

A Four-Quadrant Model for Continuous Evaluation and Development of Programs in Leadership and Reflective Practice

Zachary Gabriel Green

The complex and often subjective nature of outcomes from leadership development programs and fellowships has served as a source of consternation for funders, program officers, fellows, and evaluators alike. The tools used to conduct evaluations, while often sound in methodology, may not be robust enough to capture the intricacies of leadership development as, itself, a multidimensional and developmental process. The Leadership Learning Community working session on evaluation, through examining current questions and constructions of leadership development, created a model that begins to address challenges unique to evaluating such programs. The model is generated from a theory base that takes into account the self-organizing nature of systems. It also recognizes the diverse perspectives that concurrently influence the leadership development process.

The four-quadrant model for continuous evaluation and development of programs in leadership and reflective practice, is built on two axes (see figure 1). The horizontal axis is the time dimension, represented as a continuum. At one end is Short Term Focus and at the other end is Long Term Focus. The vertical axis is the process dimension, which attends to the locus of attention in leadership work. At the ends are Internal Process and External Process. The four quadrants generated are Learning, Mastery, Practice, and Sustainability. The model can also be thought about in terms of the acronym LAMPS, which stands for *learning about mastery, practice and sustainability*; the light that most leadership development programs attempt to bring.

The Quadrants

Quadrant I—Learning “me”

Internal Process/Short Term Focus

This quadrant is characterized by skill development, planning and preparation. It involves developing goals for work and evaluating internal competencies for action. By its nature, this quadrant requires attention to the current state of the variables to begin the process. The shadow side of this quadrant occurs when efforts at efficiency turn to compromises of expediency. When managed well, there is effectiveness, vision and readiness for in depth work.

Quadrant II—Mastery “I/we”

Internal Process/Long Term Focus

This quadrant is characterized by mastery of key elements of the given area of focus. It involves a developmental process of implementing skills and a progressive capacity to take creative action. Considerable attention is given to the potential of long term implications of processes that could lead to transformation. The shadow side of this quadrant may be seen when opportunities turn to opportunism, primarily for self-interest. When managed well, there is acceptance of readiness and clarity of purpose is deepened.

Quadrant III—Practice “you”

External Process/Short Term Focus

This quadrant involves application of competencies and skills, either in a new way or for the first time. It may include a variety of forms, most commonly a presentation of plans to others or the initial “on the ground” efforts with those for whom service is offered. Preparation in this quadrant may involve seeking counsel from others and gathering resources needed to take action. The shadow side of this quadrant is when a short term process becomes short-sighted exploitation. Such actions erode trust for all parties involved, resulting in no measure of the potential efficacy of the practice. When managed well, there is the opportunity for vision and commitment to practice to be initiated in the direction of growth.

Quadrant IV—Sustainability “we”

External Process/Long Term Focus

This quadrant brings the focus to the ongoing implications of collective action. It is called sustainability because it is the locus where learning, practice and mastery converge to create an external process. It is the quadrant where growth potential can be realized and effectiveness most noted. As a catalyst for dynamic change, or as a ripple effect touching ever wide circles, or a bridge over chasms of difference, or any of a number of ways, these processes bring transformation. The shadow side of sustainability comes when perpetuation is without purpose and commitment is cut-off from community. When managed well, the transformation is one of growth, where commitment, community, and purpose are one

Important Caveats

- ⊖ While this model calls for quadrants to describe leadership learning in a variety of areas, no quadrant should be thought of as a static, rigid structure.
- ⊖ One must use systems thinking and dimensional visualization to capture the fullness of the representation. Not unlike the yin-yang symbol, the boundaries between sectors are present but permeable.
- ⊖ Elements of each quadrant can be “seen” in all other quadrants. The processes described are dynamic and fluid, subject to progression and regression based on the moment of measure.
- ⊖ While seen as primarily a developmental process, the process is not necessarily linear and may be occurring in one quadrant, field or vector while relatively dormant in another.
- ⊖ Finally, the model allows mapping leadership learning on a number of dimensions. It can be used for a single fellow, a class of fellows, a program, the leadership learning field, a community, or a funding group, just a to name a few. The dimensions, once mapped can indicate areas of clarity and disparity in the overall process. A range of permutations are possible.

The Fields

Quadrant I & III—Preparation

Quadrant II & IV—Transformation

Quadrant I & II—Growth

Quadrant III & IV—Depth

The Vectors

Quadrant I to Quadrant IV—Effectiveness

Quadrant III to Quadrant II—Initiation

The Boundaries

Internal Focus at Learning and Mastery—Readiness (Transition/Guilt)

External Focus at Practice and Sustainability—Commitment

Short Term Process at Learning and Practice—Vision

Long Term Process at Mastery and Sustainability—Purpose