

## Axis 6: Organization theories : Classical theories

### Introduction :

Organization theories are frameworks that seek to explain how organizations function, evolve, and achieve their objectives. These theories provide insights into organizational structures, behaviors, and processes, helping to understand the dynamics of work environments. They encompass diverse perspectives such as classical, neoclassical, contingency, and modern theories, each offering unique viewpoints on organizational behavior, leadership, communication, and decision-making.

We will start with classical theories, then, which refer to a set of management and organizational principles developed during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These theories include scientific management, administrative theory, and bureaucratic theory, proposed by Frederick Taylor, Henri Fayol, and Max Weber, respectively. They emphasize principles such as efficiency, hierarchy, specialization, and formalized procedures to enhance organizational effectiveness.

### 1- Theory of Scientific Management

The Theory of Scientific Management, developed by Frederick Taylor, focuses on optimizing efficiency and productivity in organizations. Taylor proposed breaking down tasks into smaller, standardized elements and using scientific methods to determine the most efficient way to perform each element. This approach aimed to eliminate unnecessary movements, improve worker productivity, and increase overall efficiency. Taylor's scientific management also emphasized a fair division of labor and the idea of a "one best way" to perform each task.

An example of the Theory of Scientific Management is the implementation of time and motion studies in manufacturing. Frederick Taylor applied scientific principles to analyze and optimize work processes. In a factory setting, he observed workers performing tasks, broke down each task into its basic elements, and measured the time required for each element. By identifying the most efficient methods and eliminating unnecessary movements, Taylor aimed to increase overall productivity and reduce labor costs. This approach led to improved efficiency in various industries during the early 20th century.

## 2- The Theory of Administrative Divisions

The Theory of Administrative Divisions, proposed by Henri Fayol, is part of his broader Administrative Management Theory. Fayol identified five primary functions of management: planning, organizing, commanding, coordinating, and controlling. Regarding administrative divisions, Fayol emphasized the need for organizations to have a clear and well-defined structure. This involves organizing tasks, resources, and people into distinct divisions or departments based on their functions, ensuring a systematic and efficient approach to achieving organizational goals. Administrative divisions help establish a hierarchical structure with clear lines of authority and responsibility within an organization.

An example of the Theory of Administrative Divisions is evident in a large corporation where distinct departments handle specific functions. For instance, a technology company might have separate divisions for research and development, marketing, finance, and human resources. Each division focuses on its specialized area, allowing for efficient management, clear delegation of tasks, and streamlined coordination. This organizational structure helps enhance productivity, as individuals within each division can concentrate on their expertise while the overall company benefits from a well-coordinated and organized approach to achieving its objectives.

## 3- The Theory of Bureaucracy

The Theory of Bureaucracy, developed by Max Weber, emphasizes the importance of a rational and efficient organizational structure. Weber's bureaucracy theory advocates for a formalized system characterized by a clear hierarchy, division of labor, written rules and procedures, impersonality, and merit-based appointments. An example of this theory can be found in government organizations, where there is a hierarchical structure, standardized procedures, and officials appointed based on qualifications. This bureaucratic approach aims to minimize ambiguity, enhance efficiency, and ensure a systematic and predictable operation of organizations.

An example of the Theory of Bureaucracy is evident in government institutions. Consider a tax department where tasks are clearly divided based on functions—such as tax assessment, auditing, and collections. There is a hierarchical structure with officials at different levels of authority, each following standardized rules and procedures for tax processing. This bureaucratic system

ensures consistency, fairness, and efficiency in handling taxpayers' affairs. Additionally, appointments and promotions within the department are typically based on qualifications and merit, aligning with Max Weber's principles of bureaucracy.

#### **4- The advantages and disadvantages of the classical theories**

Classical theories of organization, developed during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, laid the foundation for understanding organizational structures. Here are some advantages and disadvantages:

##### **4-1- Advantages of the classical theories of organization:** Here are some advantages

1. **Clear Hierarchy:** Classical theories emphasize a clear chain of command, which can lead to well-defined roles and responsibilities, reducing confusion.
2. **Efficiency:** The principles of scientific management, a classical theory, focus on optimizing work processes to increase productivity and efficiency.
3. **Specialization:** Classical theories advocate for specialization, allowing employees to become experts in specific tasks, potentially enhancing overall proficiency.
4. **Predictability:** The hierarchical and structured nature of classical organizations promotes stability and predictability in operations.

##### **4-2- Disadvantages of the classical theories of organization:** Here are some disadvantages

1. **Rigidity:** Classical theories can lead to overly rigid structures, making it challenging to adapt to changes in the external environment.
2. **Limited Creativity:** The emphasis on strict rules and procedures may stifle creativity and innovation among employees.
3. **Overemphasis on Structure:** These theories often overlook the human aspect of organizations, neglecting the impact of social and psychological factors on employee motivation and satisfaction.

4. **Resistance to Change:** Classical organizations may face resistance when trying to implement changes due to their entrenched and traditional structures.

In modern contexts, organizations often blend classical principles with more contemporary approaches to address the limitations of classical theories.