

# The Education Carousel

Robert E. Bear



*Toward a Philosophy of Education*

# The Education Carousel

## **My Philosophy of Education Statement** (*short version*)

All children/students/adults can learn and it is a/the purpose of any adopted/designated/responsible individual or institution (public or private) charged with the task/s (internally or externally) to aid them in a/the path of self/societal-fulfillment using any methodology appropriate within then ethical, moral, and legal guidelines of its/their societal context adopted/adapted/established by the individual/s or institution financing and participating in the education.

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It is eminent that sometime/s in an educator's training and/or professional experience that they affront and outline their personal theories and philosophical viewpoints on pedagogy. Such an endeavor may help focus their own operational performances tied into these perspectives. For some, this fastidious task is initially undertaken when contemplating teaching as a career. Others are forced to confront transcribing an educational philosophy on an application for employment with a school district. And, those who pursue graduate school will find the undertaking a necessary requirement in a course of study.

Coming to terms with one's philosophies may transgress with trepidation and arduous exploration, particularly for beginning educators who may feel they have agrestic and seemingly aleatoric philosophies. In light of this, throughout the following treatise I will abroach some of my philosophical slants and theories as an adjuvant to stimulate inquiry, dissection, debate, and possible assimilation.

I envision philosophy as an ethereal, abstracted construct, like a mental carousel: an ad hoc reality, temporary and in flux in an individual's perceptions of "the way things are and how they ought to be". Furthermore, a conscientious person's philosophies are afflations and not adamantine: a non-corporeal organism in an evolutionary process.

So too, philosophies are amalgamations of numerous and varied elements, mostly borrowed. Sometimes we may saddle one we find particularly attractive and adopt, maintain, protect and care for it. Other times, because a particular settee on the carousel feels uncomfortable, a part just doesn't work right, or perhaps its image has become worn and tarnished, we decide to jump off and climb aboard another. Or, maybe, even fashion our own. The latter choice is the much more difficult of the two. None-the-less, our own fabrication is allelomimetic; very similar to one or more that we have found appealing. Parts may be painted with a different color, a new calliope added, festooned with colorful lights, and have more hand-carved "designer" horses, yet it is still has comparable aspects of others. This same analogy for personal theory construction is true in regards to the individuals consid-

ered by western educational historians as significant, influential reformers; i.e., Plato, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Calvin, Jefferson, Addams, Lenin, Dewey, Ghandi, and DeBoise. Each had a philosophical genealogy tied into their immediate culture and personal history. They all adopted/adapted pieces of their micro/macro societies in reaction to the unpleasant fit of a saddle.

Discussion of philosophical beliefs of education should probably have a definition of "education" as a frame of referent; however, a concise definition is not the intent of this descant and the hermeneutic rhetoric revolving about this term is a Mobius Strip (Actually, philosophy is too; then again, the universe and "time" probably are as well.). So, for its components, I'll list training (mental, physical, and spiritual), learning (formally or informally guided), experience, schooling, enlightenment, imparting and/or acquiring knowledge, and skill development. The reader is free to create their own iter for dialysis and rumination. Along with this inventory I'll add the following horses to the carousel of education.

Education is a theory of society.

Education is a function of "society" and "society" is a function of education.

Education is a purpose of "society" and "society" is a purpose of education.

Education is emancipatory and emancipation is education.

Education is "relative" (interpretation open).

Education is not only the relative domain of "humankind".

Education is an/a individual/collective/group phenomenon.

Education begins in the home.

Students need to be responsible for their own learning (Studenting).

What's my personal philosophy of education? It's an eclectic construct, partially driven by idealism, yet allied somewhat to realism, Neo-Thomism, experimentalism, and existentialism. I have no profound philosophical insights with designer horses, gaudy lights, or new wave music on this carousel. At first glance it may appear abstruse and altisonant. Actually, it is quite simple and not fashioned in defiance to a particular outlook in vogue. Instead, in art terminology, it's an assemblage, composed of bits and pieces and colored to fit my personal aesthetic; complete, with dents and nicks. However, it is also has horses "of a different color"; chameleons, alive and evolving, transactional and changing hue as the need/s arise/s. Succinctly, my educational philosophy is the following:

All children/students/adults can learn and it is a/the purpose of any adopted/designated/responsible individual or institution (public or private) charged with the task/s (internally or externally) to aid them in a/the path of self/societal-fulfillment using any methodology appropriate within the ethical, moral, and legal guidelines of its/their societal context adopted/adapted/established by the individual/s or institution financing and participating in the education.

The above statement is short and does not outline other parameters encased in the capacious arena of education. Additionally, I believe that all students should have an Individual Education Plan (IEP), not just those in "Special Education"; after all, aren't all students special? For the development of these IEPs, educators need to consider more than the traditional assessments toward lack of competencies and performance. They should also regard student's interests, personality temperaments (Choleric, Sanguine, Phlegmatic, and Melancholy), learning styles, positive accomplishments, and cognitive skills and physical abilities in various discipline areas.

Correlated with the concept of IEPs, one could also incorporate variations of "elective tracking" systems that are done in some foreign countries. It would seem that such processes in the U.S. could help reduce drop-out rates (assuming that "society" continues to value the contemporary concept of a high-school diploma), increase student performance, and lessen discipline problems. Currently, U.S. schools are primarily set up to direct persons to go to college rather than meet the overall desires/needs of individuals/employers/institutions/society and allow for more vocational programs and employment skills that are not necessarily predicated on a college degree. This dramatic push for high school graduates is a direct result of the post World War II efforts to give returning veterans something constructive to do since many had no jobs. Certainly, going to college is important for many aspects of employment options and for the enrichment of individuals, society, and cultural institutions. However, I do not believe that attending college is "the answer" for all; many agree, since most students who graduate from high school do not go on to colleges or universities.

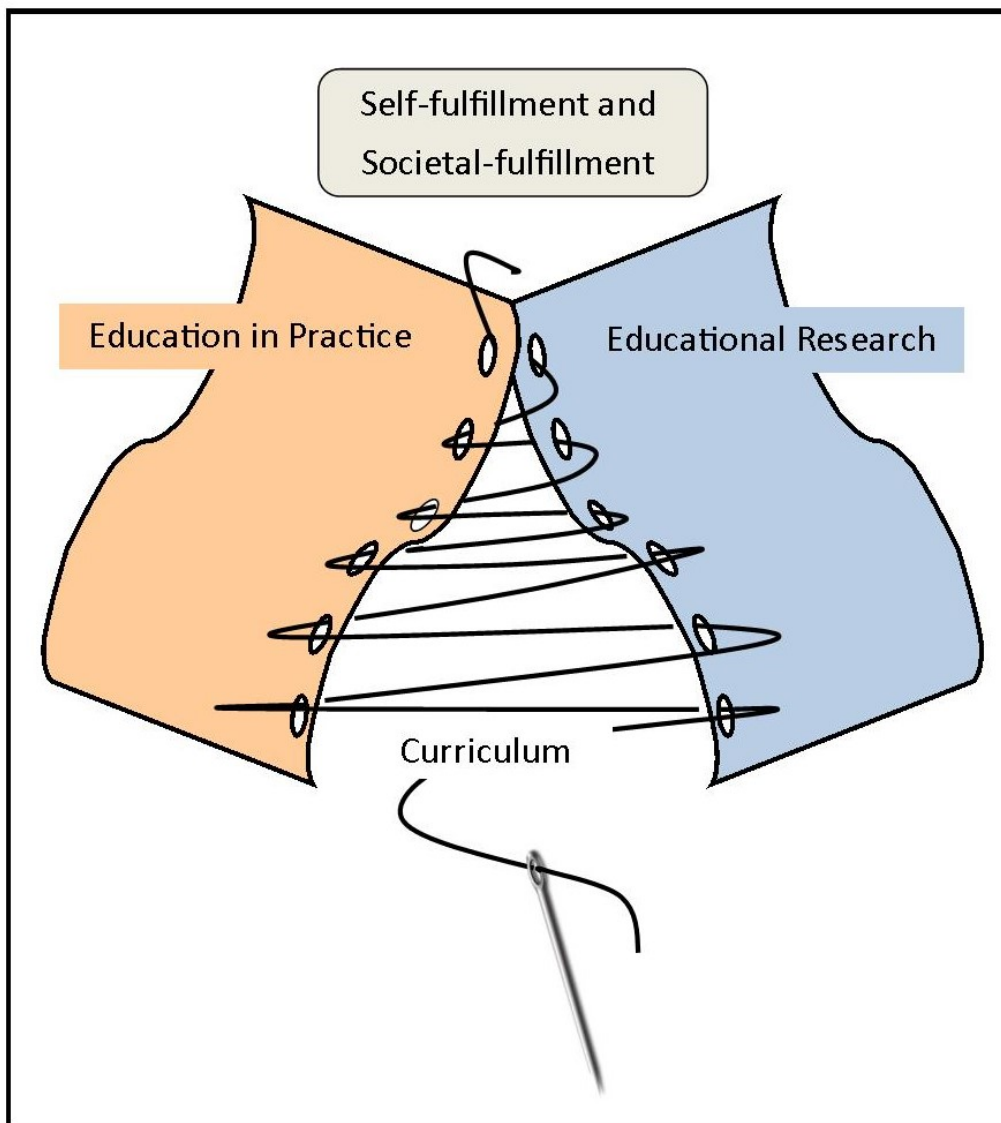
Arguably, the U.S. is not a "melting pot" of cultures, nor should it be. It is a "tossed salad" made up of numerous cultures and subcultures that contribute to the essence and flavors of the entity. In the long run, a switch in the major educational program emphasis of preparing individuals to attend colleges would benefit collective U.S. society (institutions of higher learning could assist such endeavors). For example, in a public academic system where I taught, the Hispanic male high school drop-out rate was over 60%. According to a couple of Hispanic colleagues of mine, this high incidence is tied into the "macho" image of their culture which stresses working and earning money to support family. Therefore, in order to help keep cultural values intact (if they should be), one must ask which is more important, employable skills, a "diploma", or degree and should the conceptions of competencies associated with these go through some metamorphoses?

Apropos to any discourse on a philosophy of education is a discussion of theoretical positions on curriculum and instruction. As stated earlier, the realm of "education" is a plural-lateral, complex and evolving organism. Subsequently, to help understand some of its characteristics in institutionalized corporeality, I have created several diagrams delineating many of its components and phenomena.

Any philosophy of education could also be seen as an idealistic, linear element lying in a universe parallel to educational reality, both going nowhere. Neither is of much value unless there is a dynamic thread (curriculum) forming a tapestry of the two together. Both can then move in tandem, on a forward

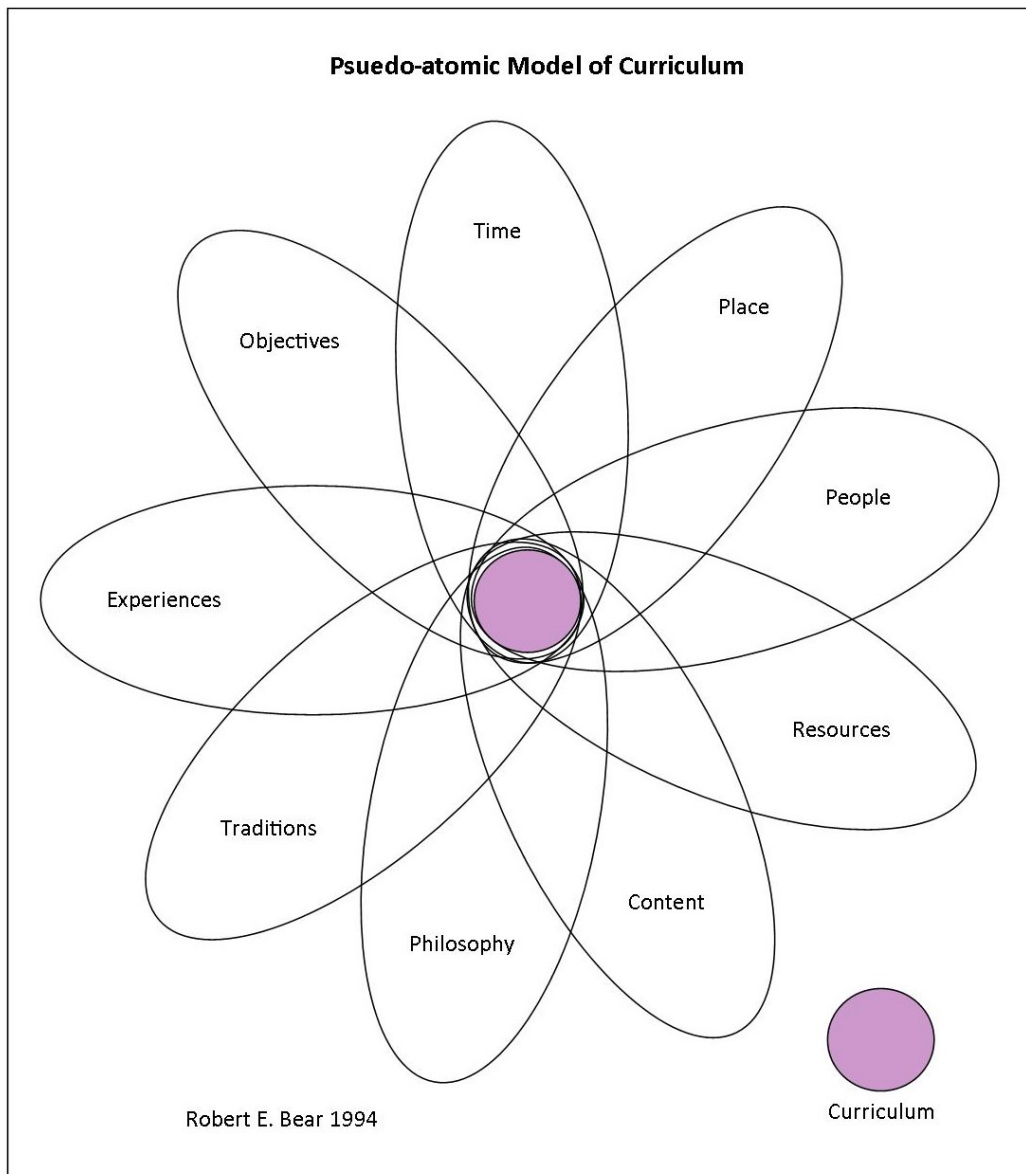
(hopefully) course (see diagram #1). Their married purpose? The self-fulfillment of both the individual and "society".

Diagram #1: **Purpose of Curriculum**



Illustrated in Diagram #2, the **Pseudo-Atomic Model of Curriculum**, curriculum is the dynamic (interacting) intersecting area in constant permutation, where the component constructs of time, place, people, resources, content, philosophies, traditions, experiences, and perceived objectives (formal and/or informal) are overlapped and designed to meet the described desires and needs of a given society by a designated body of that society under the umbrella of institutionalized pedagogy. The intersecting area, curriculum, is lissome because each of the components are always mutable in various degrees and not necessarily perpetually in direct relational proportion to one another. Each of the components has some input/affect/effect/extraction on the curriculum construction and delivery.

Diagram #2 **Pseudo-Atomic Model of Curriculum**

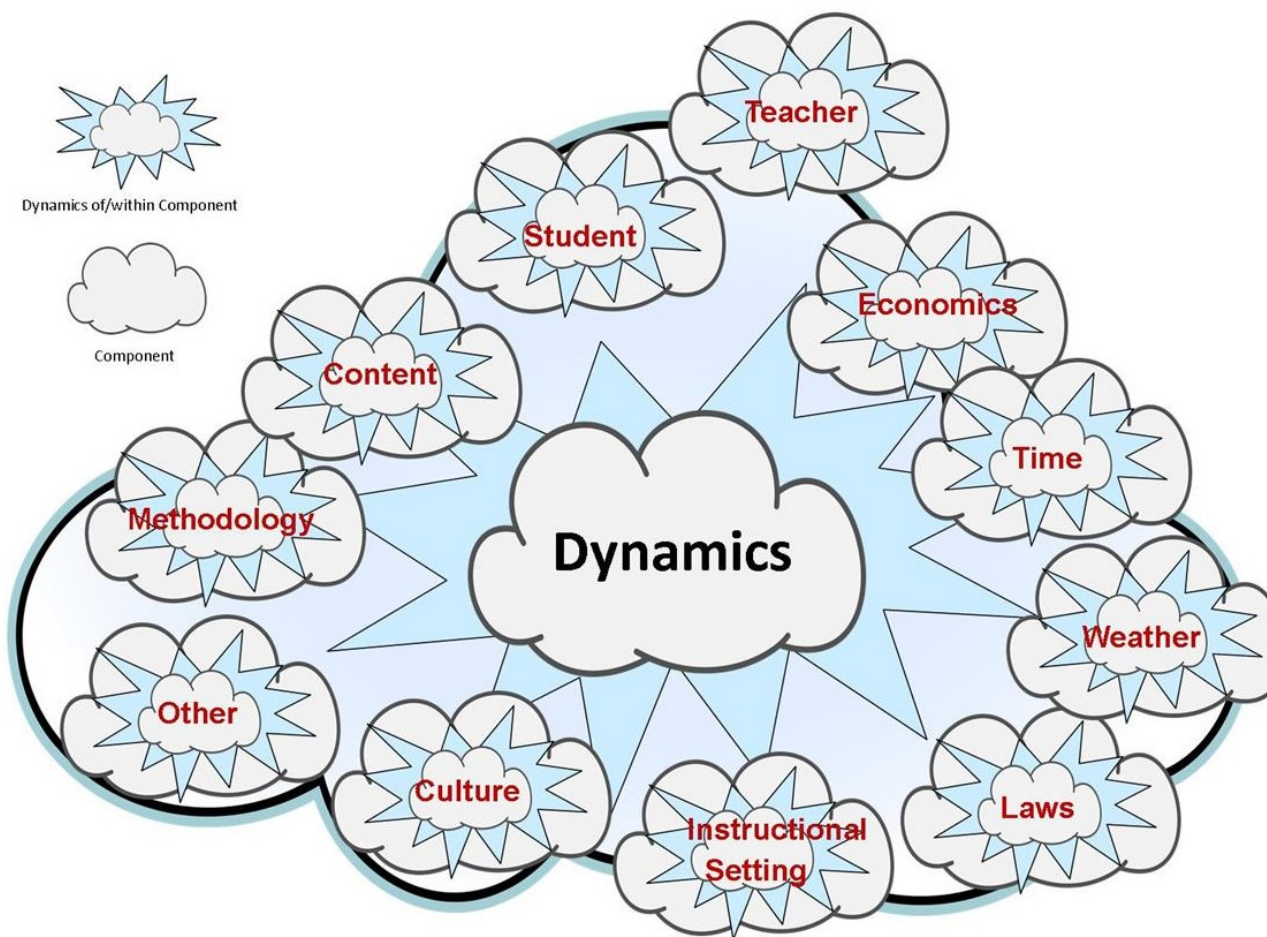


Another theory spawned from educational philosophy is that of instruction. The Abstract Anomalous Brain Model of Instruction (diagram #3) I offer for explication is a composite describing the dynamic matrix of institutionalized educational instruction. Each of the components is like a thunder cloud in itself, with its own dynamics and those in turn (or out of turn) affect/effect the other components. It is an ethereal multi-dimensional nebular mix, characterized in multi-intermodular components and their dynamics (between and among one another and the whole) in various rates and densities of perpetual transformation. The dynamics of this matrix is/are empirically manifested in pedagogical activities. Teacher, student, economics, time, weather, laws, instructional setting, culture, methodologies of instruction, content of instruction, dynamics, and any other intervening factors that may be categorically assimilated as fitting together, synthesize the components of this model.

Diagram #3: **Abstract Anomalous Brain Model of Instruction**

*The four dimensional Abstract Anomalous Brain Model of Instruction is an ethereal solution characterized on multi-interdimensional components and their dynamic (between and among one another and the whole) in various rates of densities of continuous flux, empirically manifested in pedagogical activities.*

## Abstract Anomalous Brain Model of Instruction



The only constant of this matrix is change.

In turn, a component is defined as any group of factors, or elements, that may be conditionally linked together and have some intervening, or mitigating circumstance, that effect/affects instruction (pre, a, and post). An element is referenced as any attribute of a component. For example, some of the elements comprising the component teacher include the following; knowledge base, frame of reference, ethnicity, cultural make up, biases, religious beliefs, emotions or emotional state at any given moment, hearing abilities, verbal communication competencies (or lack thereof), state of hunger, state of bodily functions and needs, mental abilities, worries, etc., etc., etc. These are the entities that an instructor (as well as the learners) brings to their pedagogical environment. It must be noted that many of the elements in each component are not stable. As a direct result of this fugitiveness, the components are also in differing amounts and incidence of change.

The dynamics component is the most important subsistence of the model. It links all the components together, and at the same time, affects/effects the components individually and collectively. Elements that evince the dynamics of this model are: communication, attraction, inertness, passivity, repulsion, agreement, disagreement, extrapolation, interpretation, evaluation, action, interaction, reaction, synthesis, divergence, and conceptualization.

Because this model is sort of a living, free form, nebular invertebrate that one cannot see, except when manifested in pedagogical use, perhaps it would be more accurate to envision it as an electrically charged, multicolored cloud that is invariably changing form and hues. The analogy of the brain is used because it is an entity consisting of interacting territories which are also made up of smaller substances. The components of the model (teacher, student, economics, time, weather, laws, instructional setting, culture, methodologies of instruction, content of instruction, dynamics, and any other intervening factors) are similar to the areas of the brain (i.e., parietal lobe, frontal lobe, occipital lobe, temporal lobe, lateral lobe, thalamus, hypothalamus, basal ganglia, cerebellum, pons, medulla, hippocampus, etc.). Similarly, these elements of the model are analogous to those of the brain; neurons, dendrites, axons, synaptic vesicles, synaptic gaps, chemicals, temperature, and electrical impulses, etc. Comparable, also, are the chemical, thermal, and electrical energies dynamics of the brain which effect thought and organ activity. Consequent to these numerous variable affecters is a very complicated mix defining instruction.

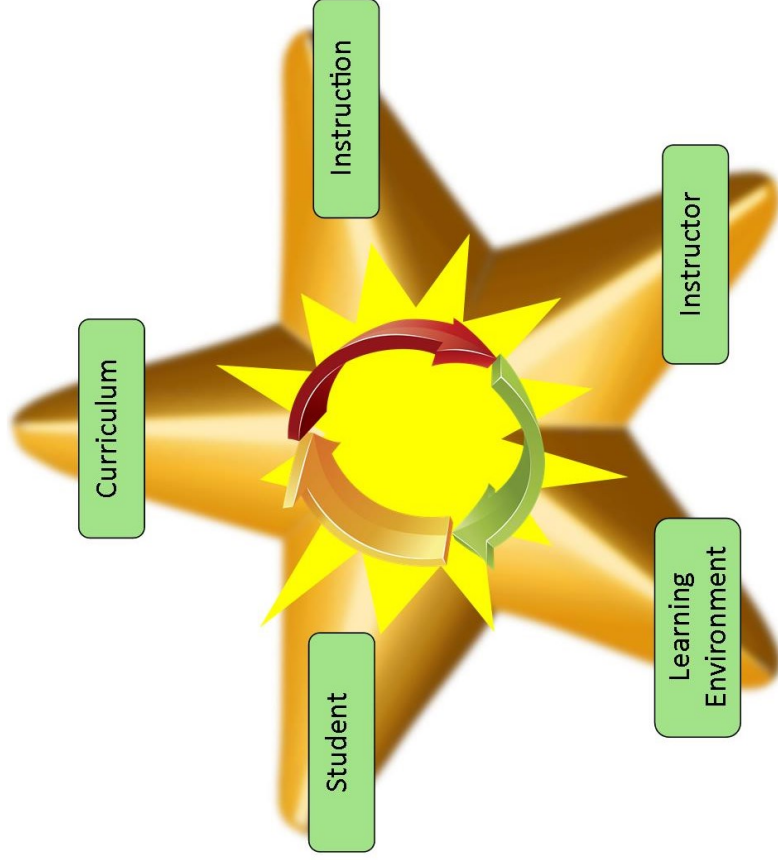
The realm of education and its institutions reflect how ideologies, societies, and cultures change. Certainly, there are numerous additional considerations and experiences one may bear in mind that are germane to the province of education which affect/effect one's philosophical slants that will also change over time; e.g., assessment, use of technological devices, instructional strategies, and classroom management. For the rookie educator, I'd suggest transcribing your philosophies and theories of instruction to be revisited, revised, and tuned in a capriccio to your particular aesthetic of pedagogy while transeversing your career.

Editorial Note:

The "/" used throughout this document was used as a quality, quantity qualifier; denoting either, or, and, and combinations of any, and, or all.)

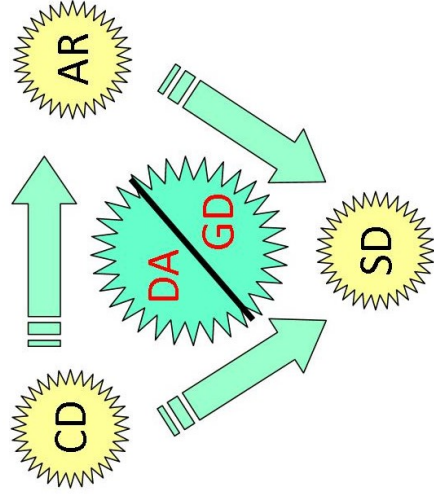


# Formal Institutionalized Education



Robert E. Bear 1997

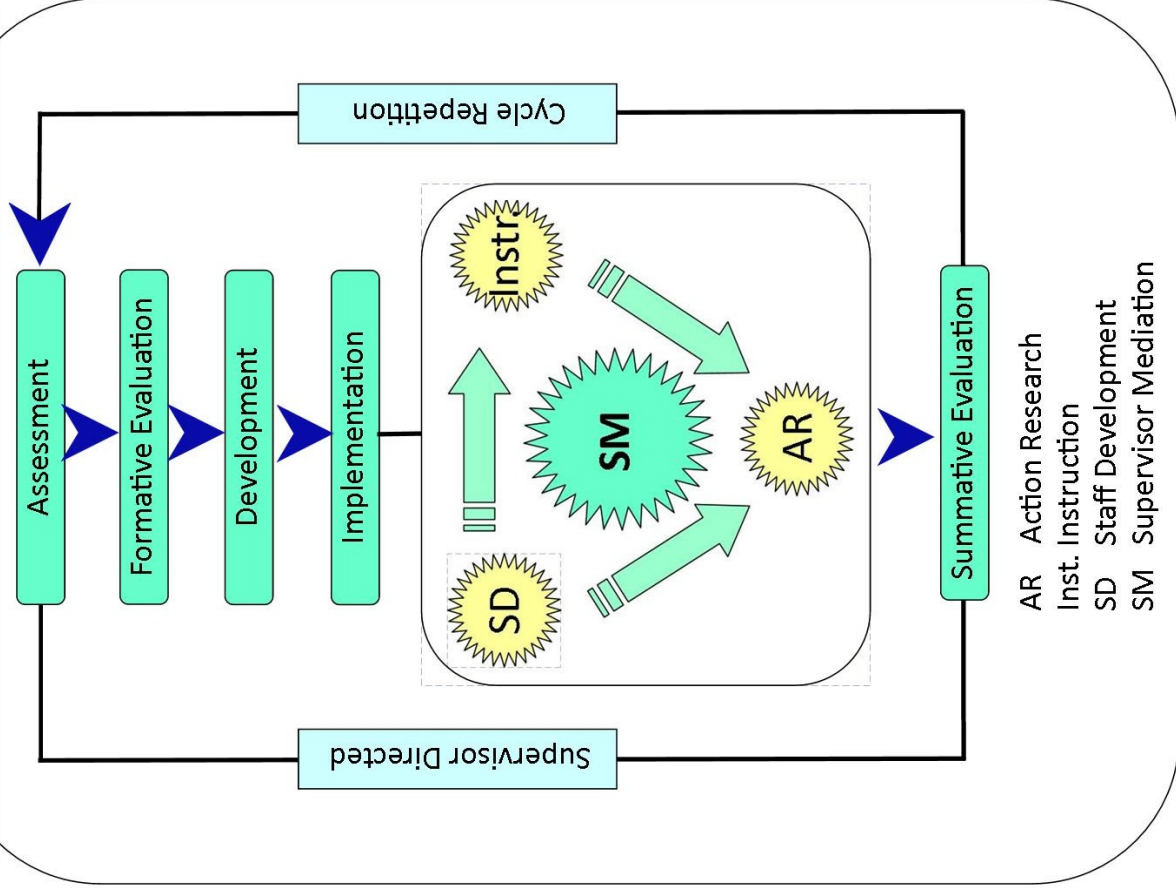
# Tasks of Instruction Model



- CD Curriculum Development
- AR Action Research
- SD Staff Development
- DA Direct Assistance
- GD Group Development

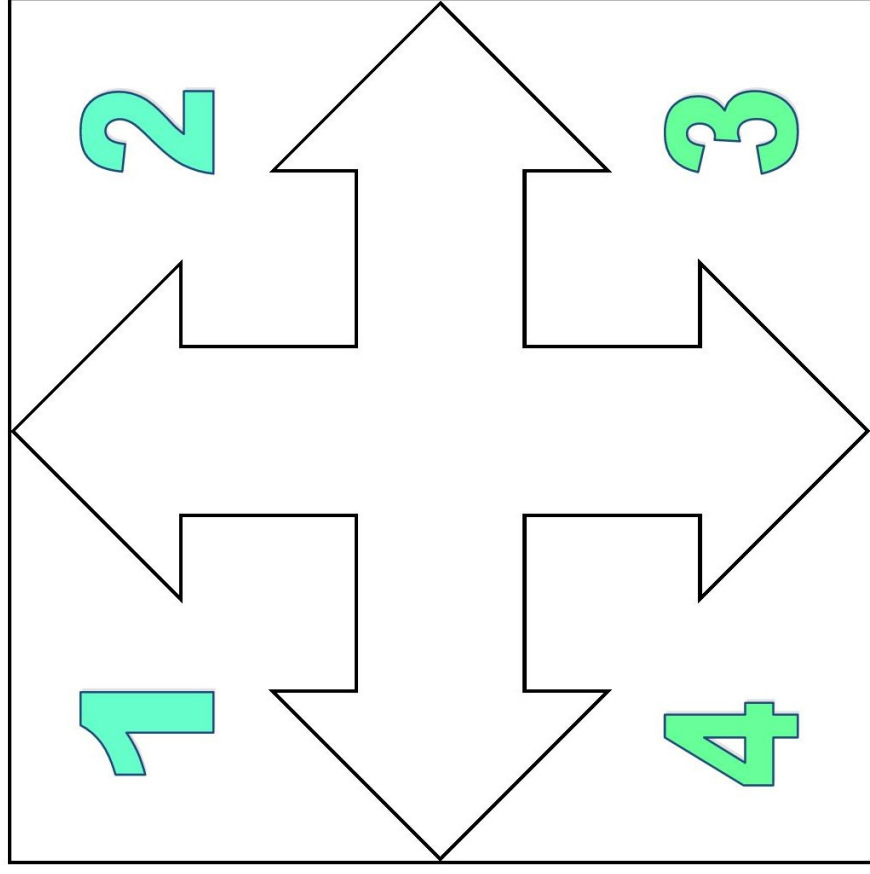
Robert E. Bear 1995

## Effective Instructional Supervision



## Supervisor Tenet Interaction

1. Attending to individual differences in teachers
2. Improving the intellectual climate of the school
3. Putting more supervisory "glue" in the school
4. Improving schoolwide teaching and learning



# Minority Culture Inclusion in U.S. Education

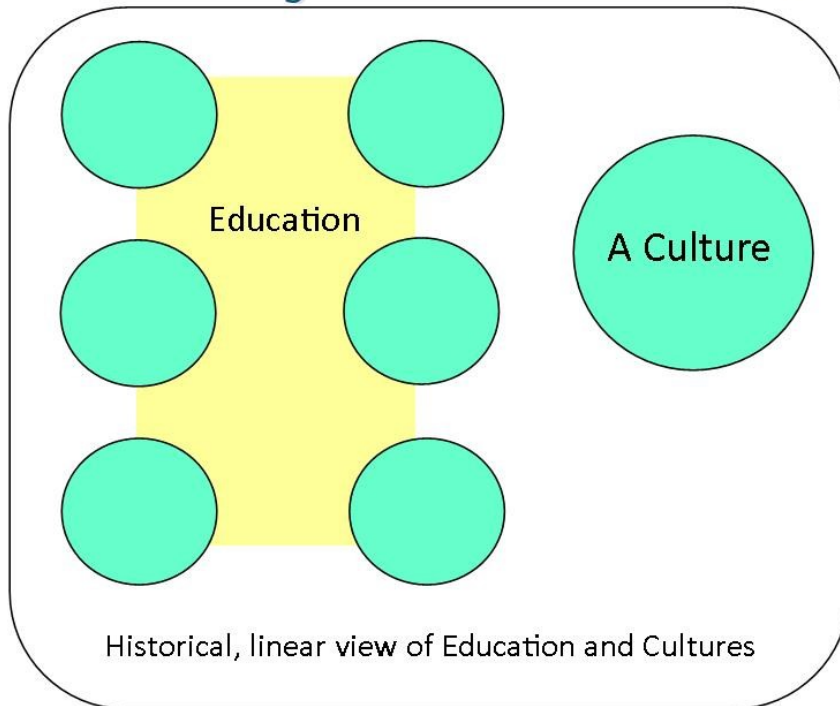


Figure 1

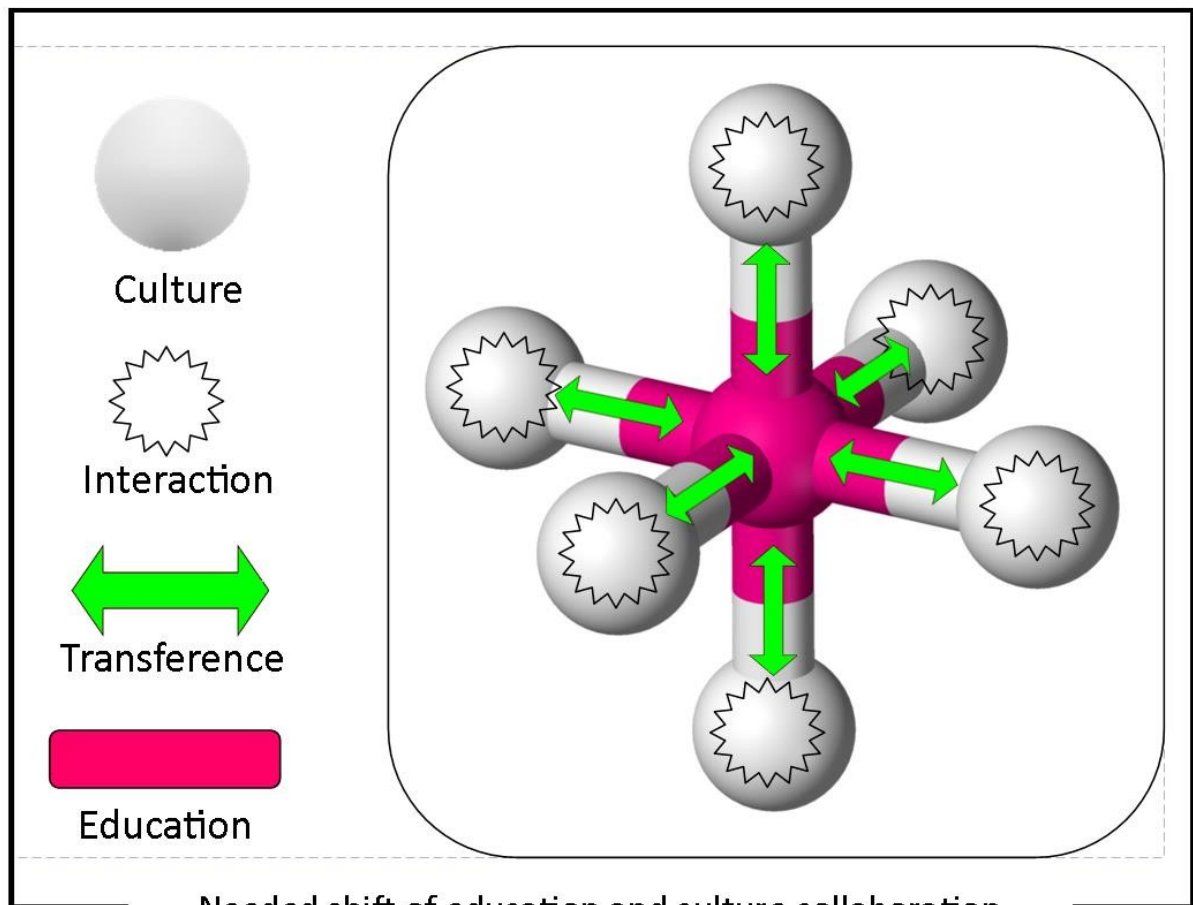


Figure 2

Needed shift of education and culture collaboration