

WEEK 2

TOPIC : DEFINING THE CONCEPT GOVERNMENT

Government may be defined as an organized group of persons who direct and control the affairs of a society, country or state. Government may also be defined as a body of persons or an institution which makes and executes laws for the smooth running of the state.

Furthermore, government as a concept may be defined generally from three main perspectives:

1. Government as an institution of the state e.g. legislature, executive, judiciary, etc.
2. Government as a process or act of governing.
3. Government as an academic field of study

Government as an Institution of the State

This means that government is a machinery, agency or channel through which the will or business of the state is carried out. As an institution of the state, government has three main organs – the executive, legislature and judiciary. Therefore government can be seen as an institution of the state which exercises executive, legislative and judicial functions for the general good of the citizens of the state.

Government as a Process or Act of Governing

This implies the step by step coordination of activities of a country through the use of different policy instruments to oversee the smooth running of a country and its resources. This process involves making of laws, interpreting of laws and adjudication of law. This relates to power and it uses in a state. In carrying out government activities, the legislature makes laws and regulates the excesses of the executive in executing the laws made by the legislature. The judiciary on its part interprets the laws. .

Government as an Academic Field of Study

Government is studied as an academic field in schools and higher institutions. This is because government is both a system, an institution and a process which can be studied for better understanding of how it works.

The study of government as an academic field can be divided into the following areas:

1. Government, at the senior secondary school level;
2. Public Administration and
3. International Relations and Diplomacy, both at the undergraduate and post-graduate levels.

The Characteristics of Government

The characteristics of government are those essential and basic elements that must be present to enable government perform its functions effectively. They are:

1. Power: Political power enables government to perform its functions effectively and efficiently.
2. Law: There must be laws to coordinate and regulate the electorates and the elected (masses and leaders)
3. Human Resources: If government is to function properly, then it must consistently maintain a workforce.
4. Basic social amenities: If Government is to achieve its goals, the provision of basic social amenities must be constantly maintained and improved upon.
5. Revenue: Government needs enough financial resources to execute policies and programmes.

The Functions of Government

The major goal of any government is to maintain law and order in a state. Other functions of government include:

1. Ensuring law and order in the country.
2. Ensuring the protection of lives and properties.
3. Assisting in the provision of basic social amenities.
4. Developing and sustaining a stable economy.
5. Safeguarding fundamental human rights.
6. Ensuring stability and continuity of government.
7. Provision of employment opportunities, educational facilities, etc.
8. Maintaining relations with other countries of the world.

ASSIGNMENT

1. Define government
2. Define government as (i) an institution of the state. (ii) a process or act of governing (iii) an academic field of study.
3. State five (5) characteristics of government