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CHAPTER 8

There is no democracy without the involvement of citizens. Participation of citizen in the government is both a right and a responsibility. Transparency is very essential in a democracy as the citizens need to be informed. There needs to be freedom of the citizens to express their views and make sure that the government responds to their views. There are a lot of barriers to citizen participation and these barriers need to be removed for full citizenship to be achieved. Citizens need to be educated and have knowledge on citizenship, politics and government so they can fully express their views and hold public officials accountable.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

1. CITIZEN/CITIZENSHIP: Citizens have a set of rights and responsibility such as the right and responsibility such as the right to take place in matters concerning the state. The essence of a state is to provide opportunities to enable citizens lead the good life. Turner defines citizenship as the formal legal identity an individual inherits through a collection of legal rights and obligations, controlling access to the scarce political, economic and cultural resources of society. The process by which an individual can change his citizenship from one state to another is known as naturalization. Citizenship is divided into civil citizenship, political citizenship and social citizenship. The term citizenship has many definitions as it means different things to different people. Being a citizen of a country also entails participating and being willing to contribute to the development of that country.

There are three dimensions of active citizenship which are: Ethical citizenship, integrative citizenship, educative citizenship. According to Kenny “to ensure full citizenship, people must be empowered to participate in the continual process of shaping their community, society and identity”

1. CITIZEN’S RIGHT: It is essential for citizens to have rights in order to participate in the running of the states. A right is defined as the privilege or prerogative conferred by law upon a person or a group. A civil right is when a privilege is expressed within the framework of the constitution of the state and if ones civil right is invaded by another individual, redress should be sought in court.
2. DEMOCRACY: The word democracy is gotten from two Greek word “demos” meaning people and “kratos” meaning rule. Democracy as a concept originated in ancient Greek but it was a limited democracy as some groups of people were not allowed to participate in the affairs of the state. The concept were all citizens regardless of their social status were allowed to participate in state affairs started in England. The American colonies also developed their own democratic ideas and it began to spread from country to country. Abraham Lincoln defined democracy as “the government of the people, by the people, and for the people”. The features of democracy are i. Independent judiciary ii. Freedom of press iii. Existence of rule of law iv. Free and fair periodic elections and v. Fundamental human rights is guaranteed.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CITIZENS

In a democratic government, the citizens have to be active and perform their duties and responsibilities in order for the government to succeed. Citizens are expected to perform the following duties i. Duty to vote ii. Duty to pay taxes iii. A good citizen must obey the law iv. A good citizen should offer constructive criticism to government policies v. A good citizen must support public education vi. A good citizen must refrain from interfering with the rights of other citizens.

In conclusion democracy is the best form of government, there would be no democracy without the involvement of citizens. Citizens should actively participate in the development of their country can make sure their rules are held accountable and should make sure they perform their duties enthusiastically.

CHAPTER 7

Political parties are an important link between the government and the people. The first and oldest political party is the democratic party which was developed in America. There are various definitions of political party as it performs so many tasks in the political process. The chief objective of a political party is to ensure that its officials attain power and maintain power for as long as democratically feasible. According to the definitions of political parties given it is inferred that a political party is a group of citizens more or less organized having some agreement in broad principles of national policy with an effort to capture political power by some constitutional means.

CHARACTERISTICS OF POLITICAL PARTY

1. The main feature of political parties is to obtain governmental power through constitutional means.
2. A political party must be national minded.
3. A political party must be organized as it derives strength from an effective organizational structure.
4. Political parties have broad principals of public policy adopted by its organization and its referred to as party idealogy.
5. Political parties must have party manifestos which must be used during and after the election.

TYPES OF POLITICAL PARTY

1. Elite party
2. Mass party
3. Ideological party
4. Brokers party: The main aim of this part is to reconcile the rich and the poor using policies of social justice for the interest of all.
5. Charismatic party.

FUNCTIONS OF POLITICAL PARTY

1. Political mobilization and recruitment
2. Interest aggregation
3. Goal formation
4. Political stability
5. Political education
6. Organization of government
7. Political representation.

POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA

The precursors of the formation of political parties in Nigeria are Herbert Macaulay, Ernest Okoli, Obafemi Awolowo, H.O Davies, Nnamdi Azikiwe and others. Constitutional development was one of the reasons for the formation of political parties in Nigeria.

The first political party in Nigeria was The Nigerian National Development Party (NNDP) and it was formed in 1923 and led by Herbert Macaulay also known as the father of Nigerian Nationalism. The National Council of Nigerian And Cameroun Party was the first party to seek full independence in Nigeria. Between 1950 and 1951 two major political parties were formed namely: action group ruing the western region and Northern People’s Congress (NPC). The parties formed before independence experienced some challenges such as: i) The political parties were without national outlook. ii) They placed much emphasis on personalities rather than on issues iii) Intra-party and inter-party conflicts in most cases polarized political parties causing them to split into factions.

When the ban on politics was lifted by the military in September 1978, 53 political parties sought to contest in the next election with only five being registered by the electoral commission. Three of them namely, NPN, UPN and NPP were an offshoot of the three major political parties before independence. In the third republic, for the first time Nigeria had a constitutional two-party system. The parties were Social Democratic Party and National Republican Party. In preparation for the fourth republic three major parties namely: People’s Democratic party, All People’s Party and Alliance for Democracy were registered by INEC.

In conclusion, Nigerian political parties have the biggest problem of corruption and seeing politics as a way to further their business interests through “sharing the national cake” which needs to be put to an end.