

WEEK 4

TOPIC: ELECTIONS AND ELECTORAL BODIES

MEANING OF ELECTIONS

Election can be defined as an act or process of voting for a candidate to represent the people of a country in various government positions. It is also defined as a process of choosing our political leaders. Examples of political office holders or leaders are President, Governors, Members of the houses of Senate and Representatives, Chairman and Counsellors of Local Government Areas. Election is a procedure that allows citizens of a country to choose their leaders or representatives.

Types of Election

1. **Direct Elections:** Direct Elections involve the electorates (voters) casting their votes directly in an election for candidates of their choice that will represent them in various government positions.
2. **Indirect Elections:** This system involves the formation of an electoral college by the legislators. The members of the Electoral College will vote for the candidates of their choice on behalf of the citizens of the country.
 - **By – Elections:** This is an election that takes place to fill a vacant elective post as a result of disqualification, death or resignation of the individual holding a public office. The election takes place in that constituency where there has been a vacancy.
 - **Run – off Elections:** When none of the candidates wins the election by absolute majority in a general election, another election would be conducted. In this final election, only the candidates with the highest votes are allowed to contest.
 - **Primary Election:** This involves the political parties presenting candidates for any election in a country. It is an election conducted within a political party to choose candidates that can adequately represent the interests of the party in an election

The importance of elections are as follows:

1. Choice of Leaders: Elections give the people in a country the opportunity for choosing their leaders into different political offices such as president, governors, legislators etc.
2. Easy and peaceful change of Government elections provides an opportunity for the masses to peacefully remove bad government from office and ensure peaceful change of government to another.
3. Promotes Democracy: Election is one of the pillars of democracy. Regular free and fair elections help in sustaining democracy in any country.
4. Provides Opportunity for political Education: Election provides opportunity for political parties to give political education to the people of a country. It is usually done through campaigns and rallies where political parties make their manifestos known to the people.
5. Provides Opportunity for Participation in Government: Election gives the citizens of a country the opportunity of participating in government by casting votes for the candidates of their choice.
6. Elections act as basis for measuring the popularity of the government in power.

ELECTORAL BODIES IN NIGERIA

There are two types of electoral bodies in Nigeria. They are

- i. (INEC) Independence National Electoral Commission
- ii. State Independent Electoral Commission (SIEC)

INDEPENDENT NATIONAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION (INEC): It is the main agent of democracy in Nigeria. INEC is a permanent body created by the constitution to organize federal and state elections in Nigeria. The overall head of INEC is called chairman. Every state in Nigeria has a resident electoral commissioner that supervises the conduct of elections in the states.

STATE INDEPENDENT ELECTORAL COMMISSION: The State Independent Electoral Commission has power to organize undertake and supervise all elections to local government councils within a state. Advise INEC on the compilation of and the register of voters for local government election.

Functions of Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)

1. Registration of political parties.
2. Registration of voters and provision of voter's cards.
3. Registration of candidates for elections.
4. Provision of electoral materials such as ballot papers and ballot boxes.
5. Counting of votes after elections.
6. Announcement and declaration of winners.
7. Education of citizens about democracy and electoral process in Nigeria.
8. To educate voters about democracy and electoral process in Nigeria.
9. To divide the country into constituencies or electoral districts.

ASSIGNMENT

1. Define election
2. Highlight five functions of INEC