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AN OVERVIEW OF THE IDEA OF PRESSURE GROUP

A pressure group is a formal or organised body with a common interest whose fundamental aim is to put pressure on any governmental institution with the goal of influencing government policies and laws to its own advantage. The pressure group is referred to as "The Functional Representative." This is the idea that various pressure groups represent different sectors of the society based on their functions and this is usually done through their occupations or professions. For example, the Nigeria Bar Association (NBA), represents the Lawyers and Solicitors, while Nigeria Medical Association(NMA) represents doctor's interests. There is also the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) which champions the interests of academics and condition of learning in Nigeria's universities.

According to Anifowose (1999) pressure group is described as "interest groups, lobby groups or even protest groups". Pressure Groups enhances or even protect the interest of their members or groups, ensures that government does their biddings and through the right channels and means they are able to make the government to listen to them.

In addition to that, these groups influence both public policy, administration, and go a long way to determine political structures of the society forms of government. Some examples of pressure groups, in Nigeria are: ASUU (Academic Staff Union for University), Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC).

Furthermore, pressure groups and political parties activities may sometimes appear similar, but they are different from each other. The first distinction is that political parties seek to gain government powers, while on the other hand, pressure groups do not seek to gain power. Second, political parties have a wide range of policies, whereas

pressure groups narrow their goals. However, these differences do not point to the fact that pressure groups and political parties have nothing in common. In fact, pressure groups and political parties relate together to achieve certain social changes.

The types of Pressure Groups includes Interest groups, Cause Groups, Insider Groups and Outsider Groups, Anomic Groups, and Associational Groups and Non-Associational Groups.

Interest Groups are seen as sectional groups, representing the people in the society. For example, the trade units, for instance, CBI (Confederation of British Industry) known as the voice of business in the country, and in Nigeria, Convention on Business Integration (CBI).

Cause Groups are promotion groups, which seek to promote particular causes. For example, charities and environmental groups. For instance, we can see the Amnesty International, which campaign for the need to end human right abuses. Any group that champions social movement is also seen as "cause group," even though the group lacks formal structure. It is always aimed at achieving a single objective, like protesting about the expansion of airports, Seaports, railways and many others.

Insider groups are regularly consulted by the government and they have regular access to ministers or legislators for example (The Nigeria Bar Association (NBA)) while outside groups have no access or links to the government and its machineries. They have to use other ways to have impact. Example of this set of groups are the Animal Liberation Front or Earth Liberation Front. However, the Insider and Outsider group changes from time to time based on the party or government in power.

Anomic Groups have unpredictable actions and behaviour as they work based on the moment and situation in the society. They are not guided by an appropriate behavioural style or rule, and they may sometimes act violently. Protest, rioting, strikes, and sometimes revolution, are some of the means through which they mount pressure.

Associational groups are usually registered with appropriate authorities in a state or country and has their own registered offices and constitution. On the other hand, non-associational groups are pressure group without a formal organisation. Their arrangement and gathering are by virtue of kinship, family attachment, social traditions, tribal or even race afflictions.

In Conclusion some of the functions of Pressure Groups are: They serve as links between Government and the People, promotes participation in Government, serve as sources of information to Government, curtailing of dictatorial tendencies of the government, promotion of the interest of the minority and influencing legislation.