

## Dialogic Coordination Through the Compassionate Impactful Communication Cycle: Towards Realising Matusov's (2026) Uniqueness Model of Educational Justice



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### Abstract

*In this commentary, I engage with Eugene Matusov's (2026) "Uniqueness Model of Educational Justice" to critique standardisation enacted as non-dialogic sameness that marginalises students' perspectives, values, and self-authored goals. In response, I propose a dialogic coordination framework that supports students in articulating and pursuing their own educational trajectories through sustained, critical dialogue with educators and educational institutions. To operationalise this approach, I introduce the Compassionate Impactful Communication Cycle as a practical mechanism for facilitating empathetic, reflective, and co-creative dialogue. Drawing on dialogic theory, Self-Determination Theory, and critical thinking frameworks, the Cycle is designed to surface participants' values, goals, and concerns, enabling the co-construction of meaningful and context-responsive educational pathways. Extending Matusov's framework, I argue that even in vocational and training contexts, educational endpoints should remain open to dialogue. Within this perspective, equity is situational, aiming to enable students to realise their self-authored goals. The constitutive view of communication holds that society, organisations, and their policies, values, and practices are constituted in and through communication. Aligned with this view, I introduce a dialogic framework to constitute the Uniqueness Model of Educational Justice. I offer dialogic coordination as both a conceptual and practical contribution and invite further dialogue about its possibilities and limits across diverse educational contexts.*

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I read Matusov (2026) as a text that speaks directly to my long-standing concerns about standardisation in education, particularly when it is enacted as non-dialogic sameness. In such approaches, students' perspectives, needs, values, motivations, goals, standards, and concerns are insufficiently engaged, and pathways toward student-authored outcomes and trajectories are not meaningfully developed. Instead, equity is often framed as differentiated support for common outcomes defined by more powerful actors, such as parents, institutions, or industry, rather than as support for outcomes authored by students themselves through dialogue with others.

In dialogue with Matusov's "Uniqueness Model of Educational Justice," I propose *dialogic coordination* as an alternative to standardisation-as-sameness. Dialogic coordination seeks to support students in arriving at their own conclusions about their educational goals while enabling institutions to design programmes that align with and support those goals. It fosters the articulation and critical examination of students' values, aspirations, and concerns, expands the space of possible trajectories, and supports the construction of pathways to realise their educational goals through sustained, open dialogue.

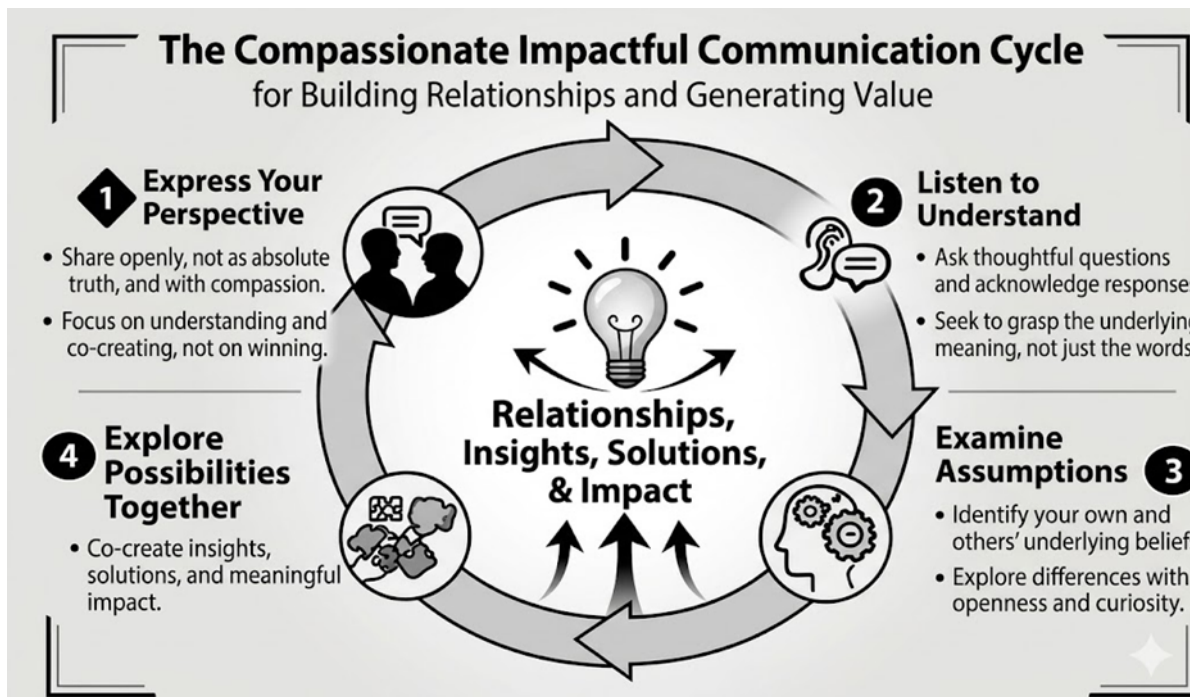
Dialogic coordination thus centres the development and understanding of students' self-authored goals and learning outcomes, alongside the design and coordination of resources and pathways that enable their realisation, including within vocational and training contexts. In this commentary, I extend Matusov's framework by positioning dialogic coordination as a conceptual mechanism and the Compassionate Impactful Communication Cycle as a practical mechanism for operationalising the uniqueness model of educational justice through the realisation of student-authored educational goals, even within training programmes.

The positions articulated in Matusov's paper resonate with my own experiences and reflections. I conceptualise dialogic curriculum design as an integrated approach that encompasses the identification of educational goals, learning outcomes, pedagogy, and assessment, all developed through ongoing, deep dialogue with students to support the realisation of their goals. Within this model, student voice is not merely present but substantively influential at every stage of the curriculum, from initial conceptualisation to implementation and iterative evaluation. This dialogue remains open and evolving as students' values, motivations, and circumstances shift in response to both internal development and changing real-world conditions. Accordingly, intended outcomes and trajectories remain adaptable and subject to continual revision through dialogue, supporting students' evolving, self-authored educational goals and pathways.

To operationalise this commitment to student autonomy, I propose the *Compassionate Impactful Communication Cycle* (for an earlier version, see Rahimi, 2026, March 18). This Cycle offers a structured, dialogic process for co-creating insights, values, and impact to design meaningful educational programmes. Its purpose is to surface participants' value orientations, needs, concerns, standards, and goals, enabling deeper mutual understanding and the generation of contextually relevant actions. Within this framework, dialogue enables students to clarify perspectives, explore possibilities, and define and revise their learning outcomes and pathways through sustained, deep dialogic engagement with, and support from, the community, including parents, teachers, leaders, and industry partners. At the same time, it provides institutions with a structured means of gaining insight into students' aspirations and of coordinating resources to more effectively support the realisation of their self-authored goals.

The Cycle draws on insights from multiple disciplines to guide empathetic, generative, and critically reflective dialogue. Rooted in Yankelovich's (2001) *The Magic of Dialogue*, it emphasises deep dialogue that goes beyond ordinary conversation or debate, fostering mutual understanding through equality by suspending authority, employing empathetic communication, and critically examining assumptions. It also

builds on Wisner's (2022) *The Art of Conscious Conversations*, following a sequential flow of expressing perspectives, seeking to understand concerns, standards, goals, and power dynamics, examining assumptions, and exploring possibilities for collaboration, co-creation, and commitment. Additionally, the Cycle is informed by Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which emphasises autonomy, competence, and relatedness as conditions for sustained engagement, and by the Paul–Elder Critical Thinking Framework (Paul & Elder, 2019), which strengthens analytical rigour throughout the dialogic process. The Cycle synthesises these influential works to enable empathetic, clear, co-creative, and constructively critical dialogue, aiming to build relationships and generate insights, solutions, and meaningful impact.



Note: I created this infographic with assistance from ChatGPT and Gemini AI (free versions).

The Cycle may help operationalise genuine dialogue in programme and curriculum design by fostering deep understanding of students' values, needs, aspirations, and goals. As Matusov notes, and as the Cycle also demonstrates, a fully paternalistic, top-down model of education is incompatible with genuine dialogue that respects the uniqueness of both students and teachers. In this respect, Matusov's perspective aligns closely with my critique of standardisation when it is treated as uniformity imposed by more powerful actors across the curriculum. I share his concern about equity-as-sameness, and I propose reframing standardisation as dialogic coordination, with equity understood as targeted or additional support that enables students to realise their self-authored learning outcomes through deep, sustained dialogue with all parties involved. This dialogic process may also reveal clusters of students with shared or overlapping educational goals, enabling the formation of cohorts that can foster both meaningful collaboration and institutional sustainability. Within such cohorts, sustained deep dialogue can guide differentiated support while preserving students' individual goals and trajectories and more effectively supporting the realisation of self-authored outcomes.

At the same time, my extension of the *Uniqueness Model of Educational Justice* to vocational training contexts introduces a point of productive tension with Matusov's apparent acceptance of standardisation, in which shared endpoints may be externally defined. I argue that even in these contexts,

endpoints should remain open to dialogue. Rather than treating professional competencies as fixed, dialogic coordination would involve participatory processes that engage students, educators, institutions, industry, and the wider community in the co-construction and ongoing refinement of learning outcomes, teaching practices, and assessment approaches, all aimed at supporting students' self-authored educational goals.

This is particularly significant in the context of rapid technological change, including advances in artificial intelligence, where professional competencies are continuously evolving. In such conditions, curricula must remain responsive and adaptable. For example, within a field such as mechanical engineering, students may pursue distinct trajectories, such as sustainable design, robotics, or entrepreneurial fabrication, each requiring different configurations of knowledge, skills, and assessment. Dialogic coordination enables such divergence rather than fixed outcomes defined and imposed by more powerful others.

Emerging educational models, such as stackable modules, further expand opportunities to align learning pathways with students' evolving life and professional goals. However, without sustained dialogue, such flexibility risks becoming superficial. Continuous engagement is therefore essential to understanding students' goals and adapting pathways as their circumstances and aspirations change.

Within this framework, equity becomes situational rather than universal. It entails providing support that enables individuals to pursue self-authored learning journeys and to develop personal and professional identities. Recognising and valuing the uniqueness of students and teachers is central to this approach. Moreover, engaging in such dialogic processes cultivates capacities for lifelong learning and meaningful civic participation. Through dialogic engagement, education can empower learners to actively participate in their personal, civic, and professional lives.

Dialogic coordination, as proposed here, does not seek to close the dialogue about the tension between uniqueness, practicality, and sustainability, particularly within higher education systems characterised by uneven resource distribution. Rather, it renders this tension visible and open to participatory, deep dialogic engagement. It offers both a conceptual and a practical mechanism for reorienting educational design towards ongoing, collaborative meaning-making and value creation that supports students' educational goals and trajectories.

In this spirit, I offer these reflections as an invitation to continued dialogue within the field of education. How might dialogic coordination support the realisation of a uniqueness model of educational justice across diverse contexts? Where might the limits of this approach lie, and how might they be addressed?

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