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Principles and Theories of Management

Nursing Management & Leadership

Classical, scientific, administrative, human relations and modern management theories; management principles and their application in nursing.

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CHAPTER 02 / NURSING MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP 02. Principles and Theories of Management

1. Classical approach

Classical management emphasizes formal structure, predictable procedures, division of labour and efficiency. Its main traditions are scientific management, administrative management and bureaucracy. These approaches help establish consistent clinical processes but may underestimate individual needs and informal relationships.

2. Scientific management - Frederick W. Taylor

Taylor studied work methods to improve efficiency through systematic analysis, selection and training of workers, standardization and cooperation between management and workers. In nursing, time-and-motion studies can identify wasted walking, poorly arranged stores and unnecessary duplication. A standard dressing trolley may reduce preparation time. Standardization must not turn individualized care into inflexible tasks or penalize staff working with complex patients.

3. Administrative theory - Henri Fayol

Fayol described planning, organizing, commanding, coordinating and controlling as managerial activities. His fourteen principles are:

Principle	Meaning in nursing administration
Division of work	Specialization and appropriate task allocation.
Authority and responsibility	Balance decision-making power with accountability.
Discipline	Follow agreed rules and professional standards.
Unity of command	One clearly identified reporting authority for a task.
Unity of direction	Common plan for activities with the same objective.
Subordination of individual interest	Patient and organizational interests take precedence over improper personal advantage.
Remuneration	Fair and appropriate compensation.
Centralization	Balance central authority with local decision-making.

| Principle | Meaning in nursing administration |

Scalar chain	Defined line of authority with safe escalation pathways.
Order	Appropriate arrangement of people and materials.
Equity	Fair, respectful treatment.
Stability of tenure	Retain trained personnel where possible.
Initiative	Encourage staff to propose improvements.
Esprit de corps	Promote teamwork and mutual support.

4. Bureaucratic theory - Max Weber

Weber described rational authority, hierarchy, written rules, specialist roles and merit-based appointment. Hospitals use credentialing, standard operating procedures and reporting hierarchies to reduce arbitrary decisions. Excessive bureaucracy may delay emergency action or discourage innovation; safe escalation should be explicitly supported.

5. Human relations approach

Elton Mayo and the Hawthorne studies are historically associated with recognition of social relationships, informal groups and employee morale. The studies have methodological limitations; they do not establish a universal productivity effect from attention alone. Nurses benefit from meaningful participation, supportive supervision and psychological safety. Behavioural theorists expanded attention to motivation and human needs, including Maslow, Herzberg and McGregor.

Theory	Central idea	Nursing application
Maslow	Needs organized in a broad hierarchy.	Attend to safety, belonging, recognition and growth; avoid treating the hierarchy as universal.
Herzberg	Hygiene factors reduce dissatisfaction; motivators support satisfaction.	Improve working conditions and provide recognition and career growth.
McGregor X and Y	Contrasting assumptions about employee motivation and autonomy.	Use empowerment and appropriate supervision rather than assuming all staff avoid work.

6. Modern theories

Systems theory treats the hospital as an open system: inputs (staff, equipment, funds) are transformed through care processes into outputs and outcomes, with feedback guiding improvement. Contingency theory states that management should adapt to circumstances rather than depend on one universally best approach. Quantitative approaches use forecasting, workload measures and decision models. Socio-technical approaches consider both technology and human relationships.

7. Application in nursing

An emergency department may combine standardized triage protocols (classical), team support and participatory review (human relations), workload forecasting (quantitative), and flexible surge staffing (contingency). Select approaches by patient need, risk and evidence. Management theories are conceptual frameworks rather than clinical treatment rules.

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8. Important Examination Questions

Long Answer Questions

1. 1. Explain Fayol's fourteen management principles with nursing applications.
2. 2. Compare classical, human relations and modern management theories.

Short Answer Questions

1. 1. Scientific management.
2. 2. Bureaucratic management.
3. 3. Systems approach.
4. 4. Contingency theory.
5. 5. McGregor's Theory X and Y.

Very Short Answer Questions (with answers)

1. 1. Who proposed scientific management? - F. W. Taylor.
2. 2. Who is associated with administrative principles? - Henri Fayol.
3. 3. What is esprit de corps? - Team spirit.

9. Quick Revision

- Taylor emphasizes work methods, Fayol administrative principles and Weber formal structure.
- Human relations theory recognizes staff relationships and motivation.
- Modern management adapts to systems, data and circumstances.

10. Conclusion

Taylor emphasizes work methods, Fayol administrative principles and Weber formal structure. Human relations theory recognizes staff relationships and motivation. Modern management adapts to systems, data and circumstances.

Practice questions

Choose one best answer. The answer key and explanations follow the questions.

1. Which management theory states that the approach should adapt to circumstances?

A. Scientific management
B. Bureaucratic theory
C. Contingency theory
D. Administrative theory

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2. According to Herzberg's theory, what is the role of hygiene factors?

A. Guarantee motivation in every employee

B. Eliminate all need for recognition

C. Replace career-growth opportunities

D. Reduce dissatisfaction

3. Which Fayol principle describes a common plan for activities with the same objective?

A. Unity of direction

B. Unity of command

C. Scalar chain

D. Stability of tenure

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Answer key and explanations

1. C - Contingency theory

Contingency theory rejects a single universally best approach in favour of contextual adaptation.

2. D - Reduce dissatisfaction

Herzberg distinguishes hygiene factors that reduce dissatisfaction from motivators supporting satisfaction.

3. A - Unity of direction

Unity of direction aligns activities toward the same objective under a common plan.

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