Name: Aghedo Osasenaga Hero-Douglas

Matric no: 19/MHS01/054

Dept: MBBS

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**CHAPTER 7: POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA**

**Definition of Political Party**

According to R.G Gettel, “political party is a group of citizens more or less organized, who act as a political unit and who by the use of political power aim at controlling the government and carrying out its general policies”. Herman Finer, on his part, defined political party as “an organised body with voluntary membership, its concreted energy being employed in the pursuit of Political Power”. However, Joseph LaPalombara defined political party as “a formal organisation whose self-conscious, primary purpose is to place and maintain in public office person who will control alone or in coalition, the machinery of government”. According to Agbaje (1999), “ a political party is a group of persons bonded in policy and opinion in support of a general political cause, which essentially is the pursuit, capture and retention, for as long as democratically feasible, of government and its offices.

From the above opinions,we infer that a political party is a group of citizens, more or less organised, having some agreement in broad principles of national policy with an effort to capture political power by some constitutional means.

**Characteristics of Political Party**

Below are some of the characteristics of political parties;

1. The major or central feature of political party is to capture governmental power through constitutional means. The means of capturing such powers must also be peaceful and lawful
2. They always have broad principles of public policy adopted by its organisation, which is referred to as party ideology. It also serves as a basis for classifying parties.
3. They have party manifestoes which guide their conduct during and after winning elections.
4. They must take into consideration the interest of the nation

**Types of Political Parties**

1. Elitist/Cadre Parties; This is a political party that draws up membership from the highest echelon of social hierarchy in a country.
2. Mass Parties; This is a political party that draws its membership from all sections of the society and have wide membership.
3. Ideological Party; This is a political party formed with political ideology or benefits which form the bases of the party.
4. Broker Party; This is a political party formed with its members drawn from upper and lower classes of the society.
5. Charismatic or Personality Party; This is a political party formed or led by individuals with charisma.

**Functions of Political Party**

1. Political mobilisation and recruitment
2. Political education
3. Political representation
4. Interest aggregation
5. Political stability
6. Conflict management and political integration
7. Organisation of government
8. Provision of alternative government and policies
9. Electoral competition and governance
10. Goal formation

**Political Parties in Nigeria**

Political parties in Nigeria developed following the growth of the nationalist consciousness and sentiments, and nationalist movements (Ikelegbe, 2010).

According to Ikelegbe, nationalists agitators formed groups and associations, to organise against colonial misrule. Thus for this purpose, The National Congress of British West Africa Territories was formed in 1920, the West African Students Union in 1925 and the Lagos Youth Movement in1934. Herbert Macaulay, H.O. Davies, Ernest Ikoli, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo and others were precursors of political parties in Nigeria, where in the forefront of political activities and party formation in the 1920s and thereafter.

The fulcrum for the emergence of parties formation in Nigeria was constitutional development. The Clifford Constitution of 1922 provided four elective seats in its legislative council, while the Richards constitution of 1946 retained four elective seats and established regional assemblies. The Macpherson’s constitution established regional executive councils, and provided for a system of indirect elections to the much largely Nigerian Legislative houses.