

Diagnostic Repertoires

Overview

A major theme of this review is that, at least by my reckoning, social scientists have an impressive collective capacity to think with intelligence and sophistication about the problem of government learning rates. This does not mean that anyone knows in advance which conceptions and theories apply to different individuals or agencies any more than a physician can diagnose in advance the causes of the problems of the next patient to be seen. Nor does it mean that all diagnoses can yet be linked to effective remedies. But it is a respectable beginning.

Illustrative Individual Diagnoses

In Table 1, I give a list of some major diagnostic alternatives of shortfalls in individual learning; space limitations necessitate deferring a full listing to another place. Undoubtedly, the reviewers who address this field in future years will be able to add more alert differentiation, tighter integration, some empirical weights of more likely diagnoses, codify procedures for taking relevant details of a patient's history, and offer suggestions for multistage empirical examinations of organizations that are equivalent to the standard general-physical screening exam and the use of indicated laboratory tests. In the left column of Table 1, I make general reference to the high-level theory or issue involved. In the right column I have grounded the theories by less formal language; social science is not in another world but, usually, only codifies in perspective what Clifford Geertz (1973) called the hard surfaces of daily (there isn't any other kind) life, in the schedules, appointments, meetings, and deadlines in bureaucratic and political jobs.

Table 1. Illustrative Diagnoses of Individual Learning

Theoretical perspective	"Your problem is that you . . ."
Fixed nature	
Motivational and emotional	Do other things Don't want to learn Love routine Don't use your unconscious effectively Think you're right already Are too old to change
Ability	Don't have the ability Aren't suited to this job
Passive-reactive	Don't think for yourself Just want to have a good time Need a good leader Need some ideals Follow the course of least resistance Need an interesting problem Are too realistic about what you can accomplish Need to think of yourself as a professional Need a better identity
Developmental	Have to keep working at it Are underchallenged or over your head Aren't getting the respect and appreciation you feel entitled to Need better critics Need a sense of perspective Don't like responsibility Are scared to grow up because you would feel lost, confused, alone, and vulnerable Need incentives to grow up and take charge Are too deferential and too intimidated by authority
Stress	Have too much stress Are trying to do too much Have too little stress Feel complexity or change threatens your sense of control
Aversive motivation	Resent being a subordinate Are scared you're a potential victim Are too realistic about how much your superiors care about you Need psychotherapy Work in a bad organization Are afraid to admit you don't know the answer already