profession or the liberation of the academic from these norms) in undertaking his or her work. These categorizations are simplifications and are not meant to be complete in their representation of the complex work of academic developers undertaking consultations with academics nor the nuance, flux, or complexity of human interactions. The purpose of their presentation is to illuminate and provide opportunity for reflection on this aspect of our work.

It is the third category – the responder – that Lewis, Brinko, and others would describe as neutral. As described above, however, the positioning of the developer in support of the individual academic in potential opposition to the institutional culture or practice engages the developer in unquestionably non-neutral consulting practice.

Having considered in detail the approaches an academic developer may employ when engaged in consultancy, we now turn to consider the neutrality of the tools that may be used to inform or underpin this interaction.

Neutrality of an academic development tool: the teaching observation

Observation of classroom teaching is a basic tool of the academic developer, regardless of changes in conceptualization of the nature of teaching, which now embraces course design, facilitation, and teaching metacognition, in addition to lecturing, in both physical and virtual spaces. Classroom observation is the primary way in which the academic developer gathers data about key relationships: teacher with student, student with student, teacher with content, student with content, and teacher and student with the institution. Much has been written about peer observation of teaching as a vehicle for professional development, as a tool of quality assurance, and as a way to gather evidence to support bids for promotion or certification (e.g. Gosling, 2002; Peel, 2005). Whether academic developers are peers is an open question. Shortland (2004) notes that the terms ‘classroom observation’ and ‘peer observation’ are used interchangeably in the case of the institutional practices she studied, perhaps in anticipation of ‘non-peer’ observation.

The literature about peer observation constructs this activity as data collection and likens it to research (Nyquist & Wulff, 2011; Wilkerson, 1988). The association with methods of qualitative research, a type of research meant to discover, test, and examine variables *in situ*, serves to divert attention from the purpose of observation in the context of instructional consulting, which is, at heart, evaluation. Academic developers have also borrowed from qualitative research the concept of triangulation and promote it as providing a more complete, and thus more accurate, understanding of the teaching case at hand. Observation is widely supported as a way to neutralize the ‘bias’ of one perspective, for example, the teacher’s.

Oddly, however, the means by which developers are to mitigate or neutralize the ill effects of bias often introduce bias. For example, Lewis suggests that the teacher focuses the ‘developer as lens’ on questions of interest to the teacher, because the observer cannot observe everything. Gosling, who declares that observing itself ‘is not a neutral process’, acknowledges that checklists and observation schedules represent a systematic approach to collecting data, but that ‘an informal recording

of what happens is probably best' (Gosling, 2002, p. 3). In the first instance, the choices of what to place on a checklist or schedule represent value judgments; in the second instance, the observer records, in narrative form, what he or she wishes. The use of video recording is frequently suggested as a means to eliminate bias in observation, but the neutrality is illusory, for the lens must be pointed, and the angle of view adjusted. Who makes these decisions, when, and why? Even a preset, constant wide-angle view represents a bias; employing several camera angles to be viewed at the same time during playback becomes impractical. The presence of a camera or cameras can become more intrusive than the presence of a live observer, causing teacher and student behavior to change.

Other problems with operationalizing the concept of 'developer as lens' are that it calls for inauthentic behavior on the part of both the developer and the teacher, and that it tends to diminish the validity of the teacher's own experience. The developer sets aside his or her values, beliefs, and expertise, becomes the instrument of the teacher, and stifles the urge to participate in class beyond note-taking. The teacher must ignore the presence of the observer and not put on a 'show'. Perhaps most jarring is the knowledge that one's own experience of teaching a session is just one among many versions, and may not be considered the 'true' one. This last thought is not necessarily harmful, but can be unsettling. The portrayal of the teaching observation as an activity that can be conducted as impartially as selecting a random sample, if certain rules are followed, sets up unrealistic expectations for the process and the outcomes of observation.

Methods of recording classroom observations do not avoid the pitfalls of partiality, either, no matter how systematic they may seem. Lewis (1997) identified five observation techniques, building on Evertson and Green's (1986) typology: narrative, descriptive, categorical, technological, and visual. These five types can be categorized further as either unstructured or structured. The observer using a narrative system will note 'broad segments of behavior using the syntax of those being observed' (Lewis, 1997, p. 34). The observer may note the time at which activities change, take notes on the content of the lecture, make comments about presentation style and use of media, and comment on the teacher's rapport with students. In fact, the narrative system is not really a system at all in the strictest sense; the content and structure of the narrative depend on the interpretive abilities of the observer, both in understanding what to choose and in interpreting the wishes of the teacher being observed. The observer determines what may be relevant to notice and omits other detail that does not seem important to record. Video recordings will have to be reviewed and interpreted using any of the systems mentioned here. The structure and content of the narrative that the observer creates depend in large part on who the observer is and the purpose of the observation. If the observer is an academic developer, it seems likely that he or she will use categories of behaviors to guide the observation, whether they appear on a form or not. If the observer is a peer who has been asked simply to observe, the content and structure of the observation could take almost any form.

The most commonly used observation systems, what we will call structured observation systems, involve the use of predetermined categories. One type of structured observation system uses categories such as 'Teaching Methods Employed', 'Student Participation', and 'Classroom Management', as prompts that direct the observer's gaze. The observer is then free to write a narrative pertinent to each category. The observer may also be prompted to make additional comments that do not fall into any of the categories. If the observation is of a summative nature, the

observer is asked to comment on strengths and weaknesses. This type of observation tool may also carry a disclaimer that it is only a guide and does not represent a set of requirements. This type of structured yet open-ended instrument is meant to allow for variations in both teaching and observational styles while at the same time providing a systematic, replicable method for recording human behavior. The 'guided narrative' tool represents a negotiation of technical and practical human interests. The categories set out in the instrument comprise a technical view of the observed activity, while the acceptance of a sense-making narrative in response to the categories represents a practical orientation.

Checklists, rating scales, and forms that focus on a particular aspect of classroom teaching such as interaction with students, reinforcement, or questioning, are highly structured observation systems that rely on closed, preset categories. These tools pursue objectivity by identifying behavioral indicators of effective teaching, quantifying the occurrences of desired – and undesired – behaviors. In contrast to the guided narrative tool, structured observation tools privilege technical interests over practical interests.

The last technique in conducting observations of teaching comprises four steps: a meeting/interview between the observer and the observed to establish agreement about the purpose and scope of the observation; the observation itself; a post-observation meeting to discuss what was observed and to elicit interpretations, from the observed and the observer; and the production of a document by the observer summarizing what was observed, by the observed reflecting on the observations, or by both parties. Through this process, the unequal power relationship created through the act of observation is brought into balance by involving the observed in planning, directing, and interpreting. The procedure also tries to address ownership of the data and the meaning made from it by implying co-ownership. However, in the USA, the developer relinquishes ownership of the recorded data and his or her interpretations to the observed teacher. Elsewhere, ownership may vary depending on whether the observation is part of an explicitly developmental process or part of quality assurance procedures.

The final step in the observation process constitutes the reflective component of the observation, deemed the activity that generates learning and personal growth, often for both parties. The notion of reflection in academic development encompasses a broad variety of concepts and techniques. It is thought to enhance teaching practice, although we are not exactly sure in what ways reflection improves teaching (Kreber, 2004). In spite of the ambiguity about what constitutes reflection and how it is an effective strategy for professional development, the activity of reflection is, in current practice, integrated into the design of instructional observation. As mentioned before, the last step in the instructional observation is a meeting between the observer and the observed to review what was observed and for the observed staff member to formulate interpretations of the observation. In effect, this is an oral reflection that the developer/consultant records in writing for the observed, integrating the teacher's remarks. Ownership of this document varies among HE contexts. In the context of formative professional development, standard practice is for the observed teacher to own the document, to use as he or she wishes. The joint reflection on the shared experience of the classroom session not only provides evidence of the activity, but serves to equalize the power differential between the consultant and the observed teacher. The developer encourages the

observed teacher to re-read the document and write further reflections, incorporating actions the teacher might have taken and describing the results.

Reflection may also be a required activity in the context of an observation performed as an evaluation or to serve as evidence of having met the requirements for a teaching certificate. The teacher's 'reflective commentary' about the session reflects the observed's point of view after having discussed the observation with the observer. In this context the developer's job is to tactfully extract what amounts to a confession (MacFarlane & Gourlay, 2009), in which the teacher admits to committing certain mistakes and relates a critical incident that caused the teacher to embark on change, concluding with a plan to introduce new scripts into his or her teaching repertoire that will align more closely with currently approved attitudes and behaviors. The opportunity to record in writing his or her own perspective ostensibly lessens the teacher's resistance to surveillance, providing a way for the teacher to share disciplinary power, in the Foucauldian sense of self-surveillance (Felten et al., 2004), over him- or herself.

In the foregoing examination of the tool of classroom observation, risks to authenticity stem from working to attenuate power differentials, control over process and outcome, and source of authority that arise from conceptualizing the observation activity as instrumental to delivering a product or a prescription, conducted by an individual who possesses an expertise that the academic does not. Thus, the framing of classroom observation as data collection pairs most comfortably with mental models of consulting that are product-oriented and prescriptive, such as seller/purchaser, doctor/patient, counselor/counseled, and researcher/subject. Although the academic developer operating at a given moment under any of these mental models may have as a goal a transformational, emancipatory outcome, the manner in which this result is achieved depends on maintaining a delicate balancing act that entails significant psychological and emotional work. Further, academic developers, by collectively agreeing to follow the practices described in this paper, may actually be reinforcing their own culture of performativity along with its attendant inauthenticity (MacKenzie et al., 2007).

The challenger/defender, the co-inquirer, and the critical friend/seeker models of consultancy seem less likely to run the same level of risks to authenticity in the ensuing consultancy. For one thing, these models require that the dyad enter the relationship as equals in terms of power, authority, control, and expertise. Inherent in these models is a norm of contesting the status quo and problematizing. The classroom observation is not a data collection activity, but an invitation to engage in critique. Couched in this way, the consulting relationship mirrors scholarly work processes, which is clearly one reason why these models seem less performative and more authentic. The question arises, however, as to whether the academic developer, whether coming from the academic ranks or still engaged in teaching, could ever operate authentically under these models. Our answer is 'probably not'. Rather, academic developers should devote effort to creating organizational contexts in which academics will engage in an authentic activity – critical discourse about teaching – as a natural consequence of a scholarly attitude toward teaching.

Conclusion

Following in the tradition of the Challenging Academic Development collective (see <http://cadc.wordpress.com/about/> for a description of this collective), we seek

to develop our field through critical reflection leading to transformation. In this paper, we have seized upon the myth of neutrality in academic consulting, inspired by the metaphor of academic development as a neutral location in space, neutral by virtue of being a crossroads at the center where all come together or being located at the margins – a ‘neither here or there’ place – or as a sort of demilitarized zone where no conflict or partisan talk is permitted.

Throughout this paper we have suggested that the techniques and tools that developers use often accomplish multiple purposes that are frequently at odds. We have pointed out that generally accepted techniques, often described as systematic, scientific, impartial, and non-judgmental, are used to overcome resistance to surveillance, limit harm, equalize power differentials, and carry out organizational policies, all of which are decidedly non-neutral purposes. Of particular importance to us is the field’s tacit acceptance of the ideal consultant as detached, rational, impartial, objective, and capable of selfless giving. The notion of ‘tools’ as value-free constructs further enhances this lofty ideal. A theme throughout this paper is the balancing, compensating, and ‘neutralizing’ that developers do while using their non-neutral tools so that they may sustain the personal credibility that will allow them ongoing positive relationships with their clients.

For academic developers and academics alike, an enormous obstacle to achieving authenticity is the ‘performative culture’ of HE (Cranton, 2006; MacKenzie et al., 2007; Wilcox, 2009). For example, Wilcox (2009) complains that even when engaged in a potentially developmental activity such as reflective self-study, the: ‘contemporary academic must “perform” herself, creating convincing depictions of her achievements and aligning her activities with performance and tenure criteria’ (p. 127). That we, as academic developers, encourage and in some cases enforce the activity of written and public reflection, further compounds the inauthenticity of the act, and undermines the power of the tool of reflection. Academic developers often rationalize public reflection in written form as a way of ‘making the invisible work of teaching visible’, providing evidence, or as a beneficial therapeutic device. By encouraging or requiring reflection that has not sprung naturally from an activity, which has been pre-formatted, or prescribed by institutional imperatives, however, academic developers may unwittingly reinforce the academic’s conformity to performative norms that contradict his or her sense of authenticity. MacFarlane and Gourlay (2009) suggest that authentic reflection ‘contests orthodoxies’ (p. 458) and ‘re-examines universal truth’ (p. 459), acts of reflection that might spring naturally from the use of the challenger/defender or critical friend/seeker models of the consulting relationship. The same authors imply, and we agree, that in order for the tool of reflection to re-gain its status as transformational tool, academic developers must themselves engage in critical reflection about the orthodoxies and universal truths that surround its use.

Authenticity in our practice of academic development matters because it is the quality of authenticity that we are helping teachers to develop (Cranton, 2006). If we have not engaged in a critical examination of our ‘selves’ (and not just our roles), our relations with others, our culturally charged models, tools, and techniques, along with our performative context, we cannot expect to be prepared to guide and encourage others on this journey. How can we become more authentic in our practice in the face of the performative culture of HE and the institutions on which we depend for our livelihood? When we are conscious of the coercive or persuasive purposes behind our seemingly benign approaches, we can modify the

way we use the tools, who uses them, and under what conditions, in order to achieve greater congruency between our values and our actions. We can also bring into conscious consideration the contradictions that exist in our work; the pull between institutional policy and transformational learning of the individual academic; the intention of liberation achieved through a performative act such as public written reflection. By doing so, we can deploy our approaches and tools knowingly and act in ways that are authentic. By problematizing our most tacit and most widely held assumptions, by subjecting ‘common sense’ and ‘best practice’ to our and others’ most critical gaze, we open ourselves to the potential of transforming ourselves and our field.

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