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Developing the Quinn Model: Leadership for Guiding Transformational Journeys: A Reflection

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Abstract

Purpose: Leadership in health and human services is an integral component of high-quality healthcare, employee wellbeing optimal patient and organisational outcomes. In order to achieve these outcomes evidence-based leadership development is required. The aim of this paper is to explore the development of the Quinn Model: Guiding Transformational Journeys, through a deliberate and transparent reflective approach.

Design: We describe the identification of the need for a contemporary, evidence-based approach to leadership education and the evolution of a model based on transformational leadership and how this has contributed to the health and human services sector through tertiary education.

Findings: The Quinn Model: Guiding Transformational Journeys advocates for transformation to be at the centre of all leadership development activities and interventions, as it can contribute to a permanent change of state or being leading to a higher level of function. The model relates to individual people, teams of people, units, organisations, or communities and reflects the interconnectedness needed for successful transformational leadership.

Originality: We have explored the innovative methods undertaken to link the components of transformational leadership into a meaningful, useable model for present and emerging leaders in a healthcare and human services setting.

Keywords: Leaders; Innovation; Professional practice; Reflection; Transformation; Transformational leadership; Transformational learning

Introduction

Leader and leadership development are critical for the Health and Human Service (H&HS) sector, which is facing unprecedented challenges. These challenges have previously been categorised as centering around human resources (22%), leadership and governance (21%), finance (8%), infrastructure and supplies (8%) and knowledge and information (7%) [1]. Deficiencies in leadership capability have been found to have contributed to adverse outcomes in healthcare nationally and internationally with recommendations from key reports over many years focussed on the need for leadership development for healthcare professionals [2-6]. Needless to say the impetus to embed leadership and management in every clinician's repertoire is gaining serious momentum [7]. The importance of effective H&HS leadership is difficult to overestimate as leadership not only improves major clinical outcomes [8] resulting in high level of patient/client satisfaction [9], but also improves employee well-being by promoting workplace engagement and reducing burnout [10].

Investment in improving leadership capabilities has been widely emphasised in the literature [11-13]. Formal training and education is now accepted as highly desirable for H&HS leaders recognising that some core leadership skills and competencies can be intentionally taught [14,15].

Creating and implementing effective H&HS leadership programs is not an easy task. The diverse and often conflicting views within the sector and the numerous external stakeholders, who often have their own unique views on the role and appropriate directions of our services, provide further challenges [16] (Thus, a formal leadership model can serve as the foundational starting point for learning and as an organizing framework for the developing leadership curricula [10]. A detailed model [17] was developed in response to the need for contemporary, evidence-based approaches to transformational learning for leaders and aspiring leaders in the health and human service sectors. This model draws upon transformational leadership, which is applicable to a range of contemporary work settings as it encompasses leadership development activities to a greater degree than many other approaches. The Transformational Leadership model has previously been criticised as lacking in conceptual clarity [18,19] contributing to ambiguity in measuring and explaining the effectiveness of the model [20]. This newly devised model has taken these critiques into consideration and draws on each of the author's considerable industry experience and reflects an extension which responds to some of these commonly reported limitations of Transformational Leadership (TL). Through many collaborative endeavours in industry and education, the authorship team have utilised their leadership experience, across many disciplines and fields within the H&HS sector, to contribute to exploration and analysis of the development of a final model, The Quinn Model: Guiding Transformational Journeys.

This report provides a reflective perspective of the development of the final model, The Quinn Model: Guiding Transformational Journeys [17], and its use and value in transformational leadership learning in tertiary education and H&HS service delivery.

Leadership Styles

The first step to creating an evidence-based resource about transformation leadership to support teaching and learning involved utilising the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) based on work by Burns [21] and Bass [22,23] and their full range leadership model [24], as a standardised leadership assessment. This model includes three broad leadership approaches that can be proportionally applied and balanced to achieve the most effective and productive outcomes in a range of circumstances. These three approaches are laissez-faire, transactional, and transformational leadership. These are in turn further divided into sub-components. The MLQ instrument assesses the level that each of the sub-component qualities is demonstrated by the leader. The full range leadership model proposes that the most effective leadership that is likely to lead to transformative outcomes in people and organisations has proportionally higher levels of expression of the transformational leadership qualities and conversely proportionally lower expression of transactional or laissez-faire approaches. In Burns' [21] seminal work the author conceptualized leadership as either purely transactional or transformational. Transactional leaders are those who lead through social exchange such as denial of rewards for lack of productivity. He hypothesised that in the post-industrial age a more inspirational style of leadership was needed, a change that required leaders to work in new and different ways with their followers. Transactional Leadership occurs when the leader rewards or disciplines the follower, depending on the adequacy of the follower's performance [25]. In addition, Laissez-Faire leadership represents a passive leadership style that abdicates legitimate responsibilities [26] and is often considered to be ineffective on its own. Therefore, Laissez-faire and transactional approaches should ideally be expressed at much lower levels than the transformational leadership components.

Transformational leaders behave in ways that achieve superior results by employing high, balanced levels of all of the four core components of transformational leadership: individualised consideration; intellectual stimulation; inspirational motivation; and idealised influence with proportionally lower levels of laissez-faire and transactional leadership styles. Transformational leadership provides a better fit for leading in today's complex work groups and organizations, where followers not only seek an inspirational leader to help guide them through an uncertain environment, but where followers also want to be challenged, to be individually acknowledged, and to feel empowered, if they are to be loyal, high performers. Despite debate regarding conceptual clarity and construct validity of aspects of this theory [18,27,28], this fit and evidence that it is an effective form of leadership has made transformational leadership a significant and enduring approach in the health and human services field [29,30]. The merits of transformational leadership are clear and include characteristics such as vision, ability to drive change and the ability to persuade followers to transcend their own self-interest for the greater good [28]. However, whilst considered strengths within this model, there is a risk that these traits can become weaknesses if utilised in excess. Quinn's work encapsulates the essence of a transformational leadership approach, but further addresses the matter of human and system complexity and engages with the process of leadership development.

Transformational leaders are those who stimulate and inspire followers to achieve extraordinary outcomes and, in the process, develop their own leadership capacity [23]. Transformational leaders help followers grow and develop into leaders and respond to individual followers' needs by empowering them and by aligning the objectives and goals of the individual followers, the group, and the larger organisation. Research demonstrates that transformational leadership is effective in every sector and every setting [31]. This type of leadership has been shown to be an effective approach in organisational change through enhancing employee change supporting behaviour [32,33] and in enhancing customer satisfaction through encouraging, inspiring and motivating employees to seek innovation and positive change [34]. Transformational leadership has been positively associated with dynamic work environments, employee satisfaction and effective organisational culture [35].

Transformation a Central Component to Leadership Development

In 2013, Quinn set out to develop a course on transformational leadership. Throughout this journey, she uncovered the Full Range Transformational Leadership Model [24] as an important, foundational element. The strong evidence-base and teaching applicability and broad leadership applicability of the Full Range Transformational Model generated a solid base for Quinn's leadership course development.

"I was drawn to the completeness of the component parts of the Full Range Transformational Leadership Model and its resonant alignment with my lived experience in senior leadership roles in health and human service settings spanning three decades. What was even more exciting to me was that the model came with a standardised psychometric test that had been researched and normed for multiple industry settings. Even better, was that it came with a body of research demonstrating capacity to train for transformational leadership behaviour and skill development." Quinn, 2022

At this point in her journey, Quinn believed that more than a focus on leader attributes and behaviours would be required to develop an educational course that could teach students how to enable transformation to occur within their work situations.

"Whilst discovery of the full range transformational leadership model and the associated standardised MLQ assessment was indeed good news for a strong contribution to a single tertiary unit on transformational leadership I was aware that some of the system leadership and inner development approaches that I had experience of in my leadership journey would further enhance a course." Quinn, 2022

Three themes resonated with Quinn throughout further exploration of transforming approaches in leadership [36]:

Transformed Thinking: Becoming conscious of what we want our leadership to be like, rather than just unconsciously enacting old patterns, can speed up our participation in a paradigm shift that is taking place in virtually all fields today. Thinking in a more transformative ways can free us from being distressed by continuous change and the impact of global interdependence and allow us to recognize these realities as opportunities.

Transformed Being: Inner Work for Transforming Leaders: Changing the content and structure of our thinking is not enough. Leadership success today depends equally on developing our inner capacities in ways that fundamentally change who we are. The second section explores topics such as the inner work for adaptive challenges, wisdom beyond certainty, mindful leadership, the development of the observing self, transmuting suffering, responding creatively to challenges in a complex world, deepening and expanding Inner capacities for 'becoming the change'.

Enabling Transformation in Others: The Art of Working with and Transforming Groups: Leadership today is no longer just about directing people and energy toward solving problems. It is about creating settings and an atmosphere that enables people to flourish and grow and become leaders themselves. It is important to explore how leaders can access their own unconscious knowledge to help others become aware of the impact of external influence, and how to align energies and connections in groups of people sharing the wisdom they know.

While still focussing on the same concept of 'transformation', Quinn recognised in Pearson's work a systems approach exploring the interplay between the inner world of the individual and external systems, that appeared less developed in the writing of Bass and Burns. Quinn felt a deep resonance with the work of Pearson [36] pertaining to her experiences and encounters with leadership in the complex world of health and human services across 20 years. She had an increasing realisation of the profound wisdom of the basic premise presented in the book: the basic premise being, in her interpretation, that

"If you want to be in the business of transforming anything (be it people, teams, organisations or communities) you need to have three dimensions of transformational development in play at the same time. Firstly, a group of leaders exposed to transformed thinking. Secondly, this same group exposed to a set of conditions and experiences that might enable inner transformation. Thirdly, that same group of leaders, who have been exposed to some things that have begun to transform their thinking and who have at least begun the process of inner transformation, now begin to be exposed to processes, tools and approaches that equip them to work with other emerging leaders who, in turn, begin to the process of being exposed to transformed thinking and commence the process of inner transformation." Quinn, 2022

Critically, Pearson's work provided indications of how one might guide the development of transformation in individuals and systems. Quinn reached a conclusion that the basic premise presented in Pearson's work would provide a useful framework on which to base a transformational leadership course. This framework could in turn act as a structure to incorporate a range of other tools, approaches, and materials gathered over the course of her leadership career to enrich the course program under the three broad themes: transformed thinking, inner transformation and enabling transformation.

"It became clear by the third read that the three interlinking themes could be readily adapted to form the basic structure of the unit complemented by the Bass & Burns Full Range Transformational Leadership model. Other leadership tools and resources that I had utilised throughout my career could also be readily accommodated within the three-theme structure." Quinn, 2022

The single unit transformational leadership course, was delivered as an elective within a Postgraduate Diploma in Counselling and Chaplaincy, offered by an independent tertiary college as an intensive course over a six-week period in mid-2014. It was designed to provide a greater opportunity for experiential learning involving intentional activities and focus across the inner and outer worlds of leadership that would be more likely to lead to the conditions that enable transformation to occur. These conditions are not often included in academic programs supporting leadership and management skill development. In previous studies it has been reported that students undertaking experiential learning in leadership courses had greater confidence in their skills to lead change, seek out enhanced responsibilities and become more a more vocal advocate for sustainability in the workplace [37]. Similarly, experiential learning has been shown to facilitate leadership efficacy, capacity, motivation, and enactment [38]. In this unit the learning outcomes were centred around progressing from general transformed thinking to learning to 'be the change', to enabling the transformation of others. The intended learning outcomes for the course are shown in (Table 1).

Learning Outcomes Number	Learning Outcome Description
1	Discuss the nature and quality of leadership provided by others in different contexts and agree on which leadership attributes might be effective in differing circumstances
2	In your own journey, demonstrate deeper insights about, and greater awareness of, the personal inner transformation that is required for effective leadership
3	Develop strategies for growth and development regarding the process of inner transformation that is required for effective leadership
4	Apply strategies that support the development of effective leadership capacities and the transformation of people with whom you are working.

Table 1: Course Intended Learning Outcomes.

Course results and informal student evaluation demonstrated that the designed learning outcomes were well achieved, and feedback on the course was positive.

“The teaching equipped students with profound, adaptable tools and methods for digging deep within oneself to root out obstacles and to discover the emerging and hidden leadership qualities and resilience embedded within each student. A unit truly designed to equip leaders for life-long leadership.”

2014 Student Reflection

A number of students subsequently sought out Quinn following the course to undertake further development and coaching to explore some of the ideas further.

“Transformational Leadership will remain one of the most impactful (personally and professionally) subjects during my studies at the College. I understood perhaps for the first time in my life, I was ‘transacting’ through life, not ‘transforming’ through life. The course offered a radical insight into the power of a story and its capacity to transform lives, my own and those around me.”

2014 Student Reflection

Student presentations and feedback from peers was the final part of the single-unit course. This required a level of vulnerability in sharing experiences which raised some interpersonal issues that were not able to be adequately addressed in the timeframe or format of the assessment day. As a result of this and further student feedback, additional support was established for students as required. In future planning for course delivery, building in additional follow-up group sessions for the students and more focus on providing an ongoing safety net for the students to work through interpersonal issues was considered and implemented.

“Wendy provided tools and drew out shared experiences that taught deep into the realities of leadership dynamics, leading students through critical reflection and self-examination into an understanding of the mastery of transformation leadership’s complex challenges and rewards.”

2014 Student Reflection

Design and Development of the Initial Model

In developing the original postgraduate transformational leadership course for delivery in 2014, consideration was given to the Full Range Transformational Leadership model and the MLQ assessment. The process of combining the work of Bass [22], Burns [21] and Pearson [36] had begun with the development of a Leadership for Transformation Framework (Figure 1). This early representation reflects a ‘bringing together’ of these two perspectives in order to address the question of how to design a more effective leadership development program utilising the analysis and development of behaviours and attributes of transformational leaders together with a framework for teaching the process for enablement of transformation through transformed thinking, inner transformation and enabling transformation in others. This model was utilised within the 2014 course and viewed by students as a well-designed tool for addressing current challenges in the delivery of services in the field of health and human services.

“Wendy’s model, whilst engaging in critical reflective thinking processes, went beyond by taking students on a real-life journey of encounter with self and others, providing practical tools and reflective practices, that continue to build resilience and stamina for the journey ahead, for which I am most grateful.” 2014 Student Reflection

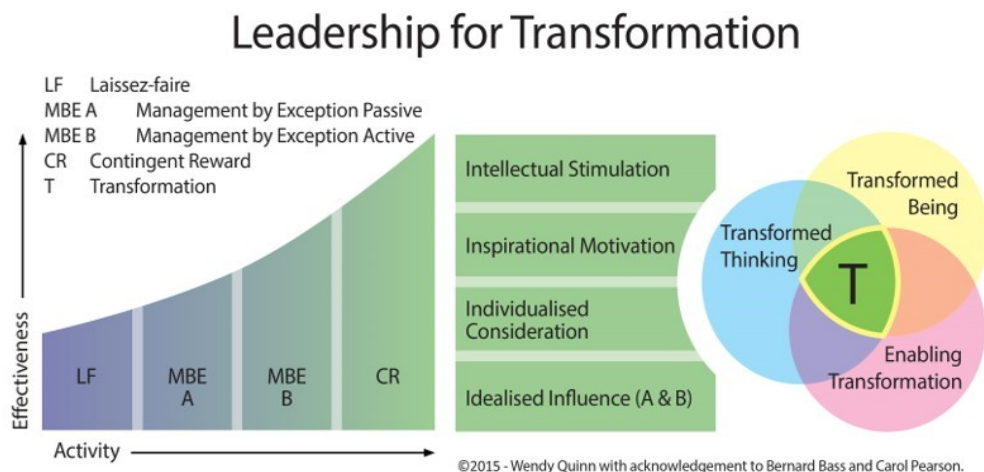


Figure 1: Leadership for Transformation [39].

The Leadership for Transformation Framework highlights the connections between the four components of transformational leadership and the three elements of Pearson’s approach. The four components of the Bass [22] MLQ model form a basis for understanding and supporting the growth and development of the character and behavioural traits of transformational leadership. This foundation of learning is then complemented by the additional developmental exploration of transformed thinking, inner transformation and enabling transformation. The continued interplay between these two areas of work and the developmental journey that occurs when all three of the Pearson approaches are being developed at the same time creates the circumstances that make it more likely for sustainable transformation to occur, particularly when done in an environment of psychological safety.

Personal Reflections and Motivations for Expansion

Following the success with development and delivery of the transformational leadership unit, and use of the Leadership for Transformation Framework [39] in a range of organisational consulting work, Quinn was increasingly aware of some important implications. It was clear to Quinn that there were some very real issues for health and human service organisations wanting to achieve transformation, for health professionals aspiring to move into leadership and management positions and for the education and learning requirements to support this. The following reflections surfaced:

- Change strategies need to be mindful of the importance of transformational leadership to support transformation of systems.
- The process of transforming systems requires an integrated focus on developing transformed thinking, supporting the inner transformation of leaders, and supporting their capacity to enable the development of others not just a focus on leadership attribute and behaviour development.
- Paradoxically, to transform the outer world, we will need to focus on the inner world of leaders
- Different kinds of leadership development will be required to support the transformation in our leaders of the future and their role enabling transformation of systems, organisations, and the people within them. This will need to include a focus on inner development, self-awareness, and capacity to enable that process to occur in others.
- The Transformational Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) provides an objective standardised method of measuring baseline and trend changes in transformational leadership (behaviour and attributes) collectively and by individual components and includes a balance of self-assessment and assessment from others.
- There is strong research evidence that transformational leadership dimensions respond to training and intervention.
- There are several tools and strategies (with a strong research evidence base) that can be utilised to support leadership development programs to increase the effectiveness of transformational leadership in our health and human service systems.

These reflections are supported by previous work that suggests that innovation through transformational leadership and organisational culture needs to be supported by flexibility and adaptiveness in meeting ongoing changing demands [40]. Transformation of leadership requires continuous improvements of processes as well as people [41] and training and education in this space provides skills and proficiency required to support these needs. Leadership ‘training’ has previously come in many forms, but is often inconsistently translated into practice [42]. A broad range of informal, online, and organisational programs have been instituted throughout Australia in various settings, although most are targeted solely at the professions of nursing and medicine [43,44]. These, and many other education initiatives in Australia, have not included allied health, medical and administrative professionals, who all contribute to health and human service processes and organisations. Transformational leadership in H&HS requires integration of interdisciplinary knowledge, skills, vision, and innovation for effective and collaborative healthcare practice [45]. By harnessing leadership potential in healthcare professionals across disciplines, leadership capacity increases, and a sharing of power enhances more effective and successful outcomes that are responsive to organisational needs [46].

Development of the Quinn Model: Guiding Transformational Journeys

Throughout the latter part of 2014 and into 2015, Quinn continued her consultation and educational work but discovered that it was impossible to ignore the learning from her transformational leadership journey. She began to work with organisations utilising components of the Leadership for Transformation Framework [39] through consultancy and individual coaching work as well as continuing to provide leadership tertiary education through the University of Tasmania (UTAS). What emerged consistently was a further expansion of the integration in the Leadership for Transformation Framework [39]. Key emergent developments of the model included the organisational context for systems work and the concept of directionality encompassing multiple points to initiate transformation. These features began to describe how the inner and outer perspectives of Pearson's approach could be made tangible for individuals and organisations. The integrated transformational leadership approach appeared to provide added benefit for organisations attempting to resolve a wide range of issues. Transformation, and how to achieve it, was at the heart of most presenting problems. The presenting problem offers an entry point to meet the identified needs of the organisation, but at the same time allows for the central importance of leadership for transformation to be developed and guide the ongoing process of development and change within the organisation.

It had become clear that the journey of transformation was three-dimensional. The impetus for transformational change within an organisation could commence as a process being advanced by a leader(s) with an internal motivation for inner transformation and change, influencing others. Alternatively, it could focus on the development of new leadership approaches that support transformation throughout the organisation. Finally, it could occur as a mechanism to support any number of organisational needs such as project management, organisational renewal, restructuring, strategic planning, major change, healthcare redesign, cultural change, leadership and team development, and service reform, restructure, and development.

Drawing on aspects of MLQ transformational leadership, Pearson's work and developing design components, the Guiding Transformational Journeys model [17] was created (Figure 2), more recently referred to as The Quinn Model: Guiding Transformational Journeys [17]. This version reflects the interconnectedness needed for successful transformational leadership and focuses on three interlinking components: the inner layer, the middle ring and the outer ring.

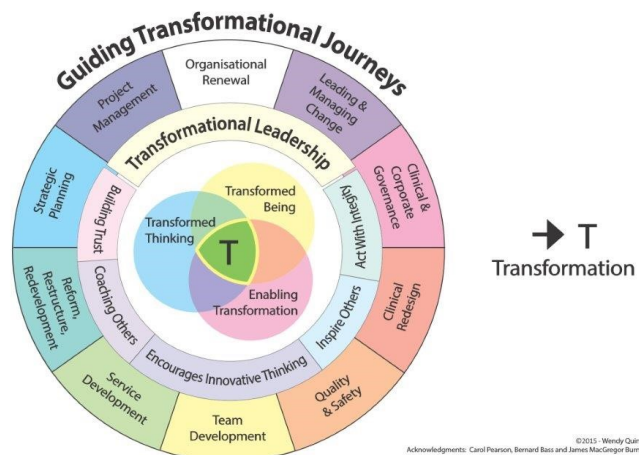


Figure 2: The Quinn Model: Guiding Transformational Journeys.

The Quinn Model: Guiding Transformational Journeys

Transformation is at the centre of this model reflecting transformation as the desired outcome of all activities and interventions supported by this approach. Transformation involves a permanent change of state or being and usually is regarded as being a transition to a higher level of function. It can relate to individual people, teams of people, units, organisations, or communities. The inner layer of the model represents transformation as the outcome that is achieved when leaders are exposed to transformed thinking whilst at the same time undergoing processes that enable inner transformation and capacity to be part of enabling the same process of transformed thinking and inner transformation to begin to occur in other leaders [36]. The middle ring is the representation of the impact of the Full Range Transformational Leadership Model [21,49] The outer ring is representing the external circumstances that are acting as the driving motivation for change and often act as a catalyst for inner transformation (Quinn). Transformation can commence as an inner journey for a leader(s), exploring inner transformation and transformed thinking as well as, enabling transformation in others (as represented by the inner ring in the model) [36]. Alternatively, it can commence with a compelling need arising within an organisation for any, or all, of the challenges represented in the outer ring (Quinn). Transformation is best supported by an interplay of all the elements in the model, often simultaneously which is the central idea behind this model. Transformation should always be reflective of an inner and outer process of linkages and learning. The journey to transformation is non-linear and often experienced in a spiral-looping manner with a need to repeat a process, represented when a new stage of learning, or level of consciousness is achieved. Transformation should be supported with the full spectrum of transformational leadership components of building trust, coaching others, encouraging innovative thinking, inspiring others, and acting with integrity [21,49].

Where to from here?

The Quinn Model: Guiding Transformational Journeys has now become the foundation for a Professional Practice Pathway (PPP) year, embedded in the Masters level qualification in Leadership in Health and Human Services and Healthcare Redesign academic courses at the University of Tasmania. The PPP was developed in response to the needs and expectations of our local and national health and human service organisations requiring educational experiences that support system leadership approaches for sustained transformation. Further research will explore this educational framework.

Conclusion

Following her extensive career in executive leadership in state government health and human service systems, Quinn embarked on a search in the scholarly literature for an evidence-base that could support her lived experience of transformational system leadership and inform the development of leadership education. The evolution of the Quinn Model: Guiding Transformational Journeys demonstrates the challenges and barriers that are faced in leadership development in health and human services. Enhancing our understanding in this domain through the development of a formalised model is key to continuing to build capacity, capability and knowledge focussed on delivering quality healthcare. This model has become the foundation for a tertiary award course dedicated to developing transformational leaders in health and human services.

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