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POPULAR PARTICIPATION

Popular participation is the process of involving every citizen in the political affairs and decision –making process of their community, state or country. It also means collective effort of the people to pool their efforts and recourses together to attain their objectives. It means to have passion, interest in the social, political, economic activities of a nation.

TYPES OF POPULAR PARTICIPATION

1. **POLITICAL:** This involves citizens joining political groups and also getting involved in policy making and implementation in their community, society or nation. It also involves eligible voters exercising their civic rights by voting or being voted for during general elections.
2. **ECONOMICS:** This means engaging in trade, commercial and business activities in a country. It means to engage in legitimate and legal business, to encourage local producer and manufacturer of goods and services by patronizing them. This involves citizens and group taking part in community-based projects through partnership with government, private enterprises and foreign investor. Such projects are usually beneficial to the host communities in particular.
3. **SOCIAL:** This involves the use of our talent and skills for national growth and development. Talents of songs, music, dance, comedy, entertainment etc have expose so many to international fame and recognition.
4. **EDUCATIONAL:** This involves readiness to support and assist the government in the educational sector of the economy. This will make education to be competitive, available and also increase the literacy level in the country.
5. **SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY:** This entails our involvement in researches, discoveries and invention of new things as this will bring wealth and fame to the country.
6. **ARTS AND HUMANITY:** It is the involvement of citizens in visual arts, graphic designs, drawings, molding, sculpturing and natural science.
7. **SPORT AND ATHLETIC:** Students who are gifted and talented with athletic and other sporting skills should be involved and make good use of it.

NEED FOR POPULAR PARTICIPATION IN CIVIL SOCIETY.

The need for popular participation in civil society in the recent years gathered much impetus because of the gain in it.

1. **Sense of belonging:** Popular participation is important because it gives sense of belonging, satisfaction, in sight to the individual and his society. The popular participation makes the citizens see themselves as part and parcel of society. It leads to social stability and harmony in society.

2. Involvement of the people: The youth and adult, male and female through popular participation come together in democratic principle to engage in activities they have interest in. This helps to get the people enlightened and organized socially, economically and politically
3. Stability in Government: Popular participation makes the government to be stable. This is because everybody is involved either as a good leader or a good follower. People are easily mobilized for societal action activities.
4. Popular consciousness and education: It entails active participation by the citizenry in consultations, consensus building, political discussions and debates, constructive criticisms and contributions. Citizens in a well-informed society use popular participation in politics to develop.
5. Legitimacy of Government: Popular participation gives legitimacy to the government. The way and manner the electorate participates in the general elections, economic pursuits, sports and cultural activities that are obtained in the country shows their acceptability of the government in power.
6. Provision of opportunities: Popular participation provides greater opportunities for the citizens to develop their natural potentials. It provides suitable environment for wealth creation, income generation through employment opportunities, market and transport system, good road network, security, and so on
7. Reduction of political apathy: Popular participation reduces political apathy in society. This is because people become active when their voice is heard and their opinions are taken into consideration in decision making.

TRADITIONAL AND MODERN MODE OF POPULAR PARTICIPATION.

Traditional mode popular participation

All societies, the world over have developed various ways of approaching political, economic, cultural, judicial and other social issues in their environment. Popular participation in traditional societies consists mainly of the following:

1. Meeting at the town square, market square or palace of the Leader: In some communities the community leader could be an Oba, Obi, Emir, Eze, Baale in whole palace meetings are regularly held, and issues of concern are discussed and resolved. But in some communities, meetings are usually held at the village square or market square to discuss issues that affect them.
2. Participation of youths: The youth in traditional setting are powerful power brokers in the administration of the local communities. In Igbo land youth were used in the past for defense and sanitation purpose. Up till now, the youths are used to execute policies and projects in many traditional communities.

3. Participation of Women Groups: The women are also involved in the administration of many traditional communities. Women associations and groups are powerful tools in meeting the needs of the community though, their participation is not as much as that of men;
4. Punishment of Lawbreakers: Community members in Pre-colonial societies enforced the law among their members. Anybody who acted against the rules and regulations and taboo was reported and punished accordingly if found guilty.
5. Participation as Agents of socialization: Community members are much involved in the socialization process in the traditional setting.

Advantages of Traditional mode of popular participation

- i. It is simple to arrange
- ii. It saves time and energy
- iii. Saves cost
- iv. It gives confidence to both the leaders and the followers:
- v. Bribery and corruption practices are absent
- vi. There is no court litigation
- vii. The issue of opposition does not encourage bitterness and rancor

Modern Mode of Popular Participation:

Modern mode of popular participation has a lot of well defined conditions which all the participating interests group or individuals must adhere to. These include:

1. Participation in general elections: This type of popular participation strengthens the democratic culture and legitimizes the government. In elections people directly elect their representatives in popular and periodic elections.
2. Participation in Debates to Address Issue(s) of National and common Interest: Through radio, television and phone-in programmes or articles on national dailies community members participate in the affairs of the country.
3. Youth Programmes: Youth programmes like in NYSC (National Youth Service Corps) enable youths to participate in, interact with youths from different ethnic groups during the compulsory service year.

4. The use of Agents of Mobilization: Agents of mobilization such as MEMSER and NOA are used in Nigeria to enable people to participate in the affairs of the state. Such agencies enhance the capacity of the people through mass education, awareness creation.
5. Sponsorship of programmes: Community members' participate in the affairs of the state through sponsoring certain programmes on radio, television and newspapers as well as advertisements in the media.

Advantages of Modern Mode of popular participation.

1. It gives the citizens the natural confidence to choose their leaders wisely.
2. It enables all eligible voters to participate in the electoral processes actively.
3. It promotes growth and development of democracy, rule of law, economic and sport solidarity.
4. It makes voters or supporter become well equipped to assess the performance of those in charge of the affairs of state.
5. There is a good link between the electorate and the elected members.

Disadvantages of modern mode of popular participation

1. It is very expensive to carry out all the activities and get a fair result.
2. Many voters are illiterate, so, they neither know why they are voting, nor understand how to vote correctly.
3. It breeds disorder, lawlessness and thuggery.
4. It encourages the use of money to lobby the electorate.
5. Mediocre are most often elected instead of the good political philosophers.
6. It encourages bribery and corruption
7. It gives room for stealing of ballot boxes and falsification of result, killing and kidnapping of political opponents
8. It is time and energy consuming.
9. It promotes unhealthy competition.

Meaning of Democracy

According to Abraham Lincoln, democracy is the government of the people, by the people and for the people. This is the system of government in which people exercise their political power through periodic election of leaders by themselves or their representative. The word democracy was traceable to ancient Greek . The word DEMO

and KRATIA which form democracy means people and government. Characteristics of Democracy

1. Regular and periodic election: Democracy give room for periodic election so as to elect new leaders.

2. Fundamental human right: Democracy guarantees and respects the human right as stated in the constitution.

3. Party system: This system of government allows different political party system to compete for power during election.

4. Freedom of the press: Under democratic system of government all the media houses are free to express their opinions and feelings through writing or any means.

5. The judicial arm of government is independence and free of other arms of government 6. Rule of law: there is equality before the law; no one is above the law under democratic system of government.

Types of Democracy

There are two types of Democracy, which are

1. Direct Democracy: This is the system of government where everybody is involved in governing the country. It is a system whereby all citizens meet together periodically for the purpose of governing the country.

2. Indirect Democracy: This is a system of government where citizens choose their representatives to rule on their behalf. This is also called representative democracy. This system of government is practiced in Nigeria, Ghana, and U.S.A etc. Importance of Democracy It creates opportunity for everybody in a place to have a say in the government of a state or a nation Everybody has a right to make suggestions Everyone has a right to nominate a person for election There is freedom of speech, freedom of religion and freedom to education

Problems of Democracy

- **Shortsightedness:** Democratic politicians are elected for a short period of time (4 – 5 years). This election cycle causes them not to think “what is best for the country in the long run” but “what is best in the country in 4 – 5 years so I can claim responsibility and get elected again.” Therefore unpopular solution of long term problems are postponed since it would be unpopular by the voters.
- **Populism:** This is connected to the first problem. Democracy has elections and for the politician to be elected he has to be popular. Basically democracy is a giant popularity contest where the elections aren’t won by the wisest, smartest or most intelligent but by the most popular one. So the politician has to give the people gifts so he would stay popular.
- **Selfishness**

The third problem is connected to the previous two. In a dictatorship or authoritarian regime you can tell people that they would’ve to live more modest now because the state (religion, nation...) requires it. But in democracy? People are very greedy, think only about themselves and their rights. So they wouldn’t live more modest for the sake of the greater good. Instead they will oust the politician who tells them that and elect a new one who will tell them that everything is alright.

Meaning of Constitutional Democracy

Democracy is government of, by, and for the people. It is government of a community in which all citizens, rather than favored individuals or groups, have the right and opportunity to participate. In a democracy, the people are sovereign. The people are the ultimate source of authority.

In a constitutional democracy the authority of the majority is limited by legal and institutional means so that the rights of individuals and minorities are respected. This is the form of democracy practiced in Germany, Israel, Japan, the United States, and other countries.

Constitutional democracy is the type of democracy where powers of the majority are exercised within a frame work of the constitution designed to guarantee the majority right.

In this type of democracy, how the people are to be ruled and governed are stated in the constitution.

Constitutional democracy is the type which operates from and according to the constitution of the states.

Types of Constitutional Democracy

1. Pluralism: This type of constitutional democracy in which majority of the people are allowed to exercise their views, opinions and idea. It gives room for wide participation of the citizens.
2. Republican constitutional democracy: This type of democracy allows for proceedings on issues that concerns state alone. It includes all the people of a state but only on the issues that concern the state alone. Examples of countries that practice this are India, France, and Ireland.
1. Constitutional Direct: This fashion all its progressions and procedures according to the constitution of the state and allow the direct participation in the political affairs.

Features of Constitutional Democracy

1. CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRACY is the antithesis of arbitrary rule. It is democracy characterized by: POPULAR SOVEREIGNTY. The people are the ultimate source of the authority of the government which derives its right to govern from their consent.
2. MINORITY RIGHTS. Although “the majority rules,” the fundamental rights of individuals in the minority are protected. Minority right: Under constitutional democracy, the rights of the voiceless or the unprivileged are well secured through the constitution.
3. LIMITED GOVERNMENT. The powers of government are limited by law and a written or unwritten constitution which those in power obey. Limited Government: The government in constitutional democracy is limited unlike

that of other forms of democracy in which government can be dissolved at any time.

4. INSTITUTIONAL AND PROCEDURAL LIMITATIONS ON POWERS.

There are certain institutional and procedural devices which limit the powers of government. These may include:

5. SEPARATED AND SHARED POWERS. Powers are separated among different agencies or branches of government. Each agency or branch has primary responsibility for certain functions such as legislative, executive, and judicial functions. However, each branch also shares these functions with the other branches.

6. CHECKS AND BALANCES. Different agencies or branches of government have adequate power to check the powers of other branches. Checks and balances may include the power of judicial review. At the power of courts to declare actions of other branches of government to be contrary

to the constitution and therefore null and void.

7. DUE PROCESS OF LAW. Individual rights to life, liberty, and property are protected by the guarantee of due process of law.

8. LEADERSHIP SUCCESSION THROUGH ELECTIONS. Elections insure that key positions in government will be contested at periodic intervals and that the transfer of governmental authority is accomplished in a peaceful and orderly process.

9. Popular Sovereignty: In constitutional democracy, the people are seen as the louder voice of the government of a state, this makes the will of the electorate to prevail.

10. Basic freedom: The constitution allows the people to know their rights and ensure that their rights are protected; there is basic freedom of interference from the people in the affairs of government

11. Majority rule: This is the rule that gives the majority the chance to express their views and opinions in the affair of the government. Majority

rule gives leadership rights to the people and thereby gain the full support and recognition of the masses.

Functions of Constitutional Democracy

1. They provide social amenities like water, electricity, etc for the people.
2. They protect the citizens against internal and external attack

They make Law and execute them

1. They promote national unity
2. They respect the dignity of individual
3. They protect the right of individual in the country

Organizational constituted authorities: These are leaders of business organizations, clubs political parties or social gatherings.

Functions of Organizational Constituted Authority.

1. They cater for the interest of their members
2. They make decision and policies for their members
3. They protect the right of their members
4. They represent their organizations in any relevant event in the society.

Key Concepts of Constitutional Democracy

Some of these key concepts are

1. History of the people: In any good and acceptable constitutional democracy, the constitution must reflect the history of the people, the history of the people must be put into consideration.
2. Freedom of the press: The press, radio, television, newspaper and other social media are means by which citizens express their views i.e. people are free to write and make reports on governmental issues.

3. Convention: Constitutional democracy brings out convention through which the government follows, through the conventions skills are acquired and disseminated.
4. Periodic election: Free and fair election is one of the major key concepts of constitutional democracy because it allows for change in government.
5. The rights of citizens: another key is the right of citizens; their rights must be respected and protected.
6. Supremacy of the constitution: Under the constitutional democracy, the constitution is supreme and supersedes every other consideration in a constitutional democracy.

Advantages of Constitutional Democracy

The following points below are the merits of constitutional democracy

1. There is the rule of law; this promotes equality of persons and help to protect human rights.
2. It also helps to encourage constitutionalism; by this means, it helps the government to rule according to the laid down rules, regulation and principle of the state and not to rule anyhow without proper guidance.
3. There is legitimacy; constitutional democracy is regarded as legitimate because it has the full support of the people.
4. It involves periodic elections which 'lead in' another government for a change.
5. There is choice of political party i.e. there is opportunity for every for every citizens to belong to political party of their choice and select their leader.
6. Citizenship is not dependent on adherence.

Disadvantages of Constitutional Democracy

1. There is separation of powers; constitutional democracy brings about separation of powers among various organs of government
2. Corruption and manipulation of election; during the time of electing new leaders through elections, there is usually corruption and manipulation by the electoral bodies and the political parties members which helps to usher in wrong leaders into power.
3. Ignorance/ inadequate political education; Most illiterates vote ignorantly due to lack of knowledge on political education.
4. Slow decision making; due to the fact that everybody will have to express their views and opinions on any decision the governments wants to make, it makes the decision to be very slow.
5. Individuals claim right and obligation which most times make them to disrespect those in power.
6. Too expensive; constitutional democracy involves so many people in carrying out its affairs, thereby becoming too expensive to run.
7. Manipulation by few; constitutional democracy is always manipulated by some few citizens who have vocal skills and abilities in expressing views and opinions.