The Logic Model Guidebook: Better Strategies for Great Results (Second Ed.): Book Review

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The Logic Model Guidebook: Better Strategies for Great Results (Second Ed.)

L. Wyatt Knowlton & C. C. Phillips. 2013. Thousand Oaks: Sage. 192 pages. [ISBN 9781452216751]

The second edition of *The Logic Model Guidebook: Better Strategies for Great Results* is a straightforward guide, with excellent and varied examples, that achieves its purpose of giving readers a "basic understanding of how to create and use logic models" (p. xii). As enthusiastic champions of logic models, the authors adhere to the assumption that articulating precise and detailed logic models will lead to better results.

Many people are confused about how to develop logic models. The authors have taken on the task of clearing up that confusion by addressing both the construction and application of logic models. The initial chapters of the book help the reader understand both theory-of-change and program logic models. A theory-of-change model represents beliefs about how change will occur. A program logic model "details resources, planned activities, and their outputs and outcomes over time that reflect intended results" (p. 5). Examples are elaborated as they are carried over from one chapter to another in the early part of the book. The authors also wisely emphasize participatory development of models to help ensure that multiple voices are included in the resulting model.

In the final chapters the authors focus on the application of logic models to a variety of situations. *The examples illustrate application to evaluation, ways to display logic models, and uses in a wide range of situations and purposes.*

In the second edition the authors have included an additional application chapter that includes seven more program profiles.

The numerous examples of actual logic models—with descriptions of how they were developed and used—are noteworthy for their range and variety. They represent current thinking about logic modeling. Readers who carefully review these models are likely to come up with many ideas for developing models that help them improve their strategies for better results.

A strength of *The Logic Model Guidebook* is that it provides cautions about how one approaches logic models. For example, they note the importance of paying attention to context, attending to systems thinking, and attending to whether a logic model is based on wishful thinking versus solid evidence that a theory of change is realistic. The book could be strengthened by taking this aspect of the book further and critiquing the logic model examples in light of these cautions.

Additionally, it would be helpful for the authors to elaborate more on an assumption that may not be evident to the reader: logic modeling to date is heavily influenced by a linear cause-and-effect way of viewing the world. We appreciate the value of the controlled and predictive cause-and-effect orientation of logic models espoused

in this guidebook; in many situations, it is a fairly good representation of reality. The difference between this assumption and a systems thinking perspective is worthy of further elaboration. Logic modeling as a whole is in danger of overextending its utility if it does not also consider a systems perspective. Although the authors make mention of systems thinking, a richer discussion of its relevance to logic modeling would strengthen the book.[1] For example, such attention would direct the reader to the importance of context, rich displays of interconnections, and including in their models undesired outcomes that are likely to occur when the strategies are implemented.

Throughout the book, the authors use an effective teaching style in which they list learning objectives at the beginning of each chapter and include reflection questions and application exercises at each chapter's end. Additional questions that ask the reader to critically consider the assumptions underlying each example and the appropriateness of a particular type of logic model for a given situation would help to strengthen the readers' understanding of logic models. For example, we would add the following questions:

- How does the logic model help us understand the interconnections of the system being modeled?

- What undesired outcomes might result from implementing the program activities and strategies?

- How might recognizing the nature of relevant systems and subsystems help the program develop a more effective strategy for achieving desired results?

- Has the model incorporated evidence of the appropriateness of the theory to the situation in which it is being used?

For those who share our interest in how systems thinking can enrich logic modeling, we would call attention to the Paint Product Stewardship Initiative illustrative model in Chapter 8 of the guidebook. It is well down the path of integrating systems thinking with the traditional way of doing logic models. For example, it emphasizes a variety of interconnections through its different flows and arrows. It shows subsystems such as the Paint Market, and the DEQ. And as a teaser for other aspects of system thinking, note its use of "fuzzy logic". (Check out fuzzy logic on wikipedia if you're not familiar with it.)

Concluding Comments

We would argue that today's most challenging problems—hunger, poverty, environmental degradation, economic instability, and more—persist because of the system structures that produce them. The next leap forward in logic modeling will be to incorporate a greater systems perspective. Otherwise, the logic modeling process can give us a false sense of security about a program's impact on the social problems or opportunities it seeks to address. In the meantime, *The Logic Model Guidebook* moves us collectively forward through its focus on outcomes and provision of a wide range of examples to reflect upon.

Reviewed by Beverly Parsons, Ph.D., (InSites executive director) and Patricia Jessup, Ph.D., (InSites consultant)

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[1] We would especially encourage the reader who is interested in systems thinking to read the work of Donella Meadows, a pioneering scientist and systems thinker. Her book *Thinking in Systems: A Primer* is an excellent introduction to systems thinking. She describes a system as "an interconnected set of elements that are coherently organized in a way that achieves something" (Meadows, 2008, p. 11). Delving more deeply into this definition can provide insights into how to enhance your logic models.