

# Roger Kaufman

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## A Significant Contributor to the Field of Educational Technology

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During a career of more than 40 years that links the interrelated fields of educational and human performance technology, Roger Kaufman has created numerous new innovative approaches to enhance strategic planning, change management, needs assessment, assessment, evaluation, and organizational improvement.

Through numerous publications, including nearly 40 books and many articles as a Contributing Editor to this publication, Kaufman has encouraged several generations of educational and performance technologists to find practical and socially responsible ways to achieve their own ideal visions after imagining the world in which they wish their children to live. This article provides an overview of Kaufman's impressive contributions and their implications for the field of Educational Technology.

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### Brief Biography

Roger Kaufman grew up in Chevy Chase, Maryland, just outside Washington, DC. During his childhood, Kaufman's natural inquisitiveness was encouraged by his father, an electrical engineer and mathematical physicist, who frequently asked tough questions of Kaufman and his brother (Singh & Narahara, 2001). Ironically, Kaufman's high school counselor suggested that he could "look forward to a fulfilling career as a truck driver" (Singh & Narahara,

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2001, p. 16); but Kaufman, a self-described "late bloomer," graduated with honors from George Washington University a few years later. Kaufman subsequently earned a Masters degree in Psychology and Industrial Engineering at Johns Hopkins University. After a stint in the real world of business as a human factors specialist at Boeing and later as head of human factors engineering at Martin Baltimore, Kaufman completed a Ph.D. in Communications at New York University.

After earning his doctorate, Kaufman became an Assistant to the Vice President for Engineering as well as Assistant to the Vice President for Research at Douglas Aircraft Company. These early experiences in business and industry enabled Kaufman to perceive that people in business and industry tended to focus on processes rather than results (Singh & Narahara, 2001), a powerful insight that shaped much of his innovative thinking about the nature of needs.

In 1975, Kaufman joined the Instructional Systems faculty at Florida State University (FSU) at the invitation of Professor Robert "Bob" Morgan. At FSU, Kaufman founded the Center for Needs Assessment and Planning, became a full Professor, and won numerous awards, including the status of Emeritus Professor in 2004. Among other honors, Kaufman is a Certified Performance Technologist, a Fellow of the American Psychological Association, a Fellow of the American Academy of School Psychology, and a Diplomate of the American Board of Professional Psychology. He was named "Member for Life" of the International Society for Performance Improvement (ISPI), an organization for which he also served as president. In addition, Kaufman is the recipient of the Distinguished Contribution to Workplace Learning and Performance award from the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD).

Throughout his distinguished career, Kaufman has consulted with many public and private organizations in the United States, Australia, Canada, Europe, Latin America, and elsewhere. Through consulting services and workshops, Kaufman and his collaborators continue to assist numerous organizations around the globe, including AT&T, Motorola, Microsoft, M&M Mars, IBM, Sun Microsystems, the U.S. Department of Defense, and the World Bank.

In 1966, Kaufman published his first book, *Why System Engineering*, with his mentor and colleague, Bob Corrigan. Since then, he has authored and co-authored many books, including *Educational System Planning* (1972), *Needs Assessment: Concept and Application* (Kaufman & English, 1979), *Needs Assessment: A User's Guide* (Kaufman, Rojas, & Mayer, 1993), *Strategic Thinking: A Guide to Identifying and Solving Problems* (Kaufman, 1998), and *Mega Planning: Practical tools for Organizational Success* (Kaufman, 2000). He also has published over 250 articles on diverse topics of value to both educational and performance technologists.

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### Contributions to Educational Technology

Kaufman's specific contributions to educational technology can be characterized from two standpoints. First, he developed a problem-solving framework for educational strategic planning and needs assessment that has helped to

shift the attention of professionals in our field and their clients from means and activities to a sharper focus on measurable results and added value. Second, he introduced the “mega” level of planning to instructional systems designers and their collaborators so that they would be more likely to recognize and act upon their obligations to humanity and to base their “vision” on work that results in enhanced societal benefits for future generations.

### Needs Assessment

Since the 1960s, Kaufman has contributed foundational concepts related to needs assessment, a primary tool of instructional designers (Kaufman & English, 1979). Although it seems like common sense to educational technologists today, Kaufman pioneered the concept of “need” as a *noun* that refers to *gaps between current and desired results* (e.g., physicians currently over-prescribe antibiotics to their patients versus physicians should be more discerning in prescribing antibiotics to prevent the development of antibiotic-resistant bacteria) rather than as a *verb* related to specific gaps in resources (e.g., we *need* more training for physicians). Kaufman identified three types of needs: Mega, Macro, and Micro, and most importantly, stressed that the identification of solutions should not proceed until needs and objectives are clearly understood by all stakeholders in a specific context for analysis.

### Mega Planning

In 1970, the late economist Milton Friedman stated that “the social responsibility of business is to increase its profits.” About this same time, Kaufman (1972) developed a radically different perspective on social responsibility. He introduced the concept of “mega planning” to shift the focus of the people in an organization from their own immediate objectives to one that “puts a primary concern on adding measurable value for external clients and society using one’s own job and organization as the vehicle” (Kaufman, 2005, p. 6). The “mega planning” perspective has slowly gathered momentum as a practical tool for organizational success in the field of business and education around the world (Forbes, Forbes, & Hoskins, 2005). According to Kaufman, the mega level of planning is ideally based upon a vision of the world we desire to create for tomorrow’s children. In light of dramatic climate change, persistent poverty, and endless conflict, such a perspective seems more important than ever.

In *Strategic Thinking: A Guide to Identifying and Solving Problems*, Kaufman (1998) introduced the Organizational Elements Model (see **Figure 1**), an approach useful for conducting effective needs assessment and guiding meaningful strategic planning. It provides organizations with a framework for planning, assessing needs, and evaluating in reference to “what any organization uses, does, produces, and delivers with external client and societal added value” (Kaufman, 2005, p. 7). The model defines three levels of results to be achieved at societal, organizational, and individual performance levels (Mega, Macro, and Micro) and to types of means (Input and Processes). Although strategic planning and thinking starts with mega, no element is more important than any other, and they must be linked for a successful outcome. In addition, each element is associated

Name of the Organizational Element	Name of the Level of Planning and Focus	Brief Description	Type of Planning
<i>Outcomes</i>	<i>Mega</i>	Results and their consequences for external clients and society (shared vision)	Strategic
<i>Outputs</i>	<i>Macro</i>	The results an organization can or does deliver outside of itself	Tactical
<i>Products</i>	<i>Micro</i>	The building block results that are produced within the organization	Operational
<i>Processes</i>	<i>Process</i>	The ways, means, activities, procedures, and methods used internally	
<i>Inputs</i>	<i>Input</i>	The human, physical, and financial resources an organization can or does use	

**Figure 1.** The Organizational Elements Model (OEM), the five levels of results, the levels of planning, and a brief description (Kaufman, 2005, p. 8).

with each level of planning. These elements are particularly useful for merging organizational goals and social responsibility. Kaufman’s model of needs assessment and strategic planning provides a useful framework for planning, evaluation, and continuous improvement in many different contexts, including business, government, and education.

From Kaufman’s perspective, strategic thinking is the way to think about, assess, view, and create the future for both organizations and society at large (Kaufman, Oakley-Browne, Watkins, & Leigh, 2003). **Figure 2** shows the six critical success factors for strategic thinking and planning.

Strategic planning should start with identification of results, based upon an ideal vision of the future, encompassing a concern for societal impact in the long term

#### CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTOR 1

Move out of your comfort zone—today's paradigms—and use new and wider boundaries for thinking, planning, doing, evaluating, and continuous improvement.

#### CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTOR 2

Differentiate between ends (what) and means (how).

#### CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTOR 3

Use all three levels of planning and results (Mega/Outcomes; Macro/Outputs; Micro/Products).

#### CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTOR 4

Prepare all objectives—including the Ideal Vision and mission—to include precise statements of both where you are headed as well as the criteria for measuring when you have arrived. Develop “smarter” objectives.

#### CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTOR 5

Use an Ideal Vision (what kind of world, in measurable performance terms, we want for tomorrow's children) as the underlying basis for planning and continuous improvement.

#### CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTOR 6

Define “need” as a gap in results (not as insufficient levels of resources, means, or methods).

**Figure 2.** The six critical success factors for strategic thinking and planning (Kaufman *et al.*, 2003, p. 40).

(mega-level objectives) (Kaufman *et al.*, 2003). It always involves change.

Kaufman's perspective is still somewhat radical, even in a time such as now when the focus on profits alone espoused by Friedman and his adherents is being called into question. Some prefer not to change or decline to take societal issues (mega level) into account when performing needs assessment and strategic planning. But Kaufman has many converts to his perspective, including the campuses of the Sonora Institute of Technology in Mexico, where mega planning has been applied to curriculum reform for some 15 years.

### Conclusion

With his passion for practical scholarship that makes a difference, Kaufman has labored for decades to encourage educational and performance technologists to expand their horizons and take social responsibility seriously. At Florida State University and other institutions, as well as through professional associations, he has been and continues to be an effective mentor for students and professionals in the fields of educational and performance technology. Perhaps Kaufman can be said to have spent his career as a “truck driver,” after all, because he has certainly “delivered the goods.” □

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