**Critical Evaluation of the Classical Theory**

The classical theory has been criticised on various grounds by various social scientists.

1. It is criticised as an unscientific theory of organisation. It is said that the theory was not tested (verified) under scientific conditions (controlled and repeatable). Thus the empirical base of the theory is inadequate to support its elements. The critics said that theory is full of "inconsistencies, tautologies and lack of sophistication." Herbert Simon and Dwight Waldo stated that the methods used by the classical school were simply not scientific.

2. It is criticised on the ground that it neglected the human dimension of the organisation, that is, sociological and psychological aspects of management (administration). Warren Bennis remarked that the focus of classical theory is on "organisations without people". Hence, March and Simon have described it as the "machine model" theory.

3. The classical theory is described as "atomistic" because it views human beings in isolation from the fellow men in the organisation. Similarly, it is described as "voluntaristic" because it believes that human beings are immune to social control, that is, control by groups.

4. The theory has been characterised as "mechanistic" because it fails to explain the dynamics of organisational behaviour. It treats man as an lifeless instrument or mere component in the organisation machine. It is more concerned with the work rather than the worker. Thus it under-estimated human factor in the organisation.

5. The most important critic of the classical theory is Herbert A. Simon. He described the principles of organisation as "proverbs, myths, slogans and pompous inanities." He remarked that the principles are not scientifically valid and thus do not have universal relevance (application). In his words "It is a fatal defect of the current principles of administration that, like proverbs, they occur in pairs. For almost every principle one can find an equally plausible and acceptable contradictory principle. Although the two principles of the pair will lead to exactly opposite organisational recommendations, there is nothing in the theory to indicate which is the proper one to apply."

He also observed that "the principles of administration are at best, a criterion for describing and diagnosing administrative situations. All the stated principles are to be considered in the design of an efficient administrative organisation."

6. The theory has also been criticised on the ground that it has over-simplified human motivation. It assumed each worker to be an economic man who is interested in maximising his income. Accordingly, it has not taken any note of non-economic factors, that is, it has not emphasised the social and psychological factors of human motivation. The Hawthorne experiments conducted by Elton Mayo proved that the workers are motivated not only by economic factors (material rewards) but also by non-economic factors.

7. The classical theory is described as a "normative theory" because it is more concerned with *what ought to be* rather than *what is.* Thus, unlike the behavioural approach, it did not study the actual behaviour in the organisation.

8. The classical theory is described as a "static model" of organisation, that is, it treats an organisation as a "closed system", uninfluenced by the external environment. The systems approach to organisational analysis highlighted this drawback of classical theory.

9. The classical theory was criticised on the ground that it deals only with the formal organisation and neglects the informal organisational processes. A formal organisation is one which is deliberately and rationally designed (structured/planned) to attain its objectives in an efficient and effective way. while the informal organisation reflects the social relations in the organisation. Chestar Barnard and Herbert Simon observed that the actual behaviour of organisational members departs in many ways from the rationalistic behaviour.

10. According to Chris Argyris, there is a basic incongruence between the needs of a mature personality and the requirements of a classical organisation (a formal organisation designed in accordance with the classical principles). The application of such principles make the employees passive, dependent, subordinate and short-term oriented.

11. J.G, March and Herbert Simon (in their book *Organisations)* have pointed out the following limitations of the classical theory.

(a) The motivational assumptions of the theory are improper.

(b) The role of intra-organisational conflict of interests has received little appreciation in the theory-

(c) The theory has given little consideration to the constraints placed on the man by the complex information processing system.

(d) The role of cognition in task identification and classification received little attention in the theory.

(e) The theory has given little attention to the phenomenon of programme evaluation.

12. V. Subramaniam (in his Article entitled as 'The Classical Organisation Theory and its Critics' has mentioned the following two limitations of the classical theory: (i) It appears to be common sense propositions which do not appeal to the intellectual curiosity of the scholars of administration. Thus, there is a lack of sophistication in the theory. (ii) It is concerned only with the problems of management and not with the other operational problems in the organisation. Hence, it displays a pro-management bias.

**Significance of the Classical Theory**

Classical theory, despite its limitations, made a significant contribution to the evolution of organisational theory and administrative thought. They are:

1. The classical thinkers developed administration into a science. It was considered hitherto an art. Thus, it provided an answer to the call for "science of administration" by Woodrow Wilson—the father of public administration.

2. The classical writers were the first to propound the idea that administration itself is a separate activity which deserves intellectual investigation.

3. The classical theorists promoted the use of certain management techniques such as report accounting and budgeting in which public administration was deficient.

4. Classical theory formulated a set of concepts in administration and evolved a terminology which could be used by subsequent researchers. It introduced some clear thinking on authority, responsibility and delegation.

5. Classical theory offered practical prescriptions with regard to the construction of logical, rational and efficient organisational structures.

6. Classical theory played an important role in rationalising and stimulating production in the industrial organisations.

7. The very limitations of the classical theory instigated further enquiries, investigations and researches in organisational theory and behaviour. In fact, the classical approach to organisational analysis is considered as the foundation of the 20th century administrative-management thought. Classical theory was most influential during 1930-1950 in the USA. It influenced many administrative reforms committees and commissions including the Brownlow Committee (1937), the First Hoover Commission (1949) and the Second Hoover Commission (1955).

Classical theories of administration form the foundation of all subsequent theories. It earned the word classical because the principles it contain are of comparatively long standing and they stand the test of time. This means, any modern theory is built on these classical principles. They are, however, rigid in their application. They are in one way guided by military values which were imported into the field of administration from military operations in ancient Rome, Egypt and Persia. In another way, the classical principles equally imported economic values from the ideas of some classical economists like Adam Smith, David Ricardo etc.