

Sample case study on causes from the book

[Business](#), [Management](#)



Lindblom is not too pessimistic regarding the ability of the administrators to make profound 'big' choices that will change or reshape their external environments. Lindblom considers the administrators too afraid of making choices to the extent that they find every approach that is meant to alter their external environments insecure. This means that Lindblom considers the administrators as a hindrance to the sustainable growth of public institutions. He further considers public administrators to be incredibly limited in their scope because of the political environment that exists in both private and public administration (Stillman, 2009, p.). Lindblom suggests that the bureaucratic decisions that are usually made by the public administrators are seldom rational.

The rationality of decisions and the ideal perspective of bureaucracies postulate remarkably organized and thorough organizations. Bureaucracy assumes a scenario whereby administrators assess a wide range of alternative approaches and eventually selecting the best alternative based on their careful analysis of every possible situation. However, Lindblom is of the opinion that contemporary bureaucrats make decisions when they are not properly informed and carry out objective analysis. This is what Lindblom refers as making decisions by 'muddling through'.

Lindblom is pessimistic because he observes that the decisions often made by the bureaucratic executive do not have a solid basis because of limited analysis. He contends that the decisions are either initiated with limited or no theory. Consequently, he observes that the speed at which bureaucrats make decisions clearly suggest that they make decisions using negligible information. They do not consider the consequences of their decisions and

are likely to be undesirable in future scenarios.

Lindblom is concerned that the 'rational comprehensive' approach that has dominated teaching and research within public administration. He contends that bureaucrats have become accustomed to the approach because it has been in use for a long time within public administration. As such, he believes that the approach has dominated decision-making processes to a point where it has become accepted as an ideal approach for generating public policy. This suggests that bureaucrats begin to address certain policy matters by ranking them in terms of values and intentions. Consequently, they ascertain and analyze every alternative solution while justifying every potential factor. This process ends with the bureaucrats choosing the option that is estimated to deliver the maximum value that would satisfy the set objectives.

Rather than carrying out a comprehensive analysis of every option, Lindblom opines that bureaucrats use constrained processes based on limited comparison to develop policies. According to Lindblom, new policies have very little, if any, variance to the ones that are currently in use. He notes that decision-making is evolutionary and not revolutionary. To Lindblom, this reduces the number of alternative and perhaps better approaches that can be scrutinized and implemented. In other words, Lindblom alleges that policy makers look for the closest policy resembling the ones in use rather than probing policies for their appropriateness. Hence, it is very rare to see bureaucrats developing new policies. Administrators in the public sector as well as in the private sector only seek to retain the status quo. This is achieved through building on prevailing policies and modifying them in a

constant evolutionary manner. Such rigid approaches frustrate the citizens because they feel that the government is unperturbed or does not respond to their concerns. Despite his criticism of the bureaucratic approaches, Lindblom acknowledges their effectiveness. He acknowledges that the approaches that bureaucrats adopt during policy-making ultimately respond to the objectives of the constituents.

How does Long's description of the hierarchy/bureaucracy conflict with Weber's point of view? Which do you feel is more accurate in describing the modern bureaucracy, and why?

Long argues that the sources of power in a bureaucratic system are consequent and limited. He also contends that the highest point in the administrative structure of power is not important in a bureaucratic structure. He however observes that the power of the hierarchy drifts down a chain of command. As such, Long provides that the president or congress can give power to administrators based on a case to case basis. Consequently, Long opines that power is not determined by politics or the structure of government on the basis of ability to budget it depending on administrative activities. His view is that power flows from the top administrators to the center. With regard to the American system of government, Long opines that the legislative and executive branches of government often shift depending on the shifting public support (97).

On the other hand, according to Weber, bureaucracy is an administrative structure that emanate from rational and legal authority. He contends that the bureaucratic structures progressed from the traditional administrative arrangements. He argues that bureaucratic constructs only focus on the

most significant features and based on a system of power that where the leaders in the higher tier exercise control over those in the lower tiers. He therefore perceived the bureaucratic structure as a system for exercising discipline. To Weber, bureaucratic systems allow subordinates increased freedom and discretion where they can even challenge the decisions of the superiors based on the set guidelines. He contended that bureaucratic officials are appointed by the authorities that are superior and that elected leaders are not true bureaucrats (59). As such, he opines that bureaucracy does not reside with an authority that is superior in an administration. Weber's description is more accurate in describing the modern bureaucracy. This is because bureaucratic tendencies in contemporary societies are based on the duties and responsibilities exercised by offices depending on their rank. There is more allocation of specified tasks for every office and the officials operate in the manner prescribed and within specified jurisdictions. Consequently, the jurisdictions of various offices are pronounced by a set of administrative regulations. Accordingly, policy making in the contemporary societies take into consideration the inferior-superior correlation. Finally, modern bureaucratic processes are concentrating on the correctness of the process based on the enacted administration rules. As such, the legitimacy of a policy is pegged on the process. Ideally, the loyalty of the bureaucrat is in favor of an objective often to a higher position and not to the specific individual who occupies it.

References

Stillman, R. (2009). Public Administration: Concepts and Cases. Boston, MA:

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