Reading Tips and Study Questions

Session 9: Action learning and communities of practice

Required reading:


Further reading


Tips and questions

Thus far, we have focused primarily on policymaking settings and the broad “public arena,” mostly ignoring the organizational settings in which managerial routines and practitioner discretion come into play. Yet these routines and settings are enormously important for understanding how systems produce and reproduce the “state of the world” that researchers (or those who employ research knowledge) may be eager to change.

Our core concepts this week are action learning, actionable knowledge, defensive routines, and communities of practice.

1. Why, according to Argyris, is much “applicable” knowledge unlikely to be “actionable”? Why might it be important for a researcher who seeks change to grapple with the distinction between Model I and Model II learning?

2. What do organized learning networks or “communities of practice” (CoPs), as they appear in Snyder and Briggs, add to the concept of actionable knowledge? What key limits might CoPs face as mechanisms for using learning to drive changes in practice or policy? Think about the politics of the policy process, for example. Are any of these limits evident in the Boost 4 Kids case?