

# LECTURE NOTES ON CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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## I. INTRODUCTION

- Citizenship Education in Nigeria encompasses both practical and academic dimensions:
  - **Practically:** It is about knowing and practicing the provisions of the Nigerian Constitution.
  - **Academically:** It is a component of the General Studies programme that imparts knowledge about the rights and obligations of both citizens and the government.
- The content of Citizenship Education aligns with the NBTE curriculum and spans two semesters. The topics for the 1st Semester are:
  1. The Constitution of Nigeria
  2. The federal system of government in Nigeria
  3. The Constitutional rights and obligations of Nigerian citizens
  4. Citizenships
  5. The fundamental objectives and directive principles of state policy in Nigeria

## II. GOALS OF CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

- **Promote Unity and National Integration:**
  - Reduce the negative impacts of cultural plurality and political interest clashes.
  - Use institutions like schools and mass media as instruments for nation-building through the teaching of Citizenship Education.
- **Enhance National Consciousness:**
  - Encourage Nigerians to prioritize their national identity, seeing themselves as Nigerians first before ethnic or religious identities like Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, Muslim, Christian, etc.
- **Educate on Rights and Responsibilities:**
  - Equip Nigerian citizens with knowledge about their rights and obligations.
- **Civic Participation:**
  - Inspire citizens to be proactive and contribute positively to society.

## II. THE CONSTITUTION

### Definition of a Constitution

- A constitution serves as the foundational document that aims to consolidate a state as a single entity, binding all its citizens.
  - *Political Aspect:* It captures the political will or the agreement by a country's populace regarding governance. Moreover, subsidiary laws, policies, and government branches are built upon the principles established by the Constitution.
  - *Legal Perspective:* Legally, it dictates how courts address those who breach the agreement. The Constitution lays out specific rights and rules that guide the actions of state institutions and its citizens. No individual stands above the constitution. Violations lead to legal consequences determined by competent courts.
- The constitution stands as the paramount law, underpinning all other laws within a country. It sets the framework for how the government, groups, and citizens interact and operate, aiming to realize the country's objectives.

### Features of the Nigerian Constitution as a Document

1. **Preamble:** An introduction that outlines the aims and objectives of the Constitution and, by extension, the country.
2. **Type of Government:** The Nigerian Constitution establishes Nigeria as a Presidential system, as opposed to a Parliamentary or Monarchical system.
3. **Levels of Government:** Defines Nigeria as a federal state, not a unitary one.
4. **Party System:** Specifies a multiparty system, rejecting a single-party or two-party system.
5. **Qualifications and Tenure:** Lays out criteria for potential candidates and stipulates the tenure for elected and appointed officeholders.
6. **Separation of Powers:** It aligns with the theory of separation of powers among the Executive, Legislative, and Judiciary branches. Furthermore, it embodies the doctrine of checks and balances to ensure their functions interrelate and prevent power abuses.
7. **Rights and Obligations:** Enumerates the rights of citizens and their associated duties.
8. **Amendment Process:** Outlines procedures for constitutional amendments to cater to contemporary and future requirements. These might involve legislative processes, referendums, participation by federating units, judicial amendments for written constitutions, or conventional methods for amending unwritten ones.
9. **Revenue Allocation:** Describes the revenue distribution formula between different government tiers.
10. **Redress Mechanism:** Provides avenues through which the government and its citizens can seek redress in cases of misconduct by others.

## CONSTITUTIONALISM

- **Definition:**

- While the Constitution is a set of rules compiled in a single document with various features, constitutionalism represents the belief that the Constitution is supreme. Therefore, both the government and its citizens should adhere to its content and spirit.

- **Key Tenets:**

1. Behavior should align with the rule of law, meaning:
  - Every individual is equal before the law.
  - There should be impartiality, and due process should always be followed when dealing with offenders.
  - All offenders deserve a fair hearing.
2. The judiciary should interpret laws from a legal perspective.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES IN THE MAKING OF THE NIGERIAN CONSTITUTION

1. **The Ideal Situation:** Based on the philosophical works of scholars such as Locke, Marx, Hobbes, Plato, and Aristotle, which focus on ideal governance scenarios.
2. **Economic and Political Ideologies:** These include systems like democracy, capitalism, socialism, and mixed economic systems.
3. **Promotion of Good Norms and Nigerian Culture:** Encompassing values, habits, and practices that aim to enhance life quality. This is reflected in various records, including conventions, acts of parliaments, decrees, constitutional conferences, international laws, and judicial precedents.

## TYPES AND BASES OF CONSTITUTION

1. **Written vs. Unwritten:** Based on documentation. A written constitution is documented in a book, while an unwritten one is preserved through memory and oral traditions.
2. **Flexible vs. Rigid:** Refers to the amendment process. Flexible constitutions are easily amended through a simple majority, while rigid ones require more extensive procedures.
3. **Monarchical vs. Republican:** Monarchical constitutions have leaders (kings/queens) determined by inheritance, while republican ones elect leaders.
4. **Unitary, Federal, and Con-Federal:**
  - **Unitary:** All power is vested in a central government.
  - **Federal:** Power is shared between the central and local government tiers.
  - **Con-Federal:** Local or state governments possess more power than the central government.
5. **International Constitutions or Agreements:** Agreements between nations, known by various names such as charter, treaty, covenant, or pact. However, they sometimes suffer from

enforceability issues due to conflicts of interest, lack of international policing, and differing standards between nations.

### III. FEDERALISM

#### Concepts of Federalism

- **Definition:**
  - Federalism, as defined by Wheare (1946), involves a division of governmental functions between a central authority and its constituent geopolitical units, allowing each to progress at its own pace.
- **Tiers and Hierarchy of Governments:**
  - In a federal structure, neither the central authority nor its units are subordinate to one another. They operate independently and coordinate their actions. For instance, in Nigeria, power is distributed between the national government, states, and local government units.
- **Functions and Power Relationship:**
  - There's an "exclusive list" of functions (e.g., defense and foreign policy) that are the sole purview of the central government.
  - A "concurrent list" contains functions (e.g., agriculture) where both the central and state governments can legislate. In cases of conflict, federal laws take precedence.
  - "Residual powers" are left for the states to manage.

#### Importance of Federalism

1. **Unity in Diversity:** Federalism fosters a sense of unity among diverse groups. It embodies a decentralization of power and acknowledges mutual respect, fostering a sense of both self-rule and shared governance.
2. **Collective Security:** It provides a safety net to individual states, especially the weaker ones, by integrating them into a collective defense mechanism.
3. **Promotion of Development:** Federalism:
  - Spurs healthy competition between units.
  - Brings governance closer to the people.
  - Prevents the rise of dictators at the center.
  - Ensures wider consultation and collaboration.
4. **Decentralization:** Over the years, Nigeria's federal government expanded its reach. However, recent debates have focused on returning power to the states and further down to the local governments.

#### Types of Federalism

- **Dual Federalism:** This model views the federal system as a "layer cake" where each level of government focuses on its most appropriate functions. In such systems, the average citizen falls under at least two main tiers of authority: state and national.

- **Cooperative Federalism:** This approach recognizes the overlapping responsibilities of state and federal governments. The federal government dominates by holding both the exclusive and concurrent lists, rendering the state a secondary tier to the center.

### Federalism vs. Other Governance Types

1. **Federal State:** Here, the central authority shares legislative powers with other governance tiers.
2. **Unitary State:** The central authority has all the legislative powers. This approach was evident in Nigeria in 1966 during Agui Ironsi's tenure as the military Head of State.
3. **Con-federal State:** In this model, the component states are more dominant, with more legislative power than the federal government.

In essence, federalism, as a governance system, balances the need for national unity with the desire for local autonomy, ensuring both cohesiveness and regional development.

### Origin of Federalism in Nigeria

- **Historical Background:** Prior to the European scramble and partition of Africa in 1884, Nigeria as we know it today did not exist. Instead, there were multiple independent nations, each with its unique language and culture. Examples include the Urhobo, Ijaw, Hausa, Fulani, and many others.
- **Colonial Formation:** Post-1884, the British colonial regime amalgamated these diverse linguistic groups, birthing what we recognize as Nigeria today. Initially, Nigeria operated as a unitary state where the Colonial Government at the center wielded power.
- **Transition to Federalism:** However, by the mid-20th century, significant shifts occurred. Two pivotal constitutional conferences in 1953 (in London) and 1954 (in Lagos) laid the foundation for federalism in Nigeria, crystallized by the Lyttleton constitution of 1954. This transition led to the establishment of three primary federating units or regions: Northern, Western, and Eastern Regions. These regions primarily represented the three dominant ethnic groups: Hausa-Fulani in the north, Yoruba in the west, and Igbo in the east. Notably, these units enjoyed a significant degree of political and economic autonomy. Another key point is the unique status of the Southern Cameroons. Though autonomy was provided to it, the area remained within the Nigerian Federation as a quasi-federal territory with its distinct legislature.

### Reasons for Adopting Federalism in Nigeria

1. **Ethnic Concerns:** Given Nigeria's vast ethnic diversity, federalism was seen as a means to quell fears of one ethnic group gaining undue dominance. It sought to protect the interests of minority groups and provide a sense of belonging.
2. **Administrative Efficiency:** Nigeria's vast population and expansive geographical spread required a division for effective governance. Decentralizing power meant governance could be closer to the people, reducing travel burdens, saving time, and increasing government efficacy.

3. **Holistic Development:** The structure aimed to promote even and rapid development across Nigeria's expanse, ensuring no region was left behind.
4. **Market Expansion:** Federalism was also seen as a way to boost local markets in regional and state capitals, promoting economic growth.
5. **Strengthened Sovereignty:** The structure intended to enhance Nigeria's sovereignty by ensuring more balanced representation in national bodies like the National Assembly and the Federal Executive Council.
6. **Local Autonomy:** By giving each ethnic group a feeling of local independence or autonomy, federalism sought to recognize and respect the diverse identities within Nigeria.

In essence, the adoption of federalism in Nigeria was not just a political decision, but a socio-cultural one, reflecting the country's unique historical, ethnic, and geographical nuances.



## IV. CITIZENSHIP

### Definition of Citizenship:

- **Citizenship:** Citizenship refers to the formal status of an individual as a legal member of a state. As a citizen, a person enjoys full constitutional or legal rights in the part of the country they reside in and owes loyalty to the community's authorities.

### Ways to Acquire Nigerian Citizenship:

1. **Citizenship by Birth:** This applies to persons born in Nigeria either:
  - Before October 1, 1960, if either of their parents or grandparents belonged to an indigenous Nigerian community and one of them was born in Nigeria.
  - After October 1, 1960, if their mother, father, or any grandparent is a Nigerian.
2. **Citizenship by Registration:** Section 26 of Nigeria's 1999 Constitution allows individuals born outside Nigeria, who are grandchildren of Nigerians or foreign women married to Nigerians, to be registered as citizens if they:
  - Are of good character;
  - Intend to reside in Nigeria;
  - Have taken the Oath of Allegiance.
3. **Citizenship by Naturalization:** A foreign individual can apply for Nigerian citizenship if they:
  - Are at least 18 years old and are of good character;
  - Plan to live in Nigeria and are accepted by the local community;
  - Contribute positively to Nigeria;
  - Take the Oath of Allegiance;
  - Have continuously resided in Nigeria for 15 years.

**Dual Citizenship:** Section 28 states that only individuals with citizenship by birth can also hold citizenship in another country while retaining their Nigerian citizenship.

### Renouncing or Withdrawing Citizenship:

1. **Self-Withdrawal:** Citizens aged 18 and above can renounce their citizenship. The President can, however, reject this renunciation if Nigeria is at war or if it's against public policy.
2. **Withdrawal by the Government:** The President can revoke the citizenship of a naturalized or registered citizen if they are imprisoned within seven years of obtaining citizenship, display disloyalty, or harm Nigeria, especially in collaboration with an enemy nation.

### Constitutional Rights and Obligations of Nigerian Citizens:

- **Constitutional Rights:** These are fundamental entitlements every Nigerian citizen can expect. They include:
  - Right to life.

- Right to dignity.
- Right to personal liberty.
- Right to a fair hearing.
- Right to privacy.
- Right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion.
- Right to freedom of expression.
- Right to freedom of movement.
- Right to non-discrimination.
- Right to property ownership.
- **Obligations/Duties:** Citizens also have responsibilities they must fulfill. They include:
  - Respecting the constitution and its institutions.
  - Honoring the national flag and pledge, and obeying lawful authorities.
  - Enhancing Nigeria's reputation.
  - Respecting other citizens' dignity and rights.
  - Fostering brotherhood and good neighborliness.
  - Contributing to community well-being.
  - Assisting in maintaining law and order, such as reporting crimes.

## V. THE FUNDAMENTAL OBJECTIVES AND DIRECTIVE PRINCIPLES OF STATE POLICY IN NIGERIA

The directive principles of state policy serve as a blueprint or a guideline which the Nigerian government must aim to follow. These principles are enshrined in the Constitution to ensure that governance serves the greater good of the people. Let's break it down:

### 1. Principles of Governance (Section 14)

- **Participation & Equality:** Governance in Nigeria should be inclusive, ensuring participation by everyone and equality of all citizens.
- **Power Origin:** The power of governance derives from the people. It's the people's mandate that allows the government to function.
- **Security & Welfare:** The primary duty of the government is to ensure the safety and welfare of its citizens.
- **National Representation:** Appointments in government should reflect the diverse regions of Nigeria, promoting national unity.

### 2. Motto and Political Guidelines (Section 15)

- **National Motto:** Nigeria's guiding principles are "Unity and Faith, Peace and Progress".
- **Anti-discrimination:** Discrimination based on one's origin, sex, religion, status, ethnic group, or language is strictly prohibited.
- **Freedom of Residence:** Every Nigerian citizen has the right to live anywhere within the country.
- **Anti-corruption:** The government must actively work to abolish corruption and the abuse of power.

### 3. Economic Guidelines (Section 16)

- **Resource Management:** The country's resources should be used to promote national prosperity and the welfare of all citizens.
- **Economic Participation:** Both the government and private individuals should participate in the economy.
- **Wealth Distribution:** Accumulating the nation's wealth in the hands of a few is discouraged.
- **Provisions by the Government:** The government has the duty to provide suitable living conditions, including shelter, food, wages, old age care, unemployment and sickness benefits, and welfare for the disabled.

### 4. Social Guidelines (Section 17)

- **Life Values:** The Nigerian way of life should be based on freedom, equality, and justice.

- **Humane Governance:** The government should always operate with compassion and fairness.
- **Key Responsibilities:** The government must ensure equal rights, environmental protection, judicial independence, job opportunities, fair working conditions, health, safety, and the protection of vulnerable groups like children, young persons, and the elderly.

#### 5. Educational Guidelines (Section 18)

- **Equal Opportunities:** The government should ensure equal and adequate educational opportunities for all.
- **Promotion of Science and Technology:** Advancements in science and technology should be encouraged.
- **Eradicating Illiteracy:** Efforts should be made to eliminate illiteracy in Nigeria.

#### 6. Foreign Policy Guidelines (Section 19)

- **National Interests & African Unity:** In international relations, the government should prioritize Nigeria's interests and promote African unity.
- **Diplomatic Dispute Resolution:** Nigeria should prefer negotiations and discussions to resolve disputes with other nations.
- **International Law:** Nigeria should respect international laws and treaties.
- **Global Economic Justice:** Nigeria should advocate for a just world economic order.