

THE PRACTICE OF INNOVATION AND PROBLEMS OF IMPROVEMENT

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CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT: ENTHUSIASM AND CHALLENGE

- ✘ Growing enthusiasm for continuous improvement as integral to the practice of educational innovation...
- ✘ Yet integrating continuous improvement at scale, among a large population of innovating organizations, is contingent on developing system-level infrastructure to support the work.

OVERVIEW

- ✘ The practice of educational innovation.
- ✘ Centrality (and categories) of continuous improvement.
- ✘ Problems of improvement.
- ✘ Aligning politics, policies, and practice to build and leverage complementary “impact” and “improvement” infrastructures.

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- ✘ Specific focus: Organizations managing large-scale networks that engage schools in developing and fielding systemic, multi-component improvement programs.
- ✘ Distinguishing characteristics:
 - + Functionally complex, including development, training, evaluation, logistics, business systems, executive management, and more.
 - + Problem-fraught, owing to interdependencies among clients, programs, innovating organizations, external evaluators, funders, and environments.

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 - + Network improvement: Building enterprise-wide infrastructure supporting production, use, and refinement of knowledge and capabilities at scale.
 - + Executive improvement: Developing the knowledge and capabilities to structure and manage distributed, inter-organizational learning.

ESSENTIAL CHALLENGE: VARIABILITY IN INFRASTRUCTURE

- ✘ Overarching observation: Innovating organizations have been more successful in developing capabilities to attend to program impact than in developing capabilities for the continuous improvement on which positive impact depends.

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- ✘ Root cause: Variability in system-level infrastructure supporting impact and improvement as key dimensions of the practice of educational innovation.
 - + Political supports.
 - + Policy supports.
 - + Philanthropic, private, and professional supports.

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- ✘ Strong impact infrastructure and rapid effects on practice.
- ✘ Weak improvement infrastructure and problems of practice.
 - + Non-embrace: Continuous improvement not recognized as essential to the practice of educational innovation.
 - + Struggles developing and leveraging capabilities for continuous improvement in all three domains:
 - ✘ Program improvement.
 - ✘ Network improvement.
 - ✘ Executive improvement.

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- ✘ The response to impact: Positive effects of politics and policies on practice.
- ✘ The challenge of improvement: Adapting politics and policies *in response to practice*.
- ✘ Beginning points in addressing the challenge:
 - + Philanthropists, private firms, and professional associations as potential sources of influence on politics and policies.
 - + Organized as a coalition or coalitions.
 - + Coordinated efforts to incorporate improvement into the language and discourse of education politics and policy.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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