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Competitive Exams: Evolution of Management Thought

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According to one school of thought, history has no relevance to the problems faced by managers today. Some are also of the opinion that management theory is too abstract to be of any practical use. However, both theory and history are indispensable tools for managing contemporary organizations.

Like most modern disciplines, contemporary management thought has its foundations in the history of management and the many significant contributions of theorists and practitioners. A theory is a conceptual framework for organizing knowledge that provides a blueprint for various courses of action. Hence, an awareness and understanding of important historical developments and theories propounded by early thinkers is important for today's managers.

In this chapter, we first take a look at the early approaches to management. We then focus on four well-established schools of management thought (see below) :

- the classical approach
- the behavioral approach
- the quantitative approach
- the modern approaches to management

Finally, some emerging approaches in management thought are discussed.

Major Classification of Management Approaches and Their Contributors

Classical approach

- Scientific management: Frederick W. Taylor, Frank and Lillian Gilbreth and Henry Gantt
- Bureaucratic management: Max Weber
- Administrative management: Henri Fayol

Behavioral approach

- Group influences: Mary Parker Follet

- Hawthorne studies: Elton Mayo
- Maslow's needs theory: Abraham Maslow
- Theory X and Theory Y: Douglas McGregor
- Model I versus Model II values: Chris Argyris

Quantitative approach

- Management science
- Operations management
- Management information system

Modern approaches

- The Systems Theory
- Contingency Theory

Emerging approaches

- Theory Z and Quality management: William Ouchi

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