The PKRC's Value as a Professional Development Model Validated

Abstract

After a brief review of the 4-H professional development standards, a new model for determining the value of continuing professional development is introduced and applied to the 4-H standards. The validity of the 4-H standards is affirmed. 4-H Extension professionals are encouraged to celebrate the strength of their standards and to engage the wider field of professional development in dialogue.

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Background

The Professional Knowledge and Research Competency (PKRC) framework was adopted by the National 4-H Council and National Association of Extension 4-H Agents in 2004 as the definitive standard for professional development (Stone & Rennekamp, 2004). A year later the PKRC was affirmed as the academic base supporting professional development practice and standards for 4-H professional development incorporating this model were published (National 4-H Professional Development Task Force2005) (Table 1). While the adoption and implementation of these standards by Virginia as the foundation for a 4-H Extension Agents Training Program (Garst, Hunnings, Jamison, & Hairston, 2007), by California as an assessment tool in determining staff training needs (Heck, Subramaniam, & Carlos, 2009), and as a basis for comparison of academic programs for the preparation youth development professionals (Diem, 2009) speak to the validity of the model, they also highlight the slow and sporadic adoption of the framework. A literature search using the term yields but one other article, in the *Journal of Agricultural Education*, since 2005.

Table 1.

Standards for 4-H Professional Development

| Foundations for Learning	Relevance to the Learner	The Learning Experience	Assessment and Reflection
Professional	Learners have an	Content is delivered	Learners

development activities and resources focus on building competencies included in the 4-H Professional Research, Knowledge, and Competencies (4HPRKC, 2004) taxonomy.	opportunity to assess their current level of knowledge and skill. An assessment of current knowledge and skill can also serve as a baseline for measuring change.	through a variety of methods which are suited to the learner and content.	have opportunities to monitor progress, gauge improvement, and assess the impact of their learning.
Content is based on credible, up-to-date sources of knowledge.	Learners have a say in what is learned, how it is learned, and when they learn it.	Learning experiences are well organized and sequential in nature.	Learners are presented with situations which equip them to deal with uncertainty and future change.
Professional development resources and activities are based upon sound learning theory.	Learners are encouraged to learn from each other through continual communication and problem-solving.	Learning resources meet appropriate standards for technical quality (correct grammar and spelling, clear images).	Learners are challenged to become independent and collaborative problem solvers.
Learning objectives are clearly stated. It is clear how the learner will benefit from the learning experience or resource.	Learning experiences help the learner apply what is learned in real-world settings, especially the communities in which they work. Alignment between learning and daily work is evident.	Learning experiences are of sufficient magnitude to produce the outcomes desired. The forces which initiate and or support change must be greater than the forces resisting it.	Learners are able to reflect on their learning and identify further opportunities for growth.

	Technology is used in a manner that supports and accelerates learning and achievement.	Learners "learn-by-doing." When learners experience the benefits of a practice firsthand, they are more likely incorporate that practice into their daily work.	
Created by the National 4-H Professional Development Task Force (2005)			

In 2011, an emerging model of determining the value of professional development came to my attention while reviewing a book by Andrew Friedman, Continuing Professional Development: Lifelong Learning of Millions. It occurred to me that the professional development value (PDV) model he presented could be applied to the PKRC as a means to determine its relative value and possibly encourage wider application. Having begun a long-term study of professional development in 1998, Friedman concluded the current models of assessing official development value were inadequate and began developing a new model.

At the same time, the PKRC and standards for 4-H professional development were taking shape. Among the inadequacies identified by Friedman are a wide range of definitions for professional development within and between professions in professional organizations and similar disparities as to how such development is tracked, reported, and its value determined. The Friedman and Woodhead model was first published in 2008 in an attempt to provide a common language and standards for assessing professional development across fields. This model has been refined over time through application of case studies, including one with the North Carolina Association of Certified Public Accountants in the U.S. The model as published makes a distinction between inputs and outputs along four different axes illustrated in Figure 1. These involve planning, activity, outcomes, and reflection. The language used in this model is close to that of the experiential education model employed in 4-H. Under outcomes there are three subcategories titled "knowledge," "behavior," and "results," all of which are familiar to 4-H practitioners.

Figure 1.

Friedman and Woodhead PDV Model Graph
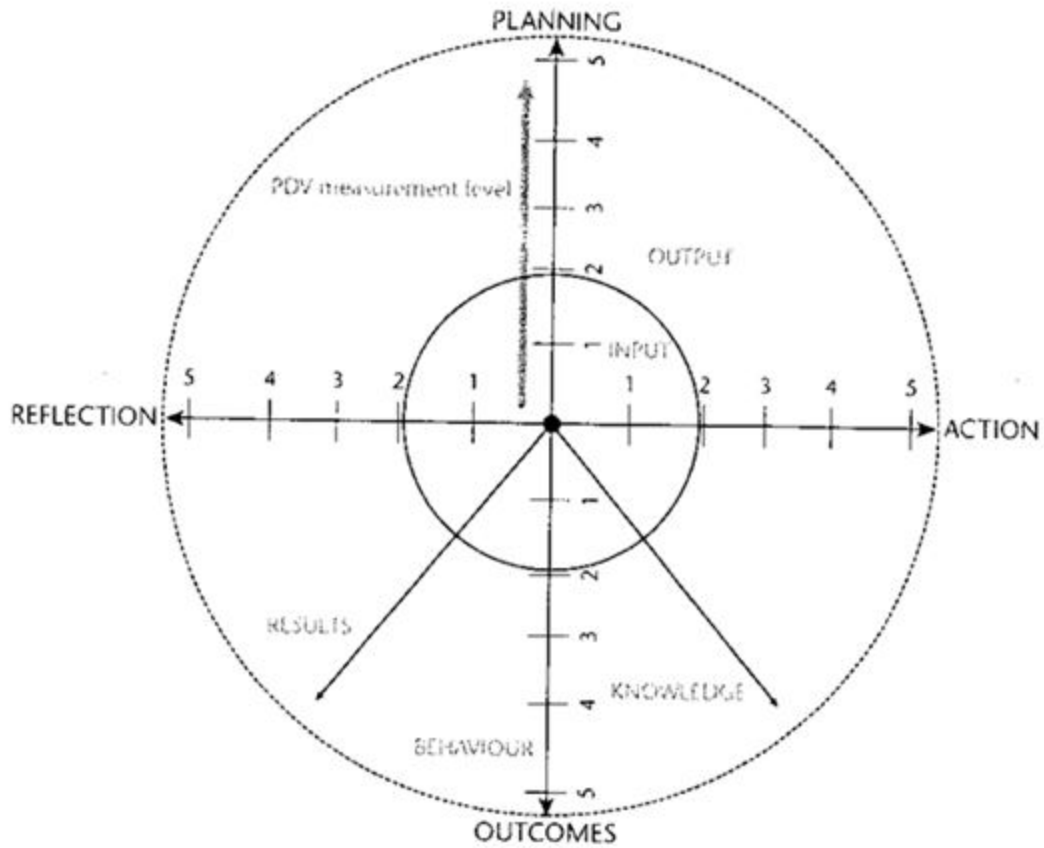
The rubric accompanying the PDV model graphic serves to quantify the inputs, outputs, and outcomes of the individual or organization's professional development activity so it can be plotted on the graph. As shown in Table 2, actions/inputs are assigned low values, with planning, reflection, and outcomes given greater weight, which increases with the potential or measurable impact.

Table 2.

Friedman and Woodhead PDV Rubric

Value	Planning	Action	Outcomes	Reflection
0-1		Note of Activity		
1		Record of Hours		
1+		• Record of Hours + evidence of attendance • Points system		

4		• Evidence of participation		
2	• Goals Set • Assess Needs • Planned activities/timescale		• Use/impact of learning alluded to • Questions to aid self-assessment • Assess against learning objectives	• Open-ended
3	• Structured review of role plus expectations • Loose competency framework		• More structure to self-assessment • Criteria for different levels of self-assessment • Audit of self-assessment	• Structured review of role/situation • Group reflection
4			• Objective scoring in combination with self-assessment	• Question templates • Questions linked to competencies • Audit of reflection records
4+	• Detailed competency		• Objective assessment	

| framework		methods	
• Outline planner		• Pere/client appraisal	
• Link point allocation to different competencies		• Objective statistical benchmarking	
• Prioritization		• Mixed assessment for different aspects of CPD	
• Individualization			

Application

I ranked the 4-H professional development standards using the Friedman and Woodhead PDV rubric to arrive at the rankings illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3.

Standards for 4-H Professional Development Ranked According to Friedman and Woodhead Rubric

Domain	Documentation or Standard Employed	Value
Planning	Self-assessment linked to detailed competencies and personalized plan	4+
Action	Record of hours + evidence of attendance and/or evidence of participation	1+
Outcomes	Peer/client appraisal encouraged	4+
Knowledge	Assessed in each module	4+
Behavior	Peer/client appraisal and benchmarking	4+
Results	Peer/client appraisal and benchmarking	4+
Reflection	Questions linked to competencies	4+

Finally I plotted the above values into the graphic as illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2.

Standards for 4-H Professional Development Rankings Applied to Friedman and Woodhead Graph
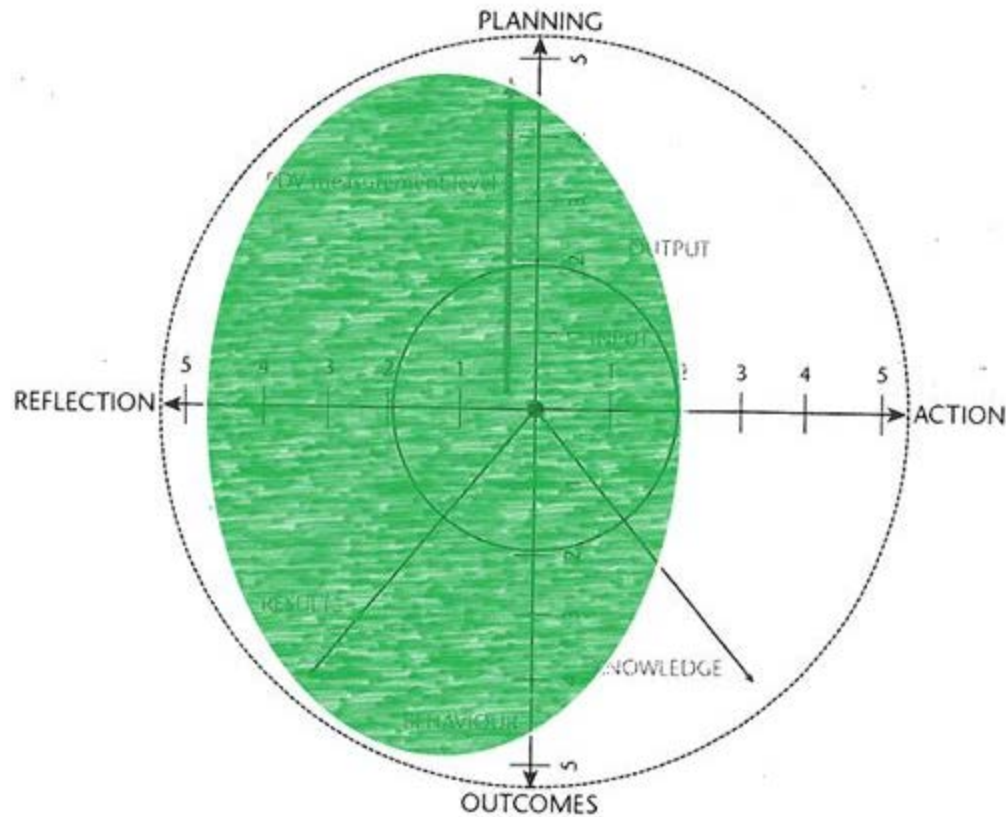
As you can see, the result is somewhat lopsided given the restricted value of actions. However, it does validate the application of the do, reflect, apply model of experiential education that shapes 4-H as an effective model for the professional development of those charged with teaching the model to volunteers and applying it with youth.

I determined that the 4-H standards, as I interpreted them, achieved among the highest possible ranking in this model. I celebrated this fact in a workshop at the annual conference of the American Association of Adult and Continuing Education (for whose journal I had reviewed the book) and invited the attendees to take the model and apply it to their own professional development plans and those of their professional associations.

Invitation

Friedman indicates in his book a desire to engage the professional development community in dialogue both in hopes of strengthening this model and moving toward adoption of a universal standard for professional development. This would enable hiring institutions, the general public, and other stakeholders to easily and readily assess the credibility of professional claims to training and competency. By applying this PDV model to the standards adopted by extension professionals, I hope to move us to claim and celebrate the validity and clarity of our standards while becoming part of that larger dialogue.

References

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