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AN OVERVIEW OF THE IDEA OF PRESSURE GROUP

Understanding Pressure Group

To mount pressure is to persuade someone or coerce a person into doing something. This makes a pressure group a formal or organized 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 advantages. 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. This is usually done through their occupations or professions. For example, The Nigeria Bar Association (NBA)- they represent the lawyers and solicitors, while Nigeria Medical Association (NMA) -they represent doctors interest. There is also the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) which champions the interest of academics and condition of learning in Nigeria's universities.

According to Anifwose (1999) pressure group is described as interest groups, lobby groups or even protest groups. What pressure groups seek is to achieve is to ensure that government does their biddings. And with some pressure through the right channels and means, pressure groups are able to make government listen to them. In addition to that, these groups influence both public policy, administration and even go a long way to determine political structures of the society and forms of government. In nature, these groups could be religious, business-like, educational, ethnic-oriented, gender-sensitive, economic or social, amongst others.

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. Rather, their aim is to influence political discussions. Second, political parties have a wide range of policies, whereas pressure groups narrow their goals. Also pressure groups are not actually accountable for any of their actions while political parties do accounts for their actions. However these differences do not point to the fact that pressure groups and political parties have nothing in common. They do , in fact, pressure groups and political parties relates together to achieve certain social changes

Types of pressure groups

- **Interest groups:** this groups is also 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:** these groups are promotion groups, which seeks to promote particular cause. For example, charities and environmental groups.
- **Insider groups and Outsider groups:** insider groups are regularly consulted by the government. They have regular access to ministers or legislators. The Nigeria Bar Association(NBA) is an example of such groups. However, an insider group may be high or low in profile, nevertheless they intend to have influence on government's mission and visions. On the other hand, outside groups have no access or links to the government and its machineries
- **Anomic groups:** groups here have unpredictable actions and behavior as they work based on the moment and situation in the society
- **Associational groups and Non-association also groups:** associational groups are usually registered with appropriate authorities in a state or country. Also these groups have their own registered offices, constitutions and so on. On the other hand , non-associational groups are pressure groups without formal organization

Functions of pressure groups

1. It links government to the people
2. It promotes participation in government
3. It is serving as sources of information to government
4. It is curtailing of dictatorial tendencies
5. It leads to promotion of the interest of the minority
6. It deals with influencing legislation
7. It brings about pressure groups lobbying

